

Lovers of peace as opposed to fearers of war can no longer claim to use these modern weapons of destruction in the interests of their aim—concord among men. Love must now cast out fear; but it requires supernatural strength, the supernatural grace of charity. The Queen of Heaven has led the way on Victory Day; we must follow her or be obliterated by the split atom.

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### DISCREDITED POLITICS

A PECULIAR mark of the present age is the increasing discredit into which politics as a "profession" are falling. The sweeping Labour victory in this country may seem to indicate a respect for one party of politicians. But a close investigation would probably show that England does not differ so fundamentally from the rest of Europe where politics are at a very low ebb. France's main troubles in the last thirty or forty years have arisen from this curious anomaly, in which the people who are governed have no respect for the class of men who assume the responsibilities of governing. There can be little hope of stability in a nation when those in charge have neither the respect nor the confidence of those they are supposed to represent. The war may well have increased this suspicion of the politician in most European countries, since the common judgment of men still lays the responsibility of war at the door of the politicians rather than of economic laws or of an inevitable human dialectical "progress".

The divorce between people and governors does not arise simply from the effect of wars. It would appear to be a general result of the decline of civilization. In a healthy and vigorous state the governors do, in fact, represent the people, are identified with them; knowing what the people need as well as what the people want, the politicians seek with a certain purity of intention to fulfil those needs. The body politic in a healthy state has all its organs functioning together in one vital action. But when disease attacks it some of the organs cease to serve the body, become disorganised or dislocated; and as the body languishes so the individual organs tend towards a form of isolation. A parallel may be seen in the cells of a human body when attacked by certain diseases. But a more direct parallel may be sought in the history of the Mystical Body. When the Church has flourished most markedly, as in its first years or during the 12th century, her rulers have lived the life of the Church more fully even than the majority of the faithful who compose the Body of Christ. Monks, priests, bishops and Popes have been men of grace, as well as instruments of grace. There has been a real identity between them in their holy lives and the life of the Christian people they served. There has been a sympathy and unity between the people and the clergy. But as decline sets in,

a rift appears between the two; the clergy cease to practise what they are by profession obliged to encourage in the people; they perform their duties, perfunctorily, as instruments of grace, but they cease to be men of grace and consequently fall into discredit with the members of the Church they serve. S. Catherine's description of the clergy in the 14th century shows how far decline had then progressed. Our Lord had attacked the same disease in the moribund religion of the Scribes and Pharisees, who set burdens on the people they were unwilling to bear themselves.

In other words, whether it be the Body Politic or the Mystical Body, decline is evident as soon as the idea of the Common Good of the whole gives place to the disintegrating particular goods of "Professionalism". The more successful the Church becomes the greater the temptation for men to seek a career in her service; and in every "Catholic Country" the danger of careerists among ecclesiastics is the source of most of the evils that lead to decline. The same applies to politics; in theory at least the politician should be a "devotee", a man set apart and dedicated to something far greater than himself. His life is one of service of the natural common good which must dovetail into the supernatural common good of all mankind, the eternal glory of God and man's possession of him in the Beatific Vision. He serves immediately the common good of the nation, but that itself is subordinate to the good of all nations, and therefore the politician lives for international peace built on international law and concord and the respecting of all men's rights. But, just as nursing the sick, teaching the young, or engaging in social work have ceased to be labours of "devotees", men vowed to a life of service in the wider context of the glory of God, and have become careers in which men may carve out their own private incomes and private lives, so the politician as a class has become professional and careerist. The politician is not a man of vows, de-voted, dedicated. The common good is seldom denied; but it tends to take a subordinate place. The good of the nation is set above that of international well-being, the good of the party above that of the nation, and sometimes the good of the politician above that of the party or the nation. This at least seems obvious in the history of French politics with the Stavisky scandals and England too has been involved in affairs like the Marconi scandal. The very idea of the politician leading a dedicated life may draw a smile from the reader today.

But the fault does not lie simply with the politician. The disease has attacked the whole society and the people are as much to blame for allowing their politicians to carry on as they do. The people can not wash their hands of responsibility, as so often the best Frenchmen seem to wish to do. To leave the members of the government

to play skittles with the affairs of State has much in its favour for the individual who is more concerned with his own affairs than with the common good. A nation whose politicians are discredited and left as a class apart is a nation of self-interested men and women who wish to be undisturbed to develop their own lives. Where each individual seeks his own security as his primary aim, the idea of the common good gives place to private interest. Such a reversal of values would be clearly immoral, but in order to justify it the political sphere has been isolated and treated by all as something beyond the normal life of man. There is then a widespread tendency among people and politicians alike to treat politics as a-moral, and to leave out the ethical principles which should always guide human action towards the one good of the whole of God's creation. In a vital society governed by dedicated men and composed of members whose first principles were not security and self-interest, such a divorce between ethics and politics would be no more possible than the divorce between people and politician.

In view of the recent movement towards the Left in this country and the increasing hold of Communism in countries such as France at the heart of Western culture these remarks may seem irrelevant. Politics are recognised as important and the politician receives the support of the people, as may be seen in the high percentage of voters in England in 1945 as compared with previous elections. But the high polling and Labour success apparently do not necessarily imply the reinstating of politics in the interests of the people. Many voted who remained sceptical about the state of the political framework because they wanted something very keenly for themselves, such as houses and jobs, and they voted for their own private interests where they thought they could get most. But if it is true that the post-war period in Europe is showing a renewed interest in the way nations are to be governed, it must be admitted that this interest lies almost wholly in one direction, namely to the Left. In a country like France the interest is in Communism rather than in the fluctuating and ever unstable government. This surely is because the Socialists, and still more the Communists, do show a seriousness in their politics. They profess to live the sort of life they wish to see the whole country, or the world, live. Many may be sceptical of the sincerity of this profession, but the very fact that they are surprised when they discover M. Molotov occupying a luxurious imperial palace in the Crimea, and have a sense of the incongruous when they hear of Mr. and Mrs. Attlee occupying Chequers, shows that something different is expected of the Left. One may disapprove of their politics, but they do claim a far closer unity with the life of the nation. In fact, the Communist leader professes a sort of dedicated life and he does behave as though he

were whole-hearted in his pursuit of what he considers the Common Good. The misfortune is that his idea of the Common Good is often in opposition to the whole culture of the West, anti-Christian and materialist. That is why no Christian should be content at the aspect of this new interest in politics.

There are many possible remedies for this state of affairs, if most of them seem hopelessly remote. But as always we are driven back to the conclusion that if Christians would act *as Christians* in the realm of politics hope would dawn again. If the clergy and the instructed laity would strive to rise above politics in such a way as to include politics in the wider sphere of Christian morality, if they would rise above party, above even nationality, and from that vantage point, in a spirit of Christian detachment, set about doing what they can to influence political affairs in so far as that is possible, they could do much to re-Christianise the government of Europe. As it is, they either withdraw from the political scene, admitting that it is corrupt beyond redemption, and leaving it to take its downward course to destruction; or they become as violently party and nationalistic as any opponent of the universality of the Church. It is surely as lacking in propriety for a Catholic priest to be a whole-hearted supporter of the Conservative Party with its pre-war record of insensibility to the Common Good, as for him to vote Communist in whose final principles there is little room for Christian liberty, Christian education or even the Christian Church. And the same impropriety attaches, for example, to the Irish priest who labours in England without sinking his national prejudices. Once the Church is shown to be a Catholic way of life, which is in fact lived, especially by its leaders, firstly as *catholics* and not as Liberals or Irishmen or Germans, then politics might be influenced in the same way. As it is the Catholic is as secular in his politics as the politicians themselves. He takes the party as he finds it and adopts its principles. He takes the secular nation as he finds it and supports it through thick and thin without ever gauging its actions by the Christian laws of human conduct. The treatment of Poland should have taught him a lesson in this respect.

If politics are to be reinstated in a Christian framework Christians will have to set up the Christian and Catholic standard above all others as *the* Life of Man and show how it is in fact lived by those who profess it. Otherwise politics, if they do emerge from their present discredit, will emerge even more secular and anti-Christian than they have been in the last few hundred years. THE EDITOR.