

important difference between mortification or appropriation of death in this life and after death; that mortification is a voluntary anticipation of death performed for the love of God and thereby nourishing the love of God in our hearts, whereas purgatory is a matter of having to accept what is happening, and is therefore not itself meritorious.

I put forward this view of purgatory merely for discussion. It has, no doubt, serious weaknesses and at least one obvious gap. I have said nothing about what is after all the actual basis for the doctrine of purgatory: that the Church does in fact pray for the dead. The fact that we can bear one another's burdens in this way is surely an important clue to the nature of the Church. But these matters, together with the important doctrine of Indulgences, which Catholics in our time are in some danger of disregarding or even discounting, and which need re-emphasis and perhaps restatement, must be dealt with on another occasion.

Liturgy and Culture¹

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It may be worthwhile in conclusion to recapitulate briefly my main train of thought. Because the Church is a human society directly gathered together by God, and since the liturgical assembly is what makes this society encounterable in the world, it follows that we must take the liturgical assembly as the prototype, or model, for any human organization which is to approximate itself to Christian ideals. For a Christian, the society brought into organic community by God must take precedence over any purely human and secular model. But what has tended in the past to obscure this insight has been the monolithic and institutional appearance of the Church. This mistake rested upon an almost universal assumption that this administrative organization was the essential Church: and that the gathered community of the

¹The concluding chapter of a book with this title, to be published shortly in the Sheed and Ward *Owlbook* series.

liturgy was merely the public and official expression in worship of this institution. Once it is realized that the hierarchical structure, the power system and the authority exist for the liturgical community, and depend on it for their *raison d'être*, the entire problem is seen in a new light. Now the task of the Christian is not to be an apologist for the institution, but to seek to mediate to the world the truths and values enshrined in the liturgy itself.

How is this task of mediation to be carried out? Clearly it is not enough simply to open the Church doors, so to speak, in order to make visible to the outside world what goes on inside: for the primary problem is to make the liturgical actions intelligible, both to those outside and to those within. What is needed first of all, therefore, is a deeper realization by those within the community of the faithful of the meaning of what they already do: and especially of the cultural dimension of the liturgy. The liturgical actions are not novelties parachuted down to us from heaven in a kind of divine rescue operation: they are human and sacramental actions lying within a long historical and cultural tradition, and constituting its fulfilment. That is to say, they are part of our culture in the modern sense: they are central to our 'whole way of life', and give depth and meaning to all our other 'cultural activities'. But they are also cultural in an older sense: expressions of a worshipping cult, with all that this implies in terms of a religious view of man, and his place in the world, and the significance of his most profound and universal aspirations.

There is a danger, however, in seeing the liturgy in this kind of cultural setting: namely, that of interpreting it in the light of a commonly held (and widely encouraged) idea that culture is something which only the cultivated élite can afford to go in for. Only they have the time and money to acquire the taste for poetry, classical music, wine and cheese parties and all the other manifestations of 'culture'. It has been one merit of writers as different as T. S. Eliot and Raymond Williams to insist that this is a superficial notion of culture. But while we must applaud their emphasis on the idea of culture as the heritage and activity of the entire community, the problem still remains of how the liturgy, which is the cultural inheritance of the whole community of the faithful, can be effectively manifested to the world at large, and seen for what it is.

In the nature of the case, this cannot be the work of theologians, artists or liturgical scholars alone: for they are inevitably associated with the élite cultural minority. It must necessarily become the task of the

community of the faithful as a whole. Unless this happens, or until it happens, the value and purpose of the liturgy, not to mention its sacred power, will inevitably be misunderstood as applying only to a minority taste. This is why the first task must be the education and cultural development of the faithful themselves. In fact this is the *whole* of the problem: for as soon as the community of the faithful becomes aware of itself and its own deepest centre in the liturgy—that is, truly aware that it is the historic people of God now incorporated into, and constituting in the world, Christ himself—it will begin to acknowledge its apostolic task of bearing the burden of salvation history for its own epoch, and so presenting to the world the fundamental message of the gospel. The community must become what essentially it already is.

So far my argument would probably be accepted, even if not in quite these terms, by the majority of Catholics who are aware of the problem and its responsibilities for themselves. But it is when the educational task itself is discussed that this unanimity is likely to disappear. In the last few decades, since the rise of the modern lay apostolate, the educational task has been largely formulated, by Catholics reared in an atmosphere of text-book scholasticism, in terms of 'doctrinal formation' issuing in 'social action'. What in practice is meant by this kind of formulation is something analogous to the learning of (say) pure mathematics and the subsequent extension of the results gained into the realm of applied mathematics, or mechanics. The 'doctrinal formation' is the absorption of religious theorems, and 'action' consists in judging how they apply to the practical problem in hand and acting on this judgment. I have tried to indicate, in the course of this book, some of the many mistakes inherent in this way of looking at the problem. Here I want to reiterate two only. The first is that it takes little or no account of the historical dimension of Christianity. That is to say, while it recognizes that Christianity is a 'historical religion', this is taken to mean only that it originated from a series of events in the past; not that the Christian here and now is the bearer of salvation history in his own person. While it speaks to me of tradition as a source of doctrine, it implies that this tradition is something external to myself. It gives me no sense of myself belonging to the tradition (except perhaps in the sense that it insists that I mustn't 'let the side down' or sully the glories of its past reputation). It tells me that my mission is to proclaim the achievements of a tradition which is past, but it does not demand first of all that I should prepare myself to contribute actively to its development in the present and the future. Tradition is something presented to

me as a free gift, which I am to cherish and preserve unchanged: it is not regarded as something I inherit by right, as an heir, which I am to make use of according to my own conscience—a conscience formed by my own position in the tradition itself.

Secondly, this model is more likely to produce willing agents than to create new sources (to use the terminology of Raymond Williams). It may be very apt for the training of people like Mr Bitzer (in *Hard Times*) who could produce by rote the notional definition of a horse, and use it to manipulate people to his own advantage: but it cannot provide the rich cultural milieu in which people like Sissy Jupe are bred—that is, people who possess within their own souls a real apprehension of the object, and can thereby transmit the results of their own wisdom and integrity to others. Because the tradition is conceived of as something external, to be imposed mechanically in the form of information, rather than as something which is within me, and is made incarnate there in order to be nourished by my own life, I am unable to present the contents of this tradition—the doctrine itself—to others through the medium of my own personality. All I am trained to do is to reflect back upon the world the harsh glare of a light which has shone upon me from above but has found no means of penetrating the core of my being. It is at this point that the role of literature and art seems to me to be crucial. Every person's experience is mediated by his own characteristic personality, which is the product of his past experience, and of the cultural tradition which lies behind and around him on every side. Experience can never consist of the bare reception of undifferentiated data from the outside world (as the classical epistemologists tended to think). It is inescapably given direction and colour and meaning by the very process of being assimilated through the network of human achievements and values which stand between me, the isolated individual, and the world around me. Thus, falling in love is a different kind of experience for a West European, with the whole romance tradition behind him (however diluted or debased it may be) from what it is for a Hindu or an Aztec. For the former, human sexuality will no doubt seem to be a central ineluctable fact of human experience: yet anthropologically speaking it may be that 'the traditional differentiations of the sexes are largely social and conventional'.² But it would be wrong to think that we have here a dilemma: either to accept the one interpretation or the other. For the social and con-

²cf. Graham Hough, summarizing the thesis of Margaret Mead in *The Dark Sun* (Pelican Books 1961) p. 269.

ventional tradition is no more escapable than the biological foundation. To suppose otherwise is to imagine that the social habits and modes of thought which make up a particular cultural tradition are a kind of spectacles through which we assimilate experience, but which we can take off, when we are properly trained, and see the world as it really is, 'scientifically'. The cultural tradition is, on the contrary, like the physicist's measuring apparatus in sub-atomic physics: however we try to see the particles of experience, the viewing instrument necessarily gets in the way, and modifies the situation it reveals.

Now a crucial rôle in the formation of a culture, and especially in the colouring of our experience and the crystallization of the meanings available from it, is played by works of verbal art. This is because language itself is the primary instrument for the handling of experience. The making of a verbal structure is thus the most basic activity of *homo faber*. But language is not only the first such instrument: it is also the medium of our most explicit responses to experience, the most universal and subtle mode for giving meaning to it. In the worlds created by the literary artist, from the primitive oral recitation to the latest novel, we are offered the richest and most comprehensive interpretations of the world which are available to us. By this I do not mean that literature is more important than, or a substitute for, science or philosophy: but I do mean that it is more directly linked with, and grows more immediately out of, the primary experiences which mark us off as human and self-conscious beings. For a person wishing to deepen his understanding of himself and the tradition which shapes his most basic human experiences, to enter into and explore these dramatic worlds created by the verbal artist is of crucial educational importance. This is 'why the novel matters'. But as Lawrence rightly pointed out in the essay of which that is the title, 'the Bible is a great confused novel'. If the dramatic worlds of literature are essential material for the understanding of the real world around us, then the drama of salvation history—which is the Bible—is the first essential material for a Christian understanding. But this is not simply a recommendation to Bible Study, important though that is: it implies the deeper recognition that the Bible is a *liturgical* literature. That is to say, it creates for us not only a dramatic world which we enter into, figuratively, by reading it or hearing it read: but, more importantly, a real world attainable only by a real entry. But of course there is only one real world: namely the familiar one we are all in. What the Bible, the liturgical drama, does for us is to take us into a dramatic world, and then to bring us out again

at the other side into the real world now transfigured by God's revelation.³ But it is impossible to appreciate this fact without appreciating the kind of entry which the merely human dramatists demand of us. If we cannot read them aright, the Biblical drama will necessarily escape us.

The liturgy is the acting out of the Biblical drama: but this acting out is nothing other than the reading of the Bible and the pursuit in action of what has been understood dramatically. The stage swallows up the auditorium so that we are all gathered up into the world created by the dramatist, who is God. The world and the liturgical sanctuary are now one. This process by which drama is transcended until it becomes reality can only be understood by those who are able to enter into the worlds which are offered to them in the literature and culture of their tradition. This is why the best form of education for the community of the faithful is one in which the ability to understand and assimilate critically the experiences offered by literature is actively fostered. Now it is true that, at an elementary level, everyone can understand and enjoy a story or a play or a film. The thing in itself is not recondite or difficult. But what characterizes the greatest works is the depth and complexity of the world they portray, and the subtlety of response they require. The Biblical drama, while it is simple, and even primitive in technique, is nevertheless complex and subtle in detail. If my argument is sound, it cannot be denied that, in claiming universality of appeal and relevance to the entire human race, Christianity is committed to the belief that everybody is capable of responding in some measure to this complexity. To say otherwise would be to deny the catholicity of the faith. While this faith does not demand a high degree of formal education, the minimal understanding that is required does entail a certain sensitivity of response and play of imagination which can only come (humanly speaking) from a strong cultural tradition. That is why a Christian is committed to the possibility of a common culture which is rich enough to provide the kind of experiences we need to nourish these responses: and to say that is to say a good deal in the contemporary context. Not only can an exclusive diet of mass triviality not provide it: neither can a diet of Catechism answers and apologetic tracts.

There are, I believe, two main obstacles to the achievement of the educational task I have described. The first is that most people, including Catholics, refuse to believe that it is possible (even if they think it

³cf. the article on *Theology and Disbelief*, LIFE OF THE SPIRIT, Oct. 1962.

desirable). The second is that they refuse to will the means which are required. As to the first, it is no doubt true that the ideal I am putting forward is a demanding one: but it is also true that the limits upon any person's cultural awareness are primarily educational and environmental. Even if intelligence as expressed by an I.Q. is a fixed and unalterable function of every person (which is very doubtful) qualities such as 'creativity' are not necessarily associated with it, and may even be opposed to it.⁴ The belief in the impossibility of more than a small minority ever being able to appreciate Shakespeare or Dostoevsky is a belief in the unalterability of a cultural situation which is in fact constantly changing. While the cultural situation governs the experience of everyone who is within it this does not mean that we have no control over it or are incapable of steering it in a definite direction. A uniformity of interests and culture is neither possible nor desirable: but what is possible is a far greater spread of high standards of awareness and criticism if only the will to achieve them is present.

But the obstacles to this achievement are nevertheless formidable. They are not just mechanical obstacles such as lack of money or accommodation. Behind these lie the human (and therefore highly intractable) problems: opposition to the very idea of a 'common culture' and to the social and political changes which would be necessary in order to make it feasible; and the problem of reconciling the latter in practice with individual freedom and minority rights. It is here, all the same, that the immediate problems arise: and it is also at this point that the cultural and educational demands merge with the political and social demands, so that in practice they cannot be separated. A critique of modern capitalist culture necessarily involves a critique of modern capitalism itself. Much Christian energy is wasted here, in trying to keep separate, not just in theory but in day-to-day practical affairs, things which can only go together. You cannot object, from a religious and moral standpoint, to the sex-exploitation or the racial injustice or the commercial philistinism without also attacking at the same time the social exploitation and the economic injustice and the political cynicism. If you try to keep them apart, attacking with full force the one without making the other a part of a single campaign, the result is that you become simply an irrelevancy: someone who seems obsessed by a narrow, legalistic or morbid side-issue, and who is too tired or cynical to embrace a larger hope. This is not to say that all

⁴cf. the work of Dr Liam Hudson, of Cambridge, reported on in the *Observer* of 11th Nov. 1962.

issues should be merged in one great surge of rage and indiscriminate resentment. It is to face the fact that problems of morals and culture, at the practical level, shade off into problems of sociology and politics. It is not to confuse moral with political issues: but simply to put morals back into a political world from which they have been largely banished.

It is the significance of the New Left in Britain to have seen this, and to have combined a scholarly analysis of the social complexities with a radical and morally serious purpose. But, as Professor Cameron has pointed out, the weakness of the New Left is that these concerns have not been adequately supported by a convincing philosophy of man. They have no coherent answer to the question 'What is it for man to live well, both as an individual moral agent and as a social and political animal?'⁵ The purpose of this book will have been fully achieved if it has even begun the task of showing how a Christianity which is grounded on a theological consideration of God's revelation throughout history of his purpose for man, and not just upon an abstract 'Christian philosophy', might provide the answer which the Left, with all its moral seriousness, still lacks—to the detriment not only of its own adherents, but to society generally: for it is in constructive criticism from that quarter that our hopes for a Christian society lie.

⁵cf. J. M. Cameron, *The Night Battle* (London 1962), p. 66.

Congregation or Aggregation?

MONICA LAWLOR

In the collective worship of the Church we have the most profound expression of the life of the Christian community—it is easy to say this but much less easy to feel or observe it. It is widely acknowledged that there has been a drift away from any social significance in, for example, the mass. It is seen as an obligation, a slot machine service for the individual, a collective but hardly communal form of worship. Many people who are aware of this deplore such a state of affairs; others feel that this is the way it should be, it is efficient and suitably formal; still