

defence drills and ready to go to jail for her belief in peace, is far more significantly Christian than the rather subtle and comfy positions of certain casuists. When I consider that Dorothy Day was confined to a jail cell in nothing but a light wrap (her clothes having been taken from her) and that she could only get to Mass and Communion in the prison by dressing in clothes borrowed from prostitutes and thieves in the neighbouring cells, then I lose all inclination to take seriously the self-complacent nonsense of those who consider her kind of pacifism sentimental.

## Priest and People in South Africa

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In this article I want to examine some of the obstacles which stand in the way of mutual understanding between white priests and black people in Southern Africa today. Initially I had intended to discuss the African and the Gospel preached to him in a more impersonal way, in terms of contrasted cultural backgrounds. As will appear, this has not proved possible, for, at least in the Republic of South Africa, the giving and receiving of Christian truth is complicated at every turn less by the cultural inheritance of the giver or the receiver than by the colour of his skin.

Perhaps the chief obstacle to the missionary's fulfilling his task is his own ignorance. This ignorance may be of the customs and languages of his people: a deficiency which missionaries throughout the world learn to contend with by imaginative hard work. At the same time Southern Africa does present particular difficulties in this matter because the African people themselves, unlike, say, the Chinese in the time of Fr Ricci, do not have a clear cut idea of what their culture is. Under the influence of European civilization the old tribal customs are dissolving or else mixing uneasily with what Europe has brought to Africa, some of it good, some of it very bad. With the best will in the world the missionary will often be perplexed. For instance, his experience

in a country district may have led him to hope for and to expect a spontaneous and childlike response; he may not be able to control his bewilderment or even resentment at the variety of reactions to his efforts in the town where he is likely to meet his first African sceptic. Even the country districts are rapidly losing their quality of being secluded retreats where the priest has been spiritual landlord, and quite frequently temporal landlord too. Evidently the missionary must be prepared to keep pace with what he cannot reverse although he will hope to affect, namely, the African adult's growing determination to choose for himself marching with his growing awareness of what he has the right to choose about. One legitimate object of a man's choice is the Christian religion. *Cujus regio ejus religio* will not finally do as a missionary maxim.

There is, however, an ignorance which goes deeper than the one just mentioned and which is much more sinister.

The policy of the present South African government towards the African, expressing the more or less articulate will of almost all white people in the country, is that the African should be disregarded, positively ignored. The legislation concerning Africans is in its minutest detail directed towards this end: the displacing of the African as a person fit for consideration. Very little experience of South Africa is needed to show that this disregard is instinctive to the average white man and woman, of whatever country of origin, of whatever creed. Crazy rationalization of this instinct is not wanting, but the observer may conclude that the fundamental drive is economic: materially, the standard of living of the South African white man is among the highest in the world; it depends on this disregard.

What has this to do with the missionary? The answer is that he is liable to be infected with this disregard, when even the slightest infection is damaging to his apostolic vitality. Surely no priest when confronted with the government's inhuman legislation would condone it, especially when it impedes his work as pastor and teacher. Rather is disregard liable to show itself in the form of unexamined assumptions; for example, that the African is not ready or never will be ready for political responsibility, that he is a 'sun-loving child of nature', charming but feckless, that he can be kept waiting, that the right tone of voice to use to him is either hectoring or terribly patient, in short that he is inferior to oneself.

Now these assumptions are part of the air which all white people breathe in South Africa, priests included, and for them as much as for

anyone dissociation from environment is terribly difficult to achieve. Various circumstances militate against the priest easily achieving this dissociation. Normally he will prefer to work in peaceful circumstances, among law-abiding people, in co-operation with the civil authorities. He sees his primary responsibility to be the establishment and maintenance of Christian communities to whom he administers the ministry of Word and Sacrament. His instinct will be to do the job he has been given. The worthiness of this instinct is not in question, but unfortunately, in South Africa, inattention to the quality of the civil rule and the social inequalities which it expresses and supports is likely to bring in its train, at least by way of default, disregard for the African, because he cannot be known, cannot properly be regarded, apart from the disabilities which he suffers, comparable to those suffered by the people in occupied Europe during the war.

From the African's point of view, the chief obstacle to his embracing Christianity or persevering in it seems to be its association with the white man. The African's natural response to the offer of God's grace is a vigorous and wholehearted acceptance, the highest manifestation of his brilliance in the art of friendship. But friendship cannot survive disregard. Christianity has come to the African as the white man's way of worshipping God, and the white man's disregard is a terrible scandal to the African, not only as an insult to him, but as an insult to God. There can be no doubt that by tradition the African is a deist who has a deep regard for what is due to God; many are saying that this Christianity that comes from Europe cannot be a good way of worshipping God if it allows the white man to behave as he does. Exploitation masquerading as 'separateness' is beginning to have a particularly horrible effect: the white man's fear of and contempt for the African is beginning to be heartily reciprocated. There is ample excuse for this in South Africa, but any type of Christianity which evidently comes from Europe is liable to be included in what is contemptible, together with the minister of that Christianity.

I have tried to show the difficulty for the missionary of dissociation from his privileged environment, even though his training should have equipped him for making critical comparisons. It should not be surprising if the African cannot easily distinguish between the missionary and other white men. The missionary has his car, his house, his financial security, although there are exceptions to this. He can go more or less where he pleases, is not liable to be flung into a police van if he has left his pass at home; he does not need to carry a pass at all. If he were

arrested for some reason he would not be beaten up and the administration of the law would not be weighted against him. I have not been able to find any instance of a European convicted of murder or rape committed against the person of an African being condemned to death; when an African is convicted of the same offences against a European he is, of course, executed.

The white priest is one of the 'haves', and the dust which his car throws up gets into the eyes and nostrils of the 'have-nots' who walk along the sides of the dirt roads. Perhaps even twenty years ago this dust and all that it stands for would have been accepted as a fact of life. But not now; for the other people who, with the missionary, drive their cars along those roads, from mine-managers and government officials to farmers and road gang overseers, all enjoy their large salaries, their large farms, their large assurance at the expense of the man at the side of the road. This fact of exploitation is important, and increasingly is seen to be so by him who suffers it.

But even when dissociation has been achieved by priest and people; even when the missionary strives to make his manner of life like that of his people, it seems that there is one thing he cannot share: his people's experience of suffering indignity. 'Cannot'? A saint could achieve it; and he would be deported. The people recognize this disparity of experience, and they say: 'Father is a white man; he cannot understand.'

I am sure that this last remark does not refer to the foreignness of the missionary's culture, his graeco-roman background. Father Tempels<sup>1</sup> has noted the very remarkable resemblance between ancient western and Christian thought and the philosophy of the southern African. In this philosophy man (*muntu*) is the dominant force among all created forces. His force and his vitality consist in his participation in the vitality of God. To the *muntu* the possibility of vital growth is all-important, and this growth is by no means entirely material. In the course of a fascinating book Father Tempels comes to the conclusion that the wisdom of the *bantu*—'the men'—finds a parallel in the Church's doctrines concerning the strengthening and intensification of a man's life through grace. He is convinced that Christianity is the only possible consummation of the ideals of 'the men'.

No, Christianity, and particularly Catholic Christianity, is manifestly the fulfilment of the traditional ways of life and thought of the African. The scandal is not found in the foreignness of the white man's

<sup>1</sup>'Bantu Philosophy', by Revd P. Tempels. *Présence Africaine*, Paris.

way of worshipping God but in his failure to practice that worship. The missionary in all his dealings with his people must be conscious that he is liable to be associated with that failure, if not in reality, then in their minds.

There are hundreds of more or less Christian African sects in South Africa. Islam has come from the north and is well established in parts of Central Africa. In these assemblies the African feels able to express his reverence for God in tranquility of mind, feels able to realize his dignity as a man. And yet, how many Africans have admitted to a priest that they look to Rome as to their mother? The South African Bishops have in the clearest terms condemned racial discrimination as an offence against God. The lives of heroic missionaries bear witness to the absolute necessity of being committed to the African as a child of God and a brother in Christ. Unless the faithful, priests and people, heed these examples, their responsibility is a most heavy one.

## An Analysis of Newspeak

BRIAN WICKER

The recent publication of his *Collected Essays* has renewed interest in Orwell's position as a writer, and especially in his attitude to the artist's commitments in the world. The writer's problem, in a time of conflict, according to Orwell, was that 'one half of him, which in a sense is the whole of him, can act as resolutely, even as violently if need be, as anyone else. But his writings, in so far as they have any value, will always be the product of the saner self that stands aside, records the things that are done and admits their necessity, but refuses to be deceived as to their true nature'.<sup>1</sup> For Raymond Williams (e.g. in *The Observer*, May 21 1961) this separation, while understandable, is not necessary: 'it is part of the dissociation between the individual and society which is our deepest crisis'. Elsewhere he points out that any defence of liberty by an exile, as Orwell chose to be, standing apart

<sup>1</sup>*Writers and Leviathan* (*Collected Essays* p. 434).