

pure is the implicit if not explicit premise of all of us) but by the truthful schema *de fide vitaliter custodiendo*—how can we in this age keep the true faith *alive*? Then the rugged back of the Alps will indeed have been broken.

Holy, Holy, Holy

CORNELIUS ERNST, O.P.

I

(a)

There was life outside the Church. There was much that the Church did not include. He thought of God, and of the whole blue rotunda of the day. That was something great and free. He thought of the ruins of the Grecian worship, and it seemed, a temple was never perfectly a temple, till it was ruined and mixed up with the winds and the sky and the herbs. (D. H. Lawrence, *The Rainbow*, Phoenix edn., p. 203).

Will Brangwen has taken his wife Anna to Lincoln Cathedral, which is described with a surcharged sensuous religiosity through Brangwen's eyes. But Anna resists the 'dazed swoon' of the cathedral: she wants freedom, open space, she brings the cutting edge of her separate individuality to bear on Brangwen's passionate intercourse with the cathedral. Brangwen is bitterly angry, hurt, disillusioned; he has lost his absolute, he sees his cathedrals now as 'a world within a world, a sort of sideshow, whereas before they had been as a world to him within a chaos.'

(b)

An architectural work, a Greek temple, represents nothing, images nothing; it simply stands there in the valley's rocky cleft. The building encloses the form of the god, contains it and yet allows it to emerge from this containment to stand forth in the sacred precinct through the open colonnade. Through the temple the god makes

himself present in the temple. This active intelligible presence of the god itself describes and delimits the precincts as holy. But the temple and its precinct do not shimmer away into the indefinite. The building knits and assembles into a unity all those courses and relationships in which birth and death, misfortune and blessing, victory and shame, perseverance and failure, acquire the form and the direction of human destiny. The valid range of these open relationships is the world of this historical people. Here it recovers and realizes its vocation. (M. Heidegger, 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes', *Holzwege*, p. 31).

The temple is the point of focus in which rock and storm, night and day, space and sea, become manifest; it is a work in which the coming-forth and subsiding of things—*physis*—is revealed. In the temple-work, the building, there comes to light the pregnant containing source of all things, the Earth. The work exhibits not by being put in an 'exhibition' but simply by being erected at all, a consecration and a praising in which the holy becomes radiant and the god is invoked to shine forth in an intelligible presence.

(c)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband . . . And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. (Apoc. 21.1-2, 22).

The whole complex reality of Christian cult may be envisaged as a destruction of the temple. What is involved in this destruction is indicated in the statement attributed to Jesus by 'false witness'; 'I shall destroy this temple made with hands and in three days I shall build another, not made with hands' (Mk 14.58). At least one false element in this testimony is the suggestion that Jesus himself was to destroy the temple; but the Christian reader is invited to discern a deeper misunderstanding. In the Johannine 'sign of the temple', Jesus says, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' The evangelist continues, 'But he spoke of the temple of his body' (Jn 2.19, 21). There is a hidden connexion between the destruction of the Jewish temple and the crucifixion. When Jesus dies on the cross, the veil of the temple, between outer and inner sanctuaries, was torn in two from top to bottom (Mt. 27.51). In the Epistle to the Hebrews, at the end of a comparison be-

tween the rites of the Mosaic temple and the crucifixion, we are told of the new and living way opened to us 'through the veil, that is, his flesh' (Heb. 10.10), by which we may enter into an inner sanctuary not made with hands but heaven itself before the very face of God (9.24). The way is made open in the crucifixion, and kept open in the living flesh of the risen Christ, who is the Way. Thus the Church, united with the glorified body of the risen Christ, living in the power of the *Pneuma*, is itself the temple of the living God (1 Cor. 3.17; 2 Cor. 6.16 s.); a spiritual house of living stones, a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ, the living corner-stone or key-stone (1 Pet. 2.4 s.); a dwelling place of God in the virtue of the Spirit (Eph. 2.20 s.). So too the individual member of the Christian community, whose 'body' is the temple of the holy Spirit, and who must then with his body glorify God (1 Cor. 6.19-20).

The destruction of the temple is the eschatological fulfilment of the reality of the temple, in the risen Christ and in the members of his body. During the interim until the new heaven and the new earth take the place of the old, this temple-reality of Christian cult is displayed in pregnant signs and images, an adoration in spirit and truth expressed in the tangibility of flesh. In his treatise on the sacraments St Thomas speaks of the *religio Christianae vitae* (3a. 62.5), the religion of the Christian life. The signs contain and communicate a sacrificial reality consummated in Christ (*consummatum est*, Jn 19.30), the Lamb who was slain (Apoc. 5.12), who is our temple.

II

An approach to Dr Robinson's now famous little book¹ by way of the theme of cult and worship seemed not only appropriate for this periodical but also likely to bring us to the heart of the matter. For an attempt like Dr Robinson's to rethink and reformulate the Gospel as an experience of God into which we today as men of our time could enter with whole mind and heart and body must prove itself in the concrete gestures of that experience, its embodied and incarnate sense. Let me first say (and I am all the more anxious to say it in view of other things I shall have to say) that I wholly endorse Dr Robinson's *right* to attempt a reformulation and wholly sympathize with what he himself, in his reply to the Archbishop of Canterbury's strictures, has called his missionary purpose. And for that reason I appreciate his intentions in

¹HONEST TO GOD, by John A. T. Robinson, Bishop of Woolwich; SCM Press; 5s.

publishing his views in popular, paperback form. The real point at issue is whether what he says is true. If it is, his honesty is laudable; if it is not, honesty would be no excuse, since all it would offer us is something about Dr Robinson and those who share his views.

It would be comforting if in his chapter 'Worldly Holiness' on Christian worship and prayer Dr Robinson had stated unequivocally whether he held that this worship had an *object*. I am bound to say that after repeated re-reading I am still not quite certain of his position; but it seems likely in view of his whole approach that he would probably reject the question as 'supranaturalist', since the only object of worship would be a God 'out there'. Is this a position which can be tolerated by Christians?

The Heidegger passage cited above in I (b) is a striking example of an 'objectivity' of the sacral arising from a human *work*. The god is ultimately a form of the 'Earth'; and we may remember Zarathustra's words to the men in the market-place, shortly after he has declared that God—the God 'out there' in a Platonic heaven—is dead: 'You are the sense of the Earth.' The Earth as pregnant source of all things would seem to correspond very closely to Dr Robinson's (and Tillich's) 'depth', especially since it is not merely a cosmic but also an anthropological depth: the very act of positing the human work, the building, is at once an objectification of the depth and an act of praise; the human act is a medium of revelation.² Certainly it is a more adequate expression of what may be Dr Robinson's theme than the rather tedious vulgarized

²It may be interesting to plot some family-relationships here. Dr Robinson's chief sources are all Germanic: Bonhoeffer, Tillich, Bultmann. In his prison letters Bonhoeffer writes with enthusiasm of W. F. Otto's *The Homeric Gods*; Otto (W. F., not Rudolf) belonged to Heidegger's circle, and a later collection of essays by him has the significant title, *Die Gestalt und das Sein*. Tillich often quotes Nietzsche with approval; and Heidegger has an important study of Nietzsche's 'Gott ist tot' in *Holzwege*, and more recently has produced a two-volume collection of studies on him. E. Fink, who once studied under Heidegger, has a fine book on *Nietzsches Philosophieren*, as well as a remarkable study, *Spiel als Weltsymbol*, on the Dionysiac reversal of a Platonic 'beyond'. Bultmann's Heidegger has admittedly no more than a family-relationship with the Heidegger of *Sein und Zeit*, and an even more distant connexion with the Heidegger, but family-relationships are what we are looking at here, not interpretation. Heidegger is the major contemporary representative of a movement of German thought since Hegel; see e.g., K. Löwith, *Von Hegel zu Nietzsche. Marx und Kierkegaard*, or J. Hommes, *Zwiespältiges Dasein*. Feuerbach, of whom Dr Robinson makes use, has an important place in this movement. It seems possible that Dr Robinson does not wholly realize how potent a beast he is trying to domesticate and Anglicize.

Freudianism of 'projection'. For Dr Robinson cannot have it both ways; if the God 'out there' is to be dismissed as a Freudian 'projection', then his 'depth' must be given its Freudian interpretation too: some sort of libido, perhaps, however this is conceived of.

But even supposing we improve on Dr Robinson in this way by indicating a less merely 'psychological' relationship between 'object' and 'depth' (or supposing our psychology goes Jungian rather than Freudian), could Christian theology be satisfied with a God thus objectified for worship? It must be said quite plainly that if the 'depth' or 'ground' is nothing more than Heidegger's *physis*—a *natura naturans*, a cycle of eternal return—then at most we have an illuminating but partial account of the symbiosis of man and nature in history, the 'deep', the authentic form of which would be, in Blake's words, 'Everything that lives is holy.' The Christian God cannot be simply the 'inwardness' of the universe: he is the infinitely separate (separate precisely because *non-finite*) originating source of the universe, such that by being cause of the very being of things, that being which is most inward in all things, he works inwardly in all their operations (*ipse Deus est proprie causa ipsius esse universalis in rebus omnibus, quod inter omnia est magis intimum rebus; sequitur quod Deus in omnibus intime operetur*, Ia. 105.5). That the theophanies of such a God should be mediated by human intercourse with the natural world is entirely acceptable; for such a God could only become object to man either by a human 'work', in a religion untouched by Christian revelation, or by a divine 'work', in the Incarnation.

By a 'work' is understood here any modification of the physical world, a human or divine 'intervention' in that world. Objectivity is not an intrinsic character of anything, not even in the physical world; in order that any reality in the physical world may become an 'object', it must become an object-for-me, or an object-for-us, by being assumed into a world of human purposes and intentions. A 'work' is one such mode of objectification by assumption, where a physical reality is made to embody a human purpose; and at least in the case of an art-work (on Heidegger's view) and often elsewhere, the human purpose may reveal in the work the reality of what is assumed into the work, e.g., we learn about horses by racing them in the Derby. Now because God is not just one thing among others but rather the subsistent cause of everything, he cannot be brought to objectivity simply by being assumed into a human world. He can only become a Thou for us by way of some distinct reality in the physical world which in its turn is capable of being assumed into a human world. Either we build temples in

which we make manifest to ourselves the originating source of all things (the source of our own act of making manifest too); or God himself 'enters' our world by so operating in the physical world as to make himself manifest to us: at Sinai, in the prophetic vision (for the prophet himself belongs to the physical world), or ultimately in the Incarnation. God himself builds the temple of Jesus' body. That mode of objectification which depends solely on our own act (God working within us *intime*) only presents God to us as an 'internal' or 'cognate' object, like fighting a battle or winning a victory; we use our own acts as mirrors to see the God behind our backs. In the Incarnation, God 'assumes' the physical world and makes it his own in Jesus *before* we 'assume' it into our human world; the Jesus we greet is not a mirror but a window on to God the Father in the Son: 'He who has seen me has seen the Father' (Jn 14.9). And here too God works within us by the interior *instinctus* of faith (2a-2ae. 2.9 ad 3).

One of the reasons why it is so difficult to be sure about what precisely Dr Robinson is trying to say is the hearty facetiousness with which he rejects the God 'out there'. That this rejection does involve 'questioning the existence of God as a *separate Being*' (p. 130; his italics) is clear. But perhaps all this means is, 'God is not outside us, yet he is profoundly transcendent' (p. 60). It often seems as though for Dr Robinson to call God 'separate' from the world is to say that he is spatially alongside it. He appears not to make any very sharp distinction between 'metaphysical' and 'mythological' (pp. 14-15). He quotes with approval passages from Tillich (pp. 30, 31, 55-6, 57) which on the one hand embarrassingly misstate traditional Christian theology (when has God ever been talked of by this theology as 'a being beside others', 'an object besides other objects'?) and on the other hand identify God with *natura naturans*, reject the cause-effect separation of God and creatures, and explain that to call God transcendent means that 'within itself, the finite world points beyond itself', that it is 'self-transcendent'. Points *where*?³ Or does it just point, so that the transcendence of *God* is nothing more than the *world's* manifestation of its own finitude? So that the only real transcendence is the indefiniteness of being-in-general (*esse commune*) and not the wholly actualized transcendence of subsistent being (*esse subsistens*), the infinitely actual source of all beings? We may with Heidegger reject this latter transcendence and maintain only the trans-

³It is typical of the Existentialist 'dropping of the object' that verbs which ordinarily take objects, direct or indirect, are continually used absolutely; cf. 'give ourselves to the uttermost', p. 49—give to whom?

cendence of *das Sein* with respect to *das Seiende*; but then let us be honest and reject God too.

Perhaps it is unfair to press Dr Robinson on these points; but he does raise them polemically himself, and he does offer what is apparently an alternative metaphysical view in talking repeatedly about the 'ground' (or 'Ground') of our being. It is curious to reflect that this way of talking goes back to Eckhart, where the *grund* of our being is just that mysterious depth in which God and the soul are 'one'; and that this was one of the points which rightly led to suspicion of his views. The very least that can be said is that we did not have to wait for Tillich to tell us that God was not 'out there' in a spatially objective sense (we may also remember Augustine in the *Confessions* III, 6: *Tu autem eras interior intimo meo et superior summo meo*). If Dr Robinson's 'ground' is not distinct from that which it 'grounds' then he is a pantheist; if it is distinct, then he is shadow-boxing. The real trouble is that the reader cannot be sure just what Dr Robinson means, and suspects that Dr Robinson isn't sure either.

In a final attempt to clarify his position (pp. 130 s.) Dr Robinson sets out to 'demythologise' the traditional notion of the creator:

The essential difference between the Biblical and any immanentist world-view lies in the fact that it grounds all reality ultimately in personal freedom—in Love.

This sounds promising: God is Love, personal freedom. We read on, with some slight misgivings:

For pantheism, the relation of every aspect of reality to its ground is in the last analysis a deterministic one, allowing no real room for freedom or for moral evil . . . But the Biblical affirmation is that built into the very structure of our relationship to the ground of our being is an indestructible element of personal freedom . . . We are rooted and grounded wholly in Love.

This may be a profound statement that our finite human freedom is only intelligible within God's free purposes. But we remember what has been said earlier on the same page (p.130) about the 'agape of the universe' and earlier in the book (pp. 48-9) that 'to say that "God is personal" is to say that "reality at its very deepest level is personal", that personality is of *ultimate* significance in the constitution of the universe, that in personal relationships we touch the final meaning of existence as nowhere else.' It is not clear whether our freedom, our love, our personal relationships, are simply the privileged medium in which we can discern God as the personal freedom and love of an other than our-

selves, or whether by 'God' is meant just this and nothing else: that *we* are free, loving, and personally related to each other, that *we* communicate with each other in freedom and love. Dr Robinson certainly rejects as 'myth' the idea of the 'personal ground of all our being' as 'an almighty Individual, endowed with a centre of consciousness and will like ourselves and yet wholly "other"' (pp. 131-2). Is God *other* or isn't he: Is God the 'significance', the 'depth', the 'ground' of our freedom in the sense in which 'significance' is embodied in a sign or in the sense in which 'significance' is embodied in the reality signified by the sign? Is God like 'London' on a signpost or like *London*, the city on the Thames? Does Dr Robinson hold that without the universe there would be no God? The question cannot be shrugged off as meaningless on the ground that (say) if the universe did not exist we would not be able to ask the question. Because the *Christian* affirmation is that what the universe, what Christ, point to, is just this holy God who created us in the freedom of his love, who would be free, would be love, would be *God*, even if we and the whole universe had not been created. I am afraid I cannot accept the responsibility for my lack of clarity about Dr Robinson's meaning. It is painful to see a Bishop of the Church of England shift uneasily in ambiguities like these, and it is comforting to see how promptly and unequivocally the Archbishop of Canterbury has responded in his pamphlet *Image Old and New*.

I have used for the title of this review the *Trisagion* of Isaiah 6 (a text which is sufficient by itself to show up the truly deplorable oneness of Dr Robinson's remarks about the Hebrew prophets, pp. 60-1), and the introductory texts in section I were intended to focus a concern for the character of our relationship to God as Holy. For this after all is crucial: does Dr Robinson's book really help us to see God more clearly, does he help us to realize more sharply the holiness of God?

This is to take up the question of 'Christianity without religion', as advanced by Bonhoeffer and recommended by Dr Robinson. Dr Robinson does not make matters easier for us by delaying his discussion of what he means by 'religious' until p. 84, and only acknowledging in a footnote on p. 86 that much of the discussion for and against 'religion' is a matter of definition. When Bonhoeffer himself first raises the topic in his *Letters* (paperback edn p. 91) he equates 'religion' with 'inwardness and conscience'. Dr Robinson seems to mean by 'religion' *piety*, conventional piety primarily, though not excluding the possibility of intenser forms of personal piety within the conventional mould: devotionism and genuine devotion. The passage from Lawrence quoted in

I (a) above magnificently opens up a larger perspective, no less than the 'whole blue rotunda of the day'. It is true and will be true until the Lamb himself becomes our Temple, that human temples, even Christian temples, need to be destroyed so as to share in the death and resurrection of the Temple of the Lord's Body. Simply as liturgical renewal, this means that we must invent, make new 'works', to manifest our participation in the new life of the Lord. For the temples have to be built new, after being destroyed. But just as there must persist through this renewal a continuity with the Temple of the Body and the basic gestures consecrated by that Body, so in the whole of human Christian life the rhythm of death and resurrection must continue to sound. The very grace-life in us is a conformation to the death and resurrection of Christ; it is cult, worship, because that death and resurrection is cult and worship. That this cult has both a 'horizontal' and a 'vertical' dimension is clear from the whole New Testament. In Hebrews, for instance (5.9): 'And once made perfect (*consummatus, teleiôtheis*, probably 'consecrated') he became the source of salvation to all who obey him.' Or in what since the sixteenth century has been known as the 'highpriestly prayer' of Jesus (Jn 17): 'And for their sake I consecrate myself (*hagiazô*: RSV, NEB) that they also may be consecrated in truth' (17.19). Hence the sense of *agape* in I John: 'By this we learned love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren' (3.16). 'In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be an expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another' (4.10-11). The 'depth' of the Johannine *agape* is in the 'vertical' dimension, the dimension of the love of the Father for the Son and the Son for the Father, made manifest in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Christian *agape* is sacrificial and consecrated love, a 'holy' love because it is, ontologically, a participation in the love which consecrated Jesus to and on the cross; here the *separation* of man from God was revealed, and a new and living way made open to us into the holy of holies, heaven itself.

But once again, until the Lamb himself becomes our Temple, there persists in us a tension and a gap between what we are, sacramentally, in our 'ground' or deepest self and what we live out in our particularized life of day to day, between our 'I' in God and the 'I' of our self-conscious experience. Liturgy and the sacraments are an actuation of the archetypes of saving history, a celebration of gestures in the Body which may provoke, sometimes or often, no more significant conscious stirring than irritation or boredom. Our prayer when we are by our-

selves is a persevering effort to coincide with our deepest selves, not an experience primarily but an orientation in faith. Certainly the range of our human experience must continually expand, with the growth of our personal lives and the pushing back of horizons in human history—'secular' history but not for that reason excluded from divine providence. But the mysterious purpose of that providence is the recapitulation of all things in Christ (Eph. 1.10), and its organ is the Church of faith and sacrament, the visible sign of the Temple of Christ on earth. The 'separation' of world and Church is the manifest sign that the plan has not yet reached fulfilment; and even when it does we believe that there will be a definitive 'separation', between the children of God and the light and the children of darkness and the devil (cf. I John). At least in these related senses Christianity is unthinkable without 'religion', because Christianity *is* religion, the worship of the God who is transcendently separate in holiness: a separation which finds its image in our personal lives, in Church and world, heaven and hell—in the cross of Christ.

The 'separateness' of God is not merely a matter of speculation; it is a matter of God's essential holiness and, as Dr Ramsey has very well pointed out, of the possibility of the free gift of a share in God's holiness by grace. We may respect Dr Robinson for his earnest desire to discover the relevance of Christianity in our secular experience, but our final judgment must surely be to confirm his suspicion that he has not been radical enough in his rethinking. He has not been radical enough in his sense of the unconditional demands of God and he has not been radical enough in his sense of the autonomy of human life within the mysterious purpose of God. The real challenges both of God and of man have been resolved into a conventionally progressivist harmony; the strung cord has been slackened instead of being allowed to remain free for a stranger and a stronger sounding. To practise honesty to God we need to remain more resolutely *open*: 'Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when it does we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is' (I Jn 3.2).