

L' AUBE IN THE EVENING

It is true, replied the Dutchman, we are a small people without a great future. But when early in the morning we hear a loud knocking at the door, we know it is only the milk.

The Times every morning and the *New Statesman* every week, those cover serious periodical reading for many of us. From them we should assume that the political weight of Catholicism has been thrown heavily to the right for the last hundred years. The association of Catholics with the forces of tradition is, of course, evident; this, at its worst, has meant subservience of vested interests, and, at its best, rallying with the stable and chivalrous elements of society. It is true that altar and throne, farm and nationality were the causes Catholics fought for most conspicuously in the nineteenth century, and that *Liberalism* was, to put it mildly, not favourably regarded in the second period of Pio Nono's pontificate. What is not so generally appreciated is the strength and official standing of the Labourite movement in the Church.

Père Lacordaire died, he said, an impenitent liberal, the Bishop Baron von Ketteler dug deeper to the roots of reform than did our own Victorian Radicals, and cardinals like Manning, Mermillod and Gibbons were scarcely dafodils that came before the sturzos dared. They were the leaders of a Catholic democratic movement that had reached such proportions by the time of the Europe of Locarno that the action of Catholic groups on the whole—I speak quantitatively—lay with Trade Unionism and Parliamentary Democracy. The easy attribution of authoritarian sympathies to Catholics, however impressive on an *a priori* deduction, would not, I think, bear the test of an

induction. The Nord and the Ruhr, both fairly strongly Catholic, were certainly not conservative, and though the fact of their heavy industrialization must qualify the observation, it is possible to point to the democratic spirit and action of the Church in Brittany, Flanders, Gascony, and Alsace, while Westphalia remains to this day probably the least ironed-out region of the Reich.

Now that the accents of Liberalism are those of the elderly and middle-aged, and large Catholic populations either support or acquiesce in a different organization of society, the *People and Freedom Group* in this country have published a defence of Christian democracy.¹ Here is a cause in which a Dominican is engaged by the history, constitutions, and philosophy of his Order, though he be Tory by temper and Anarchist by temptation.

One conclusion that emerges from these pages is that democracy has not failed because of its own inherent defects, but because democrats have lost their grip. As the individual is likely to give up the effort to be candid and personally responsible as too uncomfortable and to

¹ *For Democracy*. By Barbara Barclay Carter, Joseph Clayton, Virginia M. Crawford, Angelo Crespi, S. J. Gosling, Alfredo Mendizábal, Anthony Moore, J. F. Neurohr, E. Roper Power, Luigi Sturzo, Louis Terrenoire, Maurice Vaussard. (Burns Oates, Pp. x, 237, 8s. 6d.). The essays are not scattered, but written to an ordered plan. First, the history of democracy is traced, from Athens and Rome, through Florence, to modern times. Then the doctrine is analyzed in the framework of morals and law. Finally its contemporary situation is appreciated. The book is recommended to all students of politics, and particularly to those who would see the bearings of the Church in the modern world. A clearer distinction between liberalism and democracy would have been helpful. One looks for, and finds, such touches as 'the extermination of countless Abyssinians by gas, or the bombardment of open towns by Franco's aeroplanes,' While organized liberty is authority, I would not agree that authority is organized liberty (p. 114). There is a misprint on p. 215, and Lacordaire was Henri-Dominique (p. 235).

lapse into his environment, so too groups, including Christian groups, have seemed to surrender the obligations of personal integrity, and delivered themselves over to the movement of a mass. This game of follow-my-leader marks a reversal to infantilism. Such a caving-in, late in life, to a monstrous super-ego presents a curious study to the psychologist. The speed of a fleet is that of the slowest ship; the action of a human group is usually more cruel and stupid than that of its members taken individually, so that we must be careful in arguing from the popular deeds and utterances of the totalitarianisms. But there is a new note of childish meanness and cruelty. The figure of democracy is none too impressive, the tubby little figure in evening dress orating in a cemetery; but the same figure in different clothes, exalting its virility and stamping riding boots that have never known the stirrups, well if there is ever any justification for medicinal force it is there.

One of the weaknesses of democracy as we know it is that it came to a head at a time when human nature was making sacrifices to industrial technique. One man, one vote; that was all very well in the Mechanics' Institute. But it left on one side some of the deeper human dignities, and even conspired to frustrate them. Blood and soil and honour, how promptly have these been annexed by the new movements. Few men really admire the sedentary values, and few women prefer statistical abstraction to arguments *ad hominem*. But whatever the reason, real democracy is now a minority movement, and the fault lies largely with the democrats. The same thing has happened to other noble causes, to Christianity itself, as well as to rationalism in science, a classical education, Hebridean culture, the Spanish artillery arm, the inland waterways of England, fox-hunting, and mixed farming.

To the Christian philosopher, the fundamental antithesis in the world to-day is not between democracy and totalitarianism, but between government under law and government making law. The clash is not between two

forms of politics, but between two theologies. The Greek's answer to the Persian, *we have no king, but we have the Law*, provides a classical expression of the Catholic conception of politics, to which the mere voice of the majority is no more ultimate than the sentence of the despot. Appetite is not limited only by opportunity; it must be regulated by a Law it does not create. Even in high theology, divine providence and governance are seen to derive from the exemplar ideas in the mind of God. There is a Law above all government, that is the first Catholic affirmation, and if it be granted, the Church has shown that it can work as well with Swiss democracy as with Portuguese paternalism.

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CONTEMPORANEA.*

ART NOTES continues. 'The cultural and educational activities of the Nation must go on.'

CATHOLIC WORLD (Oct.): A hard-hitting Editorial states a Catholic's case for American neutrality, *unless . . .*

CHRISTENDOM (Sept.), though written up before the war, is pre-occupied with the problem of the distinctive role of the Christian in war-time, and provides much food for thought. J. V. Langmead Casserley's statement of the 'apocalyptic' approach to secular problems and events is of outstanding importance.

CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ACTION IS THE CHRISTIAN FRONT in more attractive format. In *War Propaganda: Hooey on the Loose* the Editor goes all out against American intervention.

* Penguin hopes to resume his *Extracts and Comments* when BLACKFRIARS can resume its normal size. Meanwhile he will continue, and on a somewhat larger scale, his *Contemporanea*, in order to draw attention to some contributions to other periodicals likely to be of particular interest to BLACKFRIARS readers, and which may otherwise escape their notice. It will be understood that inclusion in his lists does not necessarily imply unqualified agreement.