

know what will happen. Even if we did, the best thing most of us could do would be what St Aloysius is reputed to have said he would do if about to die shortly: carry on as before. If we are doing our best to make a good job of our vocation that is all we can do. And assuming that the cataclysm is somewhat delayed, the best hope of averting it permanently surely lies in bringing up a generation of sane and responsible men and women who will be prepared to take their places as Christians in national and world politics, industry, welfare, or education, as their abilities and talents allow.

The Scapegoat and the Underdog

JOHN FOSTER

A FEELING FOR SIN

In comparing the very vivid sense the Israelites of the Old Testament had of themselves as the chosen people to the slight feeling modern-day Christians have for themselves as the new people of God, it is interesting to notice that a powerful symbol (that of the scapegoat), integral to the Jewish law of holiness, has been reproduced in the Christian way of life with a much less valid one (that of the underdog).

In the book of Leviticus (16. 2-28) one can read how, before the high priest entered the Holy of Holies each year, two buck goats were presented to him, one of which was not killed but symbolically, through a laying-on of hands, invested with the sins of the people; then led away by a man appointed for the purpose to an uninhabited place in the wilderness, there to be let loose or pushed over the rocks from the top of a mountain. Only after the exit of the scapegoat did the high priest enter the Holy of Holies: and when the man who had led the goat away returned, he like the priest was ceremonially washed. A similar symbolic rite, this time concerning the purification of the leper, is described elsewhere in the book (Lev. 14. 1-32). If anyone suffering from leprosy is cured, he is only readmitted to the community after a purification ceremony during which one of two 'clean' live birds is dipped into a mixture of spring water and the blood of the

other bird, and then set free.

It is sometimes beneficial in our guilt-ridden age to examine the background of the levitical ritual and its great concern with what was clean and what was unclean. Christ, as we know, told his followers that he had not come to destroy the law of Moses but to fulfil it. In replacing the symbol of the scapegoat with that of the underdog, have we modern Christians lost something of irrevocable value? Not entirely, one feels; but a sensitivity to the reality of sin (which is no morbid feeling) can become dim and vague if the Jewish symbolism of the scapegoat does not find its fulfilment in authentic Christian thought and feeling.

The Jewish people were sustained by two thoughts: first, that they were a specially favoured people, God's chosen possession above all people; secondly, that they must keep his words and laws, and be holy and a kingdom of priests. To nourish and preserve these beliefs, they lived always under the shadow of the levitical law of holiness, offering holocausts each morning and evening, peace-offerings and sin-offerings at various times in the liturgical year, careful to protect the sanctity of their priests, and endowing their own bodily cleanliness and sanitary prescriptions with a deep religious significance. Their whole external cult was meaningful only in the context of their recognition of God as All-Holiness and universal sovereign, and their own need to expiate their sins and re-establish normal relations with him.

The notion of 'normality' in the relation of the human person with God will be examined later. Here it is introduced to stress that a sense of sin, a feeling for sin, is integral to holiness and spiritual health. That the children of Israel were extremely conscious of the curse of Adam which lay upon the human race and of the separation from God which it brought into the world, is seen in the symbolism of the scapegoat. But this symbolism was also a sign of something even more rooted in their sensibilities. It tells us that they lived in hope of some future salvation and reunion with God. The buck-goat had, in biblical terminology, a 'typical' value in that it foretold the coming of one who would in very fact take the sins of mankind upon himself and be offered up in sacrifice to God for the full remission of sins.

All this is described in the epistle to the Hebrews. The eleventh chapter, a martyrology of heroic examples of faith in the whole mysterious plan of God for mankind, from the primitive age, the patriarchal age, the days of exodus and conquest, to the long period from Judges to Machabees, ends thus: 'one and all gave proof of their

faith, yet they never saw the promise fulfilled; for us, God had something better in store. We were needed, to make the history of their lives complete'. The feel Christians should have for these heroes of the Old Testament is thus defined with the greatest precision. As members of the new people of God, we inherit all the conscious and unconscious religious and vocational sensitivity of the children of Israel, and make it meaningful and fully objective. 'We make the history of their lives complete'. In a very real sense we, each individually, complete the history of the scapegoat.

Perhaps the life story of St Catherine of Siena helps us most to see how this is so. After one of her mystical encounters with Christ, she felt that she was carrying on her shoulders the weight of the whole world's salvation. Her subsequent life suggests that this burden was a fact as well as a feeling. That she was able to carry it steadfastly with 'unwavering confidence rooted in faith and working in charity' is explained, as far as mystery can be explained, in terms of the mystical marriage of hearts which took place at the same time between herself and Christ. 'Give me thy heart as it is, and I will give you mine as it is'.

A genuine sense of sin brings with it a sensitiveness to the divine and all-holy, the habit of true humility and creaturehood, a feeling for the organic and communal, the gift of humour and of seeing and valuing everything in its right proportions. There is both a sense of tragedy, in accepting the fact that humanity is still *in via* or on its way back to normality in God, and a sense of humour, in watching the somersaults man turns in trying to get back to normality through his own unaided efforts. Indeed we rush to raise to his feet a man who has slipped over on a banana skin or to restore equanimity to someone who has lost his temper, but nonetheless we admit to ourselves realistically that man's hold on life at any time, physically and psychologically, is extremely precarious.

A FEELING OF GUILT

Nothing, however, shows the loss of this sense of and feeling for sin in modern Christianity than the sense of guilt which appears to have replaced it, far more than we perhaps realize. Light on this situation comes from examining the new symbolism of the underdog in modern Christianity. A morbid and unhealthy sense of guilt is something entirely different from the sense of sin and all that goes with it. In the first place, it can only come to the surface and dominate where there is nothing but arrogance and a perverted belief in one's own self-

perfectibility. It can only ring the changes on two exclusive notes, those of false optimism and uninspired pessimism, both limiting the person to success or failure in the narrow circle of his own isolated effort, destroying in him both hope and the power to escape from his own self-contemplation.

Thomas Merton identifies the sense of guilt, which masquerades as and usurps the function of the sense of sin, as a loss of faith and of a sense of mystery. This loss of faith involves

a complete loss of all sense of reality. Being means nothing to those who hate and fear what they themselves are. Therefore they cannot have peace in their own reality (which reflects the reality of God). They must struggle to escape their true being, and verify a false existence by constantly viewing what they themselves are. They have to keep looking in the mirror for reassurance. What do they expect to see? Not themselves! They are hoping for some sign that they have become the god they hope to become by means of their own frantic activity—invulnerable, all-powerful, infinitely wise, unbearably beautiful, unable to die! . . .

The activity that was meant to exalt him reproaches and condemns him. It is never real enough. Never active enough. The less he is able to be the more he has to do. He becomes his own slave-driver—a shadow whipping a shadow to death, because it can never produce reality, infinitely insubstantial reality, out of his own non-entity.

Then comes fear. The shadow becomes afraid of the shadow. He who 'is not' becomes terrified at the things he cannot do. Whereas for a while he had illusions of infinite power, miraculous sanctity (which he was able to guess at in the mirror of his virtuous actions), now it is all changed. Tidal waves of nonentity, of powerlessness, of hopelessness surge up within him at every action he attempts. Then the shadow judges and hates the shadow who is not a god, and who can do absolutely nothing. Self-contemplation leads to the most terrible despair: the despair of a god that hates himself to death . . .¹

All life which does not aspire to a complete abandonment in God and a sense of one's own nakedness and powerlessness apart from God, can only continue as an illusion by feeding on illusion. Having turned one's back on reality, one must strive to replace that reality with other illusions. The cult of the underdog in modern Christian as well as secular life is such an illusion. This championship of the underdog (sometimes claimed to be a particular masochism of the English) goes

¹*No Man is an Island* (London, 1955), p. 104.

hand in hand with a strong guilt feeling and a sense of personal inadequacy; it is reassuring to transfer one's own (concealed) failure to the (apparent) inadequacies of others: it is comforting to one's own egoism to believe that one can still imagine oneself as a valuable somebody in the face of others' anonymous nonentity.

The main characteristic of this cult of the underdog is its insincerity. This may not at first be apparent but a longer look discloses all manner of cunning and dishonesty. There is, for example, the arrogant assumption that the hand that feeds the underdog knows exactly what to feed him: the cocksureness of modern 'do-gooders' in knowing what is good for the underdog suffers from no uncertainty, since to admit to uncertainty about his 'good' would be to remove from one's own life the frail scaffolding which sustains one in delusion. Again, there is the desire to perpetuate the status or lack of status of the underdog in order to justify one's own false sense of being god. This enjoyment of the exercise of power is the great vice corrupting charity. We accept a divine gift and with the impertinence of a creature change our divine mode of action into human omniscience and omnipotence.

A second characteristic of the cult is mediocrity and incompetence. This is unavoidable, granted that the image of the underdog has suffered diminution and denigration by deposing it from its 'norm' in God to its 'norm' in the mind of fallen man. Today we still hear such phrases as the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor, which originated not in authentic Christian thought and action but in the sociological class-stratification of the nineteenth century. How often, too, are good Christians shocked when it is suggested that the ideal for the underdog should be no less than two motor-cars in the garage and a television set in every room. Of course, the suggestion is made to make the point that nothing is too much or too good for the human person made to the image and likeness of God.

Today as the essential mystery of Christianity begins to depose the present desire to lord it over others, a close examination of the way Christian charity is envisaged and exercised needs to be inaugurated. How far has it adopted the low standards of middle-class non-entity and mediocrity; how deep has its stultification gone in our de-vitalized commercial, competitive culture? As Christians, do we still queue, as in Victorian times, outside the hospital wards at Christmas time with our carol recitals: or make up parcels for the old folk to give them an extra treat on Christmas Day: or send our worn clothing to welfare societies: or put a coin in a collecting box for children's charities? In

other words are our Christian feelings for the widowed, the fatherless, the hungry, the naked, the thirsty, the imprisoned, a measure of the social necessities of the times or a measure of the 'norm' of human value in the mind of God?

The cult of the scapegoat was a living sign of human solidarity and organic community: that of the underdog is one of social and spiritual disintegration and fragmentation. What the symbol of the underdog implies is that today we have lost, sometimes it seems irretrievably, a sense of the organic and a feeling for the community. Human differentiation, the material from which the true community of persons is built, no longer is cultivated and nourished, merely exploited, for political or economic ends. Our sense of guilt will not allow us to encourage human originality in its rich and highly-variegated pattern: only to discover and invent all manner of professional qualifications and expertise to avoid the risk of developing personal qualities. What we see in the mirror of self-contemplation forces us to adopt all manner of poses and guises to mask the naked reality.

The masks we invent, to hide from our true selves as organic members of a community, invest us with a pseudo-individuality. We continue to count in running an organisation or working a lifeless social machine. Behind our professional masks we hear the echo of emptiness and are comforted by the distorted noise. So long as we can maintain our standing on a social ladder which leads nowhere and to nothingness, the illusion that we 'are' surrounds us with the miasma of solidity and security.

Modernity, said Romano Guardini, with its vital social and caritative sense, has tried to define the Lord as the great philanthropist, the friend of mankind who saw and helped its sufferings wherever possible. But modernity is over-simplifying.² It is over-simplifying, not only the mission of Christ, but also the nature of the human person. This is perfectly logical when the 'norm' of human life as it exists in the mind of God is demoted by the Christian and philanthropist to fit the measured standards of human rationalisation. Mystery is never easy to live with, not least the mystery of the human person. It is much more convenient to replace the infinite standards of God by one's own finite measurements when it comes to a matter of loving one another, even the underdog. It calls for less reverence and respect of the human person: demands less in the way of care and competence: dispenses one from facing the greater challenge of existing in a divine mode of existence, in order to rest complacent and smug in a merely human one.

²The Lord (London, 1956), p. 50.

The symbolism of the scapegoat in the Old Testament made no claims, like the modern symbolism of the underdog and down-trodden, to usurp the power of God and bring it down to our finite standards of mediocrity. It was, therefore, all the more capable of witnessing to the mystery of man's 'norm' and eventual restoration to God. Psychologically re-adjusted by such a symbol, one can re-discover Christ as more than a great figure of charity with a boundless heart and tremendous capacity for service: as more than a social reformer fighting for a juster redistribution of wealth. We can realize that for Christ the human problem of suffering is quite a different one. He sees the mystery of it much more profoundly, deep at the root of human existence, and inseparable from sin and estrangement from God. He knows it to be the door in the soul that leads to God, or that at least can lead to him; result of sin but also means of purification and return.

The divine pity and compassion for mankind encompasses the *whole* man and the whole of humanity: no categorizing here or classification: no shepherding of human beings into compartments for the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor, the 'teenager' problem, the 'teddy-boy' fraternity, the juvenile delinquent, the unmarried mother, the old people, and so on, as though certain groups of individuals had failed society and must needs be rehabilitated so that society can sleep with an easy conscience. The power of Christ is exercised at a level deeper than that at which the human mind and heart presume to act: at the very heart of the divine mystery which the human person is, by reason of his creaturehood and divine destiny.

Our romantic idealization of the down-trodden ('the fallacy of super-civilized and degenerate ages') fails, where the symbol of the scapegoat scores. Indeed Christ tells us we shall be judged on how we have fed the hungry and clothed the naked, but it is oversimplifying his word if we translate it into the language of the social reformer and philanthropist, and divorce it from the context of the divine origin and destiny of the human person. 'Insofar as you did this to the least of my brethren, you did it unto me'. We must feed the hungry and give drink to the thirsty, but we must also be aware of the person we are serving, for it is one whom Christ has identified as himself. To serve the naked, the hungry, the prisoner, the fatherless, the widowed, as Christians should serve them, means loving them with *all* our heart, with *all* our strength, with *all* our mind, with *all* our soul: indeed with our *whole* selfhood, and with the whole power and knowledge of Christ whose knowledge, feeling and vision we share.

A FEELING FOR THE ORGANIC

The feast of charity which the Christian community has been ordained to inaugurate in contemporary society through every age, and the service which it must give to humanity, if humanity is to be restored to unity with God, imposes on each member of the community the grave obligation of 'listening-in' to the heart of modern man. And this with the ear of God himself. If today this task seems beyond us, and left undone, it must surely be because some obstacle is getting in the way of the proper direction of Christian service and love. Identify this obstacle to the development of a proper human response to human solidarity, and the first stone has been prepared for the Christian reality of tomorrow.

A true feeling for the *organic* universality of mankind fails to grow in the contemporary Christian because the scope and depth of this organic unity has suffered a spiritual arrest in modern society. With the evolution of highly-organized society, the individual has been forced to take refuge in what has been described as the bastion of civilized living, the family. Today, at least in Catholic circles, the family is made the totem pole or central point of Christian adulation. Everything would be all right, we are told, if parents were more responsible and enlightened: stood fast on the moral principles forbidding birth prevention and divorce; and so on. The unit of the family is seen as the hope of civilized man, but almost always as an isolated unit in society, scarcely ever in community.

But in reality, we find that the family does not exist in isolation in our organized, planned society. From the first moment of its existence, it depends for its survival on the organized life of the society in which it is constituted. The breadwinner will continue to support his family only with the assistance of those organizations and societies which have come into existence in modern social living to protect the rights of workers, of citizens, of families. The preserver of family life (the wife and mother) will be dependent on other social groupings and institutions which have also been formed in modern society to prevent famine, disease, destruction. The children of the family, in their turn, will also have to accept the conditions laid down by a planned society for their education. One can bemoan the lost sense of community in this, but it would be senseless to attempt its re-discovery outside the context of modern-day living. Granted the fact that the social organism no longer exists in contemporary civilized life, one also has to grant that its non-existence is due, in the last analysis, to its failure to adapt itself

and measure up to the demands of love that organized social life makes upon it. Social organization, by rights, complements the social organism. The organized structure of society is devised by man to safeguard and preserve the inner organic life of person and community. If today it has become promiscuous and runs wild, it must be due to the fact that modern man has failed to discover those deeper organic needs which direct the path that organized life takes, if it is to serve the highest needs of the person, the origin and end of society.

Modern social organization today certainly serves some of the needs of the individual but it fails him in others. Thus Pius XII could, where modern woman is concerned, praise the many concessions which have been granted to her in the political and economic spheres over the last hundred years, yet deny that these had promoted the development of her essential womanliness. By rights these concessions should have enriched the basic feminine qualities of woman, and enabled her to create a deeper and richer organic unity between herself and modern man. Experience shows us that they tend to highlight even more clearly the fundamental conflict between the sexes which is part of the condition of fallen human nature. It is as though our modern secularized, self-redemptive world had decided to ignore the reality of sin and resultant discord between the sexes, and to attempt a new synthesis based on its own illusions about the nature of man and woman.

Though the Christian can put before the modern secularized mind a picture of the catastrophic change which came about in the feelings of the two sexes towards one another at the moment of the fall from grace, as yet he has not been able to work out a new organic unity between them which measures up to their new situation in an organized society. So he can talk about the indissolubility of the marriage contract, of the way the man and woman complement one another's persons on every level of personal life (physical, psychological and spiritual), but he has still to work out how this is possible of fulfilment in a situation into which new elements have entered, throwing down new challenges to the duality of man and woman.

What, for example, calls for change in the relationship between husband and wife in circumstances where the wife's political and economic status has undergone great improvement: how does the modern husband adapt his role as husband to a wife who since puberty has been trained and educated to become financially independent of her parents, encouraged to aspire to a responsible position in the government of the country as a citizen of a democratic society, etc.? As yet we do not know

what type of Christian marriage and family answers best the needs of the person living in modern society. All the Christian instruction and doctrine in the world can do no more than preserve the ideal. When it comes to the more important work of translating the ideal into reality, Christian faith ceases to be an intellectual concept, and changes into a creative treatment of actuality. Creativity becomes, in the last analysis, the proof of Christian faith.

This creativity of the person living in the modern world finds its greatest challenge in searching out and actualizing the possibilities for a deeper organic unity in personal, family and communal life. Its determining note is its missionary quality. In the first place it does not seek to act outside the circumstances of time and place but desires to understand the human situation in depth, seeking out the right opportunities and occasions for changing the direction of human life where it has gone astray, and identifying the real obstacle to maturation present in the situation.

So T. S. Eliot in speaking of the family as the primary channel of culture will point out how 'what is held up for admiration (today) is not devotion to a family, but personal affection between the members of it: and the smaller the family, the more easily can this personal affection be sentimentalized'. Even among Christians, the concept of the family does not go much beyond the needs of those who constitute it at the moment. 'A piety towards the dead (however obscure) and a solicitude for the unborn (however remote)' is not usually cultivated in the modern family. 'Unless this reverence for past and future is cultivated in the home', he continues, 'the family can never be more than a verbal convention in the community. Such an interest in the past is different from the vanities and pretensions of genealogy; such a responsibility for the future is different from that of a builder of social programmes.'³ Here Eliot pinpoints one of the more subtle distortions which have crept into the natural institution of the family today, changing the direction of its proper organic growth and maturity. A study of city life would no doubt show how the urge to satisfy but momentary needs in personal and family life springs from the situation of industrial urban society. There are therefore obstacles in such a way of life prohibiting growth, but obstacles which once surmounted would be seen in retrospect as so many new opportunities for a richer, more evolved organic life.

Taking as a stepping-stone towards a reappraisal of modern society

³*Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot* (Penguin Edn, London, 1953), p. 251.

(that form of social life in which people find the means of winning through to their highest aspirations), the modern regard and concern for 'social tidiness', it can be seen, we think, that where the rich life of a society of people is concentrated on nothing more inspiring and dynamic than hygiene and regimentation, they have surrendered their rights and duties as persons living in *community*. A mechanical, standardized order, the rationalized system of the factory or office, is reproduced in the order of the living and the organic, in order to relieve them of the bother of living organically.

It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the people of our times still adhere to the ritual of uncleanness of the chosen people of God, but in a new debased form. Inner cleanliness becomes defined not in terms of holiness and the organic relationships existing between members of a living worshipping community, but in those of laxatives, pills to cancel out odours, and soap. The good and the true and the beautiful become dependent on shampoos and hair oil. Detergents produce the whiteness which enables one side of the garden fence to feel equal or superior to the other. 'Inner cleanliness' and its cult succeeds not only in changing human and divine standards of morality: it also destroys modern man's moral fibre. There is a moral problem to solve but there is also a psychological. A people so intent on 'social tidiness' and 'inner cleanliness' have not only parted company with the sources of human morality: they have also become psychologically unhealthy.

It would, however, be oversimplifying the present situation to equate the modern sense of guilt with merely such obsessions as 'social tidiness' and hygiene. Scientific humanism is more ambitious than this. According to its evolutionary ethics, the present 'global unification of human awareness' in matters of 'social tidiness' and hygiene (with its elaborate organization) will inevitably lead to a progressively more conscious mind. Modern man will not always be content with dual carriage-ways, electric washing-machines, and dry-cleaning. 'Mankind as a whole will achieve more intense, more complex, and more integrated mental activity, which can guide the human species up the path of progress to higher levels of hominization'.⁴

A SENSE OF HISTORY

In fact the occupational risk Christians always face of 'sitting in judgement' on a world out of true will not take us very far in coming

⁴cf. Introduction by Sir Julian Huxley to *The Phenomenon of Man* by Teilhard de Chardin (London, 1960).

to a true value-judgement of the contemporary situation, unless we admit that our present civilized barbarity or abnormality is not an end-state, but only the beginning of a new human condition which will demand a much greater 'resistance of liberty' on the part of Christians than usually contemplated. To be avoided at all costs is that kind of consolidation on the part of Christians which loses them contact with the missionary situation. The rise of scientific humanism in our times has created a new missionary situation for the Church. Though the rapidity of this rise has to some extent taken the initiative from her, and placed it in the hands of the new missionary social engineers, the fact that of late the Church has also come to see more clearly her own missionary action in terms of an organic collaboration with the new scientific mode of human work, has done much to cure her members of a former lack of feeling for the created world, and exorcised the latent gnosticism of the past century, which eliminated the dimension of history in Christianity and its incarnational rôle.

The importance of history in Christianity is slowly being re-discovered. For any Christian to continue to bear witness to and create mystery in the contemporary situation, it is essential that he has both a feel for human history, and knows precisely what its significance to Christianity is. The chosen people of the Old Testament had such a sense of history. They knew themselves to be involved as a people in the continual history of the world. They felt that they had a missionary rôle, as a people, in its evolution. Nothing happened around them in the histories of other peoples which was irrelevant to this rôle. Whatever happened had to be interpreted in its light.

Their missionary rôle in essence was to bear witness in profane history to certain events which had taken place. These events were the interventions of God. God, as the Lord of history, had entered profane history: through the divine intervention, profane history entered sacred history. This collaboration of God with human history showed above all else that profane history was not a meaningless succession of events or a heterogeneous sequence of civilizations. It had an inner coherence and organic unity of its own. It developed according to some inner principle of unity and growth: and this ordered pattern of development corresponded to the ordered pattern of sacred history. Underlying all human history was the story of the Lord of history. Whatever happened, happened for a purpose, and this purpose closely followed the divine purpose for mankind.

With a return to the mentality of the Bible, Christians today are able

to take part in the history of their times with a new sense of mission. They are again able to see that what is happening in our scientific, technological civilization has an affinity with the eternal plan of God for mankind. The essence of their mission is to discover this correspondence. Only in discovering this are they able to understand what God's will for mankind is in our times..

The dialogue with time which the Christian inherits at the moment of birth, when he becomes heir to a million human ties and relationships, is at root the source and nourishment of his feeling of solidarity for the human community. The symbol of the scapegoat, when it successfully enters the Christian dispensation, becomes the fact of the holocaust, the holocaust of peace which every member of the social body of Christ becomes for the life of humanity. This deep Christian feeling, which Leon Bloy expresses so well when he writes: 'The efficacy of the divine blood is such that a single true act of charity, however imperceptible it may be, can in the divine scales of divine justice balance thousands of crimes', is vital today if the contemporary crisis of unification through which the world is passing is to be resolved satisfactorily for humanity.

As Conrad Weiss writes: 'The will, which today is growing even greater, to create a condition that shall hold within it an exemplarily complete essence of humanity and an enduring peace, is burdened by the heavy paradox that it is not humanity which is the goal of the Incarnation'. Every human interpretation of history (and today the interest in a philosophy of history is in the ascendant) suffers from the disadvantage that it is enclosed by history and by its belief in the self-determination of human history. The advantage of the Christian interpretation is that it takes the top off a self-enclosed view of world history and lets in the light of God. The Christian interpretation of history goes beyond history and affirms that history will never make sense unless seen from a standpoint beyond itself. 'A view of history', writes Professor Jeffreys, 'that goes beyond history is that it can make sense of the failure of history instead of seeing it as unintelligible frustration'.⁵

The feeling of the Christian for human history goes, of course, far beyond this. With his intuition and vision, he can come to appreciate apocalyptically the coming of the Lord of this world and the dominion of anti-Christ. He will prepare himself for the blood-testimony of the end of time. Much more could be said on the relevance of the Christian witness to his times and the times to come. What we hope to have

⁵*Glaucon* (London 1957), p. 127.

shown, however, is that being a Christian at any time calls for deep feelings for the whole of humanity and for the whole of history. Nothing is so liable to destroy this strong sense of the organic and the community than those evasive tactics which would replace the notion of holocaust with that of helping the underdog.

Writing about Prayer

GILES HIBBERT, O.P.

It is generally admitted that far too many modern books on prayer and the spiritual life are of little value. Such books often enough claim to belong to the tradition of the Church, depending upon and being continuous with the great figures of the past such as St Bernard and St John of the Cross, but in fact this dependence is merely superficial, there being a fundamental break in a process of transmission which must be essentially organic, with its roots in the past and its *life* in the present—that surely is the significance of tradition.

To claim that our thought about the nature of prayer should be up to date is not to claim that it should dissociate itself from the past—far from it. The very nature of Christian speculation is that it must give full value to and appreciate the language and thought-form in which the Church has given expression to her consciousness of the life of Christ within her throughout her history, and particularly as witnessed to by the great patristic figures and doctors of the Church. Any 'spiritual' writing which does not take cognisance of, or indeed is not dependent—whether explicitly, even whether consciously, or not—upon Saints Augustine, Gregory, Bernard, Thomas Aquinas, John of the Cross, François de Sales, not to mention the Greek Fathers of the early Church will inevitably be 'private' and therefore only by accident capable of helping the faithful in their life of prayer in the Church.

All this is straightforward, but there is another aspect which is more important. This can be summed up by saying that the spiritual life, and therefore prayer *par excellence*, is concerned with the meeting and dwelling together of God and man, and it is in this reality that lies the