

# BLACKFRIARS

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CAST OUT THE OLD LEAVEN	The Editor	97
CATHOLICS AND MODERN POLITICS	Aelred Graham	99
ST THOMAS IN EUROPEAN HISTORY	Paul U. Foster, O.P.	116
OBITER	'Aldate'	131
CORRESPONDENCE	The Earl of Iddesleigh	132
REVIEWS: Donald Nicholl, M. Tew, Terence Tanner, etc.	T. Charles Edwards,	133

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### CAST OUT THE OLD LEAVEN

**I**T is, I suppose, a commonplace that politics today are in a state of change which amounts to a re-shaping of the whole trend of national politics since the Reformation. Old divisions—even the century-old division in this country of whig and tory—have ceased to possess any real meaning. 'Right' and 'left' in their extremes have been revealed as of the same spirit. The difference between Nazi and Communist is principally one of horizons; their principles of government are the same. Thus the battered terminology of early twentieth century politics has reached a stage in which it become a melée of meaningless labels, so that 'democratic' and 'reactionary', 'progressive' and 'free' and the like have no substance to their sounds.

At a period when new forms are emerging and demanding to be logically worked out and perfected, it is imperative that those who know the true end and purpose of politics and know too the nature of political man should play a large part in this new creation. One type of politics alone has so far received that concentrated effort of vast numbers of men which is necessary to turn it into a formative power; and since it lacks any foundation in man's nature it has been able to use every means however foul to uphold and perfect its system. Its latest achievement has been to throw the world into a perplexity of doubting fears regarding its treatment of a Cardinal of the Church. The trial of Cardinal Mindszenty has perhaps woken a few more people to the power they are facing. Yet most of those even who have woken up remain dazed, not knowing where they stand and clinging to the old words, hoping that Labour if not Conservatism, Democracy and Freedom-loving countries will be able to

achieve something in opposition. But while these outworn phrases are bandied about no new politics emerge with sufficient vigour and vitality to impress themselves on the changing and potential material which is waiting to be 'formed'. Meanwhile the communist political outlook grows at once deeper and more widespread, colouring that of many who would never regard themselves as Communist.

It is therefore the special duty of Catholics, who indeed are quite certain as to the nature of man and his last end and who in consequence possess the two fundamentals of true politics, to play their part in the new formation of the future Christian policy which must establish itself if mankind is to be saved. In the recent past they have facilely given themselves over to one particular brand of politics which was labelled 'right'. Even now in this country the vocal members of the Catholic body still appear to cling to these outmoded forms. French Catholics crossing the channel are amazed to find that while the numerical majority of Catholics vote Labour and consider themselves as leaning towards the left, the Catholic 'voice' in journalism, etc., is almost without exception 'true blue' conservative and therefore still wholly immersed in the politics of a past age. The only reaction to this is a revulsion from all politics and a condemnation of the great Catholics of the day who have tried to direct the affairs of their respective nations towards the real common good.

On the contrary every Catholic must be concerned with the common good and playing his rôle, however insignificant, in achieving this end which is the purpose of politics. These politics must be Christian, proceeding from a Christian point of view of man, of immortal soul made to be engraced with the love of God, and leading on to the Christian goal of the beatific vision. The principles which are found in the Gospels and elucidated by such great and gracious minds as that of St Thomas are to be applied to the present concrete situation.

For these and similar reasons, as well as for the inherent excellence of the paper, we publish an article far longer than is our usual custom, an article on this very point of Catholics and Modern Politics. And we have followed this up with an equally long discussion on the relevance of St Thomas to the modern scene. The crisis of these years demands that the Catholic, instead of leaving the problems to the politician to fight out among themselves, should himself live as a 'politician'. That is, he must live as a citizen working for the common good and thus providing a channel through which the grace of God can exercise its re-creating power. The Spirit of God must brood over these waters of change. The individual Christian will only provide a barrier to the work of the Spirit if he cling desperately to the out-moded counters of a post-Christian politics.—THE EDITOR.