

has checked tendencies towards the cult of personality which have showed themselves, which, holding the world well lost for love, would exalt the solace and enrichment of a couple together by detaching them from the living flow of racial processes, and would suggest that a baby was a stranger to their personal values, or that 'companionship' could be independent of the family.

Finally it should be remarked that the formal witness of the Church is more concerned with conditions than with occurrences. It allows for the mistakes we make, not least in the field of sex, where nature itself does not work tidily. Unfortunate incidents, however numerous, can be left to the robust conscience and ready contrition of the faithful. What the Church cannot do is to remain silent when what is wrong is proclaimed not to be wrong. Then an erroneous morality settles on us and from excusing ourselves we present come to believe that we have no guilt. In this respect acts can be good or bad, but habits are better or worse, for what we do is not so profound as what we are. Sins are a difficulty, vices a problem. Consequently the Church takes its stand, not against persons but against the causes that may carry them away, and its condemnation is not of the goings on of individuals but of a settled contraceptive attitude.

PERSONAE

6. Victor White, O.P.

(† May 22, 1960)

D*EUM et animam scire cupio*: St Augustine, it will be admitted, had the right to say this, and those who knew Father Victor can have no doubt that he too, in his measure, could have made the same astonishing claim; though they cannot possibly imagine him ever making it. His modesty, his ultra-English intellectual shyness, was almost excessive; such was his aversion to putting on airs that to get him to talk about any of the deep matters that his mind habitually dwelt on was like trying to capture a squirrel. He dodged and dived away. Yet he was, undoubtedly, a master in Israel, with a very strong sense of the responsibilities of a *magister sacrae paginae*. And he knew his own mind. If he was absent-minded, if he often seemed to be moving about in a prolonged and, to the observer, quite comical daydream, you had only to hear him addressing a class or to read a page of his writings to realize that his judgment, though scholarly and subtle, was perfectly definite and that he infinitely preferred the plainest of downright statements to anything like hinting or ironical obliqueness. Irony indeed is one of the things that his prose lacks. It is unalterably serious; every

phrase is forthright, and, when he hesitates, this too is expressed unambiguously. It was to be expected that he should sometimes hesitate, for he was a theological explorer, a breaker of new ground—whether in dialogue with Protestant theologians, as in so much of his *God the Unknown*, or in that prolonged raid into Jungian territory, which drew more public attention and whose chief fruits are *God and the Unconscious* and *Soul and Psyche*.

Father Victor's interest in Jungian psychology, which seems to have begun seriously during the war, was certainly an important factor in contemporary English theology, though there may be some disagreement over the intrinsic value of his own contributions to the problems which this interest raised for him. He brought to the matter three great, and rare, advantages: a thorough grounding in the theology of Aquinas ('my master St Thomas', he said, and he meant it); a scholar's acquaintance with the psychological literature; and an ardent, even passionate, personal interest. If one may venture to suggest a lack in his equipment, it was perhaps on the philosophical side. He may sometimes give the impression of not standing at sufficient critical 'distance' from his argument, of not giving full play to objective logical analysis. Yet, when he gave us so much, when he led us so far, it seems ungenerous to stress the deficiencies, if such they were, of this part of his work. Acutely—even excessively—conscious himself of his difficulties and limitations, no doubt his modesty played a large part in attracting to him (and through him to St Thomas, and dare we say, to his greater Master also?) religious thinkers and psychologists outside the Catholic fold, who had never before, perhaps, conceived the possibility of collaborating with a Catholic theologian in the search for truth. To such as these Father Victor spoke with the authority of a great tradition faithfully and intelligently interpreted. With all his width of interest, he was a theologian first and last; and his best work is his most theological work, both in the psychological field and in that of his encounters with contemporary Protestantism. Two splendid examples come to mind, one from each field: 'Revelation and the Unconscious', from *God and the Unconscious*; 'The Atonement', from *The Unknown God*.

But behind the public work was the person whom no phrases can recapture: the frail body, the hawklike face with its great brow, the grey eyes alternately brilliant and abstracted: the stubborn, taciturn humorous Englishman who was our brother in St Dominic. And it is appropriate that we should express our gratitude in the journal to which he gave thirty years of loyal service and in which much of his writing first appeared. May he rest in peace.