

Should academics accept jobs in South African universities? By refusing to go they witness to their disapproval of an inhuman regime, but by going they may be able to do something to alleviate it. This problem is one illustration of a tension, characteristic of human action between the claims of *saying* and those of *doing*. Take the dilemma of the left-wing socialist at the Hull by-election: by voting for the Radical Alliance he will witness to his beliefs about the war in Vietnam but he will also, it is plausibly argued, make them less likely to be implemented. (By the time this appears the election will have passed into history: perhaps Mr Gott will himself be elected, perhaps the Conservatives will win comfortably with no assistance from him, but we are here concerned with the problem as it appears to many before the election.) The only certain mistake is to suppose that there is one single solution to all such problems; that we must always come down on the side of doing or always on the side of saying.

Consider the public attitude of the English hierarchy and clergy to the liturgical reforms decreed by the Vatican Council. In many pulpits and in some pastoral letters there was a great display of reluctance. The tone of the announcements was roughly: 'We realise these changes are all very upsetting, we don't like them any more than you do but they have been imposed upon us, no doubt we will get used to them in time'. For a great number of Catholics this was a scandal. They welcomed the reforms wholeheartedly and would have liked to see the clergy equally enthusiastic. There was a suspicion that the changes which the educated laity had been awaiting impatiently for some time had taken the clergy by surprise. This may perhaps be true: it is possible that in their apparent reluctance the English Bishops genuinely thought they were expressing the feelings of the majority of English Catholics. A mistake on so colossal a scale may seem surprising but we must not rule it out.

On the other hand it is also possible, and much more likely, that the Bishops were quite well aware of the real situation but were more concerned to get the changes accepted efficiently and harmoniously than to pose as enthusiasts for liturgical reform – a sufficiently improbable posture in any case. They perhaps felt it more important to avoid provoking the conservative minority than to act as spokesmen for the ordinary Catholics. At least amongst the English, a leader is

commonly less effective when he makes starry-eyed speeches than when he shows sympathy with the grumblers and shares a little of their reluctance. In short, the Bishops were perhaps on the side of doing rather than saying and if so they have been triumphantly successful. The conservative opposition which in some countries (notably those with a 'progressive' hierarchy) has shown itself in all sorts of bizarre activities and organisations, is reduced in England to an eccentric minority whom nobody takes seriously. There has been no dramatic split in the Church and hardly more than a couple of months of letters to the Editor; the call for liturgical apartheid grows fainter each week. It may be that the English hierarchy will shortly be called upon to do a similar job in putting over a revision or development of the usual teaching on birth-control; if they handle that one with the same competence we should indeed be grateful to them.

If what was needed was a change in liturgical practice, if it was a matter of an immediate job to be done, then the results show that the Bishops were right and their progressive critics were wrong. Whether consciously or instinctively the clergy used the right methods for the English Catholic Church. But it is still possible to ask whether this *was* what was needed. Is it true that the problem was to change, with the minimum of fuss and conflict, the way in which Catholics behave in Church? Is the Constitution on the Liturgy basically concerned to get something done or to get something seen? It can be argued that the real purpose of the Council was not to reform this or that practice in the Church but to give men a new vision of what the Church is. We may say that if men do not see the Conciliar teaching as new and startling they have not seen it at all. Perhaps the very smoothness and lack of conflict with which the liturgical reforms have been received in England is an indication that they have been presented and accepted as mere tidying up, and not as a revolutionary change. It is possible that many of the clergy and some of the laity would agree with the English Bishop who announced that the Council has changed nothing. If this is so then the cutting edge of the Council has been blunted: what we have beaten into a ploughshare was, perhaps, the sword of the Spirit.

There is a time for doing and a time for saying, a time for bettering the world and a time for martyrdom, for reform and for revolution. The revolutionary and the martyr are impractical men; they are not concerned with improving their world but with witnessing to the possibility of a different world; they seek to say rather than to do. They can always be criticised for wasting an opportunity to help: 'But couldn't you do more good if you *joined* the establishment?' Yet it is not the man who does good, but the martyr who is, for the Christian tradition, the paradigm case of sanctity. We are redeemed not by the cures that Christ did but by the statement which was his crucifixion.

Some recent Christian thinking seems to forget this. The 'New Morality', for example, makes it a principle to accept the given situation (the given social situation) and do the best we can within its terms; the man whose terms of reference go beyond this situation to the world to come – whether in the Marxist sense or the Christian or both – is regarded as both impractical and ruthless, one who would sacrifice human happiness to 'abstract' principles. Christian ethics has by now learnt a lot from the liberals and moderates; perhaps the next move in the dialectic is to learn a little from, say, James Baldwin.

Do we want to make it easier for people to live a decent human life within the available inhuman institutions or are we prepared to sacrifice their happiness in order to change the institutions themselves? There is one important strand of Christian tradition according to which all human institutions are more or less equally bad; the change from one set to another can never be worth the cost in human suffering. The only revolution worth dying or inflicting suffering for is the change from this human world to a timeless non-political heaven. Meanwhile the Christian will do his best to ameliorate conditions within whatever happens to be the established order. This we may label the 'conservative' Christian tradition and it has its attendant 'liberalism'. Liberal Christianity is a development of conservatism in which all sets of political institutions are seen as more or less equally good in their time and place (we should seek to understand the head-hunters rather than to change them); heaven, however, is eliminated so that we are left with nothing at all that would justify the cost of human suffering – Christianity is seen entirely in terms of being kind to the people you meet. There is, however, a third possibility: that of the Christian who sees the 'permanent revolution' as the counterpart of the '*Ecclesia semper reformanda*' (since the Council no longer a 'Protestant' phrase), for whom the coming of the kingdom demands a continual remaking of institutions and of the structures of life and thought. So long as there is tension between doing and saying there will come times when revolution is the enemy of reform, when radical change will exact its cost in human suffering, when doing the will of God does not seem to lead to any visible happiness for anybody, when a man is simply a witness to truth and no more. In the meantime it is only in the sacraments that we have a complete unity of saying and doing: *Efficiat quod figurat* they bring about the new world they proclaim. The sacramental life, which is the Church, is our pledge of the world to come which gives validity to the revolution.

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