

THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

Thy Will Be Done

- a phrase we say at least once every day. It can be understood in a deeply life-giving and Christian way; but like all great thoughts it is open to exploitation.

People And Power

The damaging urge to dominate others is a sport of the original human quality, which is God-given: God said: *Increase, multiply, fill the earth and conquer it. Be masters...of all on earth.* It's quite a hard lesson for us to learn that (a) conquering something is of little use if you destroy it in the process; and (b) the command of God was given to all humanity in general, and to each human being in particular. So whatever shape our *dominion* assumes, it must be a respectful and benevolent one towards the earth (which at the moment it is not), and a respectful and fraternal one towards our brothers and sisters (which it seldom is). Simply to dominate, destroying and enslaving as we go, can claim no sanction from the command of God, who himself causes his sun to rise and rain to fall equally on just and unjust.

God And Power

Ultimate power needs no domineering and no violence. It reigns, serene and undoubted, without any need for war. God can be merciful and loving towards us *because he needs nothing from us*; he says in the Psalms: *I have no need of your sacrifices. Were I hungry, would I ask you for food?* This has great consequences. We may have an habitual wariness and resentment towards the domination imposed on us by other human forces; but there is no room for resentment towards God, whose deeds in our direction have no reason to be other than altruistic and loving. When Germany and Austria knelt and said *Thy will be done* to Adolf Hitler, they did something which was flawed and in the end appalling. Submission to God's will, by contrast, is by definition the best thing to do.

God And Self

We find it quite as hard to submit to God as we do to another person, because our default

mode is always self-interest: or so says the theory of original sin. Eve's choice to take the fruit was (deliciously) *unimpeachable* in terms of her own nature. It simply exalted her self over the will of God. Self cut off from God is finally doomed, because God is first and last the self's Creator, and the self only exists at the command of its Maker. We have to remember that the meaning of the self and the purpose of the self are God-given, and are known only to God. Ultimately we are poor at judging our meaning and purpose, and, not knowing the mind of God towards us, we keep reverting to selfishness when we try.

A New Mind

Paul tells us today that the only way to discover the will of God, to know what is right, what is the perfect thing to do, is to *let our behaviour change, modelled by our new mind.* This new mind is the Christian mind, or our mind when we are praying, listening to the Word of God, and submitting our whole life to the Christian obedience. Paul's unwonted gentleness in this sentence should make us think. We aren't asked to wrench ourselves into shape by an act of power: but to let ourselves be changed by an act of submission - by a resignation of power. This is essential: it is *the only way.* This is what Jesus knows when Peter calls him *Christ*. He is not an anointed warrior or a domineering King, but a Christ anointed to suffer, to submit, to carry the Cross. Peter does not understand this because he thinks like a man and not like God. He needs a new mind; and he will not have one, until his old mind founders in shuddering tears, and Jesus sinks all Peter's hopes and goes to die.

A Disciple's Mind

The 5th century prayer for peace says that our slavery to God is our exercise of royal power. To be taught by God is to come to Christ, and that is the secret fulfilment whose shape and effect is not yet revealed. When it is revealed, we shall be like him, and know him as he truly is. All who know this will purify their lives, to be as pure as Christ. *Fr Philip*