

"NOT EVERYONE THAT SAITH....

'LORD, LORD'"

The Catholic Church is a religious organization, founded and guided by God, to provide the normal means for the salvation of souls. Her kingdom is not of this world, and She is interested in the material realm only so far as it affects the spiritual.

Every Catholic knows this when he stops to think about it. But many Catholics have either consciously or unconsciously confused their religion with purely secular issues, and have claimed to speak as Catholics when they had a right to speak only as citizens. They have thus succeeded in identifying, in the eyes of the non-Catholic world, their Church and their faith with purely temporal issues with which the Church and the faith have nothing to do. They have claimed to speak as Catholics, and they have been taken as speaking for the Catholic Church when in reality they spoke for no one but themselves. And in doing so they have placed obstacles in the path of that Church's work of salvation, and have probably been responsible for the loss of many souls.

There are all too many examples of this attitude. After the French Revolution, and indeed throughout most of the nineteenth century, many French Catholics continued to support the lost royalist cause. As French citizens they had a perfect right to do so, but many of them, remembering the desecration of Notre Dame during the Terror and shocked by the irreligion and anti-clericalism of the Second Republic, claimed to speak as Catholics. They should have considered that Notre Dame might not have been desecrated if the higher clergy had not appeared to be so closely bound to the monarchy, and that the Second Republic might not have been so irreligious if those who claimed to speak for religion had given more evidence of cooperating with established government. And besides these well-meaning but misguided individuals there were those whose families had lost large estates by the Revolution and who hoped to have them restored. These men were, of course, eager to tie the Catholic Church to the coat-tails of their particular political movement and gain the support of Her immense prestige. Between them, these two groups succeeded in identifying, in the eyes of France, the Catholic Church with the hated *ancien regime*,

and had a good deal to do with raising the tide of national apostasy that turned France from a Catholic into a largely pagan nation and that was chiefly responsible for bringing this once formidable bulwark of Christian culture to her present sorry condition. Even the stern warning of Leo XIII in his *Au milieu des sollicitudes* of February, 1892, could not entirely alter this intransigent and un-Catholic attitude.

Coming to more modern times, we have the example of Mussolini's gaining considerable Catholic support by attacking the Masonic Order. Mussolini was not a Catholic, and, indeed, lived an openly scandalous life. He did not support the work of the Church in Italy, but on the contrary impeded her divine mission and placed every possible obstacle in the way of Catholic Action, finally drawing upon his head Pope Pius XI's stinging *Non abbiamo bisogno* of June, 1931. Most fundamental of all, he foisted on the people of Italy the doctrine of Fascism, a political theory and practice that violate natural human rights, that accord to the state honours properly paid to God alone, that cannot by any stretch of the conscience be made consistent with Catholic teaching. But Mussolini also attacked and dissolved in Italy the Masonic Order, not because it was a secret society hostile to religion and dangerous to all government, but because it was an organization that was not a Fascist organization. And many Catholics, both Italian and other, conveniently forgot that Mussolini was also attacking and dissolving the labour unions, the opposing political parties, and the Catholic Action groups. They shouted "Viva Il Duce", and gave Mussolini exactly what he was looking for, an excuse to say that he had the support of the Catholic Church, while all the time he fought that Church with every weapon he could muster. And so the Church was, in many minds, identified with Fascism and with everything that Mussolini did afterwards, with the brutal invasions of Ethiopia and Albania, with the treacherous "stab in the back" to a falling France. Such misguided zeal does not help the work of the Church.

A decade later the same story was repeated in Germany. Hitler wanted popular support. One of the means he used to gain it, and at the same time eliminate a rival group, was to declare war on Communism. Immediately many Bavarian and Rhineland Catholics rallied to his banner, and helped their worst enemy into power. For Hitler's war

on Communism, which every Catholic must wage, became. After the Communists came the Jews, and after the Jews came the Catholics and Lutherans. And so those Catholics of Germany who had confused temporal with eternal issues had the doubtful satisfaction of seeing their priests tortured in concentration camps, their seminaries turned over to the Gestapo, their children dragged off to learn neo-paganism in the Hitler schools. Pius XI's scathing denunciation of their one-time hero in his *Mit brennender Sorge* of March, 1937, must have brought heart-ache to many German Catholics when they finally realized what they had helped to do. But the heart-ache came too late. Hitler, like Mussolini, had succeeded in obtaining the appearance of Catholic support when he needed it.

It was a good trick, and it caught on. In 1936 Franco plunged his country into a civil war that turned out to be Spain's greatest national disaster, and achieved resounding success in winning Catholic support for his group of disgruntled army officers, big business men, and fascist-minded Phalangists. It is true that Franco's opponents were not ruling Spain in that nation's best interests, that they were betraying their country and making her subserve the interests of the Kremlin, that they were making it as difficult as possible for Spanish Catholics to practise their faith. It is also true that once the war broke out Franco's opponents carried out a bestial campaign of persecution against everything Catholic, that they dishonoured nuns dedicated to God's service, that they murdered nearly twenty thousand priests, many of them after horrible torture, that they even dug bodies out of Catholic cemeteries to vent on them their truly diabolic hatred. Such facts as these raised a wave of indignation among Catholics (most of the secular press, backing the government side, carefully omitted such embarrassing details) that was quickly transformed into support of Franco's movement. Hysterical editors of Catholic newspapers proclaimed the Nationalist cause a holy war, another crusade, and convinced the all too credulous world that they spoke for the Catholic Church. That world again identified Catholicism with Fascism, for was not Franco backed also by Mussolini and Hitler? Henceforth the Catholic Church was regarded as backing an unsavoury political movement and as giving Her blessing to anything that Franco might do.

And what did Franco do? He brought Moors from Africa and pinned pictures of the Sacred Heart on their manly Mohammedan chests before sending them out to kill his fellow-countrymen at Badajoz. He brought airmen from Italy and Germany to bomb Spaniards in Madrid day after day for two years. In his solicitude for all things Catholic he attacked the devoutly Catholic Basque provinces, which were siding with the government forces and which, incidentally, contained valuable mineral deposits. In that attack many civilians, including at least sixteen Basque priests, were killed by the armies of this defender of the faith. And when his victory was won, Franco engaged in a two-year struggle with the Pope over the appointment of a bishop to a vacant Spanish see, so that the profitable business of hitching the Church to his political star might go on. Franco may possibly have been justified in raising the standard of revolt in Spain, but he was certainly not waging any "holy war". At best he represented the lesser of two evils, and the enthusiastic and unqualified endorsement he received from many unthinking Catholics has badly damaged the Church in the eyes of the world and made Her spiritual mission, never an easy one, that much harder.

There was a similar story on the occasion of the fall of France in 1940. There is no doubt that Petain acted in what he considered the best interests of his country; neither is there any doubt that he cannot justly be blamed for all the subsequent activities of the Vichy *regime* and especially of such traitors as Laval. But he did order the surrender of the not inconsiderable remnants of the French forces at a time when resistance from North Africa would still have been possible, and there is no doubt that his action considerably prolonged the war. In assessing the reasons for France's defeat, Petain put at the top of the list the insidious curse of birth prevention. If we disregard deeper spiritual ills, of which this crime was one of the manifestations, he was certainly right. But that fact did not make all his actions automatically right. With their usual illogicality, however, many of the same Catholics who had supported Franco decided that since Petain was a Catholic and since he had condemned birth control, he must also be right in all his political and military decisions. They did not, of course, reach this decision consciously, for they seldom reach any decision consciously, but they did reach the decision, and broadcast it to

the world. "They had been taken in by "the myth of Petain." The results, of course, were the usual ones. Taking these men as representing the Church, and forgetting that De Gaulle commanded much wider Catholic support, the world identified the Catholic Church with the Vichy *regime*, in spite of the constant and often successful war waged by French bishops against that *regime's* persecution of the Jews, the Maquis, and its other enemies. And the Vichy *regime*, it may be remarked, was not exactly popular.

South America has another story to tell, but one which leads to the same conclusion. Blandly ignoring the Pope's social encyclicals, the big landowners continue to hold a scandalously high proportion of the arable land in the hands of their own small group, keeping the workers of that land in a condition bordering on slavery. They are, of course, the pillars of the conservative, reactionary parties in their respective countries, whose one aim in life is the maintenance of the economic *status quo*. But most of them also claim to be Catholics, in spite of the complete gulf between the principles they profess and the injustice they practise. With one eye on their fat purses they cynically brand as socialists any who dare to raise a voice on behalf of the exploited masses, and loudly call on their sham Catholicism as the reason for their fighting these "socialists". If this is religion, then Lenin's famous definition is right. Fortunately, this is not religion of any kind, and least of all is it Catholicism. But when those who loudly proclaim themselves Catholic take this attitude, what are people to think? They think what the supporters of Mussolini and Franco and Petain gave them reason to think—that the Catholic Church stands for the defence of capitalistic abuses, of vested interests, of organized injustice. Is it any wonder that many of the South American labour unions are anti-religious?

These are the lessons of history, past and present. How do they affect us here in Canada? There are in Canada a number of extremely nationalistic groups who seem to confuse Catholicism, forgetting the derivation of the word, with their particular culture, language, and social ideals, and who loudly proclaim their devotion to their ideal of a "Catholic state." If "Catholic state" is taken as Catholic form of government, the phrase has no meaning, for there is no specifically Catholic form of government; the Catholic Church

recognizes as legitimate any form of government guaranteeing their natural rights to its citizens. If "Catholic state" means a nation inspired by Catholic and Christian ideals of conduct, then every man of good will, and not merely these particular groups, is working to that end. But most people take out of the phrase "Catholic state" the first interpretation, and try to give it some meaning; and in doing so they remember Mussolini and Hitler and Franco and Petain, and, rightly or wrongly, they smell a Fascist rat. What can Canadian Catholics do about this? They can remember that economic and political doctrines and movements, which they have a perfect right to support as citizens if they are convinced of their value, are not the same as the religious doctrines which they support as Catholics. They can remember that not every group which proclaims itself Catholic is automatically entitled to Catholic support. They can learn the bitter lessons of history, and not discredit their Church in the eyes of a world which sadly needs the word of God.

The reverse also holds good. In North America, as in South America, there are those whose opportunities to exploit their fellow-men have been curtailed by the activities of labour unions. Anxious to regain their old power, these "rugged individualists" fight the unions by every means in their power. So they call the unions "communist", and call on every citizen interested in the preservation of law and order to join in the fight, especially against the stronger international unions. Fortunately, this particular appeal has made little headway among Catholics, who remain pretty thoroughly convinced of the value of labour unions and support them accordingly. But there is a danger that the fatal word "communist" may drive some Catholics out of the international unions and leave room for the infiltration of genuine communists. It happened in South America, and it can happen here.

All across Canada the same communist label is slapped by some politicians on any political party with whose views they happen to differ. Again, Canadian Catholics may be led to oppose these parties and thus throw them into the waiting arms of the real communists. Any Canadian, as a citizen, has a right to oppose any political party whose policies he does not approve; but let him speak as a citizen and not as a Catholic. The only political party in Canada which a

Catholic as a Catholic may not support is the one which changed its name to Labour Progressive because its war record prior to June, 1941, stank so powerfully in the nostrils of all Canadians. This is the Communist Party, and the only Communist Party. Those who call any other party communist and attempt to keep the Catholic citizen away from it are playing the communist game for the transitory advantage of a few votes.

What do all these examples add up to? They add up to this. Catholicism is a religion, not an economic or political formula. It is true that Catholics do live in the world, and have the duty of supporting those movements which promise greater good for mankind. Further, on religious issues they must speak uncomprisingly for what they know to be true. But let them be sure that the issues are really religious ones, and not political or economic schemes for power done up in religious tinsel. Let them be sure they are not being made the dupes of a new Mussolini or a new Hitler anxious to hitch the prestige of the Catholic Church to another "new order." Let them remember the old mistakes, and not again compromise the Catholic Church in the eyes of the non-Catholic world. In these days it is not enough to be a Catholic; it is also necessary to be an intelligent Catholic.

H. L. JOHNSTON.

SPRING

Suddenly out of wintry sky still grey with the last threat of snow comes a flash of blue. Through the sudden stillness, there drifts the low, sweet warbled whistle of a robin. The cold, frosty air is slowly ushered out by an early mild spring breeze.

There is always something new and fresh about April. It is the month of re-awakening. It seems almost as if a new year has begun. Out of the old discarded things of the year that has passed, comes new life. Up through the dead, musty grass shoots new, green life, and from below the blanket of dead leaves the stubborn lily pokes up its head for the first time to view the healing earth.

Here and there the snow-drifts linger and the grass seems to crawl to its very edge, contrasting its bright green