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VOICE

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VOICE

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The Church's Role in Politics

The debate is on: From Sydney to Portsmouth, to Maynooth and Belfast (to mention only those places to which reference will be made in this article) the debate on the true role of the Church in politics is on. As an article in *The Sydney Morning Herald* for April 12th, says, "For some two centuries now the secularisation of politics has been almost an article of faith in the Western World." When this paper started publication a year ago and began to be circulated in thousands to the bishops and clergy, outside the Roman Catholic Church (to which we do not adhere), it was still virtually so regarded. When the Bishop of Portsmouth in his broadcast sermon from Portsmouth Cathedral on Easter Day, gave most emphasis to his statement that "Christianity is concerned with politics" he was voicing a new determination abroad in the Church, but a determination which is still ill-informed.

The true role of the Church in politics is in doubt, it is in doubt in the minds of all who think that right should not or cannot prevail in politics, that is to say, a majority of the ordained and lay members of the churches, (in fact, all those who think that religion has nothing to do with politics). But the true role of the Church in politics is not in any doubt in the minds of those who think that right can and should prevail in politics.

The true role of the Church in politics is *not to exercise* power, but it is concerned with *how* power is exercised. And that is the answer to the prominent Anglican layman who wrote the article entitled "Should The Church Play a Part in Our Political Life?" in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, and we believe that the writer, Mr. Leicester Webb, is quite correct in saying "if the Anglican Church tries to stand aside from politics it will suffer the fate of all institutions which evade their responsibilities."

And, for the reason stated above, when two days later at a meeting presided over by the Primate of Australia, the Bishop-elect of Gippsland, said "the nation needs... the application of Christian ideals and values to its social, economic and, particularly, its political life.

"I do not envisage the formation of a Church political

party, and I hope that we shall be saved from that grave error of strategy." We are certain that he was right—so far as he went. Like the Bishop of Portsmouth, and the writer of the article in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, the Bishop of Gippsland has gone only so far. Far enough, perhaps, to make the Power politicians and the political Press wary, but not worried. For the simple reason that as yet they have merely set foot on the political stage; they have not uttered one word of guidance to the electorate, to those millions of men and women whose desire is to act as Christians, and who by withholding their political power could prevent its misuse by those political puppets who at present recognise their master's voice as coming only from behind the money bags of the International Financiers which control political parties and Press.

But, on the same day that the Bishop of Gippsland was speaking, the leader writer in the *Belfast Telegraph* was writing in angry alarm against the Bishop of Cork, who agrees with the Bishops of Portsmouth and Gippsland that Christianity is concerned with politics, but he is not content with vague generalities. He has not only indicated what should restrain the exercise of political power, but in one important sphere, with the other Roman Catholic bishops in Eire, he has given concrete, specific advice to those whose power can restrain politicians. This is what the Bishop of Cork had to say, as reported in the *Belfast Telegraph*. He was addressing the tenth congress of Christus Rex at Killarney:

"The Church is the final arbiter of right and wrong even in political matters. In other spheres the State might for its own good reasons ignore the advice of the experts, but in faith and morals it might not.

"Thus it was that when the bishops in this country took a stand not so long ago on the Health Bill, they were not acting as a mere pressure group; they were not exercising the democratic right they undoubtedly had as citizens to make representations directly to the Government.

"They intervened on the higher ground that the Church is the divinely appointed guardian and interpreter of the moral law and that the proposed Bill was in certain essential respects at variance with that law, so that it was their duty as bishops and officers of the Church to oppose the Bill.

"At the same time certain elements not noted for their sympathy with things Irish or Catholic raised the cry that they were being ruled from Maynooth rather than from Leinster House, as if heeding the voice of the Church in a matter of ultimate principle was not in order in an overwhelmingly Catholic country.

"You have a natural duty to provide yourself for your own health and that of your dependents; you have no right if you are a Minister of State or a deputy to inaugurate a so-called free health service and make medicine, in effect, a State monopoly. A socialised health service, therefore, is

at once a wrong to the average person and a wrong for the persons introducing it."

A monopoly of any kind is wrong because it destroys freedom of association, and thus contravenes the natural law. A socialised health service is wrong, not only because it is a monopoly; but because also it removes from the individual person the *responsibility*, in any personal sense, of providing the means of paying for the benefits of a health service, while giving him *power* of access to those benefits. Power is divorced from responsibility; and that is against the natural law.

If it is argued that the economic or financial system has in the past, or does in the present, leave large numbers of people without the financial power to pay for health service benefits, then to that argument there are two clear answers. One is that the economic system is obviously capable of providing the physical benefits, because, though in an inefficient way, it is doing so under the Health Service; and the other is that the principles of the natural law, *i.e.* of justice, should be applied to the financial system. As it is, the natural law has not been applied to the financial system, and has now been abandoned in the medical profession and in the provision of health benefits. An organism of private responsible practitioners having a personal, *organic* relation with responsible individual patients has been destroyed; and in its place has been substituted a monster monopoly *organisation*, in which personal responsibility has been gravely weakened in every way.

The Moral Law.

There can be only one role for the Church in politics, and that as the Bishop of Cork has said, is to be arbiter, by virtue of moral not physical force, of right and wrong. And when we say 'right' we mean the *natural* way things work, the way they are ordered by God to work; as distinct from how they so frequently are *actually* made to work. In the latter case they are actuated by unworthy motives—motives of power, not power for self-development, but power for power's sake.

Etymologically the word 'moral' is associated with the word 'wrath'—the wrath of God. And the association of 'moral' with the word 'law' is an intimation that the law of God has sanctions, sanctions which are applied automatically and inexorably, if over a protracted period of time, when His law is broken.

Man has *power* of choice, and it is of the nature of this power in human nature that it can be misused to obtain forbidden fruits. But ultimately the individual person so misusing his power suffers the sanctions of the moral law. When power so misused by a single person is personal to himself, the harm is not only limited, the connection between cause and effect is easily identified. Quite a different state of affairs exists when the power of individual men is collectivised, as it is in wrong forms of association and social structure, so that one man or small group of men are enabled to use not only their own power, but that of the collectivised group, for wrong ends, ends contrary to the natural law. It is precisely this latter state of affairs, in an ever more aggravated and extreme form, which the world faces today. It is the immoral use of political power, power used in contravention of the natural law.

No clergyman would deny that Christianity is concerned

with the personal actions of men and women in the use of their power of choice; there are limitations within which it has to be restrained, and there we have the Ten Commandments to guide us. Within those limits man has a natural, inalienable right, given him by Creation, to develop his conscious individually according to a sovereignty of choice immanent in his being, with all the help of educational instruments found in an enlightened Christian Society which renders unto God what is due. But the very basis of this moral order, which is freedom of choice within the *natural* law, is destroyed if Caesar, misusing power which he has collectivised by a perversion of the moral order, makes financial, economic and political arrangements and orders which destroy either material or spiritual freedom of choice. The actuation of such a society is always the same: it is the love of power for its own sake, and if unchecked it leads, as it has done, to the creation of a machine and a mental climate which dominates those it controls and also those "in control" of it. The separation of responsibility in any adequate sense from the use of power, and the distortion of information which accompanies it, leads to a complicated state of society in which only a few are able to identify cause and effect.

The attempt to set up an international order, through World Government, on this immoral basis is sheer lunacy, and can only lead to an unparalleled, fiendish tyranny, under whatever name.

What church or clergyman, then, can deny that political power, as well as private, personal power, has to be bound back to the moral law? And what church or clergyman will deny their responsibility to Society to pronounce upon the moral law and prophesy against the misuse of political power in contravention of the moral law, whether by the humblest, most ignorant elector, or the cleverest, most ambitious politician, financier or economist? For it is on the Church, untrammelled and uncorrupted and (as it should be) uncontrolled by temporal power, which Society in its every individual person relies for guidance in the identification of cause and effect where the moral law is concerned. It is the responsibility of the Church. If conditions are such that Christian bodies cannot act in consort, then they must act separately.

Correct Procedure for Action.

In his article in *The Sydney Morning Herald* Mr. Leicester Webb says "it is always hard to exert political influence without becoming interested in power for its own sake, and thereby becoming corrupted by power." He cites what has happened to an important section of the Roman Catholic Church in Australia, concerning which we have had independent reports friendly to the Roman Catholic Church and far removed from Mr. Webb, and which confirm his view. He also cites what has happened to the worker-Priest movement in France; and he might have cited the Catholic political action parties in Europe. These are all examples of the wrong way for the Church to act.

It is not the business of the Church to identify itself with any political action or pressure group; but it most emphatically is its duty to pronounce upon the morality of the means which they pursue to attain those ends.

There are "right" ends and "wrong" ends, as there are "right" means and "wrong" means; and it is the tend-

ncy of power to corrupt. It is the tendency of Power, in the persons of those who exercise it or who would exercise it, in order to retain or gain it to compromise objects and to compromise means, and thus to sacrifice truth. It is a continuous tendency, and it can lead all one way; but only if there is not a pull the other way. It is the business of the Church to provide the pull the other way—the pull against the temptations of power. This it can only do if it stands like a rock, uncompromising and incorruptible, a stronghold of integrity which cannot be pulled, but which exerts a pull. At the head of this paper is the word INTEGRITY; it is the keynote of the Church's role in politics. Others may compromise, but not the Church.

It is not for the Church to exercise political power. The sanctions of the Church are not physical, not temporal power. The sanctions of the Church are ATTRACTION. The kingdom of God on earth has no merit if it has no attraction, if it does not provide peace, contentment, joy, the life more abundant which was foretold. The sanctions of the Church are that obedience to the moral law, which it should preach in politics, will provide these results.

Let the Church advise the electorate to withhold its power on terms. Let it boldly denounce the evil politics of our time. Let it denounce all monopolies. Let it denounce an evil financial system. Let it denounce that Full Employment policy, which is an anachronism in an age of powered machinery, and which causes so much unnecessary production, so much strife in Industry, and so many material urges.

Funds

Contributors to the funds of the Campaign which this paper leads are asked to make their cheques payable to: THE CHRISTIAN CAMPAIGN FOR FREEDOM, and to despatch them to The Treasurer of that Campaign at Penhryn Lodge, Gloucester Gate, London, N.W.1.

Disappearance of Copy

The whole of the copy for this issue of *Voice* was lost in the post, while being sent from the editor's home to Liverpool. For this reason the material had to be reproduced at short notice. It has not been found possible to replace three of the articles, included in the original copy, among which was an article by the Rev. Henry Swabey in his usual lucid style.

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Morality in International Relations

The monthly review *Blackfriars*, which is edited by the English Dominicans, in its April issue contains an article under the above heading by Sir Desmond Morton. The article concludes by stating that U.N.O. "aims in theory to judge international disputes," but it is not "by any means a body accepting, and imbued with, the Christian moral law. Still U.N.O. is the best the world assents to at the moment, is a step in the right process of order, and, as such, we must do our best with it." It is not clear from the article who is meant by "we." And how can it be a step in the right process of order if the order is not based on the Moral Law? And why "Christian" Moral Law? The Moral Law did not come into existence with the coming of Christ. It has always been part of Reality, part of that Truth which Christ exhorted His hearers to seek.

We have chosen to write about this article, because it claims to be concerned with morality in international relations, because it is published under the auspices of a religious order, and because the conclusion of its author is that those whom he is addressing "must" support an immoral order. A man who says it is wrong to commit murder and commits it all the same, is in a worse state than a killer who does not see anything wrong with his action. Sir Desmond Morton's article is full of moral pretensions, but his actions and his advocacy of others' actions are no better than those of the man without them.

Morality in international relations is all-important; that goes without saying; and it may be asked what justification is there for an international organisation through which to conduct them, if, without such an organisation, relations are immoral? In other words be-all and end-all of the justification for an international organisation for this purpose is to establish relations according to the Moral Law. But U.N.O. which Sir Desmond Morton, in common with virtually all the secular political newspapers, would have us support, doesn't accept the Moral Law.

It is an easy and correct conclusion that the urgent question which has to be dealt with is not whether morality in international relations is necessary, but how obedience to the Moral Law is to be induced.

Anyone familiar with the working of the political, the economic or the financial world knows that although tribute has to be paid to truth and to Christian and humane objects, the dominating motive of the most powerful elements in these worlds is power; and knows too, that the tribute to truth is constantly being diminished, while there is a continual enhancement of the control of the power-motivated elements. We are witnesses to the truth of Miss Jacquetta Hawkes's assertion in her book *Man on Earth* that "Intellect, imagination can no more spring from naked power than roses from a guillotine." And with no less force of truth the remark could be applied to morality.

How realistic is Miss Hawkes's statement that "It is perfectly certain that the politically privileged, the ruling bosses of large urban populations, will be interested in power alone"!

How unrealistic and futile is the reliance which Sir Desmond Morton is willing to place on politicians: "How important then become the statesmen upon whom each country relies to conduct its foreign and home affairs! How

important is not only their natural integrity and sense of justice, but their individual belief in God and in the moral laws He has revealed for the right guidance of all men."

Charity begins at home; so does the moral use of power. There will be no morality in international relations until it does. The equipping of an international caucus with absolute military, police, economic and financial sanctions will inevitably strip power of even the vestments of morality.

We invite the English Dominicans to co-operate with us in establishing a recognition of Authority in politics.

The Archbishop of York

The following is a copy of a letter sent to the Archbishop of York in reference to the article published on the front page of Voice for April 9, containing an invitation to Dr. Garbett, which he declined to accept.

To the Most Reverend The Archbishop of York,
Your Grace,

You are one of those able to make your voice heard above the general din; hence, no doubt, you have some influence on the climate of opinion. This is both a privilege and a responsibility; hence I feel constrained to call your attention to a criticism of your statement at Bradford on March 18th that one of "the fields in which Britain could still give a lead" is in "showing how authority and liberty can be combined."

The criticism runs thus:—

"The Archbishop's statement is on a level with a child's saying that he would show that a fire could be combined with heat. Freedom is a property of Authority in the same sense that heat is a property of fire. It is not a question of whether it *can be* combined with Authority; it *is* an attribute of Authority. The Founder of Christianity did not say that Freedom can be combined with Truth; He said that the Truth shall make you free."

To the critic the word 'Authority' is evidently practically synonymous with 'Truth.' One possessing Authority is one who knows the truth about a subject and therefore one whose advice is the correct advice to follow. Christ spoke with Authority because he knew the Truth. He was identified with the Author and Supreme Lawgiver in whose service, paradoxically enough, is perfect freedom.

There seems little doubt, if I may say so with all respect, that your critic has touched on something fundamental. I submit also that he is justified in going on to ask leaders of the Church to come down to earth, as it were, and give detailed guidance, in language that every body can understand, on the nature of Authority in society.

Your critic is the editor of *Voice*, a journal of strategy for personal, political and economic freedom, and he invites you to answer, on his front page, certain specific questions relating to our social and political life which clearly come within the province of the Church.

I trust that you will see your way to give satisfaction on this matter. You may say "What is *Voice*? What powerful and influential backing has it"?

The answer is "None." But neither had the Carpenter's

Son; yet He spake with Authority. And it is this Authority which *Voice* is asking you, as a Church leader and one claiming to be in the Apostolic Succession, to express.

I am, your Grace,

Yours respectfully,

T. N. Morris.

Your Help is Requested

Greatly reduced rates for the purchase of the current number of *Voice* are announced on another page, in the expectation that supporters of the Campaign, now in its second year, will co-operate with the promoters by circulating copies wherever they may think attention may be attracted to its message.

Throughout the life of the journal, *Voice*, a few—all too few—have been ceaselessly active in preparing its contents and in distributing, discretely and we believe intelligently, individual copies amounting to a very large number, to members of the Clergy and of the general public. The work involved, in all cases so-called 'spare-time' work, as well as voluntary, has been immense.

An extension of this distributive activity will not, unfortunately *spread* the burden of responsibility. Those who have spent most energy will continue to spend it at the same rate as before. But the effects of their labours will be increased in proportion to the additional assistance they receive. Will you help?

Metaphysics of Business

May 31, 1845 (Chambers's Edinburgh Journal).

... Accustomed as we are in this country to see almost every person engaged in some kind of business or craft, we are apt to suppose it the natural and ordinary state of things. A twelve hours' bill seems the general fate of man. But in reality constant working is the exception from the rule. There are very few nations which pursue regular callings continually. Some that are by no means uncivilised work extremely little. . . .

There was no shopkeeping worth speaking of in ancient Greece or Rome. Factories existed not among the Ptolemies. While the crusades swept across Europe, there were very few men calling themselves Merchants in London, Paris or Venice. It is entirely since the close of the middle ages that men have raised into vogue the idea that business is the sheet-anchor of the individuals and of nations. There is thus a great difference from past time to present, as well as from other nations to us. . . . It therefore appears that the love of action and excitement, or what Dr. Darwin would have called 'an accumulation of sensorial power,' is what chiefly animates the hard-working nations, being the same impulse which once gratified men in war and in the chase, and still leads the born wealthy to the turf and the gaming-club. It is but the phase in which the mass of manly power appears in modern civilised nations. . . .