

however we suffer with him that we may also be glorified with him'. (Rom. 8. 17). If Dominican spirituality is centred around our adoption as sons of God by grace, as we learned from St Catherine's great vision of St Dominic proceeding like the Word from the bosom of the Father, then we are to expect that we shall be more and more like Christ in his sufferings as our spiritual life progresses. But even while increasing charity causes increasing torment over sin, at the same time, it brings the ever-increasing joy which comes from ever closer union with Christ.

We who are still so far from that burning charity which causes a continuing torment of desire, should petition, like St Dominic, for the gift of true charity to help us in saving souls, for the most valuable reparation for sin that we can offer is this torment caused by charity itself. Until we have reached such perfection of charity, we should prepare ourselves for it by patiently enduring all our little hardships and penances, presenting them to the Father in union with the chalice of Christ's agony, his chalice of agonizing desire for reparation and for souls. His is the chalice which we take up each morning at the offertory of the mass, when we say (in the Dominican rite): 'What shall I render to the Lord for all that he has done for me? I will take the chalice of salvation and will call upon the name of the Lord'. At the mass, let us present ourselves and the souls we wish to save, in the chalice of Christ's precious blood, the chalice of his burning charity which consumed him as the victim of our salvation. And the fire of divine love which he so vehemently desired to cast upon the earth, will flame forth from the chalice into our hearts.

Saint Hilary

SISTER SUZANNE, O.S.B.

St Irenaeus, with whom Hilary of Poitiers has much in common, says: 'No doubt there are many tongues spoken throughout the world, but the strength of tradition is one and the same . . . for as one and the same sun, created by God, shines throughout the world, so the light of truth shines everywhere, enlightening all who wish to know it'. St Hilary is

one of the first saints in the calendar on January 14th, perhaps because his very name is in keeping with the joy of that season of the year, reflected from the coming of Christ anew each Christmas.

He can be a model for Christians of whatever kind. He was a married man, yet his life was as austere as a monk's. He was a bishop and champion of truth, an exile and refugee, a writer and theologian; active all his life, yet deeply contemplative. He was a man of prayer and loved the Bible. He could rebuke kings and emperors, yet was gentle with sinners. He was a man of peace who nevertheless knew how to fight when necessary. He was a convert, and appreciated what is noble in pagan souls. Though an ardent Catholic, he was always willing to listen to non-Catholics who were seeking truth. He was a simple man who for all that found it difficult to 'get across' to his readers, with a complicated literary style not at all easy to read, as he was the first to admit. His poetry was misunderstood, as when he sang the glory of the Trinity.

'Give me, Lord God', he prayed, 'the true sense of words, the light of intelligence and faith in the truth, so that what I believe, I can say to mankind'. God granted his prayer in that even so harsh a critic as St Jerome could say that the little girl, Laeta (whose intellectual powers we might envy) can 'run through all the books of Hilary without stumbling'. Martin of Tours was also an admirer of his. And the Church has declared him to be one of her Doctors.

He was born between 315 and 320 A.D., and died in 368, comparatively young. His chief work was on the Trinity, and he also wrote commentaries on the psalms and on St Matthew's gospel, and constantly wrote in defence of Catholic truth against the Arians. These writings show him humble and adoring in God's presence, with the happy trust of a child in his father and friend. He is unexpected in his choice of words, and there is a special charm in the spontaneity of his approach to God and men. With him what seems banal becomes a means of conversion, or a way to praise God. He is highly conscious of his responsibility as a priest and preacher. 'Lord', he cries, 'thou hast given me the gift of the word. It gains me no recompense other than the honour of serving thee, of showing thee to those who know thee not, and to heretics who deny thy existence and what thou art, thou, the Father of the only Son of God'.

He has a great struggle to be articulate, trying to express the inexpressible. 'Not in vain, Lord, hast thou promised "Ask and thou shalt receive; knock and it shall be opened"'. A beggar, I ask what I need . . . when I study the prophets and apostles, I must be grimly

tenacious; I must knock at all possible doors till they open to receive the understanding of thy teaching . . . but only thou canst open thy door'. He seems so caught up by the love of God that he becomes inarticulate when he tries to tell what he knows of him. 'The things we must learn of the Father are the things that his only faithful witness, the Son, tells us of him'. 'But', he adds, 'I would rather meditate these things than say them'.

He would have understood the exasperation of a girl in our own times who, after long and laborious efforts to explain to her little sister the catechism lesson she had just heard on the incomprehensibility of the Trinity, was met with the retort 'but I understand the Trinity very well'. He would also have understood the answer, though he says 'nothing is worthier of God's glory than to place him beyond the narrow confines of human intelligence'. One might suppose that this adoration of the incomprehensible would put Hilary out of touch with ordinary people. Like the desert Father who wept because the theologians had stripped him of a God whose hand he could clutch, we need something more tangible to support our faith, hope, and love. But anyone who reads him on his own conversion or on the gospel of St John will soon find the very human heart of the saint.

He paints a wonderful picture of St John, the 'poor ignorant uncultivated fisherman' who outleaps time and tosses the centuries aside as lightly as if they were a bad catch of fish. It was from John he learned that the heart of God made man is the best place for viewing the invisible, understanding the incomprehensible. It was the text 'I am he who is' in John's gospel which had converted him, and he was haunted by its echo. In one of the rare homilies of his included in the Roman breviary, he dwells on the mystery of the phrase as said by the Son of God made man. 'The Lord had said "who do men say that I am?" He meant them to know that there was more to him than their senses perceived . . . he wanted them to show the faith that sees in the Son of Man the Son of God'.

Again, speaking of St Peter's declaration, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God', he says: 'Blessed is he who was praised for having gazed at and seen what human eye could not see. He did not contemplate flesh and blood, but saw the Son of God by the revelation of the heavenly Father—he first saw the divine in Christ'. And in a hymn to the Church he says: 'O blessed happiness that founded the Church in giving Simon his new name Peter. How sturdy and worthy a foundation for God's Church is that rock which was to crush hell's

jaws, shut hell's gates and smash down the ramparts of death. Blessed door-keeper of heaven, to whose safe hands are given the keys of everlasting life, whose sentence on earth is already ratified in heaven'. In temptation it is cheering to our faith to read such enthusiastic passages from the early Fathers on St Peter's privileges.

Hilary knew how to stoop to the little and ignorant. He made, for instance, an alphabetic hymn (each line begins with a letter in turn) to impress the truths of the creed on the minds of his flock. But they seem to have remained unmoved by his eloquence.

Creation was for him a transparent veil over God's presence. Every creature proclaims God's love and beauty. 'The very heavens and earth, the sea and all that is in them', he says in his comment on Psalm 68, 'glorify God: the sky with its embroidery of silver stars, the slow movement of the spheres, the heat of summer and the joy of spring, winter's hoar and autumn's calm all sing his praise. The earth, brooding over the hidden grain of wheat and all the other seeds sings him a quiet song. The swell of the sea and its crashing waves proclaim him king, as do the vast depths of the ocean . . . All these are mortal and will pass away; but even if they are admirable, how much more worthy of praise must not God their creator be?' He says: 'it is in the majesty of God's works that we find written his splendid name'—the name 'He who is'.

He can take our breath away by his insight into the ways of God, as when he calmly states 'God says: "I love nothing so much as man"'. In his commentary on Psalm 134 he says: 'and my Son came. By the mystery of his birth, he, Jesus, became one of them'. He goes on to tell of the slow but lovely transformation of human kind, as they partake of divinity; impurity turns to purity, blindness gives way to the true light, jealousy to zeal, drunkenness to fasting, vice to virtue; and best of all, hate becomes love. He ends with a vision of Christian unity: 'because God says, "I do what I please in heaven, on earth, in the sea and in the depths"', and it pleases him to give us a share in the love and happiness which he is himself. Heaven begins here in us. 'Already the consummation of the resurrection of all flesh has begun. For he himself has put on our flesh, by the power in which he was begotten by his Father before all ages; Jew, Greek, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, all are one in Christ because his flesh is all flesh, because the Church is his body'.

The account he gives of his conversion is very simple. On reading St John's gospel 'all at once my intelligence outleaped its narrow con-

finer and learned more than I dared hope of God. I knew then that my creator is God of God, that the Word of God is God and in God from the beginning. I saw that the light remains in the world. I understood that the Word was made flesh in order that flesh might be raised to God: for it is our flesh that he took, and among us that he dwells. My soul was filled with joy, for through the flesh I drew near to God, and by faith I was called to a new life, to be born anew'.

The renewal of scriptural reading by ordinary Catholics has done much to help them to understand non-Catholics better; in the same way if both turned to the tradition handed down by the Fathers a further step towards reunion would have been taken. A passage from Hilary's writings may help us in thinking about the coming Council: 'To prepare for it we must pray, often read the Bible, fast, be humble and full of good works, be chaste and patient in every adversity . . . the everlasting light will be ours, and will always enlighten our life. We will possess the supreme good together. We shall all hear the word of God, and sing his glory in one vast choir with the angels. . . . That is the reward of faith. We shall not have need of anything. We shall not be jealous of one another, for we shall live in the same communion. Our Lord will have overcome all evil'.

Again he writes: 'All you who have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ himself . . . You are all one in Christ Jesus. Does that unity of so great a variety of races and social conditions come from the union of their wills? Does it not rather come from the one sacrament, and one baptism? All have been christened. Our Lord asks the Father that those who believe in him should be one as he is. He shows that his oneness with the Father must be the model and example of the oneness of those who believe. The sacrament of our Lord's body and blood explains and confirms the oneness of our baptism, the christening that is the putting on of the one Christ'.

'That city, formed of a vast number of living souls, gathered together in one, and in each one of us, makes the City of God in which he is until the end of the world'. St Hilary's commentary on Psalms 126 and 127 gives an idea of the splendid breadth of his vision of the Church. 'Let us hope for that blessed Jerusalem, for that Mount Sion, for that peace of Israel, because the Lord's dwelling is built in peace, in the peace that is Christ our Lord'. He had discovered that he had become, in the Son, the child of the Father and brother of all God's children, made one with them by the sacraments. How could he leave others with a mistaken idea of the truth? He must bring them back to their

Father and his, showing them how he himself had found the way home.

He saw that the first field of his apostolate lay with his own family. There is a charming letter to his daughter Abra, in which he tells her the tale of a splendid young man whom he has seen, who possesses a marvellous dress and a precious pearl which he covets for her. The dress can never wear out, become moth-eaten or torn, dirty or outmoded. The pearl gives its owner everlasting youth, health and life, and there is nothing harmful in either of these treasures. But they can only be obtained on condition of despising other gems and vanities of dress. Besides the promise of these gifts, he sends her a hymn he has written, and begs her to let him know if she desires them. If she cannot understand any parts of the letter she is to ask her mother to explain them. He ends 'God who gave thee to us guard thee everlastingly, my beloved daughter'.

We have no better witness to Hilary's great qualities than the letters written after his death by those who knew him. They often speak of him as 'happy Hilary'. 'The excellence of his doctrine gives him the title "light of the Romans".' The patrology quotes ten letters from St Jerome in his praise, and Augustine calls him 'a most eminent doctor of the Church'. Venantius Fortunatus speaks of him as the highest peak of faith, virtue and honour, whose eloquence shines like a precious stone. In conclusion may we quote the prayer from an old missal: 'Grant we beseech thee, Almighty God, that what happy Hilary thy confessor affirmed of the excellence of the word, we may become worthy to understand and truthfully to confess'.

Reviews

THE BASIS OF BELIEF, by Dom Illyd Trethowan; Burns and Oates, 8s. 6d.
PROVIDENCE AND FREEDOM, by Dom Mark Pontifex; Burns and Oates, 8s. 6d.

If both these contributions to the *Faith and Fact* series are well worth reading, this is because both are genuine inquiries; the problems they discuss are real problems for the two authors. These are already well known as Catholic philosophers of independent temper. With a common Benedictine background, they share also, though expressing it very differently, a certain dissatisfaction