

The new structures so widely demanded since the Council are gradually forming. Quite apart from numberless and largely unofficial, loose and experimental groupings, more or less charismatic, such movements as the Y.C.W. and the Newman Association had been working quietly long before the Council, and the forthcoming public sale of the new Newman journal is merely one more sign of the gathering momentum. More recently we have read of the restructuring of Christian life and the formation of 'outward-looking worshipping communities with a Christian social purpose', to use the phrase of the Bishop of Portsmouth (*The Tablet*, September 30th).

The question then increasingly becomes in what direction we are to look: outwards indeed, but where precisely out? Evidently this very question makes sense only on the presupposition that individual decisions are to be taken as a matter of responsibility to the community at large and that a community as a whole can have direction through individuals finding and articulating themselves in it. But granted this, which is already an aspect of that reversal of perspectives from the individualistic to the communitarian point of view so searchingly indicated by Fr Fergus Kerr in his article last month, the question of direction becomes increasingly imperious, and now on the level of the community as a whole. Immediately, of course, the answer lies in what is to hand, the local possibilities in each case. But the real question is not so much whether there are not also larger objectives and priorities beyond these local projects, but rather whether such local projects should not somehow be inscribed in the élan of the larger ones, so as to derive their measure and their very sense from them: the larger priorities of racism, world poverty and war.

It is very difficult to talk about what is involved here, so immediate, so deep, so complex, so inchoate are the issues as yet. But surely, if one has any sense of what is stirring in the depths, then the movements and events of which we usually talk and are aware are merely symptoms and signs. And at the heart of the crisis of authority, of the 'monastery in turmoil', of the world coming of age, whatever, there is the fact that the human race is before a crisis, a challenge to decision, the choice between persistence in an evolutionary cul de sac and a change of direction in the name of life. Individual and institution alike are exposed to this *krisis*, and the problem of both alike is then to find a meaningful way of relating to this forward movement of life under pain of stultification. The way of relating

has to be particular, it may be very humble, but it must draw its meaning from this creative process of the universe, even if takes the form of suffering.

Against this background, the articles we publish this month take on their proper relief. Fr Cornelius Ernst shows us how the Council has effected a decisive shift in the ideology of the priesthood—and, by implication, of the priestly people, the ‘royal priesthood’. From being defined in terms of worship, priesthood now becomes defined again effectively in terms of what seems to be the basic idea of Hippolytus. For the prayer for the ordination of priests used by Hippolytus in the third century included the key-terms ‘grace’, ‘counsel’, and ‘direction’ (from *kubernan*, whence ‘gubernare’, whence our govern, but in the sense, I take it, not of captaincy from any poop on high, but of steering, coxing, piloting from below). And these terms are surely to be taken as mutually defining, just as together they seem to express the unifying notion implicit in the threefold term used again and again by the Council: prophet, priest and king.

Direction, however, is a matter of discernment, option, decision, and so of separation and rejection as well as of acceptance. To redefine the priesthood in terms of direction, therefore, is to complete and articulate, and by that very fact to shape, the deep but polyvalent, stirrings of the race and the Church. And an important part of what is meant by this redirection is spelled out in the message of the sixteen bishops of the third world which we also publish in this issue. It is precisely because the Church is in principle independent of any particular social, cultural and economic system and yet is of its nature directive, that it must concretely at critical moments disengage itself from one particular complex and re-incarnate itself in another. Thus by confronting us with the choice between working for a co-operative, socialist world welfare state and continuing our collusion with a system based on competitive demand and profit, the sixteen bishops in their turn point to and particularize the same crisis and project of redirection. The withdrawal from the evolutionary cul de sac and the regathering for the forward élan of life here assumes the form of a shaking out of all our relationships and their recasting to a more universal and fraternal design.

What it is vital to grasp is that we are all involved in this process, whether we are aware of it or not, and in all our relationships, interdependently. The new shape of marriage, as well as our working lives, our spirituality as well as our political gestures, the deep disturbances of our unconscious as well as our reflective fumbings are all implicated.

For each age is a dream that is dying,  
Or one that is coming to birth.

P.L.