

The Lack of Sincerity in Modern Life

Alumni Prize Essay by F. P. Aylward, '44

The world today, as we all very well know, is in a state of chaos unprecedented in its past history. The greater number of nations are at war and each of the remaining nations is making rapid preparation for entrance into the conflict if any cause sufficiently great should arise. Many of the smaller nations have already gone down to defeat at the hands of brutal and relentless despots; others are on the brink of destruction. The peoples of the European world are faced with all sorts of sorrow and hardship. They suffer continually from cold, hunger, and fear of instant death, and they cannot even call their wills their own.

Contemplating the mercy of God, one may ask himself what can be the reason for all this confusion. Why is nation making war on nation? Why are men bent on destroying lives and property? There must be an answer. Yes, the world is full of answers. Our papers are filled with them, and we see brilliant men coming forth every day with explanations of the problems confronting the world. Many of these are good; many are silly; but there is, to my mind, one cause which stands out in importance. It is the lack of sincerity in modern life.

This is a subject that has been little discussed, and to which almost no attention has been paid. I think that it should be given more thought and that something should also be done in the way of bringing it before the eyes of the public.

There is, of course, a certain lack of sincerity in every field, and space will not permit me to discuss it in any great detail; but I shall deal briefly with it in connection with the most important fields of society; family life, religion, politics, and social life in general.

In this age of progress—I think that is the popular term—family life has been definitely on the decline. Speed and the mad race for pleasure have taken away from man any conception of the real purpose of his existence; namely, to work out his salvation by doing God's will on earth. Each member of the family is now content to follow his own desires without any thought of the others. Father has his club, Mother has her bridge parties, and the children have parties away from the guidance of those whose duty it is to direct them. There seems to be a lack of that mutual

love and contentment which was characteristic of our home life a generation ago, and there are very few homes today modelled after the little Home of Nazareth.

You may ask why should this be, and the answer I give is that there is a lack of sincerity. Men may still have Christian principles concerning family life, but few practise them. They are afraid of being called different, afraid of public opinion. Nobody can truthfully say that people like this mad way of living, that they would not rather live simply and within their means, but they do not possess the backbone to defend their principles, and are not sincere. Why are these Christian principles being neglected in family life? Because the modern way of life is easier to follow and the serious course of doing one's duty to his family or neighbour is not considered modern. People must follow the crowd and, if everybody else is going down hill, they must follow, even at the expense of losing their self-respect.

Even religion is now affected by lack of sincerity. A man used to have his convictions and stick by them; now he is afraid to take a firm stand on what he professes. He will try every means within his power to mould his religion to suit the environment in which he finds himself. There are some churches, too, which bow to the whims of their congregations. If their people do not like to be reminded of a certain sin, that sin is just not mentioned. If a doctrine is not agreeable to some of the richer supporters of a particular church, then that doctrine has to be dispensed with. And so we have religions changed to suit the passions of some and the pocket-books of others. Many make use of religion for material gain and attend church as they do a union or society meeting. Yet all pretend to have religion at heart.

Lack of sincerity covers a wider territory in modern politics than it does in any other field and is, as a result, the cause of more widespread evil. There are, today, only two main forms of government in the world: democracy and dictatorship. The dictators are, as anyone can see, anything but sincere. They are not motivated by any love of country or of subjects, but by a selfish greed for power. They attain their ends by every means of trickery known to man, and their word is only something to be broken when their goal has been gained.

In our democracies we are a bit more fortunate and have representation in the government. But how sincere

are our representatives? Some, I admit, have our welfare at heart, but too many use us merely as a means of getting themselves a good position in which they can practise graft. In their campaigns they are lavish of promises which they do not intend to keep; they advocate measures in which they have no faith; and they fool the unsuspecting public into giving them support which they do not deserve. What do they care if our farmers are steadily going behind; if our fishermen are in need of relief; if our laborers are unemployed? Their chief and only concern is their own material gain, since they no longer need our support. Parliamentary acts and bills, apparently designed for the good of the country as a whole, in reality benefit only a select few, and the irony of it all is the seeming sincerity with which they are planned.

We are too well aware of insincerity existing in the relations between governments of different nations. There is no such thing as real friendship based on charity or the good will of one nation towards another. There exists really nothing but selfishness. Men skilled in diplomacy are employed by the various governments to look after their foreign affairs, and treaties, trade agreements, and pacts are all made for the purpose of getting the better of the arrangement, not of meting out justice.

In our social realm the whole make-up is insincere. The charity that should always be found in the forefront has completely vanished. Man's neighbour has, it seems, become almost his enemy, at least when he is not about. People seem to have completely forgotten Christ's words, "As long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me". (Matt. xxv., 40). Men are ever at each other's throats, ever ready to do each other harm, and ever willing to succeed at the expense of someone else. All this, of course, is carried on in an underhand way, and people can appear very pleasant to their so-called friends whom they are trying to stab in the back. Society has now become a continuance of the "Spider and the Fly" drama.

Then we have the many organizations that have been formed for public welfare. We see people dedicating, or pretending to dedicate, their lives to service in societies dealing with such work as the welfare of the youth and the poor and the sick, the care of stray cats and dogs, the prevention of cruelty to dumb animals, and prohibition of the use of alcoholic beverages; and we know that those same

people care not one iota for anything except their own pockets and the glory and publicity they can glean from this work. Their chief desire is to see their names in print and to appear great in the eyes of the public.

I have pointed out some of the walks of life in which lack of sincerity is most apparent, and there are many other such cases which we meet every day. Is it any wonder that the world is in chaos when so great a part of it is living a lie, a double life?

Where is it all going to end? I can offer no solution other than that the youth of today will have to be taught how to conduct themselves when they take their places in the world. They are our men and women of tomorrow; they must know that first of all comes honesty, and, if they are going to act with honesty towards their fellow-men, that they must first be honest with themselves. They must learn some Christian principles which will rule their actions, and they must be ready at all times to defend those principles. After all, to be truly Christian we must be sincere, and our first move towards reform is a return to Christianity.



The Hope

Gerald Mallett, ex '40

Now the tale of grief once more we hear,
Wrung from a land bloody from past horrors,
Now we feel again the same old fear,
And tremble when we think of coming sorrows.

But there shall be an end—grayish light
On ruptured fields will turn to gloried gold—
And we shall believe again that Right
Reigns only—as He taught us in days of old.



The drying up of a single tear has more
Of honest fame than shedding tears of gore.

—Byron

'Tis strange, but true; for truth is always strange,—
Stranger than fiction.

—Byron