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The New Social Catholicism

By

Rev. PAUL HANLY FURFEY, Ph.D.

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TIMES of crisis make men think. During prosperity people are inclined to accept things as they are; but a period of depression is likely to be a period of vigorous social thought. This is true of the present situation. Old ideas are being criticized. New ideas are being proposed. We are trying to think our way through to a better social order.

The Church cannot be indifferent in such a time. As a matter of fact, the present crisis has called forth a number of vigorous Papal pronouncements, of which the *Quadragesimo Anno* is the best known. The present pamphlet will not discuss these official statements in themselves. Rather it will discuss a new movement based upon these statements, a movement which aims to interpret these doctrines in more specific terms, a movement which I have ventured to call the *New Social Catholicism*.

This movement is a diffuse thing which shows itself in a thousand ways. Perhaps its most concrete expression is to be found in some recently established periodicals. In France, the magazine, *Esprit*, founded in 1933 and edited by Emmanuel Mounier, presents Catholic social doctrine from a philosophical, rather than a theological, standpoint. The articles in this review are possibly the most thoughtful expression of the new movement, and Mounier's book, *Revolution Personaliste Et Communautaire* is perhaps its best systematic treatment.

The quarterly, *Colosseum*, founded in 1934, is the English exponent of this New Social Catholicism. Perhaps the best known contributors to this periodical are Christopher Dawson, and Eric Gill. The former's incisive commentaries on current affairs have been published in a remarkable series of books. Gill is best known as a brilliant artist; but his writings, particularly his social interpretations of art, are essentially important contributions.



The significance of these periodicals does not lie in the publications themselves, but rather in the fact that they are symptoms of an aroused social consciousness among Catholics in general.

One must not receive the impression that these publications are the only symptoms of the newer movement. The same thing is shown in a thousand other ways. College students are demanding in their organizations and in their publications that we face the present crisis with a new seriousness. The peace movement has made gratifying progress among Catholics. The improvement of interracial relations is encouraging, while the rural-life movement is taking on a constantly deeper social coloration. The *New Social Catholicism* is, therefore, a great mass movement, involving both clergy and laity, rich and poor, a movement looking towards a more truly Christian world.

Back to Christ

Some may be surprised by the word *new* in connection with this movement. After all, the Church never teaches *new* doctrines. She has received a deposit of faith which she must hand on unchanged from generation to generation. How, then, can we talk of a *New Social Catholicism*?

To reassure people, let it be said once and for all that this movement is new only in the sense that it seeks to renew the vigor of our old faith and to bring the modern world back to Christ. Its newness, then, is only apparent.

When we talk of the necessity of a renewal or restoration, this does not imply that the Church has wandered from her mission. On the contrary, the Church has never ceased her divinely appointed task of teaching the doctrines of Christ, and exemplifying them in the lives of her children, particularly in the lives of the saints. Yet, such is the weakness of human nature and such is the world in which we live, that we can only too easily lose the vigor of our faith and the fervor of our charity. For the modern world is a materialistic world; supernatural religion is not taken seriously. It is hard to live in such an environment without being contaminated. It is not surprising, then, that our social relations become tinged with a certain worldliness.

The *New Social Catholicism* proposes no new doctrine. It

employs no means of action which are essentially new. It merely proposes to return with a fresh loyalty to the old doctrines of Christ as taught by the Church in all ages, and especially as propounded in the encyclicals of recent Popes.

Faith

The world has strayed from Christ through unbelief, and it must return to Christ through faith. Faith implies the acceptance of truths simply and solely because God has revealed them. We do not believe because the proposition looks reasonable to us. We believe only on God's word.

Of course, this does not imply that a truth of faith can contradict reason; for truth, after all, is essentially one, and faith and reason both lead to this same truth. It may happen, however, that faith and reason seem to contradict each other because of the limitations of our intellect. Judged in the light of reason, the truths of faith may sometimes seem unreasonable. This is why St. Paul did not hesitate to speak of "the folly of the Cross."

What do we do in such cases of apparent contradiction? Do we try to defy God, relying on the light of reason, or do we humbly accept His word? It is easy to put ourselves to the test. Consider a situation in which the world's wisdom and Christian truths are opposed. Let us then ask ourselves which of these two alternatives we embrace.

Take, for example, the question of wealth. The world considers wealth as, beyond question, desirable. The world believes that riches are important enough to be worth a great deal of sacrifice. Christ, both by His preaching and by His life, taught that wealth was a grave danger which should ordinarily be avoided. In this instance then, faith and worldly reason are opposed. What do we do in such a case? Do we follow the world by striving for wealth, by bowing before the wealthy, and by teaching the love of wealth to the younger generation? Or do we believe in Christ? Do we accept His scale of values? Do we honor poverty and hold it up to ourselves as a desirable ideal?

The *New Social Catholicism* believes that it is our duty in this case, and in similar cases, to put reason aside and humbly to follow Christ. The *New Social Catholicism* believes, moreover, that this humble submission to Christ's teaching is not a handi-

cap, that it is, on the contrary, the only true wisdom, and that it is only through this wisdom that the world can be conquered and brought back to Christ, for "the foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the wise" (I Cor. 1:27).

The World

When we look at this modern world of ours, what do we see? If we examine it through the eyes of natural wisdom, we see, on the credit side a swift and amazing progress which has fundamentally altered our everyday life during the last century or two. We see an increase of wealth which has been astounding, and which even in the depth of depression permits the average man a standard of living far above anything of which his grandfather dreamed.

On the debit side, we see a malfunction of our economic system which has resulted in a series of depressions bringing great suffering to the poor. We see also a maldistribution of wealth which permits a few individuals an inordinate share of riches while many poor are undergoing real suffering.

If we look at the same time through the eyes of faith, we see the same facts, but in addition to these facts, we see something else. We see humanity as part of a great cosmic synthesis in which man has been given the duty of knowing God by faith and drawing close to Him by charity.

Some men are faithful to this divine mandate. These men exist, not as scattered individuals, but as a certain social unity spoken of in the New Testament as the Kingdom of God on earth, or under a different figure, as the Mystical Body of Christ. This kingdom has the Church as its visible aspect and the Church gives it its effective unity of action. By their membership in the Church, therefore, men work out their highest and truest destiny.

We see, also, other men who refuse to participate in this divine plan, men who reject the gift of faith, and who are not united to God by charity. These men also make up a social unit and this unit is spoken of in the New Testament as *the world*. The world is an infinitely malign force which opposes the Kingdom of God and which tries to destroy the work of Christ, the King. The unity of action by which the world

opposes the Kingdom of God is derived from the leadership of Satan. This extraordinary doctrine is very clearly stated in the New Testament wherein Satan is called the "prince of this world" (John 12:31, John 14:30, John 16:11), or "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4). There is, therefore, a Kingdom of Satan among men just as there is a Kingdom of God.

These two kingdoms are at war. The warfare is constant and unremitting. It is an essential warfare which can never cease as long as the two kingdoms exist side by side. Earthly states may fight and may later become reconciled, but the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan can never be reconciled, because their purposes are fundamentally opposed. The purpose of the Kingdom of God is to establish the supernatural life of grace in the hearts of all men. The purpose of the Kingdom of Satan is to destroy this supernatural life. Since these two purposes are irreconcilable, continuous warfare becomes inevitable. This constant struggle is the main theme of the Apocalypse, which discusses in obscure and figurative language the unceasing warfare between Christ and Satan, and the inevitable final victory of the former.

The warfare between the two kingdoms is primarily internal. The battleground is the individual conscience. Yet the struggle has a very definite visible and social aspect. Satan desires war, race hatred, class struggle, economic injustice, because these things are sins in themselves and because they breed still other sins. These phenomena, therefore, represent visible victories of the Kingdom of Satan in our modern world. On the other hand, the Kingdom of God desires peace, justice, and mutual charity, because these things are virtues in themselves and because they make it easy for a man to work out his supernatural destiny.

The struggle for social justice, then, may be looked upon as simply the outward and visible aspect, the social aspect, of this Apocalyptic warfare between Christ and Satan. The struggle in our daily press between truth and error, the struggle in the economic field between justice and avarice, the struggle in our legislatures between the selfish private interests of the few and the good of the many—all these things may be considered individual battles which go to make up the great warfare of which we have been speaking. As Catholics, therefore, we have

a double motive for loving justice and charity. First of all, we want them for the reason that any decent man wants them, namely, because a natural sense of fair play demands justice, and a natural feeling for one's fellow man demands kindness for the oppressed. We share these motives with everyone, but in addition to these, we have the overwhelmingly important motives furnished by our Faith. If we really believe that sin is for us the greatest evil, and if we really believe that charity is for us the greatest conceivable good, then we shall have motives of indescribable strength which urge us to fight for social justice and for charity. Let us, therefore, examine the present status of society as reflecting this Apocalyptic warfare between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan. Let us consider some specific problems that we may see what work is cut out for us in our struggle.

Economic Injustice

First of all, let us look at the warfare between the two kingdoms in the field of economics. Even a very superficial view is enough to convince one that wealth is distributed in a very unfair and very unequal manner. On the one hand, a comparatively small group of wealthy persons live in palatial mansions, surrounded by crowds of servants and enjoying vast financial resources which make it possible for them to gratify every whim. On the other hand, are the great mass of the poor—underfed, inadequately clothed, poorly housed, people who know no economic security. These latter have little political influence. They must depend largely on the good will of the more fortunate classes for their welfare.

Of course this difference is accentuated by depression, but even in so-called "normal" times, the maldistribution of wealth is such that a great many of the poor must suffer. This impression is confirmed by the results of careful scientific studies. One of the most careful and most recent of them says: "If \$2,000 may be regarded as sufficient, at 1929 prices, to supply the basic necessities for a family, we find that 16 million families or almost 60 per cent of the total, were below this income level."*

*America's capacity to produce and America's capacity to consume; a digest of the studies made by the Brookings Institution, Washington, D. C., under a grant from the Maurice and Laura Falk Foundation of Pittsburgh, Pa.

Why is it that we have so many persons living below this minimum level? We know it is not because our country is poor. It is rather on account of the unfair distribution of our country's wealth which we have just mentioned. "It appears that 0.1 per cent of the families at the top received practically as much as 42 per cent of the families at the bottom of the scale."*

Pope Pius XI does not hesitate to draw the obvious conclusion: "The immense number of propertyless wage earners on the one hand, and the superabundant riches of the fortunate few on the other, is an unanswerable argument that the earthly goods so abundantly produced in this age of industrialism are far from rightly distributed and equitably shared among the various classes of men."**

All this represents a victory for the Kingdom of Satan. It does so, first of all, because this economic injustice is a sin and must therefore be just as odious to us as any other sin. It is a victory for the Kingdom of Satan also because it is a constant source of temptation. The avarice of worldly men is stimulated by the sight of the luxurious lives of the rich. They are stimulated to seek such riches for themselves. On the other hand, this unfair distribution of wealth is a temptation to the poor, inclining them towards class hatred and making them ready to listen to every agitator who preaches violence and class warfare.

Our present selfish capitalism is also a victory for the Kingdom of Satan because it makes it difficult for a Christian to lead a decent life. We do not say that it is impossible for the poor to live lives of virtue under present conditions. Indeed, the great saints profited by adversity. St. Bernadette Soubirous lived in the midst of the most sordid poverty and the suffering involved led her to sanctity. Yet this is not ordinarily the case. Many—perhaps most—men are hardened by suffering. It takes a hero to accept the cross voluntarily. It therefore comes about that an unsettled condition of society in which poverty and social unrest are common, is not the ideal environment in which to work out one's eternal destiny.

To the sincere Christian there can be only one answer to this challenge. We cannot tolerate the existing economic injustice.

*Ibid.

** Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*.

This is not a matter of choice; it is a matter of duty. We have no more right to be indifferent to it than we have to tolerate any other sort of sin. It is our strict duty, therefore, not only as citizens, but also as Christians, to strive to bring about a more decent economic order.

Race Injustice

Consider another problem. Roughly, ten per cent of the population of this country is made up of Negroes. These persons are living under a series of handicaps not imposed by nature but placed upon their shoulders by the other 90 per cent of the population. Let us recall what some of these burdens are.

First of all, there is the economic problem. The Negro finds that many of the more desirable occupations are closed to him. It is difficult, for example, for the Negro workman to rise to the ranks of the skilled laborer because these more desirable jobs are usually controlled by labor unions which, for the most part, do not encourage Negro membership even when they do not actively oppose it. Within given occupations, the Negro is forced to accept an unfair wage differential, which means that he receives a lower rate of pay for the same achievement for which the white wage earner is better paid.

In times of unemployment, he suffers more than the white worker. A number of studies have shown that during a depression the percentage of unemployment in the two races differs widely, the Negro, of course, showing the higher percentage.

In business or in the professions the same state of affairs obtains as among the wage earners. That is to say, it is difficult for a Negro business man to make satisfactory progress in his work. The Negro lawyer is handicapped by the prejudice of white judges. The Negro medical student finds some of the best medical schools closed to him, and the Negro physician cannot practice in many of our best hospitals.

These things are more or less familiar to us, but in certain backward regions of the country, still more shocking conditions exist. It is widely accepted among sociologists that practical peonage exists among Negro workers in certain areas. The Negro is still predominantly agricultural, and the plight of the Negro farmer is particularly serious. The 1930 census showed

that seventy-nine per cent of these farmers were tenants, and of this seventy-nine per cent over one-half were share croppers. Anyone who has read of the truly shocking condition of this latter class will realize how serious this handicap can be.

Americans boast of their free public school system, and of the equal educational opportunities which are supposed to be open to every child. It is rather shocking, therefore, to learn from McCuiston's study that among eleven Southern States which kept separate records of the public school outlay for white and colored children, while the annual outlay averaged \$44.31 per white child, it amounted to only \$12.57 per Negro child.

These figures are for the eleven states as a whole. As we examine individual instances, still more shocking conditions are revealed. Mississippi, for example, spent \$45.34 per year for the education of each white child and only \$5.45 for each Negro child. In separate counties, the results are even more amazing. For one county in Alabama, the figures were found to be \$75.50 and \$1.82 respectively.

The ideal that every citizen should be judged impartially by the courts is an ideal which is very sacred in American tradition. We boast that every man, regardless of his wealth, race, social position, or political influence, is judged with absolute equality by the courts. It is rather shocking to realize how far this ideal is from being realized in regard to the Negro. Let us not think in the present connection of the Scottsboro case. Such shocking miscarriages of justice can happen to white as well as to Negro defendants. What is vastly more significant in the long run than a few sensational instances is the fact that the Negro is arrested on a slighter provocation than the white man, that he is defended by poorer lawyers, and sentenced with more severity. One recent study showed, for example, that the same crimes drew on an average a sentence which was one-third longer in the case of the Negro than in the case of the white defendant.*

Finally, consider the social effect of this unfair attitude. Modern society has created an environment in which everything conspires to keep the Negro in subjection and to convince him that he is somehow inferior.

There can be only one conclusion to draw from these facts.

*C. H. McCord quoted in Weatherford and Johnson's *Race Relations*, pp. 431-32.

They represent a tremendous challenge for us. They represent an important and clear-cut victory for the Kingdom of Satan. We cannot tolerate these conditions and call ourselves followers of Christ, Who said, "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples if you have love one for another" (John 13:35).

War

Let us consider another great evil—war. The cost of the last war was simply staggering. It involved a loss of human life which will probably never be known accurately. The best available estimate sets the total deaths at 8,538,315.* The cost in terms of money was also most shocking. Prof. E. L. Bogart has estimated in a study made for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, that the total direct costs of the World War amounted to \$186,333,637,097 and the total indirect costs to \$151,612,542,560—a grand total of \$337,946,179,657.

Probably the ultimate tragedy of war, however, is something more intangible than this loss of life and of money. There is, first of all, the cost in terms of human suffering; the suffering of the soldiers at the front and in hospitals, the suffering of the wounded, the blind, and the maimed, and the sufferings of the soldiers' families. Add to these the inconsolable pangs of bereavement suffered by the survivors. Consider the ruined plans of young men whose lives were destroyed in the war, or diverted into other channels. Consider the loss to human progress, which was slowed up by the war. Consider, finally, the moral evils; the hatred, the distrust and the debauchery which the war generated. The World War was a gigantic catastrophe in which there were involved all the things which men hold most valuable, from the highest to the lowest.

If the World War were justified by a higher good, then it would not have been so completely evil, but what good can the present world show as the result of this titanic conflict? The war was fought to make the world safe for democracy, and democracy is vanishing. The war was fought to end war, and the situation in Europe is most tense and critical at the present moment.

No theologian doubts the theoretical possibility of a just war.

*Figures compiled by the U. S. War Department and given in the *World Almanac*, 1936, page 939.

The conditions necessary for a just war are well known. But there is grave doubt as to whether these conditions can be always justified today in actual practice. The most recent Catholic study on the point concludes that however often just wars have been waged in the past, the conditions being now essentially different, "modern war cannot be justified in the light of the traditional Catholic ethic of war"* while the *Integrated Program Of Social Order*, prepared by the Committee on Social Order of the Jesuit Provinces of the United States, Canada and Mexico, declares that "though a just war may conceivably be waged in strict defense, yet today the conditions for a just war seldom, if ever, need exist."

War—particularly modern war—is a major victory for the Kingdom of Satan. Are we willing to take action against this evil? Of course we are willing to do painless things. We are willing to pass vague resolutions. We are willing to talk about the beauty of peace. But do we want peace sincerely enough to renounce exaggerated nationalism? We cannot love peace effectively unless we are willing to make sacrifices for peace. We cannot really love peace unless we are willing to renounce exaggerated nationalism. "Love of country becomes merely an occasion, an added incentive to grave injustice when true love of country is debased to the condition of an extreme nationalism, when we forget that all men are brothers and members of the same great human family, that other nations have an equal right with us both to life and to prosperity."*

How shall we respond to this challenge?

The Totalitarian Revolution

We have mentioned three great evils of the modern world—economic injustice, race hatred, and war. These are not the only evils of our present society, but they are serious enough to convince any thinking man that something must be done. Certainly our modern socio-economic system and our modern system of international relations must be vastly changed before we approach the Christian ideal. Many people feel that our present

*John K. Ryan: *Modern war and basic ethics*. Washington, D. C. The Catholic University of America, 1933, p. 104.

*Pope Pius XI, Encyclical, *Ubi arcano Dei*.

system is breaking down, that the modern democratic state is not able to cope with the situation, and therefore that radical social change will be forced upon us.

Under these circumstances, there are those who argue that the state should be strengthened, that it should have power for a more effective control of the lives of the people. This has resulted in a movement towards the totalitarian state, that is to say, towards a form of civil society in which the state is exalted at the expense of the individual. In the last twenty years, the totalitarian state has appeared in Europe under two forms—Communism and Fascism.

Communitic Tyranny

In November, 1917, the Russian people revolted against the tyranny of the Czars. It was a proletarian revolt—the rise of the underprivileged workers against their oppressors. After this revolt, there was established a typical form of the totalitarian state. The workers not only seized the Government, but they arrogated to themselves all power. Lenin said: "Comrades, laboring people, you are now the state's supreme power. From now on, your Soviets are the organs of the state, with full power to decide and to act. Make them strong. We must maintain the strictest revolutionary order, and suppress mercilessly all attempts at anarchy. We must establish the most rigid control over production. Imprison and turn over to the revolutionary tribunals all those who injure the cause of the people."

In March, 1922, another form of totalitarian state appeared. In that month Mussolini and the Fascists marched to Rome. It was a psychological victory rather than a military victory, but this show of force was sufficient to overawe all opposition, and Mussolini was installed in power as a dictator. He proceeded to develop a form of totalitarianism, in which the state assumed complete direction of the economic life.

In January, 1933, Fascism triumphed in Germany. In that month, Hitler was appointed Chancellor. Again the same phenomena of the totalitarian state appeared: dictatorship, economic control, organized propaganda, the suppression of private initiative.

Totalitarian Failure

The totalitarian state, then, is one possible solution for the intolerable social problems of the present day. It is one solution; but is it a good solution? Does it really alleviate the evils which we have been discussing? To answer this question, let us consider the three evils of economic injustice, race hatred and war, and ask ourselves whether or not the modern totalitarian states have alleviated them.

Consider first the economic problem. The Soviet government is sacrificing everything—liberty, individual rights, human lives—to make real progress in the gigantic task of transforming Russia from an agricultural nation to a modern industrial state. The First Five Year Plan, which began in 1928, was partly successful, although it failed in regard to transportation, steel and coal.

Italy and Germany, on the other hand, do not seem to have attained any great measure of economic recovery in return for Fascism. In spite of official propaganda, it seems certain that unemployment is still a very serious issue in both Italy and Germany. In spite of the limitation of private profits to six per cent, the real wages of working men have fallen.

If the totalitarian state has been only partially successful in the economic field, it has certainly been strikingly unsuccessful in regard to the race issue; in fact, it has been thoroughly characteristic of totalitarianism that minority groups have had to submit to savage repression.

The best known instances of such race injustice is the persecution of the Jews in Germany. The Jews have been deprived of the right of holding public office, they have been expelled from the professions, and their businesses have been ruined by boycott. Finally, the Nuremberg law of September 1935 deprived Jews of citizenship, and added other disabilities.

The Russian government, too, has been unwilling to tolerate minority groups. The persecution of religion is the most striking instance of this, but it is by no means an isolated instance. The summary execution without public trials of scores of persons after the Kirov Assassination, the forced labor of political prisoners, and, most striking of all, the deliberate starving of literally millions of peasants who refused to conform themselves to the

Soviet agricultural program are proofs that minority groups cannot expect justice in Russia.

The oppression has been perhaps less acute in Italy, but in Italy the secret police are ever at work and political prisoners continue to be isolated on the Island of Lipari.

The severest indictment of the totalitarian state, however, is perhaps its militaristic orientation. Not only do the dictatorship countries not help to relieve the tense international situation, but they are precisely the ones who are most responsible for it.

We must conclude, therefore, that judged by results on these three problems, the modern totalitarian states have failed. They have not brought about any striking alleviation of the economic situation, and on the other hand have repressed minority groups with cruelty, and have constituted a major threat to the peace of the world. In addition, they have created new problems. They have destroyed democratic governments, wiped out academic freedom, and abolished liberty of speech. We are forced to conclude that the totalitarian state, judged by any fair standard, has been a failure. It is founded on the utterly immoral principles of class, race, and national prejudice.

The Personalist Revolution

We Catholics have no more right to be satisfied with modern society than have the Communists and Fascists. Like them, we are shocked at the evils of the present regime. In the words of the present Pope: "Unbridled ambition for domination has succeeded the desire for gain; the whole economic life has become hard, cruel and relentless in a ghastly measure. Furthermore, the intermingling and scandalous confusing of the duties and offices of civil authority and of economics have produced crying evils and have gone so far as to degrade the majesty of the State."*

Like the totalitarians, then, we feel called upon to revolt, but our revolution is of a different sort from theirs. The totalitarians preach brute force. They believe in revolution by violence. We, although we admit that violence can be justified under certain circumstances, nevertheless prefer peaceful means. It is a peaceful revolution which we preach. The totalitarians would exalt

*Pope Pius XI, Encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno*.

the state. We, on the other hand, would exalt the duties and rights of each person as a human being. Ours is a philosophy of personalism.*

The *New Social Catholicism* preaches a personalist revolution. This means that we believe that any reconstruction of society will be false unless it be based upon Christian principles, unless each of us practices the Christian social virtues. The *New Social Catholicism* believes that reform must begin by the personal practice of these virtues. The personalist revolution means that Catholics must reform their lives by means of grace, and that this must spread through society, until all are reformed. In the words of the Holy Father: "If we examine matters diligently and thoroughly, we shall perceive clearly that this longed-for social reconstruction must be preceded by a profound renewal of the Christian spirit, from which multitudes engaged in industry in every country have unhappily departed. Otherwise, all our endeavors will be futile, and our social edifice will be built, not upon a rock, but upon shifting sand."*

Political Action

When we talk of personalist action, we do not mean that political action need be excluded. The state has certain definite obligations in the socio-economic sphere. Spiritual reform is not, indeed, the function of the state, but even in this respect the state can help by providing the environment in which such reform can take place.

We Catholics as good citizens are bound to see that the state fulfills these duties. We cannot be indifferent face-to-face with bad government any more than we can remain indifferent in the presence of any other type of immorality. Bad government is sin in our eyes and we have a strict duty to help abolish it. Therefore political action may become a duty.

While these things are true, we must nevertheless recognize certain deficiencies in the technique of political action if we are to be realistic. We must take into account first of all our lack of numbers. After all, this is twentieth-century America. It is not

*Mounier, Emmanuel: *Revolution Personaliste Et Communautaire*. Paris, Fernand Aubier, 1935. 413 p.

*Pope Pius XI, Encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno*.

the Middle Ages. We Catholics are only a small fraction of the population. Our political influence cannot be very great. To speak more accurately, we can hope for political success only when others are willing to rally to our aid. We can hope for this support from others only when the measures which we propose are such as to attract outside support.

There are still other handicaps. There is, for example, the fact that important differences of opinion exist among us Catholics. This does not imply that we disagree on principles, but there is considerable disagreement in regard to specific measures. Seldom is any bill presented to Congress which does not find Catholics on both sides, and this statement applies not merely to the individual layman, but even to our leaders.

An additional handicap is furnished by our insistence on purity of means. We are not willing to succeed if success involves sacrifice of principles. Our enemies, unfortunately, are not so scrupulous. The selfish politicians whom we oppose do not hesitate to use bribery, duplicity, even blackmail.

Finally there is a sphere which lies altogether outside the bonds of political action, and this sphere is precisely the one which seems most important to us. I refer to the sphere of internal moral reform. It is possible by legislative action to bring about some external conformity to law; but force cannot bring about internal assent—a fact which was vividly illustrated by the history of the prohibition amendment.

Catholics cannot be satisfied until all men are bound together by a most close bond of charity. This is something which neither legislative action nor political acumen nor administrative genius can bring about. The essence of our program, then, is unattainable by political action.

This does not mean that we oppose political action. The Church believes in social legislation and the passage of such legislation implies the use of political means; but although we believe in political action, we believe much more strongly in personalist action. Our emphasis must always lie here.

The Technique of Testimony

If Catholic social principles are to be successful, we must convert others to our point of view. If we are to convert others, we must first give testimony of our own faith. Hence, the importance of the technique of testimony.

A prominent element in our program of personalist action will, therefore, be an effort to bring our principles to the attention of the general public, to make converts so that the Kingdom of God will gain the necessary strength to make itself felt in contemporary society. By what method shall we do this?

Worldly prudence would suggest that we use the standard methods of organized propaganda, the press, the platform, and the radio. We should anxiously solicit the approval of wealthy and prominent men, feeling that the prestige of these big names would add to the success of our program. By skilful publicity and by advertising methods, we should force our attention upon the general public. Then we should be in a position to play the game of pressure politics in the legislatures.

Methods such as these certainly need not be wrong. Indeed, we ought to use any type of publicity which is innocent in itself and which serves to make the Kingdom of God more widely known. And yet, we must recognize the fact that these same propaganda devices are not precisely the methods of the saints. The *New Social Catholicism* insists that everything be viewed from the eyes of faith. What then, is the type of publicity which a supernatural view of things would suggest?

One way of answering this question is by reading the lives of the saints. To be specific, consider the methods of St. Paul. No one, perhaps, has been equally successful with this great hero in the task of giving testimony to the truth.

We find, first of all, that St. Paul did not rely on the tricks of the orator. He began, that is to say, by renouncing the method which would look most promising to worldly prudence. "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not in loftiness of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of Christ" (I Cor. 2:1).

In the second place, St. Paul expected and welcomed suffering. He seemed to feel that easy methods were bound to fail. He

believed that suffering had a value of its own. A necessary condition of success, then was the willingness to suffer and give himself for the cause which he loved. "I most gladly will spend and be spent myself for your souls" (2 Cor. 12:15).

A third condition of success was that St. Paul acknowledged his own inability to bring about, by his own powers, the results he desired. "I please myself in my infirmities . . . For when I am weak, then am I powerful" (2 Cor. 12:10). By renouncing himself he thus became a fit instrument to be used by God for a supernatural mission. His success was something added to him, not something drawn out of his own inner powers. "My speech and my preaching was not in the persuasive words of human wisdom, but in the showing of the Spirit and power" (1 Cor. 2:4).

This has been the technique of the saints in all the ages. They have felt vividly that the propagation of the Faith was a divine work, a work which could not be accomplished by their own efforts. It was God's work and the function of the evangelist was to renounce his own self-confidence and to place himself in the hands of God to be used as God pleased. It is the sincere belief of the *New Social Catholicism* that our doctrine can be preached most successfully by the use of means such as these.

The personalist revolution can succeed, then, only if we care enough about its success to be willing to adopt hard methods, methods which will cause us suffering. This is the price we must pay. We must be willing to work unremittingly, yet not to accept credit for our toil. We must be willing to undergo physical suffering and social ostracism without feeling that we are acting heroically. The question remains, do we dare to adopt such methods?

If we do dare to use these methods, then we shall be willing to get out on the street and take our doctrine directly to the people. This involves street oratory, the passing out of hand-bills, perhaps picketing. Wherever there is a crisis, we must be on hand. Labor troubles, the distress of the farmer, the presence of vice and immorality, all these call for our active interest. Shall we be afraid?

It is our duty to carry the fight into the 'enemies' camp. We cannot be afraid of scorn, ridicule and violence, because Christ predicted these things and told us that we would be failures if

we did not meet them. The Kingdom of Satan is able to command heroic loyalty. In every age, there have been soldiers willing to suffer and to give their lives in Satanic wars. If Satan can command such devotion from his followers, shall we withhold our loyalty from Christ, our King?

Non-Participation

Our battle against the Kingdom of Satan will not be successful unless we are willing to break with Satan. As long as we retain a secret loyalty to the god of this world, we cannot be loyal to Christ. There can be no compromise between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan, and there must be no compromise within our hearts.

Our duty, then, is to break sharply with the world, the Kingdom of Satan, and to conform ourselves definitely to the Kingdom of Christ. We must be willing to love what Christ loved and to hate what He hated so that men may see the beauty of His doctrine exemplified in our lives. This means, in other words, that we must be willing to forego participation in many worldly activities. In the life of every man who believes in the personalist revolution, there must be a definite amount of such non-participation. This has been the traditional method of the saints in all ages. This is the method which is exemplified in the lives of the religious who break with the world sharply and in a literal sense. The layman is seldom able to practice non-participation to this degree, but nevertheless, he must in some sense die to the world if he is to succeed as a Christian personalist.

Looking through the eyes of faith, let us ask what Christ's standard involves. What specific forms of non-participation must the personalist practice? In order to answer this question, let us consider the technique of non-participation in regard to the three social evils which we have already discussed; namely, economic injustice, race hatred, and war.

The economic teaching of Christ is very clear. Poverty, where possible, is to be preferred to wealth. This does not mean that wealth is necessarily sinful, although wealth can very easily be an occasion of sin. It means simply that wealth is a dangerous thing, and that the Christian should avoid it where possible.

Christ Himself was literally poor. The overwhelming number of the saints were literally poor. The few exceptions to this statement were saints who, though having wealth, showed a heroic abstention from it.

The *New Social Catholicism* believes that these examples should be taken seriously, and that we ought to be willing to limit ourselves severely in our mode of life. Why do we desire spacious mansions? The housing needs of the average family are after all very modest. Why need we imitate the latest fashions in our manner of dress. Why not be content with clothing which is warm, modest and becoming? In our amusements, why need we look with envy to the millionaire playboys who figure in our newspapers? Are they after all, worthy models for a Christian?

Volunteer poverty ought to be an ideal for the layman as well as for the religious. This does not mean, of course, that the layman can practice poverty in precisely the same way that the religious does, but it does mean that wealth is a danger for every one, and that it is just as necessary for the layman to avoid this danger as for the religious. The ideal is, therefore, that we should all limit our expenditures to our real needs. This means, also, that we shall not rely on wealth in our propaganda. St. Francis of Assisi conquered the world by renouncing wealth and holding up poverty as an ideal. The same road to success is open to us.

Since Christ made no invidious racial distinction, why should we do so? The only answer seems to be that if we follow Christ, we must free ourselves from race prejudice and from practices based on race prejudice. For us in America this means principally the renunciation of prejudice against the Negro, although anti-Semitism seems to be growing rapidly enough to constitute another and separate danger.

The *New Social Catholicism* means that there should be no race prejudice in our churches, in our personal friendships, or in our economic relations. This does not mean that we condemn as a mortal sin every conceivable form of discrimination. It means that we consider it more in the spirit of Christ that these things should not be.

The Catholic recognizes—as we have said—the theory of a

just war, but he recognizes also the serious and imminent danger of unjust war at the present time. His personalism, therefore, leads him to abstain from all acts which might involve him in the current anti-Christian militarism. He will abstain, therefore, from national prejudices and the practices based thereon, exactly as he abstains from race prejudice. He will refuse, also, to participate in excessive nationalism. He will refuse also to participate in militarism. This means that he cannot lay undue stress on military glory and he will refuse to read any and all newspapers which exalt militarism and stir up international hatred.

Grace

Social Catholicism is absolutely supernatural. That is to say, it is a work of grace. Therefore, purely human means are not sufficient. No amount of heroism, no amount of human effort, can bring about a result in the supernatural order; hence comes the importance of the means of grace in the economy of the *New Social Catholicism*.

In the eyes of the *New Social Catholicism*, the cloistered saints have a social significance just as great as do the active saints. In fact, the importance of the active saints flows not from their activity, but from the inner life of grace which underlies that activity.

The *New Social Catholicism*, therefore, emphasizes the importance of all forms of prayer from the most elementary vocal prayer to the highest forms of contemplation. It emphasizes also the fact that good works are themselves prayers and gain much of their social value from this fact.

As a means of grace the sacraments become immensely important, along with prayer, properly so-called. The Sacrament of Baptism makes one a citizen of the Kingdom of God. The Sacrament of Confirmation makes him a soldier of God. The Sacrament of Penance reconciles him to the kingdom after he has committed a moral misdemeanor or felony. Holy Orders provides officers for the kingdom, and Matrimony perpetuates it. Extreme Unction prepares the dying soul for citizenship in the Kingdom of God in Heaven, the Church Triumphant.

All the sacraments are important, but the Holy Eucharist has by far the greatest importance; for it is the special effect of this

sacrament to increase charity. It, therefore, makes us especially able to perform our social duties. How often do we look with jealous eyes to that perfect little community of Christians who lived in Apostolic times and who exemplified so beautifully in their lives in the social doctrines of Christ! The *New Social Catholicism* longs to return to this happy state and it heeds the words of Pope Leo XIII "If in the record of the Church it is deservedly reckoned to the credit of its first ages that the *multitude of the believers had but one heart and one soul* (1 Cor. 10:17), there can be no shadow of doubt that this immense blessing was due to their frequent meetings at the divine table."*

If we are to restore the social ideal of Christ, then, we shall do so by frequent Communion.

If the *New Social Catholicism* is to succeed, there must be a great awakening of the spirit of prayer. Prayer accomplishes wonders. Prayer gives us strength inexplicable. If we are to overcome the unbelieving world, which so outnumbers us, it will only be by such supernatural power.

The Liturgy

The *New Social Catholicism* has shown extreme interest in the Liturgy. In view of the facts cited above, this is not surprising. The Liturgy is the Church's official prayer. The Liturgy enshrines the sacraments. The Liturgy reaches its highest point in the sacrifice of the Mass. The Liturgy, therefore, is our natural means of seeking the grace which we need. This is especially true in regard to the grace which society needs, for the Liturgy is a social prayer, a type of prayer offered by the Church as a social unit.

The Divine Office and all the sacraments are worthy of our devotion as methods of social action, but all this worship finds its perfect culmination in the Mass. This is the supreme Liturgical act. This is the perfect worship of God by which the Kingdom of God on earth acknowledges His divinity, and offers her thanks. This is the supreme way by which the Kingdom of God on earth can attain to that spotless and shining purity which is otherwise so hard to attain in this wicked world. The Mass, too,

*Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical, *Mirae caritatis*.

is the perfect prayer of intercession by which we can obtain those supernatural helps which we need, for ourselves and for others.

To gain the maximum benefit from the Mass, we must participate actively and we must participate socially; for the Mass is a social act. This active social participation is visible. When the congregation sings the Mass, or when we participate in a *Missa recitata*. These things are valuable as a visible demonstration of the spirit which animates us.

Participation, too, should be active and social in an even deeper sense. The Mass is the renewal of the immolation of Christ. The self-immolation of Christ was for men. To participate actively in the Mass, then, to join in the act of Christ therein, we ought to be willing to immolate ourselves for others, and in doing so, to express in a supreme manner our union with Christ and with one another.

The Mystical Body

The active union which subsists between Christ and ourselves and between each of us and his neighbors is explained in the New Testament under a variety of figures. Of these figures the one which has most captured the imagination of the *New Social Catholicism* has been the figure of the Mystical Body. "We, being many, are one body in Christ" (Romans 12:5). In this passage and in many other passages, the fact is expressed that we are united in a most intimate manner with Christ, the Head of the Mystical Body, and with our fellow members.

This unity depends upon the fact that in dying for us, Christ merited for us the grace which is the very essence of our supernatural life. Just as a living body is inconceivable unless it is united with the head, so the supernatural life of the members of the Church is inconceivable except in so far as they are united with Christ, the Source of this life.

This results in a most close and intimate union among ourselves. "If one member suffer anything, all the members suffer with it; or if one member glory, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Cor. 12:26). We cannot, therefore, be indifferent either to the joys or to the sorrows of our fellow beings. If we attempt to do so, we are renouncing the doctrine of the Mystical Body.

This doctrine is an inspiration for all our social action. It

would not be too much to say that all our Sociology is merely an expression of the doctrine of the Mystical Body, an attempt to exemplify the Mystical Body in our practice. This implies mutual love and mutual solicitude. It implies that members of different races must be conscious of their intimate and fundamental unity. It implies that our care for others must not be limited to our own state or nation. This is our ideal.

Face to face with the danger of the totalitarian state, we need not be afraid. Let Communism or Fascism marshal its legions against us. It may repress some of the external manifestations of the Mystical Body. Yet the Body's internal strength cannot be crushed. In the early days of the Church, the whole power of imperial Rome was arrayed against the Mystical Body. Yet in that strange contest between brute force and human passion on the one hand and the grace of Christ on the other, the victory belonged to the Mystical Body.

We too can face the future without fear, confident in the supernatural strength which flows into every member of the Mystical Body from Christ our Head, the inexhaustible source of all our strength and all our merits.



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