

August is as ambiguous a month as T. S. Eliot's disturbing late November. It is *par excellence* the month when modern 'technologico-Benthamite' man momentarily heeds the summons of his instincts and gives himself up again to the archetypal elements of sun, sea and land. But it is also the most festering month of the 'long, hot summer', in the more than physical sense which this word has come to assume. So our necessary relaxation is bound to have its disturbing shadow.

And what is the nature of this shadow? This is becoming ever clearer: whilst many still do not care and even the awakened liberal conscience is fumbling with such notions as one per cent of the Gross National Product for the 'developing' nations of the world, or with the mysterious eruption of the civil rights movement into Black Rage, radicals have moved on to make much more sweeping connexions. And once again 'connexions' is the key word. One more formulation of this growing radical conviction was well made recently in a *New Christian* leader: 'The seeds of a major conflict along racial lines are taking firm root all around the world. And increasingly the victims of exploitation are seeing the connexions that exist between racial oppression within the domestic context of Britain (and the U.S.A.) and the international injustice of an economic order which perpetuates the wealth of the white rich while the poor black starves.' There may be some very naïve boggy-mongering, some intolerant tribalism, in the attribution of a sinister monolithic unity to what is increasingly being seen as '*the system*', the 'industrial-military complex', but the essence of the insight surely remains true: certain priorities are entrenched in our actual practices, and they are grimly opposed to alternative priorities of what it is to be human. These alternative priorities have of course to be worked out in life as well as spelled out in idea, but a beginning has already been made, often heroically, mostly haltingly. So there *is* a choice to be made, and it is our very Christianity which obliges us to face it. Fr Jock Dalrymple puts it well in an important article in *The Clergy Review*: 'Try as some of us do to live the a-political life of "pure charity", we cannot succeed. In other words love forces us to take sides' ('Structures, Persons and Prayer', June).

We are therefore increasingly being put before a choice, which can be tragically sundering. There is, however, and especially for the Christian, another dimension to this choice. This can be seen more

clearly from a reflection on those who have become the principal bearers of the alternative, the student revolutionaries. For we can say that these revolutionary students raise two fundamental issues of principle. The issues are distinct but intimately related. Behind the demand for a greater say in the running of their own lives and the life of society, there lurks more or less consciously the further, ancient question: *Cui bono?* Who is society being run for? The students could be seen as a new class, in the line of all those previous new classes who have had to fight for their own recognition, like the barons of *Magna Carta*, like the burghers of the Renaissance. But, as in all these previous cases, the demand for a new participation in decision-making brings with it the responsibility towards the whole, and particularly to all those others who have not yet won their own enfranchisement. Under pain of another sort of private or sectional appropriation of the social property of power, the demand to become co-beneficiaries of power brings with it the responsibility of becoming co-trustees. But then for whom, *cui bono?*

Thus, the very fact of protest and the affirmation of a *systematic* malversation of power and resources by the few—however these few are constituted and maintain themselves—makes sense only on some implicit principle of responsibility to society as a whole. Yet this very same principle of totality also points beyond the protest to an ultimate reconciliation, with all that this involves in the way of links, compromise and compassion. From different sides, then, the apparent simplicity and purity of radical commitment or dropping out—those two contemporary versions of the ‘muckers in’ and ‘muckers out’ of the ’twenties and ’thirties—begins to reveal some of its latent ambiguity. But then perhaps, in the last resort, in a situation where the necessary election is only a moment on the whole way, this is the most characteristic Christian experience: to endure the trying and discrimination of the ambiguity of spirits to the end. P.L.