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TO accept authority is natural to man. Authority is a kind of status given to those who have proved themselves competent to exercise it, usually a confirmation of authority acquired by practice, but it may be accorded to the incompetent, it may be bought with political honours, and all desire its benefits. The "educated" classes have probably the firmest hold on economic authority, parents pay out large sums for the education of their children expecting some return, hence the Government is obliged to maintain a large number of appointments to which no one who has not qualified through these educational channels has access. It is worth while investing some thousands of pounds in a college course if it secure your child in a good job at the end of it. Nevertheless the authority for which there is the greatest respect is that of talent and ability. The student is not only thinking of ultimate securities but preparing himself to serve his neighbours with medicine, legal advice, bread, boots, houses, lessons in astronomy, even to shrieve, anoint and decently bury them. Most men hope to be producers of benefits or goods and not receivers only, they consider themselves fortunate when they have a natural love of the work to be done and unhappy when insensitive of any particular affinity with it.

Hence, in the order of authority which goes with merit, there are two classes: those who work for the work's sake and those who labour only for a reward outside the work.

It is with the first class with which I am here concerned. Where there is love of the work there is an intuitive power denied to those who acquire proficiency merely by the exercise of the will. Each man has, I submit, a particular bent or talent with which he has been equipped by Almighty God, a talent discernible to him notwithstanding the deadening uniformity of modern education which often appears as definitely designed for its repression. I distinguish between inherent and acquired talent simply because the present day world, with the damned economist and more damned

financier directing it, is loath to do so. The young are driven in droves along certain broad roads which lead to "efficiency," whereas the natural talent can only be fully developed in the straight and narrow way personal to itself. It is the natural talent, trained and disciplined, which gives its possessor supreme authority because what the owner acquires is assimilated in a system already prepared for it. Reason is fortified by intuition and finds solace among the stars.

It does not matter, however, to those we serve whether our talents be inherent or acquired, provided they get what they want. In return they will give us tokens, money, and with these we become possessed of another power which may be called the consumer's authority. If this were in direct and uniform correspondence with our authority as producers, all would be well, except for those who produced nothing. But it is not so. Our world is, for the most part, regulated by the consumer for the consumer; such reward as we may merit may have no relation to what we shall get; even what we earn is in jeopardy as men of might and cunning immediately try to wrest it from us.

This is for many the problem of the hour, for the "unemployed" are part of it, trade, Empire, European unrest, birth restriction and slum property are all reflecting the fact that the consumer doubts whether a labourer is worthy of his hire. He maintains not only that the man who pays the piper shall call the tune but how much the piper is to be paid. The consumer says a tune is worth so much, which is a matter really known only to pipers. The piper with seven children is, in justice, to be paid more than the piper with one. One tune may cost more to make than another—and so on.

These economic infringements of the producer's authority seriously concern us. But there are worse, the consumer presumes to judge the tune, he does not hesitate to say this tune is better than that, not merely for the purpose he requires it, but in itself. The consumer holds that all things are measured by the price he is willing to pay.

We might enjoy ourselves by scoffing at this absurdity,

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for it is as though men had decided to be ruled by brigands and we were all taking part in a *Beggar's Opera*, but the joke would lead us nowhere, except perhaps to drink. Happily, however, there are still persons, positions, goods and delights which cannot be bought—there is a glorious country for which Midas has no passport, in which Pepper Pools have no place. The richest student cannot purchase his degree, money cannot give us faculties which God has withheld, a surgeon's skill is not regulated by his bank balance, and we are often foolish enough to marry for love rather than for money. This country is open only to those with "le goût de faire la volonté d'autrui," for it is impossible to love our work without a lively taste for obedience, a desire for the discipline which will qualify for practice.

It is natural to obey the authority of ability, it is not normally difficult to recognize that which is due to status, and it should be usually repugnant to be compelled to obey the usurped authority of wealth. But our obedience may be of two kinds, we can obey as freemen or as slaves. The slave's obedience is irresponsible, a species of inaction, for he does only what is required of him. The freeman's obedience is to an authority which he himself expects to exercise. Doubtless many will reach heaven without doing more than is required of them—but while the demand is for action we will not discuss speed limits. We are called to action which means the doing of what we can, not the attempting of what we cannot.

In doing *what* we can we find the first condition of our apostolate. This "what" is the question answered by "the particular talent with which each man is endowed," because it is this talent for which he is responsible. Obviously the "what" varies with each one. Faith is at the business end of the artist's brush, the carpenter's chisel, the dentist's drill and the musician's fingers. This talent, found and developed in the service of others, is his immediate and tangible contact with God. If a man does not feel in vital touch with his Creator when exercising the peculiar talent with which he has been sent into the world how else shall he find Him? His action becomes Catholic in mere honesty, not only as

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to the work to be done but as to its end in use. There will be certain actions he is qualified to do but debarred from doing because the Church forbids them. In that connection we may note how few are the definite actions commended by the Church for practice in the realm of Catholic Action; perhaps this is for the simple reason that the obedience expected of us is that of freemen. The Church assumes our responsibility, and just as the sensible police officer prefers that men should look after themselves rather than be subject to constant watchings, so is the Holy See niggardly in dogmatic decisions. The Catholic has his hope in heaven, to all else the earth is man's final beatitude, hence what I have called "mere honesty" has a quality of detachment about it which gives it no small value above its non-Catholic counterpart. In answer to the question "what" we must reply by our work, the dentist with his drill, the carpenter with his plane, the surgeon with his knife, and so forth.

Then arises the further question, "Where?" If a man has a talent for cutting off legs and dissecting corpses it is unwise to open a surgery in the remoter districts of Connamara. He must be where the bodies are. The question "Where" is answered by the "What"; we have to be where our services are in demand. Otherwise I do not think place matters, I do not think our difficulties will be appreciably less in an enclosed convent than in Gower Street or Whitehall, except in one matter—the availability of Holy Mass. The Mass being the pivot of our faith, the real source of our spiritual food, it follows that we would choose to be near rather than far from its celebration. For most Catholics this is not practicable, we live and work in a non-Catholic country; we are few among many, scattered and isolated, with relatively few churches most of which are understaffed. Many Catholics only see their religion on Sundays; it is the more important that they should be able to relate it to their week, their life of every day at home and at work. The doctor's training will be in hospitals and for the sick who know not the Church, there is no Catholic regiment for the soldier and no Catholic countryside for the farmer.

If each man has a God-given talent and if it is in the use

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of it that he will best serve the Church, his duty is plain. He has to work where he is wanted, without ostentation, without controversy, without antagonizing his neighbours who are for the most part as true to the light they see as we are to the Truth we know. In dedicating his talents to God he will benefit all whom he serves by them—and the service is none the less valuable even though no one be aware that Catholicism has anything to do with it. Being himself certain about God he may be outwardly indifferent to everything about his neighbours except to such of their needs as he is competent to supply.

This is a high policy of individualism. His good deed may shine in a naughty world but it is not likely; he will often be aware of his isolation though it be cloaked by professional friendship, mutual craft or trade interests and often by good companionship. The highest form of human fellowship is that between those having the same faith and worshipping the same God; this is denied him. Getting to work keeps him from the supreme fellowship of the Mass and his days are spent in spiritual solitude. However, St. Dominic and St. Francis both anticipated this difficulty in the institution of their Third Orders. To be classed with them are the various sodalities, confraternities and guilds which bind Catholics together in Catholic activities. These are, or should be, reflections of the Mass, extensions of the Sacrifice and Communion into daily life and may sustain many for whom Sunday brings the only sacramental opportunity.

The use of our talents is in the finding and following of a personal vocation; the sharing of a common Catholic life is the means by which that vocation is kept in tune with the Church. Was it not in this way that Thomas More, Saint, found his way to the scaffold via Lincoln's Inn? In him we have a perfect example of the man following his vocation—he seems to have been "cut out" for the law. His flair for justice and his complete surrender to it, had amazing consequences—it led him to the highest position open to a lawyer in the state, and still unsatisfied, to the highest honour open to a layman in the Church. It was the legal

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mind which saw the implication in that Act of Succession but it was the Catholic soul which forbade his acceptance of it. From him therefore we may learn not only the importance of following one's bent, being obedient to the laws of craft or profession through which we serve our neighbour, but get some idea of the result of dedicating that natural talent to God, who gave it.

I am not in the very least qualified to talk further on this subject, but I would venture on one observation gathered from those who know. It would seem that with all his much writing and the responsibility and work involved in his legal duties that St. Thomas More was always minding his own business; he did not attempt to impose his ideas on others, or seem to hold men in less esteem when they disagreed with him. He did not say, "I am right," but rather, "This is right for me." He does not seem to have had any inclination to say, "You are wrong." The idea of wire pulling and lobbying to get his own way was not his, though very prevalent among his contemporaries. His position, notwithstanding a great capacity for good fellowship, was peculiarly detached and isolated, so that, in a sense, we may compare it to our own as Catholics in a Protestant country. Our faith imposes detachment and isolation. More met this difficulty, as we may, within the Church—not as one Catholic among many but as one in a small group of similarly disposed Catholics. He was not a tertiary of St. Dominic but of St. Bruno. (Not formally, as the Carthusians have not in their very nature such appendages to their order, but in spirit.) One may be often tempted to say that he had a Dominican vocation, for his works were the fruit of contemplation, but the fact is that he was one of a small group of contemplatives reposing on the London Charterhouse. And this small group had to be wiped out before Henry could subdue the rest.

This vocational view of More's life is reflected in the play written about him some forty years after his death. He is given these words:

It is Heaven that I am thus and thus:
And that which we profanely terme our fortune

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Is the provision of the power above,
Fitted and shaped just to that strength of nature
Which we are borne withal.

It is for this reason that he was so careful, perhaps, to be slow in judgment of others. Heaven's provision is so personal to the individual that one may never know where it may blossom. God sows wheat among the tares and man must wait for the harvest. His own heart and his own vocation need husbandry enough. So St. Thomas More is content with the general warning:

When a hatter
Will go smatter
In philosophy,
Or a pedlar
Wax a meddler
In theology,
All that ensue
Such craftes new
They drive so far a cast
That ever more
They do therefore
Beshrew themselves at last.

HILARY PEPLER.