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The Moral Obligation of Voting

A DISSERTATION

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BY

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INTRODUCTION

Catholics are not strangers to the world. For though they belong to the City of God upon earth, the Church of the Divine Redeemer, they live in the world with its farms and its factories, its military forces and social agencies, its economic programmes and atomic inventions, taking part in the activity round them. They seek to achieve two different but wholly compatible ends: reasonable temporal welfare in human society and the eternal glory of the saints in heaven. They belong to the Body of Christ with its spiritual means, aims, and ends, but they participate in the affairs of the world to contribute to the common good of all. For since that day when the Saviour took the coin of tribute into His hands and said: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's" men have known that they are bound to carry Christian principles into the warp and woof of public life as well as private life, to integrate Christian maxims and principles into the whole fabric of human endeavor.

Catholics have always played an important role in the social, economic, and political life of nations, though not always in positions of authority. At times they were persecuted by tyrannical rulers, hunted as animals and made the sport of jeering mobs that gathered in arenas to witness their heroic protestations of love for Christ; at other times they fled into exile, compelled to live in caves and deserts, scorned as the outcasts of society, while in reality they were its sole salvation.

Then through God's providence history changed its course and the children of the persecuted ascended the thrones of those who had killed their forefathers. Kings, princes, and other ranks of nobility became loyal children of the Church rather than her avowed enemies so that public life became somewhat Christian.

Unhappily, however, not all the sons of the Church wearing crowns obeyed the imperious call of conscience. At times they fell prey to the seductions of the "law of the members" and abandoned reason and religion in their methods of government, of politics, and of social living. They permitted the forces of the spirit to be

assailed and subdued by material forces, and empires and dynasties thought imperishable crashed suddenly and ingloriously.

While it is true that in most of the world the monarchical form of government was used, still here and there, even from very ancient times, various types of representative government functioned, so that the present trend towards democracy and a republican form of rule is not some new light which burst upon the world with the foundation and formation of the United States of America, but a plan that has been used in times past by various races and peoples.

Moreover, it should not be thought that the Church sanctioned the monarchical form of government as best. She approved and still approves any type of orderly government, provided God's rights and her rights are respected and the dignity of man is safeguarded. As Pope Leo XIII wrote in one of his memorable encyclicals: "The right to rule is not necessarily . . . bound up with any special mode of government. It may take this or that form, provided only that it be of a nature to insure the general welfare. But whatever be the nature of the government, rulers must ever bear in mind that God is the paramount ruler of the world and must set Him before themselves as their exemplar and law in the administration of the state."¹

Pope Pius XII called attention to the democratic form of government in his Christmas message of 1944. Declaring that "to many it appears to be a postulate of nature imposed by reason itself,"² he went on to say that "In a people worthy of the name, the citizen feels within the consciousness of his personality, of his duties and rights and of his own freedom along with the freedom and dignity of others."³ He outlined the differences between a true democracy and a false one; in the former "the people live by the fulness of life in the men that compose it, each of whom—in his own proper place and in his own way—is a person conscious of his own personality and of his own views."⁴

¹ *Immortale Dei* in *Acta Sanctae Sedis*, 18 (1885), 162. Afterwards designated by *ASS*. See *Great Encyclical Letters of Leo XIII* (New York, 1903), 193.

² *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 37 (1945), 13. Afterwards designated by *AAS*.

³ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

Although the Church has never endorsed any one form of government, she has insisted that the faithful have obligations to the nation wherein they live. Such obligations are founded on the virtue of *pietas*, or the love of one's country, shown by the observance of all just law, the support of national institutions, the payment of taxes, the bearing of arms when necessary—and in a republican form of government—by bearing the responsibilities peculiar to it.

From the very beginning of Christian times teachers of the faith have urged obedience to civil authority and prayers for rulers. St. Peter treated the matter in his first epistle. St. Paul stressed it especially in his letter to the Romans, while St. Clement, the third successor of the prince of the Apostles, has left a grand commentary indicative of respect for civil power, even though Domitian was enslaving the Christians: "Grant to them, O Lord, health, peace, concord, and firmness so that they may without hindrance exercise the supreme leadership which Thou hast conferred upon them. . . . Do Thou, O Lord, direct their counsels in accord with what is good and pleasing in Thy sight so that they may piously exercise in peace and gentleness the authority Thou hast granted them and thus experience Thy graciousness."⁵

Such a spirit has lived in the Church in every age. Loyalty to the civil institutions, the bearing of the burdens of citizenship as well as the sharing of its rights, have always been the teaching of the Church. As members of the Mystical Body, Catholics are not freed of their obligations to their fellow-men and to society. Indeed their very profession of the faith increases and deepens their responsibilities since they recognize all authority as from God; they understand all just law as a participation in God's eternal law; and they look upon good government as a reflection of the unchanging order of heaven. They realize, in the words of a contemporary authority, that "where the members have political rights, they have political responsibilities, which, in the last respect, are always moral duties. They have the moral duty to use their political status, both to safeguard their own freedom and to fulfill the moral law and the practice of their religion, and also to bring the laws

⁵ *Epistola ad Corinthios*, c. 61. Translation from James A. Kleist, *St. Clement of Rome and St. Ignatius of Antioch* (Westminster, Md., 1946), 47.

and institutions of the community as a whole into conformity with the standards of natural morality."⁶

The Church is interested in politics, it is true, but not as pure politics. She sees moral issues at stake and seeks to defend or uphold them. She desires to safeguard the rights of God and the rights of man so that peace may reign in society. Watching over politics with the vigilant eye of a mother, she seeks to counsel when necessary, and will even intervene. In doing so she does not act contrary to her nature, but in perfect accord with it, for

. . . to teach or to arbitrate or to bind consciences rests (once her commission to teach and bind has been granted) on the fact that politics are constantly raising moral questions. Rulers are enforcing laws, Parliaments making them, statesmen considering high policy, voters going to the polls, and all who have to fulfill in any way the common duties of the citizen are always likely to be confronted with issues reducible in the last resort of right or wrong.⁷ . . . the claim of the Church to intervene in politics rests squarely upon two pillars, her own divine commission as teacher and arbiter of morals and the fundamentally ethical character of the political community and civic life.⁸

Many years ago in a letter to the bishops of Germany, Pope Pius X set down the principle of morality in public life.

Whatever a Christian does even in worldly affairs, he is not at liberty to disregard what is supernaturally good, but he must order all towards the highest good as his final aim, in accordance with the precepts of Christian wisdom. All his actions, however, as far as they are morally good or bad, that is to say, as far as they are in accord with or transgress the natural and divine law, are subject to the judgment and jurisdiction of the Church.⁹

⁶ F. R. Hoare, *The Papacy and the Modern State* (London, 1940), 38.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ "Quidquid homo christianus agat, etiam in ordine rerum terrenarum, non ei licet bona negligere, quae sunt supra naturam, immo oportere, ad summum bonum tanquam ad ultimum finem, ex christianae sapientiae praescriptis, omnia dirigat; omnes autem actiones eius, quatenus bonae aut malae sunt in

And so it has always been. The living members of the Church have recognized the function of the State in human living; they have realized their obligations to it, and they have understood the Church's interest in political matters. Even when despotic governments persecuted the Church to the shedding of blood, she did not protest against the State as such, but against the worship of false gods, the immorality of public games, and the violence and cruelty of the rulers. If human dictates transgressed the laws of God, then Catholics had no choice but to follow God.

The rapid growth and development of the representative form of government in many parts of the world has brought on new obligations. The citizens in any state have the duty of supporting their government by obeying laws, paying taxes, and contributing to the common good, but citizens in a republican state have the additional duty of participating in the government itself, that is, by assuming public office or at least by using the electoral franchise. But while the role of public office extends to relatively few people, the ballot obliges the majority of citizens in a country.

Sad to say, however, many citizens, even Catholics, have been remiss in their obligation of voting. Even people otherwise good, fail to exercise their right when duty demands it. They are negligent and careless when they should be interested and active. But the obligation of the ballot stands and the direct words of the American Hierarchy during the heated campaign of 1840 apply with equal fitness today:

... reflect that you are accountable not only to society but to God for the honest, independent and fearless exercise of your franchise, that it is a trust confided to you, not for your private gain, but for the public good and that if yielding to any influence you act either through favor, affection or motives of dishonest gain against your own deliberate view of what will promote your country's good, you have violated your trust, you have betrayed your conscience, and you are a renegade to your country.¹⁰

genere morum, id est cum jure naturali et divino congruunt aut discrepant, judicio et jurisdictioni Ecclesiae subesse." *Singulari quadam*, *AAS* 4 (1912), 658.

¹⁰ Peter Guilday, ed., *National Pastorals of the American Hierarchy, 1792-1919* (Washington, D. C., 1921), 143.

But the gravity of the obligation received its strongest sanction from the present Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, in 1946 and in 1948 when he urged and commanded the faithful to vote in Italy. In a discourse to the Pastors and Lenten Preachers of Rome March 16, 1946, he gave this advice:

The exercise of the right to vote is an act of grave responsibility, at least when there is the question involved of electing those whose office it will be to give the country its constitutions and its laws, particularly those which affect, for example, the sanctification of feast days, marriage, family life and school, the various phases of social life. It therefore falls to the Church to explain to the faithful their moral duties which derive from their right to vote.¹¹

To the same body of clergy he spoke two years later (March 10 1948) and with even more emphasis. His words were the following:

It is your right and duty to draw the attention of the faithful to the extraordinary importance of the coming elections and to the moral responsibility which follows from it for those who have the right to vote. In the present circumstances it is strictly obligatory for whoever has the right, man or woman, to take part in the elections. He who abstains, particularly through indolence or cowardice, commits thereby a grave sin, a mortal offense.¹²

¹¹ "L'esercizio del diritto di voto è un atto di grave responsabilità morale, per lo meno quando si tratta di eleggere color che sono chiamati a dare al Paese la sua costituzione e le sue leggi, quelle in particolare che toccano, per esempio, la santificazione delle feste, il matrimonio, la famiglia, la scuola, il regolamento secondo giustizia ed equità delle molteplici condizioni sociali. Spetta perciò alla Chiesa di spiegare ai fedeli i doveri morali, che da quel diritto elettorale derivano." *AAS* 38 (1946), 187. See also *Catholic Mind*, May 1946, 301.

¹² "È vostro diritto e dovere di attirare l'attenzione dei fedeli sulla straordinaria importanza delle prossime elezioni e sulla responsabilità morale che ne deriva a tutti color i quali hanno il diritto di voto. . . . Che, nelle presenti circostanze, è stretto obbligo per quanti ne hanno il diritto, uomini e donne, di prender parte alle elezioni. Chi se ne astiene, specialmente per incolenza o per viltà, commette in sé un peccato grave, una colpa mortale." *AAS* 40 (1948), 119.

In the face of such exhortations and commands by the Vicar of Christ on the obligation of voting it seems particularly fitting at this time to single out the moral obligation devolving upon all citizens who possess the right to vote. It seems fitting for another reason as well, viz., because a large portion of the eligible voters in the United States do not use their franchise through indifference, neglect, or a similar moral weakness.

The specter of apathy and of undesirable disinterestedness is rising more and more upon the country's horizon. Many American citizens are not interested in their role as citizens; they clamor for their rights, but forget their duties; they insist upon what is owed them, but forget what they owe others. Thus the popular author, Fulton Oursler, observes the situation as neither healthy nor happy.

Today's curse upon political life is not so much what is unlawful as what is unscrupulous. At the root of our decay is sickness of conscience. Moral obtuseness is a plague over free government. This decline in national character is a serious danger, because if we lose our standards, all our liberties may be lost through abuses, corruption, and chaos. . . . "That is politics," we say. As if politics needed to be a sinkhole. Without a vision the people are perishing; they are even finding something to admire in the slickness, the tricky deceitfulness by which the taxpayers are bilked. They smile at scoundrels in office as if they were only amusing scalawags.¹³

Nor is such an attitude one of unwarranted pessimism. For the number of United States citizens who voted in the presidential election of 1948 was a scandal. According to statistics only about fifty-two percent of the eligible voters used their vote—a sad commentary upon the civic conscience of the average citizen. If the trend continues it may well be that the words of Christopher Dawson about Europe may be fulfilled in the United States.

To vote in an election or plebiscite today has ceased to be purely political action. It has become an affirmation of faith in a particular social philosophy and theory of history; a decision between two or three mutually exclusive

¹³ "Twilight of Honor," *Reader's Digest*, 56:338 (June, 1950), 7.

forms of civilization. I do not say this is a good thing; on the contrary, it means that history and social philosophy are being distorted and debased by political propaganda and party feeling.¹⁴

The Catholic Church is not interested in voting as purely political activity any more than she is interested in the purely political form of a government. But she is interested in voting as moral activity with duties and obligations to which are conjoined important consequences for good or evil. On this matter Pope Pius XI has laid down this principle:

The Church, indeed does not claim to interfere *without reason* in the direction of temporal or purely political affairs; nevertheless of her full right, she claims that the civil power must not allege this as an excuse for placing obstacles in the way of those higher goods on which the eternal salvation of man depends, for inflicting loss and injury through unjust laws and decrees, for impairing the divine constitution of the Church itself, or for trampling underfoot the sacred rights of God in civil society.¹⁵

Through her interest in the rights of God and in the rights and duties of men, the Church declares in the Code of Canon Law that "... by her power and exclusive right the Church takes cognizance ... of all matters in which is to be found a *ratio peccati*."¹⁶ These words, used by Pope Boniface VIII and Innocent III, do not refer

¹⁴ *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture* (New York, 1950), 6.

¹⁵ *Ubi arcano*, Dec. 23, 1922, *AAS* 14, 698.

¹⁶ "Ecclesia iure proprio et exclusivo cognoscit . . . omnibus in quibus inest ratio peccati. . . ." Can. 1553, 1, 2°. Note also the condemnation by Pope Pius VI of the following proposition from the Synod of Pistoia (Aug. 28, 1794). "Propositio affirmans, abusum fore auctoritatis Ecclesiae, transferendo illam ultra limites doctrinae ac morum, et eam extendendo ad res exteriores, et per vim exigendo id, quod pendet a persuasionem et corde; tum etiam, multo nimis ad eam pertinere, exigere per vim exteriorem subiectionem suis decretis; quatenus indeterminatis illis verbis extendendo ad res exteriores notet velut abusum auctoritatis Ecclesiae usum eius potestatis acceptae a Deo, qua usi sunt et ipsimet Apostoli in disciplina exteriore constituenda et sancienda:—haeritica." Denzinger-Bannwart, *Enchiridion Symbolorum* (Friburg, 1937), 1504.

exclusively to theological matters, but to all that pertains to the good of religion, either positively or negatively; positively, as they are necessary for the good of religion as the end of the Church; negatively, as they are obstacles to that end and must be eliminated.

A further instance of the Church's role of moral guidance in political affairs comes from the following statement of Pope Pius XII.

The moral order and God's commandments have a force equally in all fields of human activity. As far as the fields stretch, so far extends the mission of the Church, and also her teachings, warnings, and the counsel of the priest to the faithful confided to his care. . . . The Catholic Church will never allow herself to be shut up within the four walls of the temple. The separation between religion and life, between the Church and the world is contrary to the Christian and Catholic idea.¹⁷

Finally, as a concluding proof that politics is within the sphere of the Church's interest and judgment insofar as moral issues are involved, we may quote Pope Pius X who declared in his first consistorial allocution November 9, 1903: "We do not conceal the fact that We shall shock some people by saying that We must necessarily concern ourselves with politics. But anyone forming an equitable judgment clearly sees that the Supreme Pontiff can in no wise violently withdraw the category of politics from subjection to the supreme control of faith and morals confided in him."¹⁸

* * * * *

This work on the moral obligation of voting in civil elections is divided into three parts. The first deals with the nature, the concept, and the kinds of voting, with a brief history to show its development during the centuries. The second part deals with the general and specific principles that should guide citizens in the exercise of the franchise with particular stress given to the statements of the Supreme Pontiffs and the members of the hierarchy. The third part considers the duties that flow from the obligation to vote, viz., a knowledge of the principles, of the candidates, of

¹⁷ *AAS* 38 (1946), 187.

¹⁸ *Acta Sanctae Sedis*, 36, 195.

the issues at stake, and the use of means to promote wise and intelligent voting; it also considers the role of the priest in directing the faithful in the proper discharge of their duty. Finally there is an appendix of important pastorals on the obligation of voting from prominent members of the hierarchy.

The writer of this dissertation is deeply indebted to Very Rev. Dr. Francis J. Connell, C.Ss.R., Dean of the School of Sacred Theology, who suggested the topic and patiently guided the work to its completion. He wishes likewise to express his gratitude to the readers, Rev. Dr. Joseph Collins, S.S., and Rev. Dr. Thomas O. Martin, whose suggestion and advice proved very helpful. He wishes to thank the superiors of the Society of the Atonement for the opportunity of pursuing graduate work and the members of the community for their interest and encouragement.

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CHAPTER I

THE NATURE AND CONCEPT OF VOTING

1. THE NOTION OF VOTING

In general, voting means the expression of the will or opinion of the people with regard to some matter submitted for consideration or with regard to some person running for public office.¹ It is an indication by some approved method of one's opinion or choice on a matter of discussion; an intimation that one approves or disapproves, accepts or rejects, a candidate for office, a proposal, a motion, and the like. Father Joseph Güenechea gives this definition: "Voting is the legitimate expression of the will of some people by which they designate competent magistrates to make laws."² Obviously, voting can also be the expression of the people's will by which they accept or reject a policy, an issue, or any kind of referendum.

Voting is called the *legitimate expression of the will of some people* to indicate the exercise of a right granted by some law, with or without an office attached to it. It is said of *some people* and not of *citizens* only because at times communities and juridical persons have a vote, though they are not citizens nor are they considered such by the state. In some countries corporations and other institutions take part in the elections of senators and representatives.³ Voting is the means by which the voters *designate*

¹ See Lucius Ferraris, *Prompta Bibliotheca*, 11 vols. (Genoa, 1770), 3, 386.

² "... legitima expressio certarum personarum, qua designatur magistratus competentes ad leges ferendas." Joseph Güenechea, S.J., *Principia iuris politici*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1939), 1, 156.

³ "Dicitur legitima expressio voluntatis, ad significandum exercitium iuris ab aliqua lege promanare, sive naturali, sive positiva, cum, vel sine officio eidem annexo. Dicitur *certarum personarum* non autem civium, ut aliqui volunt; quia non raro, votum fertur a communitatibus et personis iuridicis, quae certe non sunt cives, etsi possint civitate esse praeditae, ut accidit . . . cum municipiis, corporationibus et aliis institutionibus in electione senatorum vel deputatorum. Deinde, v.g., in Argentina, respectu electionum municipalium, etiam non gaudentes civitate, poterant active interdum in eisdem participare." *Ibid.*

competent magistrates for the state, city, or some other consistory. Voting usually refers to the election of senators and representatives whose chief duty is to *make laws* (hence the name legislators).⁴

The word *suffrage*, often used synonymously with voting, has been defined as "... the right granted to certain individuals by constitution or statute to express choice among candidates for elective office or to register a vote for or against a proposed constitutional amendment, statute, bond issue, etc., submitted to the electorate according to law."⁵

The general principles of voting in ecclesiastical law⁶ apply to the principles of voting in civil and political affairs, though the scope of this dissertation is limited to the principles of voting as applicable to the members of a civil society.

⁴ "*Ad designationes magistratuum: sive sint Status, sive etiam municipii et aliorum consortiorum. Sed casu et principalius agitur de electione deputatorum et senatorum. Additur ad leges ferendas, quia eiusmodi est officium deputatorum et senatorum praecipuum. Nunc de suffragiis ad leges ferendas vel ad alia negotia tractanda et solvenda praescindimus.*" *Ibid.*

⁵ E. C. Smith, *Dictionary of American Politics* (New York, 1944), 296. In this work *election* is explained as "A choice, by persons qualified to vote, among candidates for public office. (Referenda are sometimes erroneously called elections.) In the United States the administration of elections is under state authority, subject to the provision that in the election of the members of Congress and presidential elections the regulations contained in national corrupt practices act must be observed and national officers may be assigned to attend the polls and prevent fraud, intimidation and other irregularities. Legally Congress might require that election of national officers be conducted by nationally appointed election officials. The preparation of ballots, including the determination of the validity of nominations, is usually a function of a State secretary of state. Locally appointed bi-partisan boards, clerks, and other officers count the polling in the precincts. The counting of votes is usually done in the separate precincts, though recently in Kentucky there has been a state-wide central count, and the same principle has been applied in counties and cities in some states." *Ibid.*, 111.

⁶ For the laws of the Church on voting in ecclesiastical affairs see the following canons: for causes of saints 2103, 2107, 2110, 2114; in ecumenical council 223; in plenary council 282; in provincial council 286, 292; in council of administration 1530, # 3; in elections 163-165, 167-170; in elections of religious 507, # 1, 2; in admission to profession 575, # 2; in diocesan synod 362.

Fundamentally, the right to vote is not a natural right as some authors claim. For example, there are many citizens in the United States such as minors and residents of the District of Columbia who do not have the right to vote. The same practice obtains in other countries. Then some nations have woman suffrage while others do not. If voting were a natural right it could not be suspended or taken away except for extraordinary reasons. Thus we hold that voting is a *political* right granted by constitutional provision and statute law to those of proper age and residence and deemed worthy and capable of enjoying the franchise. In the United States the right to vote is granted by the individual state and not by the federal government and only in four ways does the national Constitution restrict the action of the individual state (by not allowing any restriction because of race, color, previous condition of servitude, or sex).⁷

There have been some, even among Catholic writers, who have treated voting as a natural right. Thus Father Joseph Trunk, S.M., in *A Thomistic Interpretation of Civic Right* poses the question: "Whether men, because of their natural endowments and acquirements, can or cannot promote the common welfare of their particular state by means of the ballot." He answers: "If they can, this right should be acknowledged and accorded exercise; if, however, they cannot, this same right, natural though it be, should be suspended. Radically, then, the right to vote must be looked upon as a connatural, natural right; though the right to vote in this particular State by this or that individual can be but an acquired natural right."⁸ The same author declares that the right of voting "may be compared to the right of property, which although connatural if considered in the abstract, is acquired if viewed in relation to this or that piece of property."⁹ Certainly the right to private property is a natural right, but it seems stretching the point to make the right to vote the same kind.

⁷ See W. Leon Godshall, ed., *Principles and Functions of Government in the United States* (New York, 1948), 295.

⁸ *A Thomistic Interpretation of Civic Right in the United States* (Dayton, O., 1937), 199.

⁹ *Ibid.*

Father Charles Augustine, O.S.B., in his commentary on Canon 141 places voting as a natural right with this argumentation: "... the right of voting is, radically at least, an inborn right, inherent in a citizen by the fact of his belonging to the state. The state we hold to be of natural or divine origin. Hence the clergy, remaining citizens though clerics, cannot be deprived of that natural right by any authority, except by way of penalty."¹⁰

Jacques Maritain lends his support to such a theory in his work, *The Rights of Man and Natural Law*. He declares that a state of civilization in which men designate who shall hold authority is a more perfect state; the choice of men to lead is the most elementary form of active participation in political life. The right of suffrage rests upon a postulate of human nature¹¹ for "... universal suffrage has a wholly fundamental political and human value and is one of those fundamental rights which a community of free men can never give up."¹²

It will be noted that Father Trunk later modified his view or his terminology, declaring the right to vote to be "quasi-natural,"

¹⁰ *A Commentary on the New Code of Canon Law*, 8 vols. (St. Louis, 1923), 2, 95. Father Trunk also writes: "It is evident, then, that the letter as well as the import of these amendments [the 15th and the 19th on voting] imply that the right to vote is a natural right inhering in sufficiently perfected human nature, prior to and independent of any state grant." *Op. cit.*, 202.

See John J. Ryan in *America*, 36:26 (Oct. 9, 1926), and 37:16 (Jan. 29, 1927), for support of this theory.

¹¹ "The famous saying of Aristotle that man is a political animal does not mean only that man is naturally made to live in society; it also means that man naturally asks to lead a political life and to participate actively in the life of the political community. It is upon this postulate of human nature that political liberties and political rights rest, and particularly the right of suffrage. Perhaps it is easier for men to renounce active participation in political life; in certain cases it may even have happened that they felt happier and freer from care while dwelling in the commonwealth as political slaves, or while passively handing over to their leaders all the care of the management of the community. But in this case they gave up a privilege proper to their own nature, one of those privileges which in a sense make life more difficult and which bring with them a greater or lesser amount of labor, strain and suffering." Jacques Maritain, *The Right of Man and Natural Law* (New York, 1947), 84.

¹² *Ibid.*

but referred to Father Schwalm as his authority in holding the theory that voting is a natural right.¹²

Although respecting these authorities for their opinions, we prefer to follow the late Monsignor John A. Ryan who classed voting as a political right. "The elective franchise," he said, "is not among the natural rights of the individual. It is created by the state for a civil purpose which might be conceivably attained and in several countries has been attained, without universal suffrage."¹⁴ He explained his view by making a clear distinction between civil rights and political rights. The former are for the good of the individual; the latter for public benefit. "The chief political rights of the citizen are those of voting and holding public office. . . . The elective franchise is not among the natural rights of the individual. It is created by the state for a civil purpose . . . the power of voting is not a natural right inherent in every individual."¹⁵

Such too is the argument advanced by Professor W. Leon Godshall, an authority on civic matters. Many citizens are not able to vote though they are citizens. But those who vote perform a "function of the government which is carried out by duly accredited persons who collectively form the electorate, a fundamental branch of government itself."¹⁶

The exercise of the right of voting is vitally necessary for any free and independent state with a republican form of government. Its exercise should not depend upon the whim or fancy of the citizens, but upon the realized conviction that they participate in the government and that they cooperate either in building up or in tearing down the common good. To quote the same gentleman again:

Elections in a representative democracy are the official connecting link between the people and their government.

¹² *Proceedings of Catholic Philosophical Association*, 1939 (Washington, D. C., 1939), 33. For a discussion of the definition of voting as a right or a privilege see the following issues of *America*: July 11, 1925; Aug. 15, 1925; Aug. 22, 1925; Sept. 11, 1926; Oct. 9, 1926; Nov. 27, 1926; Jan. 8, 1927; Jan. 29, 1927; Feb. 26, 1927; Mar. 12, 1927; and Apr. 2, 1927.

¹⁴ *The Catholic Church and the Citizen* (New York, 1928), 91.

¹⁵ John A. Ryan-Francis Boland, *Catholic Principles of Politics* (New York, 1940), 215. Monsignor Ryan wrote this section.

¹⁶ Godshall, *op. cit.*, 295.

In this way the voters determine who shall hold responsible offices declared elective by the Constitution and laws of the nation. Elections are the foundation of representative government as distinguished from autocracy, where the people have no right to choose officials, and from democracy, where the elector not only chooses a greater portion of the officials but in addition passes judgment on many of the legislative actions of those it elects.¹⁷

Occasionally voting is called a privilege rather than a right. It may be considered a privilege in this sense that it is a faculty to which citizens are not entitled simply because they are citizens, but rather because they have been given the franchise by the state. As a privilege the ballot may be restricted by the power which grants it. However, it is a privilege which when accepted becomes obligatory according to the view followed in this dissertation, so that a person is not free to use or not to use it without moral consequences.

The electorate is vitally important, for as Don Luigi Sturzo remarks, it "exerts a moral and permanent control through the renewal of the elected bodies and the expression of public opinion."¹⁸ Such sovereignty of the people expresses in moral values what the elected bodies should translate into the political, the economic, the social and the legal spheres. Voting in modern life is especially important because so much for good or evil depends upon it. Good public officials, good laws, good rule come from honest and intelligent voting, while corrupt officials, unjust laws, and poor rule come from careless and negligent voting or from no voting at all. Voting is a political right which men possess in a republican form of government; it is also a political duty for which they are morally responsible.

2. KINDS OF VOTING

Though by definition voting means the expression of choice regarding a person or a matter, this expression may be in various ways. It may be by public ballot, by secret ballot, by raising the

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ See Luigi Sturzo, "Political Duties of a Citizen," *Epistle* 12:4 (Autumn 1946), 109.

hand, by rising, by the *viva voce* method, and so on. The more common means in present day government is the secret ballot. However, for the sake of completeness various kinds of voting may be here listed (from Güenechea):¹⁹

- 1) *Individual* or *plural*, as the elector is one or many.
- 2) *Individual* or *corporate*, that is, the vote of a person, or of an association or corporation.
- 3) *Plural* and *cumulative*, that is, if the electors can give all their votes at the same time to one candidate, or distribute them among various candidates.

¹⁹ Species suffragii sunt plurimae. Nam potest esse: *Individuale vel plurale* prout unusquisque elector solum unum possit ferre suffragium, vel *plura*. Lex belgica 1893 concedebat tria suffragia patribus familias qui filios haberent et alias conditiones gradus academici etc.

Idem suffragium potest esse *individuale* et *corporativum*, prout solummodo personae, vel etiam corporationes, et associationes valeant illud efferre.

Suffragium erit simul *plurale* et *cumulativum*, si electores possunt simul suffragia omnia quibus fruuntur dare ad libitum uni personae, vel inter varios candidatos distribuere.

Suffragium potest esse *universale* et *restrictum*. Universale, si omnes cives illo potiuntur; restrictum, si solum aliqui.

Restrictiones concipiuntur variae, v.g., si attenditur *fortuna* = (*suffragium censitarium*), si *dignitas*, si *nobilitas*, si *scientia*, si *gradus academicus*, vel alia peculiaria adiuncta personalia, vel realia certis personis vel muniis annexa.

Interdum, etiam existente suffragio universali, ut minoritates in camera legifera aliqualem participationem possint habere, instituitur suffragium *restrictum* in quadam circumscriptione electorali, ita ut v.g. si debent in eadem quatuor candidati eligi, singulis electoribus detur facultas ferendi suffragium pro solis tribus, non pro quatuor. Sic v.g. praecipiebat lex electoralis hispanica 8 Augusti 1907, a. 7.

Suffragium est *uninominal* vel *plurinominal*: si primum in circumscriptione electorali, uni solummodo licet candidato suffragium dare; si secundum, suffragio favere licet variis candidatis, sive libere, sive obligatorio, magis vel minus limitate iusta elencum (*lista*) prius a factionibus politicis praeformatum, cum certo ordine eligibilium.

Suffragium est *publicum* vel *secretum*. Publicum defendebat Stuart Mill, eo innixus argumento, quod electio deputatorum est functio aliqua publica, quaeque, proinde, publice debet exerceri, ut ita electio cum maiori responsibilitate perficatur. Reapse usque ad annum 1872 in Anglia electiones solebant esse publicae. Hodie in plerisque nationibus suffragatio generatim est secreta, ob maiorem independentiam et vitiationem fraudum et corruptionum." 1, 157.

4) *Universal and restricted*. Universal if all citizens possess the suffrage; restricted, if only some. Such restrictions may be based upon property, dignity, nobility, academic learning, or any other qualification, either personal or attached to some office.

5) *Uninominal or plurinominal*. Uninominal, if the electors may vote for only one candidate; plurinominal, if they may vote for several, either freely or under obligation more or less limited to the ballot furnished by the political parties with a defined order of candidates.

6) *Public or secret*. Public, if the voting is done before others, secret, if done privately. John Stuart Mill supported public voting on the grounds that the election of public representatives is a public function and should be exercised publicly. In England elections were public until 1872. At the present time, however, elections are secret because of the greater independence assured and the greater danger of corruption and "brow-beating" if they were public.

Russian elections furnish a weird exercise of the right to vote. They are secret in the sense that the voter is the only one in the polling booth, but there is no freedom of choice. There is but one candidate named by the Communist Party. If the person wishes to vote for one other than the party nominee he must scratch out the printed name and insert his choice. Indicative of this "freedom" is the fact that in the elections of 1946 88.82 percent of the eligible voters went to the polls and 99.25 percent of these voted for the Communists. Actually such elections are not a selection of men for public office, but a kind of plebiscite, constituting a public endorsement of leadership, for the outcome is a foregone conclusion.²⁰ Thus one author describes the Soviet manner of voting:

The voter shows his identification paper to a clerk of the precinct commission, who checks his name on the voters list and gives him two or three ballots, as the case may be. He may fold them and drop them straight into the box for the ballots, as most persons do, or retire to a closed booth furnished with a shelf, pen, and ink to study the papers and scratch names if he wishes to do so. He

²⁰ See Julian Towster, *Political Power in the U.S.S.R. 1917-1947* (New York, 1948), 195-198.

may also spoil his ballot by marking it in some way or writing in a name. It is not safe to stay at home, which would make him conspicuous; it is better to come and go through the motions.²¹

In some countries where a "strong man" takes control of the government, bullets rather than ballots win the elections. A person votes for the "strong man" or does not vote at all. There is no choice for the voters. This is called "rubber stamp" voting.

7) *Potestative* or *obligatory*. It is potestative, if the elector is free to vote or not to vote; obligatory, if the person is compelled to vote, for example, in Belgium where the citizens are subject to a pecuniary fine for not taking part in elections. But this penalty can be avoided by casting a blank ballot.²²

As a means of voting, machines have been used in increasing numbers in the past years.²³ Though such a system demands a large initial outlay of capital, it greatly simplifies and expedites the counting in elections, as well as reducing the cost of recording and counting votes by committees. Pushing a lever may seem less personal than marking a ballot, but it would seem to decrease the likelihood of dishonesty and fraud.²⁴

3. A BRIEF HISTORY OF VOTING

Perhaps the earliest reference to voting comes from the ancient history of the Jewish people. After Abraham and Jacob, when the families grew into the twelve tribes, the heads of several families within a tribe chose a prince or head. These men, together with

²¹ John Clarke Adams-Wilfred B. Kerr-Julian Park-Julius Pratt, *Foreign Governments and their Backgrounds* (New York, 1950), 685-686.

²² "Suffragium est potestativum vel obligatorium, prout, liberum sit vel non. Obligatorium existit in Belgio, C. a. 48, Rumania, C. a. 64, Hispania, lex 1907, Hungaria, lex 26 Iulii, 1925, Panama, C. a. 49. Similiter in Holanda, Tchecoslovaquia, Argentina, Dinamarca, Paraguay, etc. in aliquibus Cantonibus helveticis ut Uri, Appenzel, plerumque, suffragium est potestativum. Planum est, tamen, legem obligatoriam facile posse eludi per schedulam albam, latam, absque ullo candidato in eadem indicato." Güenechea, *op. cit.*, 1, 157.

²³ See Robert Dixon and E. Plische, *American Government, Basic Documents and Materials* (New York, 1950), 54 and 66.

²⁴ For recent state legislation on voting machines see Frank Smothers (ed.), *The Books of the States, 1950-51* (Chicago, 1950), 96.

the heads of the families, exercised a kind of paternal government over the whole people.²⁵

Voting played a part in the histories of the Greek and Roman peoples, though no universal right existed, even among the men. It seems to have been reserved to certain families (*eupatridae* or patricians). But the reforms of Solon early in the sixth century, B. C., swept away the distinction of birth, though they still recognized four classes of citizens on the basis of ownership of property. But even so, democracy was on a rather high level as Werner Jaeger points out:

In the time of Solon and Cleisthenes, the fathers of their democracy, the Athenians did not believe that democracy meant license, that freedom meant anarchy, that equality under the law meant freedom to say anything one wished, and that the highest happiness was the power to do what one pleased without hindrance: instead of punishing men of that type, the state tried to make its citizens better. . . . And the elections were not too mechanized by a system of lots, which substituted sheer chance for the sane judgment.²⁶

The officials were selected from a previously chosen group of qualified citizens. For the Greeks it was not a matter of good business to take part in the government but an obligation seriously accepted. And a man's understanding of business was more likely to get him elected than his party views.²⁷

In Greece voting was used to select rulers, to decide matters of policy, and to process and pass laws. In Sparta the assembly elected magistrates who decided questions on the succession of kings and adopted or rejected measures which the magistrates or Council proposed. The members of this assembly had no right to initiate an issue or to engage in debate; they simply listened to the proceedings and then voted. Some Greek city-states banded together to form leagues and had their own government of forty-

²⁵ See S. G. Messmer (ed.), *Outline of Bible Knowledge* (St. Louis, 1910), 219.

²⁶ Werner Jaeger, *Paedia: the Ideals of Greek Culture*, 3 vols. (New York, 1944), 3, 113.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

eight speakers, four from each state and twelve recorders. The speakers alone proposed and debated measures; the recorders alone voted. Such was the situation in the twelve states in the area of Thempyae.²⁸

Later when the Athenian empire was formed, the people's powers were vested in the popular Assembly which included all men over eighteen years of age. This Assembly met forty times a year, decided on matters of policy, war, food, and other details. The accepted principle was that the laws, not the people, governed. In Athens, whose population was never very large, the number of officials in proportion to the rest of the citizens was tremendous. There were seven hundred in the city and many times this number in the rest of the empire. At least twenty thousand soldiers, sailors, and jurors were on the payroll of the city. During the fourth century B. C. the public spirit and interest declined markedly so that the citizens had to be paid to attend the meetings of the Assembly.

Plato wrote of voting in his work, *The Laws*,²⁹ but these constitutions were never used in actual life. He gave a complicated system for choosing the magistrates, a mean between monarchy and democracy, but it never extended beyond the mind of its author.

Aristotle stated that the citizen "has the right to share in the juridical and executive government in any city. . . . A city is a collective body of such persons, sufficient in themselves to all the purposes of life."³⁰ Elsewhere he gave this judgment on democratic government:

. . . just as a feast to which many contribute is better than one provided by a single government, so, and for the same reason, the masses can come to a better decision in many matters, than one individual. Again, a numerous body is less likely to be corrupted. The judgment of a single man is bound to be corrupted when he is overpowered by anger or by another similar emotion; but it

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ 6, 753. B. Jowett, *The Dialogue of Plato*, 2 vols. (New York, 1937), 2, 516.

³⁰ *Politics* 3, 1. See W. D. Ross (ed.), *The Works of Aristotle* (Oxford, 1921) as translation.

is not easy for all to get angry and for all to go wrong simultaneously.³¹

For Aristotle citizenship was a full-time occupation. Citizens should be free to devote their lives to the interests of the state as soldiers in their youth, then as members of the Assembly, and of the Jury, and finally as holders of the state priesthoods. For this reason Aristotle held that full membership in the state should be restricted to the leisured classes. Artisans and agricultural laborers were excluded because they did not have sufficient time to devote to the duties of citizenship. In *The Republic of Athens* he showed in detail the qualifications of electors and of candidates, and of the offices to be filled by elected officials.

Among the Greeks voting was often done by a show of hands, except in cases of ostracism and lawsuits, when it was done secretly or with pebbles. While the government of this age and people may seem to have had much in common with what is currently called democracy, there were many differences, as Professor Jaeger has indicated :

... it may be well to recall that the democracy of Athens was "government by the people" in a literal sense; it was not only "representative government" as in the modern democracies, where the main function of the people is merely to elect delegates for the legislative body. Rather, the assembled mass of the people was itself the legislature, as it was also the judiciary. This was possible only in the ancient city-state. Modern democracy has gone one important step beyond its ancient predecessor in abolishing slavery; but it is only indirectly democratic, insofar as the people today exercise their legislative and judicial rights only through elected representatives.³²

Turning from the Greeks to the Romans we find much the same condition with regard to participation in government. Originally only the patricians were considered citizens and they alone had the right to vote in the *comitia* or several assemblies. But after the

³¹ *Ibid.*, see George Willis Botsford-Charles Alexander Robinson, *Hellenic History* (New York, 1947).

³² Jaeger, *op. cit.*, 1, 489-490.

comitia curiata and the *comitia tributa* were formed, the plebians were granted the rights of citizenship, including the right to vote.³³ In time the Romans extended their citizenship to the Latin peoples whom they conquered, but restricted it in various ways so that in some communities the citizens could not vote (*cives sine suffragio*) as in Etruria and Campania.

The Romans accepted popular sovereignty as the explanation of the source of magisterial and legislative power and conceived law as the expression of the will of the people. However, they always maintained a distinction between the *leges* and the *plebescita*. A *lex* expressed the will of the entire populace, a *plebescitum* that of the plebs only. Because a plebiscite did not express the vote of the whole people, it was not originally binding upon all. And in strict conformity with the "consent of the governed," the resolutions passed were considered binding only upon those who had assented to them.

At first the Romans voted by acclamation and it is not certain when they began the orderly vote of the *comitia curiata*. It is generally thought that *suffragium* comes from *frangere*, for *fragor* means a breaking, a crash, a din, or applause. *Fragor* also means "thunders of applause" and the prefix *sub* indicates the dependence of the action upon the proposal of the speaker. But even after the assembly was organized into the *comitia*, the voting continued to be by din, as suggested by *sex suffragia*, applied to the six oldest knights of the *comitia centuriata*. Voting by heads in a large gathering was a slow process, but was facilitated by the help of the military array.³⁴

In the Roman nation voting was rather extensive, granted even to strangers and sometimes forced upon the conquered. Only when she acquired dominion over a large portion of Italy did she restrict the right. This may be inferred from the expression, "Caerite franchise," designating the limited citizenship.³⁵

The ballot was introduced in elections to free the voter from the undue influence of the nobility, for many poor had fallen into economic and political dependence upon the wealthy. It was used in

³³ These were *ius conubii*, *ius commercii*, *ius honorum*, and *ius legis actionis*.

³⁴ See G. W. Botsford, *The Roman Assemblies* (New York, 1909), 263, 273.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 38, n. 1.

the plebiscite of Q. Gabinus in 138 B. C. and one year later a plebiscite was held to extend the ballot to all the trials of the people except *perduellio*.³⁶ The manner of voting was such that the *custodes tabellarum* stood on the *pontes* overlooking the ballot booth as well as beside the voter. Often these guards were influential men selected by candidates to exert pressure and to enable the aristocracy to control the *comitia* in spite of laws. When C. Marius was tribune of the plebs he wanted to make the *pontes* narrower to allow room for the voter only.³⁷

The elections of the *comitia centuriata* took place on the Campus Martius, the field outside the walls of Rome where athletic events were held. At sunrise the heralds passed through the city with trumpets and soon the entire populace was streaming through the gates to cast their ballots. The voting lasted all through the long, hot Italian summer day. In the early republic the citizens met carrying arms and flags and as one part voted the other stood guard, in case of an attack by enemies. Once the danger passed, the *comitia* became a jostling good humored crowd which Cicero likened to an immense sea. The campus was equipped with wooden stockades into which mutton dealers herded their flocks; these enclosures served as voting boxes which the electors entered and left only after they had placed their vote.³⁸

The voters passed from the gates through stiles. As they left they spoke the name of the candidate of their choice or marked it on a wax tablet with a stylus. The tribunes protested against unfair pressure from this public ballot and the *lex gabina* later provided for the use of the ballot. At the moment of voting each voter was given a list containing the names of the candidates and a carved wooden ballot for each of the names. He dropped the name of his choice into the urn while friends of the candidates stood round to prevent dishonesty and returned the other ballots to an attendant outside. The result of the polling was announced later.

In all the assemblies the suffrage was limited to the men. This same idea underlay the political institutions of the German tribes

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 359.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 389.

³⁸ C. Seymour-D. Frary, *How the World Votes*, 2 vols. (Springfield, Mass., 1918), 1, 6.

in the early Middle Ages. Participation in the *folk moot* was founded on membership in the tribe. Differences in rank and social status involved no political inequality and in the national assemblies of the German people important questions as peace and war were decided by the body of armed men, shaking their spears or clashing their arms. The words of the elders and nobles carried more weight because they were considered the wise men (*witans*) but not because they were wealthier or better born.³⁹

During the intervening centuries between the sack and fall of Rome there seems to have been little voting, at least on an organized scale. But later suffrage came into prominence again, especially in Italy with the rise of the numerous communes or cities as autonomous republics. Citizenship was given any man regardless of his origin who had lived in the city unchallenged for a year and a day. Before the end of the eleventh century Venice, Genoa, and Pisa had become established communes. Then followed Siena, Florence, Lucca, Pavia, and Brescia. The self-governing movement spread to Flanders among such cities as Ghent, Burges, Arras, Ypres, and Saint-Omer. In these communes the only political authority recognized was that established by the community and though the aristocratic families exercised no small influence in political affairs, these cities had an extensive popular suffrage.⁴⁰

In Spain at the Council of Leon in 1188 explicit mention was made of the presence of elected representatives of the cities as members of the council. The king promised he would make neither war nor peace without the counsel of the bishops, the nobles and the "good men." Elected representatives took part in the Council of Benavente in 1202, in the Council of Leon in 1208, and in the Council of Valladolid in 1258. By the end of the twelfth century in Leon and by the end of the thirteenth in Castile, the representatives of the cities were regular members of the Cortes, appointed by their respective municipalities.

During Henry V's reign in Germany enfranchisement was granted to artisans as well as to other citizens in Worms, Cologne, and other cities. In 1188 Frederick I granted a charter to Speir by which the citizens could elect their own municipal officers. As

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴⁰ See Carl Stephenson, *Medieval History* (New York, 1935), 360-368.

time went on the citizens became more powerful, acquiring further voice in their own government and exerting influence so that no taxes were levied without their consent.

In 1231 Frederick II told the citizens of Siena and of each of the Tuscan cities to elect and send representatives to a council with full authority from those who sent them to accept what should be decided by the representatives. He also announced to the Podestà and to the Commune of Genoa that he was about to hold a curia and that men of the respective communes should be sent to Ravenna to take part in the deliberations and to decide policies of action. This monarch also made experiments with representative government in Italy.⁴¹

In 1274 in his instructions to the Archbishop of Salzburg and to the Bishops of Passau and Regensburg, Rudolph of Hapsburg authorized them to take into counsel not only the lords and barons, but the citizens of the cities on all matters pertaining to the welfare and reformation of the empire. In the same year he convoked a general council similar in terms to that convoked by Edward I in 1295.⁴²

In the great conflict between King John and the barons, representatives were chosen to meet the monarch in November, 1213. It is not certain whether the meeting was ever held, but it is significant that the summons was issued. In 1245 another summons was issued for two representatives to be selected from each county to render financial aid to the king. In 1261 another writ came, asking for three knights as representatives of the people.⁴³

The growth of the guilds in the Middle Ages made a vast change in the exercise of government. In some places an artisan would have to give up his trade to enjoy the right of franchise. In 1295, Bern, hitherto an aristocracy, added to its governing board a group of four men from each quarter of the city who elected a Council of Two Hundred from all classes. Amiens followed the trend by changing its constitution in this manner: The members of the corporations of the arts and trades elected their chiefs who in turn

⁴¹ See A. Carlyle-R. Carlyle, *Mediaeval Political History of the West*, 6 vols. (New York, 1928), 5, 135.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 128-140.

elected half the magistrates. Often the trade guilds received representation in the city council or elected a new council which functioned in addition to the old one.⁴⁴

Actually the desire to secure public office was not very strong in France during this period for the position went unpaid, while the expenses and display involved demanded more than the majority of the citizens could afford. Thus the mayor was exposed to the strife of factions in the cities on one hand, and to the wrath of the kings on the other. Moreover, once elected, the official had to serve his term, like the members of the Roman curia, under penalty of having his house demolished. In some French communities, the mayor did receive a salary, but a very inadequate one.⁴⁵

The democratic principle that the people should have a voice in the government was more clearly felt in the Free Cities of Italy more than in any other part of Europe. Venice, Genoa, Florence, Siena, Pisa, Brescia, Bergamo, and Milan became free governments, though in time their stars began to fall except for Genoa and Venice whose destiny and influence lasted almost to the present day. Though the practice of elections was widely followed, the details have been lost. The vote was severely restricted and was considered a burden rather than a privilege. Venice had a highly complicated system of the indirect election of the doge, involving the use of lottery.⁴⁶

The little republics of San Marino and Andorra have used the democratic process of election for centuries.⁴⁷ Both owed their origin directly to the principles of Catholic thought. Andorra was founded by a bishop when Louis de Debonnaire, Charlemagne's successor, ceded the territory to the bishop of Urgel. Though the bishops exercised a mild feudal authority over the citizens, the real authority was vested in the Syndics (governors) elected by the people of the six principal towns of the republic.

San Marino in the Appenines is called after a man of this name of the fourth century, venerated as a saint. Its legislative body con-

⁴⁴ Seymour-Frery, *op. cit.*, 1, 28.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 24-25.

⁴⁷ See John L. Spalding, *The Church, Culture and Liberty* (New York, 1923), 208 ff.

sists of a council of sixty members, half of whom are chosen from the plebian order; and of the *arrego* or general assembly, summoned under extraordinary circumstances in which all the families of the republic are represented. The executive power of the government is vested in two *capitani reggenti*, chosen every six months. One man exercises jurisdiction in the city, the other in the country. The judiciary department is managed by a commissary, by law required to be a foreigner (a native of some other part of Italy) so that in the discharge of his duties he may not be biased by any family connections.

The two great mendicant orders of the Middle Ages, the Franciscans and the Dominicans, with their rules and constitutions of elected superiors, did much to promote the democratic form of government beyond their own communities. St. Thomas as one of their chief representatives has left this statement on the selection of rulers: "... the choice of rulers in any state or kingdom is best, when one is chosen for his merit to preside over all, and under him are other rulers, chosen for their merit and the government belongs to all, because the rulers may be chosen from any class of society and the choice is made by all."⁴⁸

This period of history was one of the greatest in human achievement. Life was not perfect by any means, but the wholesome Christian influence penetrated all spheres of society, into the arts and sciences, into philosophy and politics. Such a statement could not be made of the present age. Father Bede Jarrett, O.P., has made this keen judgment of the past:

Politics were held to come under the eye of the theologian for the art of them could be reached through virtue and in their perfection, only through virtue. Politics were never in the mediaeval thinker or writer a "game" or a "dirty business." Politics may often have been degraded in practice, but not in theory; political science . . . was

⁴⁸ "... optima ordinatio principum est in aliqua civitate vel regno in qua unus praeficitur secundum virtutem qui omnibus praesit; et sub ipso sunt aliqui principantes secundum virtutem; et talis principatus ad omnes pertinet, tum quia ex omnibus eligi possunt, tum quia etiam ab omnibus eliguntur." *Summa theologiae*, I-II, 105, 1 c. (author's translation).

held to be the completion and crown of the life of philosophy. The perfect philosopher must be a king.⁴⁹

During the following centuries the spirit of representative government took deeper root in the minds and lives of the people. St. Robert Bellarmine insisted, against the disputatious contentions of the opponents of the Church and the supporters of the Divine Right of kings that God gave the power to the people who in turn entrusted it to a ruler to exercise it for them.⁵⁰

In the seventeenth century when European peoples began their enterprises of colonization in the New World in search of religious and political liberty, trading companies settled the land and held outposts as havens of freedom and peace. These trading companies were an evolution of the Merchant Adventurers of the Low Countries⁵¹ which had sprung from the city, trade, and merchant guilds of the Middle Ages.⁵² In the second charter granted by King James to the Virginia Company on May 23/June 2, 1609, we read in Article IX: "The said Council and Treasurer or any one of them, shall be from henceforth nominated, chosen, continued, displaced, changed, altered, and supplied, as Death or any other several occasions shall require, out of the Company of the Said Adventurers, by the voice of the greater part of the said Company and Adventurers, in their assembly for that Purpose."⁵³ Such was the charter in choosing leaders who were the choice of the greater number.

The right of self-government existed in practically every one of the thirteen colonies from the time of their foundation. In 1643 Roger Williams obtained the following patent through the Earl of Warwick indicative of the arrangement.

The settlers have full Power and Authority to rule themselves, and such others as shall hereafter inhabit any Part

⁴⁹ *Social Theories of the Middle Ages* (Westminster, Md., 1942), 183.

⁵⁰ See James Broderick, *Robert Bellarmine*, 2 vols. (London, 1950), 2, 135.

⁵¹ William MacDonald, *Select Charters and Other Documents Illustrative of American History, 1606-1775* (New York, 1889), 14.

⁵² See C. P. Lucas, *The Beginning of English Overseas Enterprises* (Oxford, 1917), 19.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 184.

of the said Tract of land, by such Form of Civil Government, as by voluntary consent of all, or the greater part of them, they shall find most suitable to their Estate and Condition; and for that end, to make and ordain such Civil Laws and Constitutions, as to place, and to displace Officers of Justice, as they, or the greatest Part of them, shall by free consent agree thereto.⁵⁴

The development of the right of self-government continued unbroken in charters and ordinances from the Statute of the Staple passed in 1353 to the Frame of Government of Pennsylvania in 1682. The whole concept of self-government was deeply embedded in the American colonies so that Professor Rahilly has remarked:

The American colonists, merchants, as well as religious adventurers, merely set up farther afield in untrodden soil those little commonwealths and bodies politic which had long existed in Calais, Antwerp, and Burges. Religious guilds working through non-conformist churches and merchant guilds transformed into trading companies and chartered plantations, combined to produce the United States of America.⁵⁵

During the early days of American history John Locke's *Two Treatises on Government* and Algernon Didney's *Discourse on Government* were the two most popular and widely read books prior to the Revolutionary War. Doubtless the colonists felt a common sympathy for Didney who was beheaded for his republicanism.

In the New England town hall meetings there were elections to a variety of offices. John Adams has left an account of one of these meetings in 1763 telling how he was elected by a narrow margin. Sometimes they were held in churches.⁵⁶

In the first days of the Massachusetts Colony the Presbyterians were excluded by law from voting because they were not members

⁵⁴ MacDonald, *op. cit.*, 33.

⁵⁵ Alfred Rahilly, "The Sources of English and American Democracy," *Studies*, 8:29 (Mar. 1919), 97.

⁵⁶ Albert B. Hart (ed.), *American History as Told by Contemporaries*, 3 vols. (New York, 1929), 1, 286-287.

of the established Congregationalist Church. A plea by Robert Child and others asked for this political right:

We therefore intreat you, in whose hands it is to help and whose judicious eyes discern these great inconveniences, for the glory of God and the comfort of your brethren and countrymen, to give liberty to the members of the Church of England, not scandalous in their lives and conversations (as members of these churches: to be taken into your congregation and to enjoy with you all those liberties and ordinances. . . .

The right to vote was never extended to all men at any time during the colonial period except in a few colonies and then only for an allotted length of time. It was restricted by property, religion, and other qualifications. Only those admitted to the corporation that constituted the colony were able to have a voice in the election of the governor, deputy governor, and other officials. Generally the privilege of taking part in the elections was conferred by a vote of the General Court and sometimes the application had to be endorsed by the town meeting of the community in which the applicant resided before he could come before the General Court. Massachusetts discontinued this practice in 1691 but Connecticut and Rhode Island used it throughout the whole colonial period.⁵⁸

Until 1644 in Massachusetts and in New Haven only members of the established church were granted the right to vote. The General Court, under pressure from the British government, made a change, technical, but not substantial, in the religious test for voters so that the practice of imposing Church membership continued until 1684. Some historians think that the proportion of voters was about one-fifth of male adults, while others judge the ratio to have been much larger.⁵⁹ But certainly at no time did all the male citizens have the right to vote, this privilege being restricted to a minority of the upper and middle classes.

Connecticut and Plymouth had no such requirements, but few members of the colony could be admitted to voting unless they

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 1, 392.

⁵⁹ Seymour-Frery, *op. cit.*, 1, 215.

⁶⁰ See J. T. Adams, *The Founding of New England* (Boston, 1921), 395.

belonged to the Congregationalist Church or were in sympathy with it. Rhode Island had a law requiring all to be Christians and South Carolina enacted a similar law in 1716. Plymouth and Massachusetts denied the Quakers the right to vote during a large part of the seventeenth century because this group refused to take the oath required of voters. Actually, however, Catholics and Jews suffered most by being barred from the franchise. After the revolution in 1688 laws were passed in five colonies disfranchising Catholics⁶⁰ and it is probable that they were prevented from voting in other jurisdictions as well. Jews were not allowed to vote in Pennsylvania, New York, Rhode Island, and South Carolina from 1687 until 1759.

In the eighteenth century the religious affiliation passed as a basis for suffrage and property ownership became a qualification. This was due in part to the colonies' desire to conform to English usage and in part to favor the landholding aristocracy which controlled the provincial governments. Six colonies required the possession of real estate as the basis for the right to vote, while others made ownership of personal or real property the requirement. Despite these qualifications the voters in the American colonies constituted a greater proportion of the population than did the voters in the mother country because land was much easier to secure in the colonies.

Woman suffrage was not in vogue, though there is one instance of Lady Deborah Moody of Long Island voting in 1655. Records also show that Mrs. Margaret Brent of Maryland voted in 1648. As for Negroes voting, laws prohibited such action in the provinces south of the Potomac River so that when some voted in South Carolina in 1701 the matter was considered irregular and illegal.⁶²

Despite strict qualifications and restrictions, the common people had a stronger voice in the government of the colonies than did people in any other part of the world at the time. Even so, however, the legislature was not run by the people or for them, but was

⁶⁰ These were Maryland, New York, Virginia, Rhode Island, and South Carolina. See Seymour-Frery, *op. cit.*, 1, 212.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 1, 216.

⁶² A. E. McKinley, *The Suffrage Franchise in the Thirteen Colonies in America* (Philadelphia, 1905), 137.

controlled by wealthy landholders and merchants. Consequently the small farmers and laborers bore much of the burden, but received little of the benefits of representative government, particularly among the settlers of the frontier.⁶³

Possession of property was one of the chief qualifications for voting. In Philadelphia the franchise was limited to those who possessed fifty pounds, which disqualified ninety per cent of the citizens; the city had only two representatives in the assembly while the rest of the population, smaller in comparison, had eight.⁶⁴ The new constitution of 1776 laid down no specific qualifications for voting or holding office, except the payment of a state tax and the proviso that the membership of the House should be of men noted for wisdom and virtue. In South Carolina a senator had to have an estate of two thousand pounds to hold office; the governor, lieutenant governor, and councillors had to own property valued at ten thousand pounds.⁶⁵

This vested right theory, historically speaking, was the basis for all the property and taxpaying qualifications for suffrage, some of which still obtain in the United States.⁶⁶ It was also responsible for the systems of plural and weighted voting. In Great Britain, for example, until 1918, a man might vote in a number of parliamentary constituencies in which he possessed a qualifying status. The same theory fathered the various systems on the continent such as the three-class system in Prussia and the plural voting in Belgium, both of which were in vogue prior to World War I.⁶⁷

Before 1776 the qualifications for voting could not be met by more than half the men in the United States.⁶⁸ Actual democratization did not come until after the war. A chief factor for breaking

⁶³ Oliver Perry Chitwood, *History of Colonial America* (New York, 1931), 194.

⁶⁴ See K. H. A. Porter, *History of Suffrage in the United States* (Chicago, 1918), 13.

⁶⁵ S. E. Morrison-H. S. Commanger, *The Growth of the American Republic*, 2 vols. (New York, 1942), 1, 239.

⁶⁶ Max Savelle, *Foundations of American Civilization* (New York, 1942), 671.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 674.

⁶⁸ E. M. Sait, *American Parties and Elections*, rev. ed. (New York, 1942), 22.

down the qualifications based on property and income was the expansion of the west with its frontier spirit of equality. To make the wilderness habitable men had to work and bear hardships side by side so that a spirit of equality in economic life and a uniformity in social outlook developed among the people. Only three states, Vermont (1791), Kentucky (1792) and Tennessee (1796) aside from the original thirteen, came into the union with any restricted white manhood suffrage.⁶⁹

During the nineteenth century other important changes took place along the Atlantic seacoast. The increasing number of manufacturing workers were unable to meet the property or alternative requirements. Alien Irish and Germans poured into the eastern ports of the nation, seeking for jobs wherever they might find them.⁷⁰ This was an opportunity for the political leaders. Quick to recognize the importance of these large numbers the politicians urged measures to enable the immigrants to vote so that they might use these workers to their own advantage. By 1851 North Carolina alone had property qualifications for the election of state senators and only Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and North Carolina retained the tax payment qualification. In 1933 Pennsylvania was the last to abandon this requirement.

Nine of the ten state constitutions framed between 1776 and 1780 required the paper ballot for the election of certain officials, but the *viva voce* method continued in some states, particularly in the south. Arkansas used it until 1846; Missouri and Virginia until the Civil War; and Kentucky until 1891.⁷¹ Nevertheless abuses in the unofficial paper ballot tended to become as grave as those during the use of the *viva voce* system. Because of the constantly enlarged size of the ballot, it became the practice of parties to print the ballots for the convenience of the voters; these unofficial ballots rather than the ballots written by hand were considered valid in Massachusetts in 1829. Each party printed its ballot on differently colored paper so that it could be easily recognized. But bribery and fraud became even more widespread until the universal adoption of the Australian ballot between 1899 and 1900.⁷²

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 732.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁷² *Ibid.*

As early as 1800 Massachusetts enacted a law to prevent illegal voting and other New England states followed; more states delayed until after the Civil War when cities began to grow rapidly and election frauds developed apace. Though stronger registration laws and the creation of election and registration commissions tended to eliminate corruption for a few years, before long the system fell into the hands of party organizations and the frauds were perpetrated with impunity. In post-Civil War times it was estimated that as many as 60,000 fraudulent votes were cast in hotly contested elections in Philadelphia.⁷³ Fortunately since 1900 the general character of elections in the United States has improved by stricter registration laws, more detailed regulations of conduct during elections, and the granting of the franchise to women.

Though the franchise was greatly restricted in the early history of our country it was gradually extended by lessening property requirements. It was further extended by the Fifteenth Amendment adopted in 1870 to provide that "the right of the citizen of the United States shall not be denied or abridged by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." Many people in the South said that this amendment was forced upon them by a victorious North to punish the southern states and to maintain political sovereign sovereignty. And so to react against the situation the states concerned amended their state constitutions which did not discriminate against the Negro in letter, but in practice did debar great numbers of the race. Framers of the amendments set up real property qualifications—and many Negroes owned no property. They instituted strict residence requirements, established tax payment requirements, devised educational and difficult literacy tests, and enforced disqualifications for voting as crimes and misdemeanors. With such restrictions enforced, many Negroes were prevented from voting.⁷⁴

In the decades that have followed, restrictions against the Negro have changed little in southern states. Even if they wish to be

⁷³ See Joseph Harris, "Elections," *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York, 1937), 3, 454.

⁷⁴ Earl Shoup, *The National Government of the American People* (New York, 1948), 144.

Democrats in the "solid South" they are excluded by party rule. The Republican Party has been unable to attract them because it has hardly existed in this part of the country. In the northern United States, however, the Negroes take part in elections as any other American citizens, and it is becoming increasingly evident that their numbers of more than three million voters can tip the scales one way or another in political circles.

Relative to the Fifteenth Amendment it may be noted that the Supreme Court decided in 1875 that this Amendment does not confer the right of suffrage upon any one. Instead it is negative in character.

It prevents the States, or the United States, however, from giving preference in this particular to one citizen of the United States over another on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. Before its adoption this could be done. It was as much within the power of a State to exclude the citizens of the United States from voting on account of race, etc., as it was on account of age, property, or education. Now it is not.⁷⁵

In 1915 the Supreme Court was called to judge the "Grandfather's Clause" cases. In 1908 Maryland passed a law giving the right to vote to all persons who, prior to January 1, 1868, were entitled to vote and to "the male descendants of any person" entitled to vote at that time, that is, the man's grandfather, and hence the name given by popular usage. Since the Negro was not allowed to vote in 1868 and since the Fifteenth Amendment had not been adopted, the state law thus operative excluded the Negro from the polls. The Supreme Court judged this law unconstitutional.

Oklahoma presented a literacy test in 1910 and limited the right to vote to those who had voted January 1, 1866, or those who were in the lineal descent of such a person. The Supreme Court decided that this too violated the Fifteenth Amendment.⁷⁶

The next extension of suffrage was to women. The long battle for the woman's vote in the United States came to a successful

⁷⁵ Thomas J. Norton, *The Constitution of the United States* (New York, 1949), 250-251.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

end with the adoption of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920 holding that "the right of the citizens of the United States shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex." More than seventy years before the equal rights for women movement began with a convention at Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848. Through the insistence of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the wife of a prominent anti-slavery leader, the convention adopted a resolution calling for woman suffrage. In 1851 Mrs. Stanton met Susan Anthony and the two women worked unceasingly for their crusade. They organized the National Woman Suffrage Association in 1869 whose objective was to secure the vote for women by a Sixteenth Amendment to the Constitution. In 1873 they sent a petition to the Forty-Second Congress to enact appropriate legislation to protect women citizens in the several states of the Union in their right to vote.⁷⁷

In 1869 the Territory of Wyoming granted women the right to vote and in 1870 the Territory of Utah acted in similar fashion. By 1900 Colorado and Idaho granted the franchise to them and by 1915 New Mexico was the only state in the far west denying women admission to the polls.

The National Woman Suffrage Association and the American Woman Suffrage Association merged to form the National American Suffrage Association. By their efforts fifteen states had granted full suffrage to the women and twenty others had given limited suffrage. From 1878 until 1919 the Association sent every session of Congress the same proposed amendment, but without success. In May, 1919, the House acted favorably and in June the Senate approved the proposal. However, only thirty-five states approved the bill; one more was needed for the required two-thirds majority. Finally, August 18, 1920, Tennessee became the thirty-sixth state to ratify the amendment and on August 26 the Secretary of State proclaimed the Nineteenth Amendment as part of the Constitution of the United States.⁷⁸

Despite the interest in voting by some citizens there is a definite lack of interest on the part of others. True, the United States has

⁷⁷ *Heritage of Freedom* (New York, n.d.), 82-84.

⁷⁸ Arthur Schlesinger, *Political and Social Growth of the United States 1852-1933*, rev. ed. (New York, 1937), 444-445.

never had an official complete register of all eligible voters as some European countries so that complete statistics could not be made, but a reliable estimate can be given, based upon decimal census figures. Calculations set the voters in the presidential election of 1896 at 80 percent. This is certainly the largest vote on record for the United States. Elections of 1920 and 1924 brought 43 and 44 percent respectively to the polls, while those of 1928 and 1932 drew 52 percent. Other statistics are: 1936—57 percent; 1940—59 percent; 1944—54 percent; and 1948—52 percent.⁷⁹

Since 1916 at least 70 percent of all eligible voters have taken part in every national election in France, Switzerland, Austria, Great Britain, Denmark, and Belgium. In these countries individual citizens need to spend little effort to see that their names are placed on the register of qualified voters, while rather obsolete and inconvenient systems of registration in the United States have kept many from exercising their right of the franchise.

The highest voting records in democratic countries are found in those which make voting compulsory. Thus in Belgium, Holland, Australia, 90 percent or more of the electors take part in the national elections. This idea seems to have been incorporated in several American colonial statutes, though it was first given a thorough trial in the St. Gallen canton of Switzerland. In 1835 this canton passed a law punishing absence from the district assembly elections by a pecuniary fine.

This law was re-enforced in 1867 and in 1890 and a number of legally valid excuses were specified. In the five German cantons of Switzerland where this law holds, the interest of the voters in elections has been much higher than in other parts of the country. The same law has been used to notify the citizens of their electoral duties and it tends to lighten the burden of the party to get the citizens out to vote.

Compulsory voting was introduced in Bavaria in 1881, in Bulgaria in 1882, and in Belgium in 1893. In Belgium the number of non-voters previous to the law of compulsory voting was not large

⁷⁹ See *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1948*, Table 338, 311. Also in typed manuscript: Lewis J. Williams, Library of Congress, *Popular Vote for Presidential Electors; Population over 21 Years of Age; Percentage of Popular Participation in Presidential Elections, 1900-1944* (1947), 1.

compared with the numbers in England, France, and the United States. Without doubt this law has produced remarkable results, for more than 90 percent of the people take part in their elections.⁸⁰

Every country has its own problems with regard to voting and while it is impossible to list all the facts of the various nations some of the salient points may be pointed out. In England the franchise began to be widely extended after the House of Commons in 1688 began to assume the right to determine what should constitute the right of franchise in various boroughs. Actually the resolutions were amended and rescinded so frequently that by the end of the eighteenth century there was no regular borough franchise. It depended entirely upon the borough in which a man lived as to his being allowed to vote for a representative in the Commons. The borough suffrage regulations were so complicated that they confused even the election experts.

In general, however, there were four general types of borough franchise. The "scot and lot" franchise meant the vote for those who had contributed to municipal charges and were entitled to vote, though disqualified for the receipt of alms and charity. In some localities being an object of charity did not disqualify a person. There was the odd situation in a town where no resident requirements were demanded and a traveller and a troop of soldiers having arrived in the vicinity might spend the night and vote the next day.⁸¹ The "potwaller" qualification simply meant that the inhabitant, household or lodger who had the sole dominion of a room with a stove or fireplace and who furnished and cooked his own diet was entitled to vote.⁸² "Baggage hold" was another type, meaning that the person had rendered service to the community and entitled to vote. Then there was the "freeman" vote by which those who were "free" by some special privilege could enjoy the franchise, for example, *honoris causa*, by marriage with a freeman's daughter, by inheritance and service. Naturally it was open to many abuses.

In Germany the electoral question had long been a matter of contention since 1815. The Congress of Vienna (June 9, 1815)

⁸⁰ Seymour-Frery, *op. cit.*, 2, 194-195.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 1, 71.

⁸² *Ibid.*

framed a constitution for the German Federation (Bund) of thirty-eight states, but it did less for German liberty and unity than the Articles of Confederation did for the thirteen colonies of the United States. The electoral system which came into usage after 1850 was severely criticized on all sides. The following is a description of it:

On the day of the primaries the voter goes to the polls. The polling place has no ballot box, ballots, or mysterious voting machine nor any other of the arcana to which the American voter is accustomed. On the table before the Chairman of the Polls lies a large book filled with the names, occupations, and addresses of the voters. Presenting as identification the card which summoned him to the polls, the voter is asked to designate his choice or *Wahlmann* which he must do orally and in a loud voice. The chairman is not the only one who takes cognizance of the choice; for among the interested spectators is likely to be an agent of his employer, if the voter is a laboring man, or of his landlord if he is a peasant. They have attended to observe the docility with which this member of the proletariat follows his patron. Like other German institutions, the elections are always orderly and are conducted with scrupulous honesty.⁸³

On the eighth day thereafter *Wählmannen* who have been chosen by the absolute majority of the primaries are summoned to the chief place of the *Zirkel* to ballot publicly for deputies to the *Landtag*. The results of the votes in the electoral college is a House, to which all Prussians thirty years of age are eligible, but of which about half is of noble birth.⁸⁴

Electoral reform came in 1849 under the liberals, but it was Bismarck who granted universal suffrage with law in 1866. Through the years interest in voting has developed, but without the bitterness that has often marked it particularly in England and in the United States. One of the largest blocks to the Social Democrat Party was the *Centrum* or Catholic Party which took its name from the seats it first occupied in the initial *Reichstag* of 1871. In its early years the chief concern was the preservation of the

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 2, 15-16.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

Pope's position in Italy and Europe. Naturally it came into open conflict with Bismarck and his *Kulturkampf*.

At the present day after two world wars and the threat of a third, with its king gone and its dictator passed away, Germany still continues to use the suffrage systematically in its policies. As a matter of note and of warning too, Adolf Hitler secured power in 1932 by being voted into office when only three million of a total sixty-five million participated, of which ten million were eligible to vote.

Political changes in Italy came in no small measure from Napoleon's influence which made the people realize they were a nation. After plots and insurrections and ill-fated plans, Garibaldi and his red-shirts marched upon Rome in 1870, forcing the Vatican Council to disband.⁸⁵ The following year this group set up the first Parliament of United Italy. Due to the franchise laws of the times only about 2½ percent of the population voted. In 1882 it was extended to more, but only to eight or ten percent. Catholics could not vote according to the *Non expedit* decree of Pope Pius IX in 1868 who thought and hoped that the whole revolutionary movement would collapse of its own weight. Pope Leo XIII repeated the decree of his predecessor but Pope Pius X issued an important document, *Il ferme proposito*, permitting the faithful to vote in certain circumstances.⁸⁶ Then during the period after the first World War and Mussolini's rise to power the franchise developed little. Suffice it to say that whereas the faithful were forbidden by the Popes to vote in the restless years of the nineteenth century, they were advised and commanded to vote in the twentieth century.

In South America voting is controlled by the executive power which until comparatively recent times, was extremely unstable. Civic disorders and political clashes occurred very frequently, but fortunately the governments have approached a greater maturity and the citizens themselves are becoming more accustomed to the republican form of government. The method of voting is much the same as in the United States, but women are barred from the

⁸⁵ Raymond Corrigan, *The Church in the Nineteenth Century* (Milwaukee, 1938), 166 ff.

⁸⁶ Orazio Premolli, *Contemporary Church History, 1900-1925* (London, 1932), 79 ff.

franchise except in Chile. Chile, Argentina, and Brazil are possibly the furthest developed, but Chile with its parliamentary form is much like eighteenth century England with its aristocracy of birth and wealth.⁸⁷ Still she is considered to have a higher level of politics than any other country of South America. Certainly she is not noted for the revolutions which have plagued several other nations.

Though a large country territorially, Brazil takes little interest in elections. Perhaps this is so by reason of the small number of qualified voters. Paraguay, Ecuador, and Venezuela have considered revolutions the normal way to settle difficulties; Bolivia and Peru have abandoned this primitive manner of action, but they do not function as peacefully as Chile.

Of all the South American countries Chile is the only one demanding property qualifications for voting. Adult male suffrage is also the general rule. The voting age is generally twenty-one, but in Paraguay it is eighteen years. Bolivia, Uruguay, and Ecuador demand ability to read and write as a qualification, while Peru permits every one to vote who is either a married adult, an owner of real property, a tax payer, a master employer, or able to read and write.⁸⁸

At present the usual way of voting is in the secrecy of a voting booth, but it was not always so, even in the United States. In colonial days much of the voting was done in the *viva voce* manner, but there were also occasional departures from this system. Nine of the ten state constitutions formed between 1776 and 1780 used the secret ballot for the selection of some officials, though most of them were chosen by oral vote. As the voter appeared the judges inquired: "John Smith, for whom do you vote?" He replied by shouting the name of his choice. Then the clerks enrolled the vote and the judges announced it as enrolled. The representative of the candidate for whom the man voted arose, bowed, and thanked him aloud, and often his partisans applauded.⁸⁹ In Kentucky the election of the sheriff consisted of arranging the friends of one candidate

⁸⁷ Seymour-Frery, *op. cit.*, 2, 280.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 2, 274.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 2, 287.

on one side of the road, the friends of the other on the opposite side. Naturally the longest side won.⁹⁰

The use of the ballot met some resistance in being adopted particularly by the property classes in the early history of the United States. But by 1800 it was introduced to the seaboard states. Arkansas kept its *viva voce* method until 1846, Missouri and Virginia until the sixties, and Kentucky until 1890.⁹¹

Universal male suffrage began in our country in 1882 and carried over to the women, as noted before, in 1920. France, Italy, and Japan granted the right to vote to women in 1945, while Belgium, Holland, Switzerland still give it only to the men. Further information and data on woman suffrage will be found in a later chapter.

This brief essay in no measure attempts to synthesize all the currents and aspects of the voter's participation in representative government as well as the methods and kinds of voting in vogue, but it may have served to point out some of the more noteworthy features of the republican form of government and the corresponding practice of voting in various countries. Though representative government is not new in the history of mankind, it is new in its almost world-wide acceptance at the present day. But this form of rule does not free citizens from supporting and participating in their government; rather it establishes the added responsibility for loyal Christian citizens to take an intelligent and active interest in the political affairs of their city, state, and nation. And this they can do by using their right of voting honestly and effectively.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1, 247.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER II

PRINCIPLES OF THE OBLIGATION OF VOTING

1. BASIS OF THE OBLIGATION

a. *Man's Need of Society*

The fundamental basis of the moral obligation of voting is two-fold: (1) The state is a necessary society demanded by man's nature and his needs; (2) Every citizen is bound to promote the common good. In a republican form of government where the citizens select their rulers, judges, and other administrative and legislative officials, it is of the utmost importance that the citizens take an active and intelligent interest in those whom they select. Moreover, since the civil government greatly affects the lives of the citizens, it follows that the officials be chosen with care and honesty.

By nature man is a social and political animal, according to the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas¹ and other scholastics. Man's nature and needs demand that he form some kind of a basic society to satisfy his exigencies, to fulfill his potentialities, and to perfect his powers. Now the most basic unit of society is the family and while it is vital in supplying man's elementary needs it is not sufficient to fulfill all the needs of the individual or of individual families. The state is necessary to supply those needs which the family cannot furnish. The family supplies those necessities by which man can live, but the state furnishes those goods by which man can live well.² Thus St. Thomas writes:

Man is naturally a civil or social animal. This is evident from the fact that one man does not suffice for himself if he live alone; because the things are few wherein nature makes adequate provision for man, since she gave him

¹ *Summa theologiae*, II, 96:4; *Summa contra gentiles*, III, 85.

² *Comm. in Ethica*, I, 1.

reason by means of which he might provide himself with all necessities of life, such as food, clothing, and so on, for the protection of which one man is not enough. Wherefore man has a natural inclination towards social life. Now the order of providence does not deprive a thing of what is natural to it: rather is each thing provided for according to its nature as we have said above (c. 71). Therefore man is not so made by the order of providence that he is deprived of his social life. Yet he would be deprived of it, were our choice to proceed from the influence of heavenly bodies like the natural instinct of other animals.³

Since the state is necessary that man may attain his end, it follows that man has the duty to be the member of some state. He also has the obligation to contribute to the support and welfare of the state in achieving its end—the temporal common good. He fulfills this obligation by loving his country, by supporting and obeying just laws, by paying taxes, by bearing arms when necessary and by fulfilling other civic duties of citizens.⁴ One of these other duties in a republican form of government is the obligation of voting in order to promote the common good.

It is obvious that government is necessary in a state to insure peace and order, and to promote the best interests of all. This is precisely the reason why citizens should be interested in their government and in the men who represent them. The state needs good rulers and administrators; the citizens have the obligation of selecting them. St. Thomas lays down the principle of the state's purpose and the function of government in the first chapter of *De regimine principum*:

If man were intended to live alone, like animals, he would not require any one to govern him; every man would be his own king under the supreme command of God, inasmuch as he would govern himself by the light of reason given him by the Creator. But it is the nature of man to be a social and political animal, living in community, differently from all other animals; a thing which

³ *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, 85.

⁴ See Gerard Joubert, *Qualities of Citizenship in St. Thomas* (Washington, D. C., 1942), 119.

is clearly shown by the necessity of his nature. Nature has provided for other animals food, skins for covering, means of defense as teeth, horns, claws, or at least speed in flight; but she has not endowed man with any of these qualities; instead she has given him reason by which, with the assistance of his hands he can procure what he wants. But to procure this, one man alone is not enough. For he is not in condition to govern his own life; therefore it is in man's nature to live in society. Thus if it is natural for man to live in society, it is necessary that some one should direct the multitude for if many were united and each did as he thought proper, they would fall to pieces unless somebody looked after the public good, as would be the case of the human body, and that of other animals, if there did not exist a power to watch over the welfare of the members. Thus Solomon says: "Where there is no one to govern, the people will be dispersed." In man himself the soul directs the body; and in the soul, the feelings of anger and concupiscence are governed by reason. Among the members of the body there is one principle which directs all, as the heart or the head. There ought then to be in every multitude some governing power.⁸

By reason of his need to live in society and to have authority and government man is obliged to contribute what he can in the affairs affecting the whole. All authority comes from God and according to the more common theory, He gives it to the people, who in turn entrust it to those whom they chose to rule and to legislate. Members of the government are custodians of the law; any laws they enact must conform to the natural law; they may not violate this higher law or ignore the dignity of man. But by the same token, the other citizens cannot shirk their duties which bind them to take part in the government insofar as they are able and competent to do so.

⁸ *De regimine principum* 1, 1. Note too the words of Pope Leo XIII: "Man's natural instinct moves him to live in society, for he cannot, if dwelling apart, provide himself with the necessary requirements of life, or procure the means of developing his mental and moral faculties. Hence it is divinely ordained that he should lead his life—be it family, social, or civil—with his fellow-men amongst whom alone his several wants can be adequately supplied." *Immortale Dei*, ASS, 18 (Nov. 1, 1885), 162.

b. Every Citizen Bound to Promote the Common Good

Legal justice is the virtue of the good citizen and it looks directly to the common good.⁶ It perfects the citizen and inclines him to seek and act for the common good in a reasonable way. Legal justice is distinct from *pietas*, for it regards one's country as it is the common good, while *pietas* considers it as in some way the principle of being.⁷ It is obvious that one of the ways of promoting the common good is the honest and intelligent use of the vote in civil elections in order to secure worthy men for positions of public service.

The common good is not the good of a few, of a class or group, for as Pope Leo XIII has insisted: "The enjoyment of this common good is common to all men in human society and can not be restricted specifically to individuals, classes, races, or nations."⁸ Pope Pius XI further explained that "the temporal good in the temporal order consists in that peace and security in which families and individual citizens have the free exercise of their rights, and at the same time enjoy the greatest spiritual and temporal prosperity possible in this life, by the mutual union and coordination of the work of all."⁹

Now the common good is not simply an aggregate of particular goods, nor the good of the whole which ignores the parts, for the social units are parts which contribute to and share in the common good.¹⁰ Nor is the common good simply identical with a purely material good. There is a temporal common good and a spiritual common good, but even the former

in its fulness is not identical with a purely material good, even less with its own material advantages. It is rather the collective good of men, distributed in national groups,

⁶ *Summa theologiae*, II-II, 58, 6.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 101, 3.

⁸ *Cum multa*, Dec. 8, 1882. *ASS*, 15, 241.

⁹ *Rappresentanti in terra*, *AAS* 21 (Dec. 31, 1929), 737.

¹⁰ "Bonum commune civitatis et bonum singulare unius personae non differunt solum secundum multum et paucum, sed secundum formalem differentiam, alia enim est ratio boni communis et boni singularis, sicut alia est ratio totius et partis." *Summa theologiae*, II-II, 58, 7 ad 2. See II-II, 31, 3 ad 2 for common good as more "godlike" than the individual good.

with their essential characteristics as physical, rational, social, moral and religious beings. The excellence of this collective good, verified mainly in the political order, includes the various aspects of man in the political order, in the sense that both the national and international communities are bound to safeguard those goods as well as the conditions favoring their pursuit by individual men. But it amplifies individual good generally, insofar as one who is conscious of the temporal common good cannot satisfy fully the conditions of his own salvation, unless one fulfills somehow his duty towards that collective common good.¹¹

One who seeks after and promotes the common good also seeks after and promotes his own good as well. St. Thomas explains how this is so:

first, because the good of the individual cannot be complete unless the common good of the family, city, or state to which he belongs is assured. Hence Valerius Maximus (*Fact. et dict. mem.* 4, 6) says of the ancient Romans that they preferred to be poor in a wealthy state than be wealthy in a poor one. Secondly, since a man forms a constituent part of a family and of a state if he acts prudently with regard to the common good, he will necessarily learn to seek his own good rightly, so that it may be advantageous to the common good. For the good disposition of parts depends upon their relation to the whole. As St. Augustine says: "It is unbecoming for a part not to fit harmoniously into the whole." (*Conf.* 3, 8)¹²

Just as the state with its authority and laws has the obligation of promoting the common good, so the individual citizen has the same duty. For the citizen as part of the state is bound to contribute to its welfare. In a republican form of government one of the means of so doing is the electoral franchise. At present it seems that the character of the obligation cannot be stressed sufficiently when so many citizens seem infected with the spirit of rugged individualism and selfishness leaving no room for the finer instincts of the soul.

¹¹ Thomas Greenwood, "International Casuistics," *The Thomist*, 13:3 (July 1950), 364.

¹² *Summa theologiae*, II-II, 58, 10 ad 2.

By not voting or by voting carelessly and indifferently, such citizens tend to tear down the common good rather than to share in its up-building. Just as public officials have the duty of promoting the common good, so too the individual voter has his obligation, to a lesser degree, to contribute to the good of all. As Monsignor John A. Ryan has well written:

The citizens are bound to promote the common good in all possible ways. The franchise enables them to further or to hinder the commonweal greatly and fundamentally, inasmuch as the quality of government depends upon the kind of officials they elect. Not only questions of politics, but social, industrial, educational, moral and religious subjects are regulated by legislative bodies and administered by executive. Therefore the matter [of voting] is of grave importance and the obligation of the citizen to participate in the elections and to support fit candidates is correspondingly grave.¹³

The Bishops of the United States in their pastoral letter of 1919 minced no words as to the citizens' obligation to promote the common good by active interest and intelligent action in political affairs. We may cite them at length:

In its primary meaning, politics has for its aim the administration of government in accordance with the express will of the people and for their best interests. This can be accomplished by the adoption of right principles, the choice of worthy candidates for office, the direction of the partisan effort towards the nation's true welfare and the purity of elections, but not by dishonesty. The idea that politics is exempt from the requirements of morality is both false and pernicious; it is practically equivalent to the notion that in government there is neither right nor wrong, and the will of the people is simply an instrument to be used for private advantage. The expression or application of such views accounts for the tendency, on the part of many citizens, to keep aloof from politics. But their abstention will not effect the needed reform, nor will it arouse from apathy the still larger number of those who are so intent upon their own pursuits that they have

¹³ *Catholic Principles of Politics* (New York, 1943), 204-205.

no inclination for political duties. Each citizen should devote a reasonable amount of time and energy to the exercise of his political rights and privileges. He should understand the issues that are brought before the people and co-operate with his fellow citizens in securing, by all legitimate means, the wisest possible solution.¹⁴

Obviously one of the means of advancing the common good of a nation with a republican form of government is the right use of the ballot. The ordering of man's life to the common good follows from his social and political nature.¹⁵ As a citizen man is ordained to the promotion of the common good which is ordained, in turn, to the perfection of the individual. And as a citizen he fulfills his duties in particular aspects by honest, intelligent, and faithful voting in civil elections. He is obliged to use the vote for the common good, for as Father E. Cahill, S.J., remarks: "... in a democratic system of government all enfranchised citizens are bound in conscience to exercise the powers they have in so far as they may be necessary or useful for the common good, lest a group of politicians or financiers or Press magnates be permitted to dominate public life to the injury or enslavement of the people. In this sense every citizen is bound to be a politician."¹⁶

The duty of the citizen to vote is founded upon the rights of a naturally constituted whole to the proper cooperation of its parts, as St. Thomas teaches.¹⁷ The kind and degree of cooperation vary according to the capacity of the part and the role it plays in the civil organism. Thus a public official will have a greater coopera-

¹⁴ Peter Guilday (ed.), *The National Pastorals of the American Hierarchy, 1792-1919* (Washington, D. C., 1923), 326-327.

¹⁵ "Si enim sit libera multitudo, quae possit sibi legem facere, plus est consensus totius multitudinis ad aliquid observandum, quod consuetudo manifestat, quam auctoritas principis, qui non habet potestatem condendi legem, nisi in quantum gerit personam multitudinis; unde licet singulae personae non possint condere legem, tamen totus populus condere legem potest." *Summa theologiae*, I-II, 97, 3 ad 3.

¹⁶ E. Cahill, *Framework of a Christian State* (Dublin, 1932), 499.

¹⁷ *Summa theologiae*, II-II, 58, 5. "Non est idem simpliciter esse virum bonum, et esse civem secundum quamcumque politicam. Sunt enim quaedam politicae, non rectae, secundum quas aliquis potest esse civis bonus, qui non est vir bonus; sed secundum optimam politicam non est aliquis civis bonus, qui non est vir bonus." *Comm. in Ethica*, I, 926.

tion in the whole than the ordinary citizen, but both must work to promote the common good. And both must use the franchise in civil elections.

c. The Christian Concept of Civic Duty

That a Catholic citizen should take an intelligent interest in the civil government and should support it to the best of his ability is nothing new in Christian teaching. Our Lord Himself set the example and gave support to the national institutions during His life on earth. Indeed the insinuations and accusations that He was an enemy of the state were nothing more than the most insolent falsehoods. For He laid down the fundamental principle of Christian participation in the role of the state when He said: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's."¹⁸

Then St. Paul gave in detail some of the duties of a good citizen. He said the Christian should be subject to higher powers "for there is no power but from God, and those that are, are ordained of God."¹⁹ He went on to specify the obligation of giving honor to those in authority and having positions of dignity, to pay taxes and other tribute, and to render to all the proper due. Here was the first explicit statement of the obligation in justice on the part of the citizen to the state in the New Testament. In other passages too, the Apostle wrote of the citizen's duties, particularly in the epistles to St. Timothy and St. Titus.²⁰

At the same time St. Peter, as Christ's first vicar, told the faithful to be "subject to every human creature for God's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors as sent through Him for vengeance upon evildoers, and for the praise of the good. . . . Live as freemen, yet not using your freedom as a cloak for malice but as servants of God. Honor all men; love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king."²¹ Honor the king, said St. Peter, and that king was Nero.

¹⁸ Mt. 22:21.

¹⁹ Rom. 13:1-3.

²⁰ Titus 3:1; 1 Tim. 2:2.

²¹ 1 Pet. 2:13-17.

Re-statements and developments of this New Testament teaching can be found in the writings of many Fathers. They recognized the need of civil rulers and of civil authority. Particularly striking were the prayers of St. Clement of Rome for civil powers. "Grant concord and peace to us as well as to all the inhabitants of the earth . . . grant us to be obedient to Thy almighty and glorious name, as well as to our princes and rulers on earth."²²

From the same source we have a beautiful liturgical prayer of the Church, bearing ample testimony of the realization that the authority of the state was from God.

Thou, O Master, through Thy transcendent and indescribable sovereignty has given them the power of royalty, so that we, acknowledging the honor and glory conferred upon them by Thee, may bow to them, without in the least opposing thy will. Grant to them, O Lord, peace, concord, and firmness so that they may without hindrance exercise the supreme leadership Thou hast conferred upon them. For it is Thou, O Master, O heavenly King of all ages, that conferrest upon the sons of men glory and honor and authority over the things which are upon the earth. Do Thou, O Lord, direct their counsels in accord with what is good and pleasing in Thy sight, so that they may piously exercise in peace and gentleness Thy graciousness.²³

This clear and concise prayer was used before the end of the first century when persecution was still enforced. For the suffering Christians understood that when the civil authorities exercised their power justly, they acted according to the law of God.

The great apologist of the second century, St. Justin the Martyr, pointed out to his adversaries that the Christians were loyal citizens. They gave their allegiance to the king and prayed for him; they paid their taxes as Christ had taught them. These are his words:

As we have been instructed by Him, we, before all others try everywhere to pay your appointed officials the ordinary and special taxes. For in His time some people came and asked if it were necessary to pay tribute to

²² c. 61. For a translation see James Kleist, *The Epistles of St. Clement of Rome and of St. Ignatius of Antioch* (Westminster, Md., 1946), 116.

²³ *Ibid.*

Caesar, and He replied: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." Wherefore, only God do we worship, but in other things we joyfully obey you, acknowledging you as the kings and rulers of men, and praying that you may be found to have, besides royal power, sound judgment.²⁴

In the Martyrdom of Polycarp (c. 155) we read that the saint spoke to the pro-consul in the following manner: "You I should have held worthy of discussion, for we have been taught to render honor, as is meet, if it hurt not us, to princes and authorities appointed by God."²⁵

Then St. Theophilus, bishop of Antioch, writing about 181, quoted St. Paul's thirteenth chapter to the Romans and added this comment: "This also the scripture commands, that we be subject to the magistrates and authorities and that we pray for them 'that we lead a quiet and peaceful life.' And it also teaches us to render all things to all men: 'Tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; owe no man anything except to love one another.'"²⁶ In another passage he turned from the Christians to the pagan rulers to declare that their rule came from heaven. "The king is not to be adored, but to be honored with legitimate honor. For he is not a god, but a man made by God, not that he may be adored, but that he may judge justly. In a certain way he has been entrusted by God with the administration."²⁷

Later the enigmatical Tertullian (160-240/250) showed the relationship of the Christian citizen to the pagan rulers in his usual forceful way. "A Christian is enemy to none," he began

least of all to the Emperor of Rome whom he knows to be established by God, and so cannot but love and honor, and whose well-being moreover, he must needs desire, with that of the Empire, over which he reigns so long as

²⁴1 *Apology*, 17. See translation by Thomas Falls, *Saint Justin Martyr* (New York, 1948), 52.

²⁵Kirsopp Lake, *Apostolic Fathers*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1945), 2, 327. See also Epistle to Philipians in *Apostolic Fathers*, 1, 299.

²⁶P. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*. Referred to as MG 6:1140.

²⁷MG 6:1142.

the world stands—for so long will Rome endure. To the emperor, therefore, we render such reverential homage as it is lawful for us and good to him, regarding him as a human being next to God, who from God has received all his power and is less than God alone.²⁸

But the same writer placed severe limitations upon the Emperor's power. "They know from whom they have received their power," he asserted. "They are convinced that this is God alone, on whose power alone they are entirely dependent, to whom they are second, after whom they occupy the highest place and before and above all the gods. . . . He [the emperor] gets his sceptre from where he got his humanity; his power where he got his first breath of life."²⁹ Then in one of his magnificent sweeps of rhetoric for which he is famous, Tertullian pointed out how the Christians took part in all the affairs of human life just as any other dutiful members of the state.

We are not strangers to life. We are fully aware of the gratitude we owe to God, our Lord and Creator. We reject not the fruits of His handiwork; we only abstain from their immoderate or unlawful use. We are living in the world with you; we do not shun your forum, your markets, your baths, your shops, your factories, your stables, your places of business and traffic. We take ship with you and we serve in your armies; we are farmers and merchants with you; we interchange skilled labor and display our works in public for your service. How we can seem unprofitable to you with whom we live and of whom we are, I know not.³⁰

Ignio Giordani in his work, *The Social Message of the Early*

²⁸ *Ad scapulam*, Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus series latina*. Referred to as ML (1:700).

²⁹ *Apologeticum*, 30 (ML 1:440).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 42 (ML 1:491-494). See also the early document, *The Epistle to Diognetus*: "For Christians are not distinguished from the rest of mankind by country, or by speech, or by custom. . . . But while they dwell in Greek or barbarian cities according as each man's lot was cast and follows the customs of the land in clothing and other matters of daily life, yet the condition of our citizenship which they exhibit is wonderful and admittedly beyond all our expectations." 5, 1, 4.

Church Fathers, classifies three types of Christians of this period: (1) Those who were Roman in feeling, loved the Empire and wished to introduce the faith as a positive factor in civil and political well-being, who were loyal to the Empire but distinguished between it and the idolatrous trappings. (2) Those who sought to win a legal recognition for the Church and the enjoyment of ordinary rights without mixing in politics. They preferred to avoid public office, but wanted the state to renounce its own deification. (3) Those who identified Caesar and Satan, Rome with Babylon, and hated and opposed all that was Roman as the incarnation of evil.³¹

St. Clement of Rome, a freedman or the son of a freedman, simply felt that as a citizen he was a Roman and that Christian charity refined and ennobled the duties of citizenship. Many others felt likewise, such as Abercius, Melito of Sardis, Athenagoras, Apollonius, Theophilus, and Dionysius of Corinth. The point is that these Christians realized they owed a duty to the state. Christian virtue meant love of the fatherland and respect for and obedience to civil authority. And though Tertullian would not fit into the class of the men above, he has left a famous passage to indicate the penetration of Christianity into every phase of human life. "We are a people of yesterday and yet we have filled every place belonging to you, cities, islands, castles, towns, assemblies, your very camp, your tribes, companies, places, senate forum! We leave you your temples only!"³²

St. Ambrose of Milan (333-397) commented on the teaching of St. Paul to show that the faithful were bound by the civil law. "The ordinance of the power by God reaches to the point that he is the minister of God who used his power rightly: 'He is God's minister to thee, for good.' Therefore there is no fault in the office, but in the minister; it is not the ordinance of God that can displease, but the act of the minister."³³

St. John Chrysostom in Constantinople indicated the duties of the faithful, even of the clergy, to civil authority. In his com-

³¹ *Social Message of Early Church Fathers* (Paterson, N. J., 1943), 147.

³² *Apologeticum*, 37 (ML 1:464-5).

³³ *Expositio in Lucam*, 4, 29 (ML 15:1704).

mentary on the thirteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans he has left this splendid and concise appraisal:

To show that these regulations are for all, even priests, he has made this plain at the outset by saying, as follows: "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers," even if you be an Apostle, or an Evangelist, or a Prophet, insofar as this subjection is not subversive to religion. And he does not merely say *obey*, but *be subject*; and the first claim such enactment has upon us, and the reason that suits the faithful is that all this of God's appointment. "For there is no power but from God."²⁴

St. Ambrose made the distinction between the power and the office—the power comes from God, the office comes from man. But those subject to authority do not pay civil obedience simply to man, but to God who is the source of all authority and power. "For that there should be rulers, and some should rule and others should be ruled, and that all things should not be carried on in confusion, the people swaying like waves this way and that, this I say, is the work of God's wisdom. Hence he does not say 'there is no ruler but from God,' but it is of the thing of which he speaks and says: 'There is no power but from God.' And the powers that are, are ordained of God." Those who rule take care of the goods of others. . . . "It was for this that from old all men came to an agreement that rulers should be maintained by us, because to the neglect of their own affairs they take charge of the public, and on this they spend their whole time and so our goods are safe."²⁵

But perhaps the most succinct passage comes from St. Jerome's *Commentary on Titus* wherein St. Ambrose saw a definite political meaning in the words of the Apostle, imposing obedience to secular power by all Christians. After making the distinction between the office of the ruler and the power from God, he refuted any suggestion that St. Paul meant the faithful were to obey any and every command but only what was good. In another passage

²⁴ *Hom. in Romanos*, 23 (MG 60:616).

²⁵ *Ibid.*

he commented on Matthew 22:21 "Render to Caesar" etc. in this vein:

The Apostle teaches that the faithful are to be subject to principalities and powers. The Greek word rather means principalities than princes and powers and refers to the power itself, not the men who are in power. . . . Hence he added "to be ready for every good work" (Tit. 3:1). If what the emperor or prefect commands is good, then we are to submit to his will, but if it is evil and seems against God, answer him from the Acts of the Apostles: "We must obey God rather than men."³⁶

St. Augustine (354-430) told the faithful that they should obey civil rulers. The abuse of power does not lessen their authority or make it come from any source other than God. "He that gave Marius rule, gave Caesar rule; He that gave Augustus it, gave it to Nero; He that gave the rule to Vespasian or to Titus, both sweet natural men, gave it also to Domitian, that cruel blood-sucker. And to be brief, He that gave it to Constantine the Christian, gave it also to Julian the Apostate."³⁷

The great doctor implied that Christians have very definite obligations as citizens. Obedience to law and support of national institutions were an obligation binding in conscience. And in *De libero arbitrio* he seemed to favor a representative type of government, though this text should be not stretched too far. "If a people have a sense of moderation and responsibility and are most careful guardians of the common welfare, it is right to enact a law allowing such people to choose their own magistrates for the government of the commonwealth."³⁸ Elsewhere he showed the impact of Christian influence upon human life, defending its place in social and political spheres:

Let those who say that the teaching of Christ is harmful to the state produce such armies as the maxims of Jesus

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 617. Cf. Wilfrid Parsons, "Early Patristic Political Thought," *Theological Studies*, 1:4 (Dec. 1940), 355.

³⁷ *De civitate Dei*, 5, 21. in Migne, ML 41:168.

³⁸ 1, 6 (ML 32: 1229). St. Thomas quotes this passage with approval in *Summa theologiae*, I-II, 97, 1, c.

have enjoined soldiers to bring into being ; such governors of provinces ; such husbands and wives ; such parents and children, such masters and servants ; such kings, such judges, and such payers and collectors of tribute, as the Christian teaching instructs them to become, and then let them dare to say that such teaching is harmful to the State. Nay, rather will they hesitate to own that this discipline, if duly acted up to, is the very mainstay of the commonwealth.³⁹

All these quotations from the Fathers obviously have no explicit mention of the duty of voting in civil elections but they do indicate that the early Christians were concerned with their duties and responsibilities in civic life. They point out that the Christian could not be indifferent or negligent in carrying out the duties demanded by good citizenship. Therefore these patristic texts form a solid background and firm support of the obligation of the Catholic to fulfill his duty in modern society. In the republican form of government prevalent in a large part of the civilized world today, the citizen is bound to do all that justice and charity enjoin. One of these obligations is that of voting in civil elections.

From what may be called a Christian Concept of Civic Duty according to patristic sources (or a Christian awareness of civic responsibility) we may pass on to some papal pronouncements of recent times. That the words of the Supreme Pontiffs are of special weight is obvious ; that they contain much to awaken Catholics from any false notions or complacent attitude is the purpose of referring to them here. These references do not expressly show that the Catholic must vote, but stress the more general principle of active interest and participation in political matters. In his masterpiece, *Immortale Dei*, Pope Leo XIII sounded the call for participation in civic affairs, for

Catholics, by remaining aloof, will allow men easily to arrive into power, whose opinion give no grounds for hoping that the state will be the better for them. And this would prove injurious for religion too ; for men hostile to the Church would wield enormous power, those who love her, next to none. So it is clear that Catholics have

³⁹ *Epistola 138, 5 ad Marcellum, 2:15.*

good reason to take part in political life, though they must not do so to sanction what is culpable in actual systems, but so as to cause these very systems (as far as possible) to serve the genuine and true public welfare, and with the aim of making the spirit and the beneficent influence of the Church to circulate in all the veins of the body social, like a life-giving sap.⁴⁰

In the very first allocution of his pontificate Pope Pius X spoke of his motto, *Restaurare omnia in Christo*, and declared:

We know that it will be displeasing to some that We also intend to occupy Ourselves with political affairs. However, whoever judges things dispassionately will realize that the Sovereign Pontiff cannot separate politics from the magisterium that he exercises in faith and morals. Moreover, because he is the chief and director of what is a perfect society, the Church, that is to say, the Pope must be willing to enter into relation with the rulers of states and governors of a republic, for, lacking such relation, he would not be in a position to assure Catholics, everywhere and in all places, security and freedom.

The Church and its leaders are not interested in politics as politics, that is, in the technique of running a state, but they are interested in politics as a part of human life with moral aspects and consequences. It is unfortunate that many do not understand the relationship of politics and morality and would repeat the words of Raymond Poincaré, one time president of France: "We leave the city of God to the Popes; but we shall not allow them to come out of their domain."⁴²

Many times Pope Pius XI told his audiences that they should take part in public life. For example, when he spoke to the University Students of Italian Catholic Action in 1924, he declared: "When politics lays hands upon the altar, then religion and the Church, and the Pope who represents her, not only are within their rights, but are doing their duty if they give guidance and direction; and Catholics have the *right* to demand these and the

⁴⁰ ASS 18, 177.

⁴¹ Nov. 9, 1903. ASS 36, 195. See *Tablet* (London), Nov. 14, 1903, 778.

⁴² Quoted in Civardi, *Manual of Catholic Action* (New York, 1935), 185.

duty of following them."⁴² He explained that there should be no confusion of Catholic action with political action and insisted that the faithful should fulfill their obligation to their country and to the common good. "Catholics would be playing themselves false," he went on, "to a grave duty were they not to interest themselves, so far as they can, in the political affairs of the city, the province, the State itself. . . . Standing thus idle, they would leave the direction of public affairs to the easy grasp of those whose opinions hold forth no great hope of salvation."⁴³ Before another group he insisted upon the duty of taking part in politics.

Catholic Action not only does not prevent each man from joining in politics, but it creates a definite duty for them to do so. . . . We cannot disinterest ourselves from politics, when "politics" means the whole complex of common goods, as opposed to those that are individual and particular. . . . How should we disinterest ourselves from what is the more important, where the greater duty of charity exists, and that from which may depend those very goods that God gives—private and domestic goods, and the interests of religion itself.⁴⁵

Although Catholic Action is not political action, its principles will serve to prepare Catholics for politics. Note the strong language of the Holy Father:

Catholic Action, though not political itself, wishes to teach Catholics to make better use of politics, and to this they are held in a special way, since their Catholic profession exacts from them that they be better citizens than anyone else. Every profession demands a preparation, and he who wants to be a good man of politics, cannot withdraw himself from the duty of a proper preparation. . . . Though not indulging in party politics, Catholic Action wants to prepare men to be *good* politicians, *great* politicians; it aims at preparing the con-

⁴² Sept. 8, 1924. *L'Osservatore Romano*, Sept. 11, 1924, 4.

⁴³ Letter to bishops of Lithuania, June 24, 1928. *AAS* 20, 257.

⁴⁵ Address to members of Italian Catholic Action, Oct. 30, 1926. *L'Osservatore Romano*, Oct. 31, 1926, 2.

sciences of Christians politically, and to form them, in this manner too, Christian-wise and Catholic-wise.⁴⁶

On another occasion the same Pope defended the noble position of "the field of politics, since it concerns the interest of society as a whole . . . under this aspect [it is] a field for the vastest charity of all, the field of political charity, to which none other, we may say, apart from religion, is superior."⁴⁷

Indeed political action can have a very noble purpose, namely, to integrate Catholic teaching into all political and social life. The task is difficult, but not impossible; moreover, it is absolutely necessary if the mission and message of Christ is to leaven society. In the words of Pope Pius XII:

It is not by setting up a negative or merely defensive attitude to oppose erroneous theories of atheistic materialism and bad leaders that we may hope to solve the agonizing problems of the working world. It is by the active presence, in factories and in stockyards, of pioneers fully conscious of their double vocation, as Christians and as workers, who are resolved to assume fully their responsibilities and know neither respite nor rest until they have transformed their environments to conformity with the teachings of the gospel. It is by such positive and collective work that the Church will be able to extend her life-giving action to millions of souls.⁴⁸

Such is the mission of the Church—to put the teachings of Christ into every department of human life, to implement, to integrate, to perfect the natural and to make it Christian. The Church cannot hide in its buildings, its clergy cannot remain in the sanctuary and the rectory. "The Church cannot shut herself up passively in the seclusion of her temples and so abandon the duty entrusted to her by divine Providence of forming the integral man" (Pius XII).⁴⁹ Nor can the Catholic remain aloof from the society in which he lives. He has the obligation to take part, ac-

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Catholic Action University Students, *L'Osservatore Romano*, Dec. 18, 1927, 4.

⁴⁸ Letter to Canon Cardijn, Mar. 21, 1946.

⁴⁹ Address to Cardinals, Feb. 20, 1946. *AAS* 38, 149.

according to his abilities and circumstances, in the political affairs of his city, state, and nation.

The Church cannot be silent about the duties of the faithful in public life. Her members have obligations to the common good just as they have obligations to each other. And when moral issues arise, as they must, the representatives of the Church, the clergy, cannot be silent. They should indicate, says Cardinal Hlond of Poland, the duties of good citizenship. And even more specifically in the matter of elections

They should point out the moral principles guiding the electoral law of the citizens. Giving an answer to those questions, the Church does not involve itself in party political questions, but only states moral and religious principles according to which Catholics themselves should form their electoral conscience. The Church does not lead an electoral campaign, but points out moral principles which should be adhered to by all the parties if they wish to gain the votes of Catholics.³⁰

Often when Catholics become members of a political party they become subject to the whim of those about them and fall victim to the tempo of the times, forsaking Christian principles and inspiration in public life. Or to quote Luigi Sturzo "they not only lose the sense of a moral and social apostolate possessed by parties of Christian inspiration, but they become too attached to the material and utilitarian aims of politics, failing to discern honest methods from those that may be described as questionable, and often finding themselves an ineffectual minority, overwhelmed by a majority at once too material-minded and realistic."³¹

One of the finest documents in modern times on the duties of Catholics in political life, and especially on the duty of voting has come from Cardinal Hlond to whom previous reference has been made. He sent out this instruction in the autumn of 1946 in mimeographed form because the government would not permit its being printed.

The Church has taught the faithful for a very long time that it is their duty to give their strength and their

³⁰ *Tablet* (London), 188:5558 (Nov. 16, 1946), 260.

³¹ *Politics and Morality* (New York, 1937), 104.

abilities for the service of the community and towards co-operation for the common good of the whole community. It is a demand of social justice, which tells us to break from the narrow circle of our private affairs, to take account of our fellow-beings, and to direct our strength towards the service of the community.

She cannot properly fulfill the demands of social justice to collaborate for the common good without taking part in governing, and thus in political life. This obligation increases for us Catholics, because, being educated on the basis of a healthy Christian outlook, we understand human and divine affairs better, because nothing is strange to us.

We have the duty to do good to everybody. "Therefore whilst we have time, let us do good to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of the Faith" (Gal. 6:10). This precept of the holy Faith turns us towards our fellow human beings, towards social needs, towards political demands, in order to bring into human life as much good as possible. We must revive in ourselves the desire for good for all which is the beginning of social reform.

Political life is one of the most important forms of temporal life, because it has to serve the common good. It must be directed by good men in order that they may act in a good manner. The vocation for this life is the vocation of fulfilling the social moral virtues. Morality is the basis of political life and its conditions. Only those who respect morality can demand power, which means only those who desire this good, and who seek to work together in order to achieve it.⁵²

It is unfortunate that many Catholics identify politics with fraud, bribery, and shady business practices and will take no interest in what concerns the commonweal. There is justification, of course, for resenting the way that some public officials have acted, but the office itself is not evil, and the aberrations of sinful men will never be overcome by good citizens denouncing the evils, but remaining aloof from participation in affairs. Apathy, indifference and even contempt for politics will only bring more harm than good. For just as Catholics alone can bring forth Christian principles, so

⁵² *Op. cit.*, 260

they must take an active interest in political affairs. As Luigi Sturzo has stated:

Pius XI, in an address to Belgian Catholic youth, said that politics are an act of charity towards one's neighbor. To wish for public good, to work and even sacrifice for this end, is certainly an act of charity when it is not strictly an obligation; and when it is of obligation, it is an act of social justice (as the casting of the electoral ballot). Even in public life it is necessary to create or re-create the atmosphere of Christian morality, and this cannot be done except by true Christians.⁸³

The Catholic citizen must assume his role in promoting the common good by taking an active interest in politics, for what truly benefits the country likewise benefits the Church. The Catholic citizen cannot remain isolated from public life, but must do whatever he can to render it completely Christian. To cite Luigi Sturzo once more:

A Catholic in a regime of freedom cannot remain isolated and alien from the life of the modern State, which has assumed many characteristics and cultural and moral functions that it once had not, and now controls almost all the forces of society. If the Catholic remains aloof, he assumes grave responsibilities before God and his neighbor, for too often this means abandoning the commonweal to those who do not recognize the laws of Christian morality.⁸⁴

Politics and morality should work hand in hand. There should be no discord between them, no quarreling about rights, about what belongs to God and to Caesar, for, as Michael de la Bedoyere has observed "... many things belong to both, but under different aspects and for different purposes. One must attribute the success and the realistic spirit of democracy in the nineteenth century to the fact that it was built on men who, though unlearned, were wise and strong with a wisdom and character largely due to their religion and to the discipline it demanded."⁸⁵

⁸³ "Political Duties of a Citizen," *Epistle*, 12:4 (Autumn 1946), 108.

⁸⁴ *Politics and Morality*, 112.

⁸⁵ *The Drift of Democracy* (London, 1931), 54.

The timidity and false prudence of not taking part in politics is not virtuous but blameworthy. Little, if anything, is gained by such an attitude and often much is lost. The Catholic citizen has the obligation to fulfill his duties, an obligation that ultimately goes back to God, for in the work of the epigram: "There is no right without a duty and there is no duty apart from God." The obligations binds in politics as well as in any other phase of human existence for the common good is at stake. The proper intelligent interest and activity in political matters may bring about much good for the state and the Church, while irreparable harm may come through negligence, indifference, and carelessness on the part of some, as well as the corruption of those who take advantage of these defects in human nature to serve their own selfish interests. The field of politics is wide open to the Catholic, to render service to God and to Caesar, to the Church and to the common good, to spiritual advancement and temporal progress. Once more we may refer to Mr. de la Bedoyere:

In modern politics, where the moral aspect is always in the forefront, it is hard for the religiously well-educated Catholic to feel at home. He prefers the complete emancipation from religious and moral considerations, as he thinks, of the business or professional world. Hence the paucity of Catholics in Parliament or in local government to the detriment of Christian influence upon the nation. And, on the whole it will be admitted that such Catholic representatives as we have do fairly good work in defense of Christian principles, earning thereby in the bargain the deepest respect of their fellow politicians. Nonetheless it is obvious that in politics generally, there lies a magnificent field for Christian influence that has been scarcely tapped at all.⁵⁶

2. GRAVITY OF THE OBLIGATION OF VOTING

a. *From Papal Pronouncements*

In modern times the various Sovereign Pontiffs have reminded the faithful of their duty to vote, although Pope Pius IX issued his famous *Non expedit* February 29, 1868, by which the Italians were

⁵⁶ *Christian Crisis* (New York, 1942), 166.

told "*Ne electi, ne electori*" (Neither elected nor electors) that they could not participate in their own elections. However this statement was by way of exception rather than general rule.

Pope Leo XIII continued the "hands off" policy for the Catholics in Italy, but he issued several masterly encyclicals on Catholic principles of politics. In *Libertas humana* he declared that "it is expedient to take part in the administration of public affairs, unless it be otherwise determined by reason of some exceptional condition of things. And the Church approves of every one devoting his services to the common good, and doing all that he can for the defense, preservation, and prosperity of his country."⁵⁷ Then in *Sapientiae christianae* he voiced this maxim: "In short, where the Church does not forbid taking part in public affairs, it is fit and proper to give support to men of acknowledged worth and who pledge themselves to serve well in the Catholic cause and in no way may it be allowed to prefer to them such individuals as are hostile to religion."⁵⁸ Earlier in *Immortale Dei* he had urged the faithful to use popular institutions, so far as they could, for the advancement of truth and righteousness.⁵⁹

On May 14, 1895, Pope Leo relented in his prohibition against taking part in Italian elections, allowing the faithful to vote in administrative contests, but not in political ones. When Pope Pius X ascended the papal throne in 1903 he held to the principle of the *Non expedit*, though he attenuated its force by granting dispensations for the elections of 1904 and further modifying it with his *Il ferme proposito* of June 11, 1905.⁶⁰ He declared that the faithful might take part in such elections as the bishops judged expedient to prevent the election of unworthy men. He praised the initiative of Catholic laymen who sought to serve the Church and protect the rights of God in public life and asked for political participation in these words:

This makes it incumbent upon all Catholics to prepare themselves prudently and seriously for political life in

⁵⁷ ASS 20, 594.

⁵⁸ ASS 22, 397-398.

⁵⁹ ASS 18, 177.

⁶⁰ ASS 37, 741 ff.

case they should be called to it. Hence it becomes necessary that this same activity, already so laudably displayed by Catholics in preparing themselves by good electoral organization, for administrative life in parish and city councils, should be extended to a suitable preparation and organization for political life.⁶¹

Pope Pius also sent a letter to the Spanish people on the duty of voting (February 20, 1906), reminding them that when the cause of religion or of the state is endangered, no one can be indifferent. The faithful could render great good by taking part in the elections.⁶²

In his document to the hierarchy of France, *Notre charge apostolique* wherein he condemned the activity of *Le Sillon*, this Pope again stressed the principle of political activity, implying thereby the responsibility of voting: "Is it not the duty of every Catholic to make use of the political arms which he has in his hands to defend her, and also to compel politics to remain in their own domain, and beyond rendering what is her due, to leave the Church alone?"⁶³ In *Singulari quadam* of September 12, 1912, to the workmen of Germany he spoke of all moral activity as subject to the judgment and jurisdiction of the Church, obviously meaning that where political activity touched upon moral matters, it was wholly within the domain of the Church's guidance.

Pope Pius XI spoke a number of times on the duties of citizens,

⁶¹ ASS 37, 758. For a history of modern Italy see L. Sturzo, *Church and State in Italy and the Coming World* (New York, 1945), 114 ff.

⁶² "Meminerint omnes, periclitante religione aut republica, nemini licere esse otioso. Iamvero qui rem seu sacram seu civilem evertere nituntur eo maxime spectant ut, si detur, capessant rem publicam legibusque ferendis designentur. Catholicos idcirco periculum omni industria cavere oportet: atque ideo, partium studiis depositis, pro incolumitate religionis et patriae operari strenue; illud praecipue atnitendo ut tum civitatum, tum regni comitia, illi adeant, qui attentis electionis uniuscujusque adiunctis necnon temporum locorumque circumstantiis, prout in memorati commentarii scriptionibus probe consulitur, religionis ac patriae utilitatibus in publica re gerenda prospecturi melius videantur. . . ." ASS 39 (1906), 76.

⁶³ "Le devoir de tout catholique n'est-il donc pas d'user des armes politiques qu'il tient en mains pour la défendre, et aussi pour forcer la politique à rester dans son domaine et à ne s'occuper de l'Église qui pour lui rendre ce qui lui est dû?" August 25, 1910. AAS 2, 623. See *Tablet* (London), Sept. 10, 1910.

telling the faithful that there could be no political *fuga mundi* since the times demanded their interest and activity. Then in his *Paternalis* to the people of Mexico in 1926 he pointed out that "These counsels and prescriptions . . . in no wise will prevent the faithful who put them loyally into practice from fulfilling the duties and exercising the rights which they have in common with other citizens. Indeed, on the contrary, their very title of Catholics requires that they make the best use of the rights and duties, for the good of religion is inseparable from that of the fatherland."⁶⁵

To the same people in a more advanced stage of their difficulties the Holy Father addressed another encyclical in 1937 in which he stated explicitly the importance of the ballot: "Thus a Catholic will take care not to pass over his right to vote when the good of the Church or of the country requires it."⁶⁶

But of all the recent Popes speaking on the duties of Catholics in public life, and specifically on the duty of voting, none has been more emphatic than Pope Pius XII who on a number of occasions has stressed the duty of the faithful in this matter. Before the critical elections of 1946 he sounded this warning to the Pastors and Lenten Preachers of Rome:

The exercise of the right to vote is an act of grave responsibility, at least when there is question involved of electing those whose office it will be to give the country its constitution and its laws, particularly those laws which affect, for example, the sanctification of feast days, marriage, family life and school, and which give direction according to justice and equity, to the various phases of social life. It therefore, falls to the Church to explain to the faithful their moral duties which derive from their right to vote.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ *AAS* 4, 658. Addressed to the German Hierarchy on subject of workmen's unions.

⁶⁶ Feb. 2, 1926. *AAS* 18, 178.

⁶⁷ *Firmissimam constantiam*, Mar. 28, 1937. *AAS* 29, 189.

⁶⁸ *Catholic Mind*, 44:1001 (May 1946), 301.

"È un diritto, e al tempo stesso un dovere essenziale della Chiesa di istruire i fedeli, con la parola e con gli scritti, dal pulpito o nelle altre forme consuete, intorno a tutto ciò che concerne la fede e i costumi, ovvero che è inconciliabile con la sua propria dottrina, e quindi inammissibile per i cattolici, sia che si tratti di sistemi filosofici o religiosi, o degli scopi che si

Later the same year on the occasion of his patronal feast, June 1, His Holiness gave an allocution to the Sacred College in which he spoke of the coming elections in Italy and France and the responsibility that rested with the voters.

Tomorrow the citizens of two great nations will be crowding to the voting booths. What is the fundamental issue in these elections? The question is whether these two nations, these two Latin sister nations which have more than one thousand years of Christian history behind them, will continue to be established on the firm rock of Christianity, on the acknowledgment of a personal God, on the belief of man's spiritual dignity and immortal destiny, or, on the contrary, will choose to place their future in the inexorable and totalitarian power of a materialist state, which acknowledges no ideals beyond this earth, no religion, and no God. One or the other of these alternatives will be verified, according as the champions of Christian civilization or its enemies are returned at the head of the poll. The decision lies with the electors, and the responsibility, an exalted but serious one, is theirs.⁶⁸

propongono i loro fautori, o delle loro concezioni morali riguardanti la vita così dei singoli come dell comunità.

"L'esercizio del diritto di voto è un atto di grave responsabilità morale, per lo meno quando si tratta di eleggere coloro che sono chiamati a dare al Paese la sua costituzione e le sue leggi, quelle in particolare che toccano, per esempio, la santificazione della feste, il matrimonio, la famiglia, la scuola, il regolamento secondo giustizia ed equità delle molteplici condizioni sociali. Spetta perciò alla Chiesa di spiegare ai fedeli i doveri morali, che da quel diritto elettorale derivano." *AAS* 38, 187.

⁶⁸ "Domani stesso i cittadini di due grandi nazioni accorreranno in folle compatte alle urne elettorali. Di che cosa in fondo si tratti? Si tratta di sapere se l'una et l'altra di queste due nazioni, di queste due sorelle latine, di ultramillenaria civiltà cristiana, continueranno ad appoggiarsi sulla salda rocca del cristianesimo, sul riconoscimento di un Dio personale, sulla credenza, nella dignità spirituale e nell'eterno destino dell'uomo, o se invece vorranno rimettere le sorti del loro avvenire all'impassibile onnipotenza di uno stato materialista, senza ideale ultraterreno, senza religione e senza Dio.

"Di questi due casi si avvererà l'uno o l'altro, secondo che dalle urne usciranno vittoriosi i nomi dei compioni ovvero dei distruttori della civiltà cristiana. La risposta è nelle mani degli elettori; esse ne portano l'augusta, ma pur quanto grave responsabilità!" *AAS* 38, 256-257.

But even more important than the elections of 1946 were those of 1948 in Italy when the Communists, bolder than before, openly vowed to gain control of the government and threatened to harm the Church. As Vicar of Christ and defender of the faith, Pope Pius XII again addressed the Pastors and Lenten Preachers of Rome on the solemn obligation of the citizen to use the vote in such grave circumstances.

It is your right and duty to draw the attention of the faithful to the extraordinary importance of the coming elections, and to the moral responsibility which follows from it for all those who have the right to vote. Without doubt the Church intends to remain outside and above all political parties, but how could it be possible to remain indifferent to the composition of a parliament to which the Constitution gives the power to legislate in matters which concern so directly the highest religious interest, and the condition of the life of the Church in Italy itself?

. . . Consequently it follows:—That in the present circumstances it is strictly obligatory for whoever has the right, man or woman, to take part in the elections. He who abstains, particularly through indolence or from cowardice, thereby commits a grave sin, a mortal offense.⁶⁹

Everyone has to vote according to the dictates of his own conscience. Now it is evident that the voice of conscience imposes on every sincere Catholic the necessity of giving his own vote to those candidates or to those lists of candidates, which offer them truly adequate guarantees for the protection of the rights of God and of souls, for the true good of individuals, of families, and of society, ac-

⁶⁹ "È vostro diritto e dovere di attirare l'attenzione dei fedeli sulla straordinaria importanza delle prossime elezioni e sulla responsabilità morale che ne deriva a tutti coloro i quali hanno il diritto di voto. Senza dubbio la Chiesa intende di restare al di fuori e al di sopra dei partiti politici; ma come potrebbe rimanere indifferente alla composizione di un Parlamento, al quale la Costituzione dà il potere di legiferare in materie che riguardano così direttamente i più alti interessi religiosi e la condizioni di vita della Chiesa stessa in Italia? Da tutto ciò consegue;

"Che, nelle presenti circostanze, è stretto obbligo per quanti ne hanno il diritto, uomini e donne, di prender parte alle elezioni. Chi se ne astiene, specialmente per indolenza o per viltà, commette in sé un peccato grave, una colpa mortale." *AAS* 40, 119.

cording to the laws of God and the Church's moral teaching.⁷⁰

Thus the Sovereign Pontiff emphasized the duty of voting; the grave obligation of voting in grave circumstances; the guilt of serious sin for one who abstains without cause; and the obligation of voting according to one's conscience.

At the same time the Pope stressed the duty of the priest to make known to the faithful the gravity of the obligation to vote, but warned that "whenever from the pulpit you fulfill the high and holy office of preaching the word of God, guard against descending to petty questions of party politics, to the bitter conflicts of parties which irritate the soul, aggravate discords, weaken charity, and harm your own dignity and the office of your sacred ministry."⁷¹

The Holy Father further laid stress on the obligation of voting in allocutions to groups of Catholic women. In an address to the women of Rome, October 21, 1945, he stated: "... the electoral ballot in the hands of the Catholic woman is an important means towards the fulfillment of her strict duty in conscience, especially at the present time."⁷² "Her vote," he said, "is a vote for peace. Hence in the interest and for the good of the family, she will hold fast to that norm, and she will always refuse her vote to any tendency, from whatever quarter it hails, to the selfish desires of domination, internal and external, of the peace of the nation."⁷³

Before the elections in France and Italy in 1946 he spoke to women of both countries in this fashion:

A good number of you already enjoy political rights. These political rights have corresponding duties—the right to vote, the duty to vote, the duty of giving your vote only

⁷⁰ "Ognuno ha da votare secondo il dettame della propria coscienza. Ora è evidente che la voce della coscienza impone ad ogni sincero cattolico di dare il proprio voto a quei candidati o a quelle liste di candidati, che offrono garanzie veramente sufficienti per la tutela dei diritti di Dio e delle anime, per il vero bene dei singoli, delle famiglie e della società, secondo la legge di Dio e la dottrina morale cristiana." *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Questa grande vostra*, AAS 37, 291. English translation by N.C.W.C. of Washington, D. C., 9.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, English trs. 12.

to those candidates or those lists of candidates that offer not vague and ambiguous promises but certain guarantees which respect the rights of God and of religion.

Think carefully. This right is sacred for you. It obliges you before God, because with your ballot you have in your hands the higher interests of your country. You are concerned with safeguarding and preserving for your people its Christian culture; for its girls and women their dignity; and for families their Christian mothers. The time is serious. Know well your responsibilities.⁷⁴

In an allocution to the Congress of the International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues, September 11, 1947, the Pope spoke of the gravity of the obligation for all. He insisted that those who would not take part would be guilty of serious sin. "There is a heavy responsibility on everyone, man or woman, who has the right to vote, especially when the interests of religion are at stake; abstention in this case, in itself, it should be thoroughly understood, is a grave and fatal sin of omission. On the contrary, to exercise and to exercise well, one's right to vote is to work effectively for the good of the people, as loyal defenders of God and of the Church."⁷⁵

From these papal pronouncements we learn of the grave character of the obligation of voting, particularly in circumstances of serious import to the good of the Church or state. Pope Leo XIII laid down the general principle of interest in political affairs and each of the succeeding Popes stressed the obligation in particular circumstances. From their writings and addresses we know that a Catholic cannot be indifferent to his obligations as a citizen, but must use the political forces at his disposal, particularly the right to vote, to better the status of religion and of the common good, particularly when either cause or both demand his vote.

In given instances, the obligation of voting may be grave, that is, binding under pain of mortal sin, when there is danger that evil forces may gain control of the government and this danger can be averted or lessened by an election. The vote obliges all citizens, both men and women; it is a trust by which they can

⁷⁴ N.C.W.C. news release, May 13, 1946.

⁷⁵ *AAS* 39, 486. English trs. 7.

promote good or evil; it is an obligation binding in the sight of God. The voter must follow the dictates of his conscience, but refuse his vote to any forces that would bring evil to the Church or to his country. He must give his vote so as to work effectively for the good of the people, as a loyal defender of God and of the Church.

Thus have the Popes stressed the importance of the vote in the social, political, economic, and religious life of a country. Hence the faithful have the additional responsibility of obeying the counsels and commands of the Vicar of Christ as well as promoting the common good of Church and state.

b. From Episcopal Directives

Advice and exhortation to use the ballot as a means of promoting the cause of religion and the welfare of the country were by no means limited to the Popes. Again and again in many parts of the world the bishops of the Church have raised their voices to urge and command the faithful to discharge their obligation of using the franchise.

In 1921 Cardinal Amette, Archbishop of Paris, addressed a pastoral to his flock on this duty. Later, in a joint letter to all French Catholics, the hierarchy gave this message:

It is a duty of conscience for all citizens honored with the right of suffrage to vote honestly and wisely with the sole aim of benefiting the country. The citizens are subject to the divine law as is the Church. Of our votes, as of all our actions, God will demand an account. The duty of voting is so much the more binding upon conscience because of its good or evil exercise depends the gravest interests of the country and of religion.

It is your duty to vote. To neglect to do so would be a culpable abdication of duty on your part. It is your duty to vote *honestly*; that is to say, for men worthy of your esteem and your trust. It is your duty to vote *wisely*; that is to say, in such a way as not to waste your votes. It would be better to cast them for candidates who, although not giving complete satisfaction to all our legitimate demands, would lead us to expect from them a line of conduct useful to the country, rather than to keep your

votes for others whose program indeed may be more perfect, but whose almost certain defeat might open the door to the enemies of religion and of the social order.⁷⁶

Again in a joint pastoral of February 6, 1924, the French hierarchy repeated their advice that the faithful should use their vote and use it honestly.

Cardinal Verdier, Archbishop of Paris, wrote of the obligation of voting in his *Le petit manuel des questions contemporaines* in the following way. He called the vote "the normal means of contributing to the good management of public office."⁷⁷

Since citizens choose government officials by their votes, and to a certain degree control their activities in office, we must say that it is every citizen's *duty to vote*. His vote is the normal means of contributing to the good management of public office. If a citizen votes wisely, he will usually be able to check evil, and will, at times, effect real good. In any event, he will always add prestige to a good cause by increasing the number of votes in its favor.

A citizen's obligation to vote is still more grave when in certain circumstances his failure to vote is likely to bring about the election of a poor candidate, who might do harm by aiding and abetting measures contrary to religion, to morality, and to the true interests of his country.⁷⁸

Cardinal Suhard, also Archbishop of Paris, sent a letter to his clergy (as given in *La Croix*, April 27, 1946) reminding the faithful of the duty to vote. He declared that abstention would be gravely sinful and asked the "Christians to ensure by their votes respect for the rights of the human person and for the liberty of the family, the protection of the interests and dignity of the workers, the defense of the individual, civic and religious liberties, and the maintenance in France of a spiritual ideal corresponding to the genius of the nation."⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Given by Ryan-Boland, *op. cit.*, 207-208.

⁷⁷ (Paris, 1934), 35.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Tablet* (London), 187:5532 (May 18, 1946), 252.

Later the same year for the feast of Christ the King (October 31) he issued a statement to be read in all the churches under his jurisdiction. His instructions on the obligation of voting were the following:

1. It is necessary to vote. That is an absolute duty. Abstention would constitute a grave fault. It is inexcusable.

2. It is necessary to vote justly. That is to say: For social progress, particularly the increasing amelioration of the condition of the workers and their effectual participation in the life of the nation, for the affirmation and safeguarding of individual, family, civic, and religious duties.

3. It is necessary to vote usefully. That is to say, with a sense of what is opportune. To know how to renounce partisan bitterness or even legitimate preferences. To bring votes to the list which, taking account of local conditions, seem to have the most chance of ensuring the success of the ideas enumerated above.⁸⁰

In the important elections of June, 1951, nearly all the bishops of France issued pastoral letters on the duty of voting. In printing a selection of these statements, *La Croix* said it was impossible to quote them all. They were cast in similar terms, insisting (1) upon the duty of voting and (2) upon the duty of voting only for those candidates who were prepared to support spiritual values and in particular to support a true freedom of choice in education that would make it possible for parents to send their children to Catholic schools. Such were the statements of Cardinal Gerlier and Cardinal Leinhart.⁸¹

Archbishop Feltin of Paris said that to abstain was treason.⁸² Archbishop Richaud of Bordeaux declared that no one was free from grave sin for not voting unless it were actually impossible for him to do so.⁸³ Archbishop Lefebvre of Bourges said there was no excuse for abstaining simply because one had been disap-

⁸⁰ *Tablet* (London), 188:5557 (Nov. 9, 1946), 244.

⁸¹ *Tablet* (London), 197:5795 (June 16, 1951), 485.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

pointed with the performance of a party in which he had placed his hopes.⁸⁴ Bishop Jaquin of Moulins reminded his flock that none could do anything that would favor Communism, while Bishop Mathieu of Aire and Dax declared that it was not enough simply to register a vote against Communism, since the French Socialist Party had always shown a constant malevolent opposition to Catholic ideals.⁸⁵

When the French people failed to vote in the elections of October 7, 1951, several members of the Hierarchy issued statements condemning such indifference. Cardinal Gerlier, Archbishop of Lyons, and Cardinal Leinhart, Bishop of Lille, were particularly outspoken. "To vote," said Cardinal Leinart, "is a serious obligation, abstention from which would be a sin. Each person has one vote. If he does not express his wishes by casting his ballot, it is equivalent to giving an extra vote to the opposition. One does not escape his responsibilities as a citizen by not voting, he increases them."^{85a}

During the restless post-war years in Italy members of the Hierarchy followed the lead of the Holy Father in stressing the moral obligation of voting. They wrote at length on this duty for all the faithful. Some pointed out that abstention from the polls would be gravely sinful; that voting for enemies of the Church would be a mortal sin; and all urged their subjects to vote for candidates who would benefit the Church and the nation.

In his Lenten pastoral of 1946 Cardinal Salotti repeated the message of the Holy Father and went on to say:

As a shepherd of souls I have not only the right but the duty to enlighten my flock on the difficulties and dangers of this moment of historic importance. The present hour is so dark and the dangers of such magnitude threaten, that all citizens must interest themselves in the elections. Absenteeism is today a grievous fault, due to egoism or weakness, fear, if not cowardice. It would be wrong to assume that one vote more or less matters little. Majorities can be won or lost by a few votes only. Enemies of God and the Church will go to the polls in a compact mass—

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

why should Catholics do otherwise? One does not favor the humble or the poor by staying at home on election day.⁸⁶

Cardinal Fossati, Archbishop of Turin, urged the faithful to support those candidates who gave proof of their honesty, of the practice of religion, of obedience to the Church and to the Holy See, and of understanding and observing the principles of Christian sociology for the welfare of the workers and the good of the country.⁸⁷ Cardinal Ruffini, Archbishop of Palermo, and the hierarchy of Sicily declared that "No one should abstain from voting for any reason whatsoever"⁸⁸ and that to vote for evil men was contrary to religion and moral principles.

In February, 1948, Cardinal Schuster, Archbishop of Milan, whose diocese is the largest in Italy and regarded as the most important politically outside of Rome, wrote a circular to his clergy on the significance of voting. Recalling the instructions already issued by Cardinal Piazza of Venice, he went on to say that absolution must be refused to Communists and to members of movements contrary to the Christian faith, when the people formally adhere to the errors contained in these doctrines and secondly, when they cooperate, even if only materially and especially by giving their vote to these nefarious groups, and by refusing to discontinue their cooperation after a warning.⁸⁹ He added:

The Church recognizes any form of legitimate government, provided it is organized according to the laws and aimed at the achievement of the common welfare. It is the duty of Christians to vote in political and administrative elections, and the vote of everyone should be free and given according to his conscience. It is gravely unlawful for any of the faithful to give their votes to candidates, or lists of candidates, that are manifestly contrary to the Church.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ From "*Salviamo L'Italia*—Let us save Italy," *Tablet* (London), 187:5526 (Apr. 6, 1946), 173.

⁸⁷ *Tablet* (London), 191:5624 (Mar. 6, 1948), 154.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 191:5623 (Feb. 28, 1948), 138.

In March, 1948, the Sacred Consistorial Congregation declared that all the citizens of Italy were bound to vote, but only for "those candidates in which there is a certainty that they will respect and defend the observance of the divine laws and the rights of religion and of the Church in both private and public life."⁹¹

The Archbishops and Bishops of Liguria told their people to use the ballot, especially to oppose Communism, and to vote "in accordance with conscience or else they not only sin mortally, but likewise become responsible for all the consequences of their action. Confessors are bound to comply with this ruling [of refusing absolution to those who refuse to give up Communism] in the execution of their high office . . . when denying or granting the sacrament of penance."⁹²

Three years later in 1951 Cardinal Elia Dalla Costa of Florence told the faithful of his archdiocese that failure to vote in certain critical circumstances was a more grievous sin than missing Sunday Mass or neglecting the annual Easter Communion. Such were his strong words:

Even township elections can cause enormous damage to our institutions. To realize the importance of this it is enough to observe that whoever abstains from voting, or who votes for individuals who oppose Christian faith and morals, automatically makes himself responsible for all the damages that come after that to souls and to consciences. He thus makes himself guilty of a sin much greater than missing Mass on Sunday or not making the Easter Duty. The latter are individual sins, whereas a badly given vote or a neglected vote is a social sin which damages—and oh how gravely it damages—the community, the countryside and the very state itself.⁹³

Cardinal Schuster also told his people to vote in this vital election affecting "our religion and our future" because "it will decide whether Italy will remain free and Catholic, or whether it will be grouped among the states which are satellites of the Soviet Union."⁹⁴ He called upon the priests to offer prayers for three

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*, 191:5631 (Apr. 24, 1948), 260-261.

⁹³ *New York Herald Tribune*, May 15, 1951, 5.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

days prior to the election for the defeat of Communism. The bishops of the regions of Liguria and Emilia urged their flocks to vote against the enemies of religion.⁹⁵ The semi-official paper of the Vatican, *L'Osservatore Romano*, devoted a front page article to the "Peremptory Duty" of voting in the elections to subdue the forces of evil.⁹⁶

It will be understood, of course, that these admonitions and commands from the hierarchy dealt with grave circumstances so that the obligation of voting at these times were grave. But they illustrate the gravity of the duty in times of crisis and certainly the principle holds in all times of similar character.

The members of the Dutch Hierarchy stressed the obligation of voting in a letter dated May 12, 1946. After quoting the Holy Father's words from the allocution of March 16, they reminded the faithful that voting in Holland was a legal duty as well as a moral right and it should be taken seriously since the elections would "decide the broad outline of Government policy, and of the spiritual and material reconstruction of the fatherland."⁹⁷ They continued:

In the past years we have experienced the true significance of the people being deprived of any real influence in State administration. For this reason all Catholics must fulfill the obligation to vote imposed upon them by law; and since political life must also be based on the spiritual principles of Christianity, they must consider themselves bound to elect only those persons whom they may reasonably expect to be guided by these principles in the spheres of legislation and administration. The fulfillment of these ideals is, under the given circumstances, in the opinion of the episcopate, best guaranteed by the Catholic People's Party.⁹⁸

Perhaps one of the finest and most important statements issued by any member of the Catholic episcopate was that of Cardinal Hlond drawn up at Jasna Gora September 10, 1946. Distributed

⁹⁵ *New York Times*, 100:34084 (May 20, 1951), 1:16.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Tablet* (London), 187:5532 (May 18, 1946), 252.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

to the clergy in stencilled copies because the government would not allow its printing, it took six weeks for circulation before it could be read simultaneously in all churches October 20. It was not published in any secular newspapers and Catholic papers were allowed to print only resumes and short extracts. The following principles might well be adopted by all the faithful (the full text may be found in the appendix):

The Electoral Duties of Catholics. . . . Participation in voting is an essential necessity for a democratic state, and is both a right and an obligation of all citizens. From this the following conclusions result:—

1. Catholics, as members of a State community, have the right of expressing their political convictions.

2. Catholics have the right to decide by their votes the most essential laws of Polish public life.

3. Catholics have a civic, national and religious duty to take part in the elections.

4. Catholics may not belong to organizations or parties the principles of which contradict Christian teaching, or the deeds and activities of which aim in reality to the undermining of Christian ethics.

5. Catholics may vote only for such persons, lists of candidates, and electoral programmes, as are not opposed to Catholic teaching and morality.

6. Catholics may neither vote for nor put themselves forward as candidates for electoral lists the programmes or governing methods of which are repugnant to common-sense, to the well-being of the nation and the State, to Christian morality and the Catholic outlook.

7. Catholics should only vote for candidates of tried probity and righteousness who deserve confidence and are worthy representatives of the well-being of the Polish State, and of the Church.

8. Catholics cannot refrain from voting without a fair and wise reason: for each vote, given according to the above recommendations, either promotes the common good or prevents evil.⁹⁹

Cardinal Griffin of Westminster delivered a statement on "The Christian Duties in Political, Civil and Industrial Life" as his

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 188:5557 (Nov. 9, 1946), 244.

Lenten pastoral of 1948. He gave special place and emphasis to the obligation of voting by all Christian citizens. We may quote his words in part: "There are some who boast that because of the corruption of politicians they refuse to vote. It is my duty to tell you that the Catholic citizen has an obligation to vote. The Holy Father himself recently declared that when grave issues are at stake to neglect to use the vote may be a serious sin of omission."¹⁰⁰

He then explained that the Church does not interfere with the freedom of Catholics in voting according to their consciences. The faithful may vote for any party or candidate provided they do not hold teachings contrary to religion. In this connection the cardinal quoted the words of Cardinal Bourne in 1931:

First, in this country a man or woman is free to join the political Party which makes the greatest appeal to his sympathy and understanding. Secondly, having done so, he or she must be on guard against erroneous principles, which, on account of the affiliations which affect these parties, are to some extent at work within them. Thirdly, he may never deliver himself or his conscience, wholly into the keeping of any political Party. When his religious faith and his conscience come into conflict with the claims of the Party, he must obey his conscience and withstand the demands which his Party make upon him.¹⁰¹

Cardinal Griffin warned against the thinking that one vote can make little difference; usually the number of people who reason this way is such that the result of an election might have been altered by those who neglected to vote. Catholics, he said, share in the responsibility of the community and they must realize that they who have the right to vote are in some manner responsible for the actions of those in high office.¹⁰²

Another group of bishops who insisted upon the obligation of Catholics to use their right of voting was the Hierarchy of the Philippine Islands who issued their pastoral under date of May 21, 1949. They declared that "It is . . . the most sacred duty of the voter carefully to examine candidates and their policies and

¹⁰⁰ *Catholic Mind*, 46:1028 (August 1948), 534.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

above all, irrespective of political parties or factions, to cast his vote only for those whose principles will advance the best interests, moral and social, of the state."¹⁰³ They exhorted their people to scorn bribes and to vote honestly to improve the working conditions and standards of living. "Treasure that right to vote," they urged, "exercise it freely, intelligently, and with the greatest vigilance, lest any man infringe on your legitimate liberty of choice."¹⁰⁴

Prior to the General Election in Great Britain February 23, 1950, the members of the Scottish Hierarchy sent out their own pastoral with principles fundamentally the same as those previously quoted but with a special reference to their local conditions.

1. No individual or party has a more pressing right to vote than another, where no particular moral principle is involved. No one may vote for parties or candidates opposed to the teachings of God and His Church. Thus Communism and atheistic materialism cannot have the vote of Catholics. . . . Our Catholic people ought to be sufficiently mature to apply these principles when making their choice of candidates.

Again, our Catholic people should never act under the influence of party slogans, prejudices, or hatred, or at the orders of men who care nothing for them or for the religion they profess. It is common knowledge how Catholics have been induced to vote as Communists, men pledged to our extermination, by means of appeals to class hatred and cupidity.

A healthy realism is desirable in voters in time of an election. Since success depends on obtaining a majority every inducement is held out to attract voters. Promises made by politicians at election and other times have been known to have been broken, so that it becomes of the greatest importance to judge a candidate by his sincerity rather than by his party label or the extravagances of promises. Our aim should be to elect good, sincere men, and not merely party politicians who have no mind of their own.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ *Catholic Mind*, 47:1041 (Sept. 1949), 568-569.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ "The principles: (a) Everyone has an immortal soul, and is created by God to know and love Him in this life, and to be happy with Him after death. In consequence we all belong to God. (b) This means that the family, the

The Australian Hierarchy issued a letter "Morality in Public Life" September 4, 1950, printed in pamphlet form and distributed to all the faithful. Among other matters the document treated of the obligation of voting in these terms: "In the matters of politics . . . it would be a great mistake to believe that all the moral responsibility rests on the shoulders only of those who play an active part in public life."¹⁰⁶

This duty to use his political rights binds the Christian not only in elections to determine the government of the nation, but in local elections, and in others in which he is able to vote, such as his trade union, his employers' or professional association.

Nor does the duty of the Christian begin and end on election day. The good citizen will always watch what is being done in his name, and by using all legitimate means within his power will endure that no legislation or other regulations will be passed which are contrary to the principles of natural law or of religion.¹⁰⁷

Turning to statements from the American Hierarchy we find

community, and the state, are but a means to a Divine end, and must be used as instruments to that end. (c) The duty of a government is to help its citizens towards God by providing them with the possibility of a decent living consonant with their status as children of God. It must also see that no section is favored at the expense of another. (d) The best help a Government can give is to secure the rights of the individual against public and private domination, and the right of private property, correctly interpreted, is the most important of these." *Tablet* (London), 195:5726 (Feb. 18, 1950), 136.

¹⁰⁶ *Catholic Mind*, 48:1054 (Oct. 1950), 636.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* Also: "Since the vocation of politics is so noble, it follows that the responsibilities of those who take part in politics are equally great. The men who govern the community, need therefore, to be very conscious of the truth, that although they may have been chosen by the people, the authority by which they govern comes from God. The authority is given to them so that they may secure the well being not only of their own nation, but, as far as they can, the good of men and women everywhere." *Ibid.*, 635. Again: "When the association of which he is a member adopts policies opposed to the moral law, or to the duties imposed by justice and charity, he cannot decline responsibility simply by saying that he did not vote for the policy in question or for the committee which formulated it. Nor is he free from blame when he failed to vote at all, for his very failure to vote was, in itself, a contribution to the injustice committed." *Ibid.*, 633-634.

the following eloquent message issued during the heated presidential campaign of 1840:

. . . reflect that you are accountable not only to society but to God, for the honest independent, and fearless exercise of your own franchise, that it is a trust confided to you not for your private gain, but for the public good, and if yielding to any undue influence you act either through favor, affection, or motives of dishonest gain against your own deliberate view of what will promote your country's good, you have violated your conscience, you have betrayed your trust, and you are a renegade to your country.¹⁰⁸

Then in 1933 the Bishops of the Administrative Committees of the National Catholic Welfare Council called attention to the duty of voting as an obligation of piety. They declared:

In our form of government the obligation of bringing about a reform of the social order rests upon the citizens, who by their votes give a mandate to legislators and executives. They make evident a civic duty, and for us Catholics it is also a religious one governed by the virtue of piety; that is, a certain filial piety toward our country which impels us to promote the reform of the social order by voting for competent and conscientious men of high moral principles.¹⁰⁹

The Most Rev. John McNicholas, Archbishop of Cincinnati, wrote at least three pastoral letters on the obligation of using the franchise. In 1929, 1935, and 1939 he sent out messages to be read in all the churches on the importance of voting and the obligation binding upon all. He asked that both men and women "vote in all elections" and "to make a sacrifice to discharge this important civic duty."¹⁰⁹ He further asked that all Catholics not yet citizens become such as soon as possible and to use the right of voting as soon as they had secured it. "It is most important," he declared,

¹⁰⁸ Guilday, *op. cit.*, 142-143.

^{109a} Huber, Raphael, *The Bishops Speak* (Milwaukee, 1952), 189.

¹⁰⁹ *Catholic Mind*, 26 (1928), 254.

"that the good citizens be thoroughly impressed with the importance of voting. Those who habitually vote and those who habitually refrain from voting cannot but exercise an influence for good or evil on the community."¹¹⁰

He rejected the notion that the single vote is of no consequence, asserting that all should form the "habit of voting. Whether or not elections seem important, the principle of voting habitually is important. Only a conscientious judgment, seriously formed, can justify the voter in remaining away from the polls."¹¹¹ The Archbishop continued:

The Catholic voter is asked to consider whether we can have any responsibility in our civil government except through recognized political parties, which will be held responsible to the people and which will merit either their approval or condemnation. The voter is asked to decide for himself what method of government or what party will impose the greatest responsibility on those who represent the people and who should exercise authority for the general welfare. The decision should be made according to the conscientious judgment of the individual.¹¹²

Other ordinaries have urged the obligation of voting as Archbishop Lucey of San Antonio and Bishop Mussio of Steubenville. Archbishop Cushing of Boston was particularly emphatic during the elections of 1948 when a Planned Parenthood Bill (birth prevention) sought entrance into the state legislature. "Both as a citizen and as a spokesman for morality," he warned, "I am bound urgently to remind you of your solemn obligation to vote, and therefore to register and vote."¹¹³

Within the more recent past Cardinal Spellman of New York wrote letters to his people informing them of their duty to use the ballot. In a letter dated October 4, 1949, he called the duty to

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ 1939 pastoral. The other references, unless indicated, are likewise from this letter since the 1929 and 1935 directives are substantially the same as the former.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *The Pilot* (Boston), Oct. 20, 1948, 4.

register and vote as "our civic duty, our patriotic duty, and our religious duty." He commented further:

As Americans every one of us is responsible for the preservation of our Democratic Republic. The Republic is our guarantee of our liberty. The men and women elected to public office have the power to preserve or destroy that Republic. They wield that power as legislators, judges, and executives. We have the power to elect good Americans for these offices. We wield this power as voters on Registration and Election Days.

. . . For the continuation of the United States of America and for the safeguarding of our God-given liberty, I ask every eligible man and woman to do his or her conscientious duty by registering and voting.¹¹⁴

One year later he sent another message to the people of New York (October 9, 1950) with the following content: "Therefore do I ask all of you who are eligible to register and vote, but I beg you remember that while this is your privilege and duty, it is also your sacred responsibility to vote for honest and able men. Dearly beloved, I pray you, be loyal Americans and true Catholics, protect your country, yourselves and your children: REGISTER AND VOTE!"¹¹⁵

In their pastoral of 1951 the American Hierarchy spoke of the need to "recover that sense of personal obligation on the part of the voter." Later they referred to man's being faithful to moral principles as a "citizen, a voter, . . . and as a member of society."¹¹⁶

Thus have the official teachers of the Church, the members of the hierarchy, singled out and stressed the obligation of voting in civil elections. They have called it a duty not only to the State, but to God, a duty binding in conscience, a civil obligation with moral implications. They repeated the words of the Pope that in elections of serious moment, abstention from the polls, without reason, would be a mortal sin.

The bishops advised that the faithful must vote only for those who will respect and defend the divine law and the rights of religion and of the Church both in private and in public life; that

¹¹⁴ *The Catholic News*, Oct. 8, 1949, 1.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Oct. 5, 1950, 32.

they must vote wisely and honestly (or as others said, usefully and intelligently) for it is not sufficient to go to the polls and cast the ballot indifferently; that they must vote so as to ensure the rights of the human person and the liberty of the family, the protection of the interests and dignity of the workers, and to defend the individual, civic, and religious liberties.

They further declared that a person sins who votes for a candidate or list of candidates who are obviously against the Church. No one can belong to any party or organization or support any system whose principles contradict Christian teaching or whose activity undermines Christian morality. Moreover, the good citizen must vote not only in those elections which determine the national government, but all those of lesser magnitude, for upon them often hinges the kind of higher government.

It seems especially significant that these documents should appear in these times when the forces of atheistic dictatorships, Communist blocs, and ruthless, godless men strive to gain control of republican forms of government and of those blessings that so many hold as their precious heritage. However, such interest in the moral aspects of politics is nothing new for the leaders of the Church, for it is their duty to safeguard the faith, to protect religion, and to defend human rights. Courageous prelates of the Church always raise their voices to inculcate Christian teaching when the needs of the times demand it.

c. Statements of Theologians

The obligation of the citizen to vote in civil elections derives from an obligation in legal justice,¹¹⁶ that is, rendering what is due for

¹¹⁶ "Justitia legalis: quia ex lege manat iisque competit quos lex aestimat hac instruendos esse facultate, nedum sit ius de se singulis a natura conlatum." A. Vermeersch, *Quaestiones de iustitia* (Burgess, 1903), 87. "Justitia legalis seu generalis est virtus specialis iustitiae quae describitur: Habitus supernaturalis per quem unusquisque reddit quod debitum est rei publicae cujus ipse pars est, sive caput sive membrum, i.e., sive leges ferendo etc. ad commune bonum, sive obediendo legibus ob bonum commune. Haec virtus perfectior est iustitia particulari, quoniam nobilius objectum, bonum commune respicit; est tamen iustitia nimis perfecta, quia, ut facile intelligitur, non ita perfecta habet triplicem supra expositam rationem quae ad iustitiam requiritur." G. Waffelaert, *De iustitia* (Burgess, 1885), 19.

the common good. This virtue regulates the citizen's obligations and relations to the state, based on the needs of the common good.¹¹⁷ It differs from commutative justice as regulating the exercise of rights between man and man (*do ut des, facio ut facias*) and from distributive justice as what is due to parts from the whole, as a ruler has the obligation of giving justice to his subjects.¹¹⁸

Legal justice differs from obedience, patriotism, liberality, and other similar virtues because the motive underlying the duties of legal justice is the natural relation of the parts to the whole. Acts of legal justice are of obligation and the basis of the obligation is the necessary nexus between the act and the common good, which the person is bound to promote. The proximate motive of obedience, patriotism, liberality, etc., may be the common good, and though there be an obligation according to some virtue there is no strict obligation in justice.

After defining justice as "a habit by which man renders to each one his due by a constant and perpetual will" St. Thomas Aquinas gives the following explanation of legal justice in his *Summa theologiae*:

Justice . . . directs man in his relations with other men. Now this may happen in two ways: first, as regards his relations with individuals, secondly, as regards his relations with others in general, insofar as a man who serves a community serves all who are included in that community. Accordingly, justice in its proper acceptance can be directed to another in both senses. Now it is evident that all who are included in a community, stand in relation to that community as parts to a whole; while a part, as such, belongs to the whole, so that whatever is the good of the part can be directed to the good of the whole.

¹¹⁷ "Justitia commutativa ea est, quae inclinat privatum hominem ad reddendum debitum strictum alteri homine privato, idque ad aequalitatem rei ad rem, ut sc. res quae detur, prorsus adaequat rei dandae." J. Artnys-C. A. Damen, *Theologia moralis*, 2 vols. (Turin, 1944), I, 292. "Justitia distributiva ea est, quae inclinat principem eiusque ministros ad distribuenda bona justa subditorum merita et necessitates; justitia distributiva etiam, sed indirecte tantum, versatur circa onera distribuenda, quatenus sc. distributio onerum recedit ad quamdam bonorum partitionem; liberum enim esse ab onere habet rationem boni." *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

It follows therefore that the good of any virtue whether such virtue directs a man in relation to himself or in relation to certain other individual persons, is referable to the common good, to which justice directs: so that all actions of virtue can pertain to justice, insofar as it directs man to the common good. It is in this sense that justice is called general justice. And since it belongs to the law to direct to the common good as stated above (I-II, 90, 2), it follows that the justice which is in this way styled general is called legal justice, because man thereby is in harmony with the law which directs the acts of all the virtues to the common good.¹¹⁹

Legal justice is both a general and a special virtue because the nature of its object, the common good, is such that any act of virtue can be ordained to it. It is a general virtue by reason of its power of commanding and of ordering the acts of the other virtues to their end; a special virtue by reason of its special object, the common good.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ "Justitia . . . ordinat hominem in comparatione ad alium. Quod quidem potest esse dupliciter. Uno modo, ad alium singulariter consideratum. Alio modo, ad alium in communi, secundum scilicet quod ille qui servit alicui communitati servit omnibus hominibus qui sub communitate illa continentur. Ad utrumque dicitur se potest habere iustitia secundum propriam rationem. Manifestum est autem quod omnes qui sub communitate aliqua continentur comparantur ad communitatem sicut partes ad totum. Pars autem id quod est totius est; unde et quodlibet bonum partis est ordinabile in bonum totius. Secundum hoc ergo bonum cuiuslibet virtutis, sive ordinantis aliquem hominem ad se ipsum sive ordinantis ipsum ad aliquas alias personas singulares, est referibile ad bonum commune, ad quod ordinatur iustitia. Et secundum hoc actus omnium virtutum possunt ad justitiam pertinere, secundum quod ordinat hominem ad bonum commune. Et quantum ad hoc iustitia dicitur virtus generalis. Et quia ad legem pertinet ordinare in bonum commune, ut supra habitum est, inde est quod talis justitia praedicto modo generalis, dicitur justitia legalis, quid scilicet per eam homo concordat legi ordinanti actus omnium virtutum in bonum commune." *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, 58, 5 c. The translation, unless otherwise indicated, is that of the Dominican Fathers (New York, 1948).

¹²⁰ See Hyacinth-M. Hering, *De justitia legali* (Friburg, 1944), 44. Also his article in *Angelicum* 14 (1937), 464-487. "Duplex est justitia quae est virtus cardinalis, quae dicitur justitia specialis; alia est justitia legalis quae includit omnem virtutem." St. Thomas, *In Matth.* 1. Other references in the Angelic Doctor: III *Sent.* 9, 1, 4, 15; 33, 1, 1, 3; 33, 2, 2, 3; *De verit.* 28, 1; *De virt. card.* 1, 3 ad 3.

Now legal justice is the special virtue of the good citizen since it aims directly to promote the common good of political society. It deals with the rights of society to employ proportionate means to its end. Such justice obtains between the citizen and society for "The good of the man as a citizen," declares St. Thomas, "is that he be ordained to the state as to the whole" [of which he is a part].¹²¹ And again: "The virtue of the good citizen is general justice through which one is ordained to the common good."¹²²

According to a schema prepared by Father William Ferree, S.M., legal justice in St. Thomas is an analogical concept with five meanings: (1) Actions done according to law for the common good; (2) Actions done according to positive law, human or divine; (3) Actions done according to divine law; (4) Actions done according to the word or intention of human law; and (5) Actions done in conformity with the words of law, "courtroom justice."¹²³

Now it cannot be said that the citizen is obliged to vote by reason of any law, at least in the strict sense (except in those countries where civil law makes it obligatory) but he is obliged to vote by reason of his obligation to promote the common good. Every citizen has a double vocation, one which is proper to him as an individual man, another which he has in common with all others. A person's proper vocation and avocation as business man, physician, lawyer, laborer, architect, priest, etc., may be the means to personal and family livelihood, but it is also a channel of public service. Through such public works the common welfare is forged together, for no matter how unimpressive and insignificant one's activity may seem, it assumes importance and meaning when viewed in relation to the whole. To be a good citizen a person must realize the element of public good in what he is and the element of public service in what he does.

Now while legal justice, as a general virtue, ordains the good of every virtue to the common good, motivating the citizen in such

¹²¹ "Bonum . . . hominis in quantum est civis est ut ordinetur secundum civitatem quantum ad omnes." *De virtutibus in communi*, 1, 9.

¹²² "Virtus boni civis est justitia generalis, per quam aliquis ordinatur ad bonum commune." *Summa theologiae*, II-58, 6.

¹²³ *Act of Social Justice* (Washington, D. C., 1942), 30.

a way that he has care and concern for the commonweal and ordains his actions and efforts with the common objective of society, it is also a special virtue in this sense: It looks to the state as a functional whole ordained and directed towards the end and possessed with rights to such an end by using the proper means. St. Thomas puts it thus: "Legal justice takes its name from its connection with law. Because it pertains to law to order things to the common good . . . this justice is called legal, for through it man conforms his actions to the law ordaining the acts of all the virtues to the common good."¹²⁴ But "legal justice is essentially a special virtue since it looks to the common good as its proper object. And this is in the ruler principally, and as it were architectonically; it is in the subjects secondarily, and as it were, administratively."¹²⁵ This figure of speech is used advisedly, for just as the ruler is the architect, so to speak, of the edifice of society, so the rest of the citizens are the builders whose services and labors produce the finished building. Both are necessary that the state grow and prosper.

Legal justice is a disposition of the will; a virtue by which the citizen is inclined to, or is constantly willing to, fulfill his obligations to the state. It expresses itself in a willingness to comply with the laws and to support national institutions for the benefit of the common good, showing itself in a special way in a republican form of government by taking an active part in the electoral franchise. The moral obligation of voting finds its roots in legal justice. For since this virtue promotes the common good, the use of the franchise promotes the good of the state, while the careless, negligent, indifferent use, or non-use of the franchise contributes to the breakdown of the common good.

Older theologians did not consider the question of voting because it did not arise at their times, but at the present day it is a very live issue, the more so when voting or non-voting may spell the difference between freedom and anarchy. A person is not blissfully free of his obligation to vote; he is bound to exercise it

¹²⁴ *Summa theologiae*, II-II, 58, 5.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

no less than other responsibilities. For as Monsignor John A. Ryan has well pointed out:

The chief elements of citizenship are rights and duties. These are moral entities or categories. The relation of the citizen to the state is ethical as well as political. His rights are not all conferred by the state; some of them are natural, existing independently of the state, because they are necessary for the individual welfare. His duties to the state are not merely civil and political; in the main they are likewise moral, creating a binding force in conscience. . . . The duties of the citizen are truly ethical because the state is not a voluntary social institution. It is not like a fraternal society or professional association.¹²⁶

Most moralists hold that voting is of obligation. Some say that the citizen is bound *sub gravi*, others, *sub levi*. Some hold that *per se* the obligation is grave, *per accidens* it is light or of no obligation. In order to give a complete picture of the opinions we may consider the writings of the various authors. }

The statement of Koch-Preuss is representative of many authors: "In most countries today the people govern themselves by electing their own lawgivers, judges, and executive officers. Hence a second class of duties incumbent upon the citizen results from his functions as an elector. The right to vote has for its corollary a special duty and this duty is one of legal justice."¹²⁷

Slater gives this opinion: "In English speaking countries the people have a large share in the election of their rulers and such an important duty should be faithfully and religiously fulfilled. There may easily be a moral obligation to vote at elections to prevent the election of one who would do grave harm if elected, or in order to secure the election of one whose election would be of great public benefit."¹²⁸ But Davis speaks without qualification: "It is the duty of all citizens who have the right to vote to exercise that right when the common good of the state or the good of religion or morals require their votes, and when their voting is useful."¹²⁹

¹²⁶ *Catholic Principles of Politics* (New York, 1943), 207.

¹²⁷ *Moral Theology*, 5 vols. (St. Louis, 1925-1933), 5, 571.

¹²⁸ *Moral Theology*, 2 vols. (New York, 1907), 1, 103.

¹²⁹ *Moral and Pastoral Theology*, 4 vols. (London, 1949), 2, 90.

Callan-McHugh holds that there is a grave duty to use the privilege of voting especially in primaries, since the welfare of the community and the moral and physical well-being of the individuals depend upon the type of men nominated or chosen to rule and on the ticket platforms voted for. "The duty is not one of commutative justice, as the ballot is either a privilege or a thing commanded by authority, but not a service to which the citizen has bound himself by contract or office. The obligation is therefore one of legal justice, arising from the fact that the commonweal is everybody's business and responsibility especially in a republic."¹²⁰

Noldin-Schmitt declares that the citizen is bound by legal justice when his vote is needed to promote a good election or to prevent a bad one.¹²¹ Merkelbach asserts that the citizen is bound by legal justice, though he refers to voting as a privilege.¹²² Lehmkuhl,¹²³ Ubach,¹²⁴ Arregui,¹²⁵ and Muller¹²⁶ speak of the obligation as binding in legal justice.

Monsignor John A. Ryan has been perhaps the most outspoken of theologians in the United States on the matter of voting. In several works, *The Catholic Church and the Citizen*, *The State and the Church*, *Catholic Principles of Politics*, and *The Norm of Morality*, he has written at length on the obligation of the franchise. Thus he says: "In a country which has representative form of government, furtherance of the common good is affected mainly by elected officials, executive, legislative, and judicial. The responsibility of selecting honest and competent officials rests upon the voters."¹²⁷

Elsewhere he uses with approval the following statement from

¹²⁰ *Manual of Moral Theology*, 2 vols. (New York, 1930), 2, 619.

¹²¹ "Singuli cives ex justitia legali tenentur uti facultate eligendi, ubi usus huius facultatis ad promovendam bonam vel impediendam malam electionem necessarius utilis est." *Summa theologiae moralis*, 3 vols. (Ratisbonne, 1939), 2, 322.

¹²² "... alii autem ex privilegio eligentes solum ex justitia legali." *Summa theologiae moralis*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1947), 2, 619.

¹²³ *Casus conscientiae* (Friburg, 1903), 483.

¹²⁴ *Compendium theologiae moralis*, 2 vols. (Friburg, 1926), 1, 90.

¹²⁵ *Summarium theologiae moralis* (18. ed., Bilbao, 1948), 233.

¹²⁶ *Summa theologiae moralis* (Paris, 1936), 310.

¹²⁷ *The Catholic Church and the Citizen* (New York, 1928), 66-67.

a booklet by the cardinals and bishops of France some years ago, *Les principes catholiques d'action civique*: "To the extent that the constitution of a state established the right of voting as a means of participating in the conduct of civil affairs the citizens, inasmuch as they are bound to use this right for the public good, should regard its existence as a matter of conscience. Therefore, they are obliged, first, to make use of this constitutional right, and secondly, to use it for the common good of all."¹³⁸

He may be quoted further:

The Catholic citizen has . . . important duties as a voter. In the first place he is morally bound to make use of the electoral franchise. From the performance of this duty he can be excused only by a corresponding grave inconvenience. Since public officials possess great power either to harm or to benefit the community, those who elect them are charged with grave responsibility.¹³⁹

The second class of duties incumbent upon the citizens results from his electoral functions. In a republic, legislation and administration depend finally upon the intelligence and morality of the voters. They have it in their power to make the government a good one or a bad one. Whether the common good will be promoted or injured, depends upon the kind of laws enacted and the manner in which they are administered; but the character of the laws and the administration is primarily determined by the way in which the citizens discharge their function of choosing legislators and administrators. Therefore, this function is of the gravest importance and the obligation it imposes is likewise grave.¹⁴⁰

The same author adds a new note, asserting that the obligation to vote would seem to bind in commutative justice as well as legal justice. This is his line of argumentation:

It would seem, like the obligations of public officials, they [the electoral duties] also fall under the head of strict or commutative justice. A group of legislators inflict injury

¹³⁸ *The State and the Church* (New York, 1930), 269-270.

¹³⁹ *The Citizen, the Church, and the State* (New York, n.d.), 22.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

upon the community by a bad law, thereby violating strict justice. Are not the citizens who elected them guilty of the same kind of injustice, insofar as they foresaw the possibility? The difference between their offence and that of the legislators seems to be one of degree, not one of kind.¹⁴¹

It would seem, however, that the obligation of voting is not one of commutative justice, for the voters do not directly make the laws. They vote for the incumbents of public office who are bound to promote the common good. It seems that the function of the public official is specifically different from that of the ordinary voter, for while the official is bound on account of his salary by commutative justice to render service and to restitution if he does not perform his duty, the ordinary citizen is not held to such when casting his ballot. It seems to us that the obligation of voting is one of legal justice rather than commutative justice.

Some authors write of the obligation as one of charity as well as justice, placing it under the virtue of *pietas* which includes both charity and justice. So hold Father Joseph Trunk,¹⁴² Pighi-Grazioli,¹⁴³ and Loiano-Varceno.¹⁴⁴ The latter declares that "charity obliges citizens to exercise their right in voting at the present time especially, for through the proper use of our rights the good of the country is promoted and evil is avoided. This is a duty of *pietas*. . . ."¹⁴⁵ Fanfani declares that voting is a duty in charity and does not refer to justice.¹⁴⁶

Vermeersch states that the obligation does not arise formally from the right of suffrage, but from an obligation in legal justice.¹⁴⁷ Iorio says that the obligation is one of legal justice and not of commutative justice¹⁴⁸ while Marc-Gestermann says there is a

¹⁴¹ *The State and the Church* (New York, 1930), 275.

¹⁴² *A Thomistic Interpretation of Civic Right in the United States* (Dayton, O., 1937), 216.

¹⁴³ *Cursus theologiae moralis*, 4 vols. (6. ed., Verona, 1946), 2, 103.

¹⁴⁴ *Institutiones theologiae moralis*, 5 vols. (Turin, 1934-1942), 2, 337.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Manuale theoretico-practicum theologiae moralis* (Roma, 1950), 1, 154.

¹⁴⁷ *Quaestiones de iustitia* (Burgess, 1903), 88.

¹⁴⁸ *Theologia moralis*, 3 vols. (3. ed., Naples, 1946), 2, 160.

grave obligation to choose good men, an obligation binding in legal justice.¹⁴⁹

Rev. John Wright (now Bishop) in *National Patriotism in Papal Teaching* implies that voting is one of the duties of patriotism. He says:

True, here too it is primarily in justice (specifically legal justice) that the individual is bound to discharge his share of the responsibility for the commonweal of civil society; but according to the argument of Pope Leo XIII, patriotism itself should prompt one to take an active part in the political life by which is administered that common good which is the object of patriotism, for "to take no share in public matters would be equally wrong (We speak in general) as not to have concern for, or not to bestow labor upon, the common good."¹⁵⁰

Jone says that voting is a civic duty which would seem to bind at least under venial sin wherever a good candidate has an unworthy opponent. It might be a mortal sin if one's refusal would result in the election of an unworthy opponent.¹⁵¹ Father Francis Connell simply says that the "duty of the loyal citizen is the proper use of the ballot" and "When an office is to be filled by popular election, the responsibility of choosing a good man rests on the citizens."¹⁵² They do not refer to legal justice. Nor do Tanqueray,¹⁵³ Wouters,¹⁵⁴ Prümmer,¹⁵⁵ Hurth-Abellan,¹⁵⁶ and Piscetta-Genaro,¹⁵⁷ although they state that voting is of obligation.

Heylen declares that voting does not bind in conscience because it is a privilege and no one is bound to use a privilege. He declares that there is no strict debt due society in voting and if a law makes voting obligatory, then the law is merely penal.¹⁵⁸ Genicot holds the

¹⁴⁹ *Institutiones morales alphonsianae*, 2 vols. (20. ed., Paris, 1946), 2, 2287.

¹⁵⁰ (Westminster, Md., 1943), 175.

¹⁵¹ *Moral Theology* (8 pr., Westminster, Md., 1951), 204.

¹⁵² *Morality and Government* (Washington, D. C., 1949), 24.

¹⁵³ *Synopsis theologiae moralis*, 3 vols. (10. ed., Paris, 1937), 3, 980.

¹⁵⁴ *Manuale theologiae moralis*, 2 vols. (Burgess, 1932), 2, 2287.

¹⁵⁵ *Manuale theologiae moralis*, 3 vols. (7. ed., Friburg, 1928-1933), 2, 603.

¹⁵⁶ *Notae ad praelectiones theologiae moralis*, 4 vols. (Rome, 1948), 2, 84.

¹⁵⁷ *Elementa theologiae moralis*, 7 vols. (Turin, 1938-1945), 4, 26, 2.

¹⁵⁸ *De iustitia et jure*, 2 vols. (4. ed., Malines, 1943), 2, 514.

same view.¹⁵⁹ Perhaps an explanation for such an opinion is to be found in the fact that both authors are from Belgium where civil law obliges the citizens to vote, under penalty of a fine.

Don Luigi Sturzo, one of the foremost Catholic sociologists and political thinkers of modern times, writes of the citizen as having "the duty to send to public elective posts people who are morally honest and politically prepared."¹⁶⁰ He adds a new note to the obligation as a duty binding in social justice. "To work for the public good," he says, "is an act of charity . . . and when it is an obligation, it is an exercise of social justice."¹⁶¹ He explains his view thus:

. . . may we say that the voter goes only to fill a duty of charity towards society of which he is a part? Is it not because he receives from society the guarantee of his liberty and of the maintenance of that social order that he has been able to live as a free man? Is there not an ethical relationship between the voter and society as a whole? And if the voter, instead of giving the vote to an honest and capable person, gives it, consciously, to a dishonest and incapable one, who will thereby bring damage to public administration and who will even take advantage of the position for private purposes—has he not failed in his duties? This is therefore a duty of justice towards society.¹⁶²

Apart from legal justice it seems that the obligation to vote arises also from the duty of patriotism. The citizen demonstrates this virtue not only by bearing arms in time of war but by supporting the country in time of peace, by paying taxes, obeying just laws, contributing to the national institutions, and by taking an active and intelligent interest in political matters. Just as patriotism includes all the acts of love and service to one's country, so it includes the use of the electoral franchise for the good of the homeland. For as St. Thomas declares one virtue may command another, so legal justice commands patriotism as a potential part.

¹⁵⁹ *Institutiones theologiae moralis*, 2 vols. (Brussels, 1939), 1, 359.

¹⁶⁰ "The Political Duties of a Citizen," *Epistle*, 12:4 (Autumn, 1946), 108.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

Most authors who speak of the obligation of voting say that it is *sub gravi* in itself or *sub gravi* in matters of grave moment. After a consideration of the arguments and opinions it seems safe to conclude that the citizen is bound *sub levi* to vote in every ordinary election. If he fails through laziness, indifference, etc., he commits a venial sin. If, however, a person fails to vote over a period of time, thus becoming an habitual non-voter, he would commit a moral sin for the number of omissions could accumulate to constitute a mortal sin.

If the issue were serious, as the case between a Communist or the member of an equally evil group and a good and capable man and there was a chance of the evil man being elected, then the citizen would be bound *sub gravi* to vote for the worthy candidate. If he voted for the Communist or did not vote at all, he would sin mortally. If there were no chance of the unworthy man being elected, then obviously the obligation would not be *sub gravi*.

From the statements of theologians it seems that the obligation of voting is grave *ex genere suo*, whose matter is important in itself but which admits of parvity of matter in individual cases. That is, in individual cases the matter may be light, and a person would commit a venial sin by not voting or by voting contrary to moral principles. We speak of parvity of matter, for just as the sin of theft is mortal *ex genere suo*, but admits of lightness of matter in some cases, so that all sins of theft are not mortal sins; so in voting, while the obligation is grave *ex genere suo*, still in individual cases there may not be a sufficiently grave reason for voting at this time or for this person, or contrary to the same, so that the obligation would be light and the sin committed would be venial because the matter would be light. However, failure to take part in elections at all times or for a long time would be a serious sin, while failure to vote in an individual election (whose consequences are not grave) would be a venial sin. Those who vote for unworthy candidates in ordinary elections, all things being considered, sin venially. Such principles hold in national, state, county, and local elections.

The importance of the single vote is not to be minimized. By it candidates are elected to political office for the good or evil of both State and Church. Practically speaking what is needed is an

active and intelligent electorate, for an indifferent and apathetic one is an invitation to tyranny. It will be remembered that when Hitler swept into power it was through the ballot or when Communism assumes control of a government it generally does so through the vote and not through any bloody coup. The obligation of voting is not only recognized by the Popes, the members of the hierarchy and theologians; it is stressed by political leaders as well and in the words of one of them:

The exercise of the suffrage would seem to be the irreducible minimum of the citizen's political duties. With forty-seven million voting in the hotly contested Presidential election of 1944 out of a possible maximum of nearly eighty million, it is evident that performance falls considerably short of the ideal. Some reformers, disturbed about this failure, have urged the use of compulsion. Such proposals, however, seem to be ill-founded. By and large the rule of natural selection operates in the exercise of the suffrage. Voting implies the formation of judgments on personalities and on economic, social, and political questions which often are of extreme intricacy. The unqualified person is probably uninterested; and the intelligent and well informed who fail to cast their ballot demonstrate an insensibility to social responsibility which does not bode well for their value as voters.¹⁶³

There is little difficulty in concluding that voting is of moral obligation. It is a duty to which one is bound in conscience, a duty of justice and of patriotism as well, to be discharged with constant fidelity, for "... in the eyes of all tolerable Christians and of many who are not Christians, the position of legislators is one that avails much for moral good or evil; that bad legislators are a great mischief, and that the question of their selection is a moral one."¹⁶⁴

It should be noted that while the Pope, bishops, and theologians have emphasized the importance of voting, they did so under different conditions. The Pope and the bishops generally stressed the obligation in times of crisis when there was danger of evil

¹⁶³ W. Leon Godshall, *The National Government of the American People* (New York, 1948), 1200.

¹⁶⁴ Ed. O'Reilly, *Relations of the Church to Society* (London, 1892), 128.

forces gaining control of the government, e.g., the elections in Italy in 1946 and in 1948, while the theologians considered the obligation as a function of the citizen in a republican state. Despite this difference the authority of the Pope and of the members of the hierarchy can be called upon to emphasize the need of voting in elections apart from unusual conditions, for good government is dependent upon the way the voters use their ballot. Moreover, some of the bishops, such as Cardinal Spellman and Archbishop McNicholas have pointed out the obligation of voting apart from any grave danger imminent at the time.

3. CONDITIONS THAT MAY RELIEVE ONE FROM THE OBLIGATION OF VOTING

While in general it seems that the citizen is bound *sub levi* to vote in every ordinary election, and even *sub gravi* in matters of grave importance, there may be extenuating circumstances that will relieve him of the obligation. While the gravity of the obligation depends upon the good to be gained and the evil to be avoided so that it is somewhat difficult to determine all the excusing causes, still some general principles may be listed.

If the election were interpreted as the recognition of a tyrannical form of government or an unlawful one, there would be no obligation to vote. Indeed there would be an obligation of not voting.¹⁶⁵ Tanqueray points out that if a person were morally certain that his ballot would in no way affect the outcome of an election, he could refrain from voting for a slight cause, although, he adds, it would be better to vote for some worthy candidate and thus give good example.¹⁶⁶

Slight reasons such as vacation, hunting, recreation, etc., would in themselves not constitute an excusing cause. Even in cases where it seems impossible to elect a worthy candidate, the citizen should vote to show others that they should not give up hope for victory in future elections; and that they should be ready to use all lawful means to select good representatives. A grave cause permitting

¹⁶⁵ Noldin, *op. cit.*, 2, 332.

¹⁶⁶ *Op. cit.*, 3, 980.

a person to refrain from voting would be the loss of position with which he gains his livelihood.¹⁶⁷

Noldin-Schmitt says that a legitimate reason excuses one from the obligation of voting because affirmative laws do not bind under grave inconvenience. Obviously the inconvenience has to be greater than the evil that would be impeded. Even if there is no fear of grave evil, there is an obligation *sub levi* to vote when there is need of demonstrating publicly Catholic opinion. In this instance a slight inconvenience would excuse a person from voting.¹⁶⁸

Prümmer says that it is difficult to determine whether one sins gravely by neglecting to vote, since the gravity involved would depend upon the evil certain to be committed or certain not to be avoided.¹⁶⁹ Loiano-Vareceno quotes this point and adds that the quality of the guilt depends upon the person's conscience; generally the faithful think it licit to vote for anyone, without distinguishing between worthy and unworthy candidates.¹⁷⁰ However, they do wrong objectively and therefore their ideas should be corrected.

With regard to voting for a communist candidate or list of candidates many factors must be considered. According to the decrees of the Holy Office of July 1, 1949, bearing the approval of Pope Pius XII it is not permitted to enlist in or to show favor to the Communist party, nor to read, publish, or spread any of their propaganda.¹⁷¹ Those who violate this decree by becoming party members are *ipso facto* apostates from the faith and incur excommunication *speciali modo* reserved to the Holy See (Canon 2314, # 1). Now while one of the faithful would not be excommunicated for voting for the Communists, still on the strength of this decree surely none of the faithful in the United States, or in any other country with a relatively free government could vote for the Communists on the plea advanced by some of accepting their social and economic program while rejecting their campaign

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ *Op. cit.*, 2, 322 c.

¹⁶⁹ *Op. cit.*, 2, 604.

¹⁷⁰ *Op. cit.*, 2, 377 v.

¹⁷¹ *AAS* 41 (1949), 334.

against religion and the Church. With regard to Russia and certain satellite countries controlled by the Soviet it is difficult to say whether material cooperation might be given or must not be given. Surely nothing could be done that would constitute a positive denial of the faith. But in individual localities and areas so many elements enter in that it is difficult to draw a conclusion. Thus we prefer to withhold any judgment as to the application of this decree to countries under a Communist regime.

Ferreres says that there is no obligation to vote if no good effect is forthcoming or if the result is of little importance. However, the voting should not be omitted even if the good sought is not immediate; at times it is best to vote so that good men will receive encouragement and will exercise their power in a complete victory over their opponents.¹⁷²

Vermeersch declares that when the duty of voting does not oblige by reason of any office, the sin of omission is never contrary to commutative justice. Though the abstention may be an act of bad example the guilt is to be determined by comparing the inconvenience of voting with the evil to be overcome.¹⁷³ In practical life when a good honest candidate is opposed by an unworthy man, it does not seem that the citizen is excused from at least a slight sin by not voting. Moreover, when the outcome of an election is not foreseen, it is not a grave sin to abstain from voting. If there should be a danger of serious loss of goods or of honor, then only rarely would there be an obligation to vote.¹⁷⁴

It does not seem, however, that a citizen is freed of the obligation of voting simply because there are two candidates apparently equally good or equally bad. In the first instance, the citizens should vote conscientiously for the one considered better for surely there must be some basis of judgment to consider one superior to another. In the second instance, the citizen might cast a blank ballot to indicate his disapproval of the candidates and he could publicly express his disapproval of the candidates such as by writing to a local newspaper about the candidates.

Then if the outcome of an election is certain, the voter should

¹⁷² *Casus*, 1, 143. See *Compendium* 1, 485.

¹⁷³ *Compendium*, 2, 140.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

use his franchise to encourage the worthy candidate or to discourage the unworthy one. For no matter how certain the outcome of an election, the voter has the personal obligation of seeing that a worthy man is chosen.

4. CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH ONE MAY VOTE FOR UNWORTHY CANDIDATES

By the term "unworthy candidates" we do not necessarily mean men whose private lives are morally reprehensible, but those who, if elected, would cause grave injury to the state or to religion, as for example, men of vacillating temperament who fear to make decisions.

In practical life it is often difficult to determine whether a particular candidate is worthy or unworthy because there seems little upon which to judge accurately, especially in local or municipal elections. It does not follow that every Catholic is necessarily the best man for office and that every non-Catholic is not; nor that every Catholic will promote the interests of the common good of the state and of religion and that the non-Catholic will not. Even if a man is of sterling character in his private life, he will not by necessity prove competent in public office. Sometimes too, as St. Robert Bellarmine pointed out in his *De laicis*¹⁷⁵ the so-called evil rulers may do more good than harm, as Saul and Solomon. It is better for the state to have an evil ruler than no ruler at all, for where there is no ruler the state cannot long endure, as the wise Solomon observed: "Where there is no governor the people will fail."¹⁷⁶

When unworthy candidates are running for office, ordinarily a citizen does not have the obligation of voting for them. Indeed he would not be permitted to vote for them if there were any reasonable way of electing a worthy man, either by organizing another party, by using the "write in" method, or by any other lawful means. On the other hand, it would be licit to vote for an unworthy man if the choice were only between or among unworthy candidates; and it might even be necessary to vote for such an

¹⁷⁵ c. 4, p. 7.

¹⁷⁶ Prov. 11:14.

unworthy candidate (if the voting were limited to such personalities) and even for one who would render harm to the Church, provided the election were only a choice from among unworthy men and the voting for the less unworthy would prevent the election of another more unworthy.

Since the act of voting is good, it is lawful to vote for an unworthy candidate provided there is a proportionate cause for the evil done and the good lost. This consideration looks simply to the act of voting in itself and does not consider other factors such as scandal, encouragement of unworthy men, and a bad influence upon other voters. Obviously, if any or all of these other factors are present, the excusing cause for voting for an unworthy candidate would have to be proportionately graver.¹⁷⁷

Lehmkuhl says that it is never allowed to vote absolutely for a man of evil principles, but *hypothetice* it may be allowed if the election is between men of evil principles. Then one should vote for him who is less evil (1) if he makes known the reason for his choice; and (2) if the election is necessary to exclude a worse candidate.¹⁷⁸ The same author in his *Casus conscientiae* lists the general argument, adding that there must be no approbation of the unworthy man or of his programme.¹⁷⁹

Tanquerey declares that if the vote is between a socialist and another liberal, the citizen may vote for the less evil, but he should publicly declare why he is voting this way, to avoid any *scandalum pusillorum*.¹⁸⁰ Prümmer says the same.¹⁸¹ Actually, however, in the United States and in other countries where the balloting is secret, there seems to be no need of declaring one's manner of voting.

Several authors including Ubach,^{181a} Merkelbach,¹⁸² Iorio,¹⁸³

¹⁷⁷ "Omnes fere moderni theologi concedunt electionem mali deputati non esse quid intrinsecum malum, ac proinde aliquando per accidens licere ad avertenda majora mala." Prümmer, *op. cit.*, 2, 604.

¹⁷⁸ *Compendium* 343.

¹⁷⁹ *Op. cit.*, 1, 729.

¹⁸⁰ *Op. cit.*, 3, 981.

¹⁸¹ *Op. cit.*, 2, 604.

^{181a} *Op. cit.*, 1, 115.

¹⁸² *Op. cit.*, 1, 786.

¹⁸³ *Op. cit.*, 2, 161.

Piscetta-Gennaro,¹⁸⁴ and Sabetti-Barrett¹⁸⁵ allow for material co-operation in the election of an unworthy candidate when there are two unworthy men running for office. Ubach adds this point: (1) There must be no cooperation in the evil which the man brings upon society after assuming office; (2) The voting must not be taken as an approval of the candidate or of his unworthiness. Merkelbach asserts that such cooperation may be *licit per accidens* if there is no hope that good men will be elected without voting for the bad ones in the same election.

As a practical point it may be remarked that at times a citizen may have to vote for an unworthy man in order to vote for a worthy one, e.g., when people have to vote a straight party ticket, at least in a primary election when the "split ticket" is not permitted. However the good to be gained would have to outweigh the evil to be avoided, or at least be equal to it.

In his *Casus Genicot*¹⁸⁶ sets up a case of an election between a liberal and a Communist. To avoid scandal the citizen should give reasons for voting for the liberal. One does not support the evil candidate but simply applies the principle of double effect. This author also says that a person may use a mental reservation in promising to vote for an unworthy man.

Cardinal Amette, Archbishop of Paris, implies the liceity of voting for an unworthy candidate when he writes of voting for a less worthy one. "It would be lawful to cast them," he writes, "for candidates who though not giving complete satisfaction to all our legitimate demands, would lead us to expect from them a line of conduct useful to the country, rather than to keep your votes for those whose program would indeed be more perfect, but whose almost certain defeat might open the door to the enemies of religious and of the social order."¹⁸⁷

Thus we may say that it is permitted to vote for unworthy candidates (that is, give material cooperation) if these are the only type of men on the ballot lists; in order to exclude the more unworthy; in order to secure the election of one who is somewhat

¹⁸⁴ *Op. cit.*, 4, 26, 4.

¹⁸⁵ *Op. cit.*, 262.

¹⁸⁶ *Op. cit.*, 138.

¹⁸⁷ Ryan-Boland, 207-208.

unworthy instead of voting for a good man whose defeat is certain; and when the list is mixed containing both worthy and unworthy men, so that a citizen can vote for the former only by voting for the latter at the same time.

5. SPECIFIC OBLIGATIONS OF VOTING

a. In Certain Issues

Both Noldin¹⁸⁸ and Ferreres¹⁸⁹ point out that the general principles of the obligation of voting apply not only to national elections, but to municipal and local elections as well. Obviously, however, the obligation to vote in a local election is usually not as grave as the obligation to vote in a national election since the latter is of greater moment. However it is possible that at times there may be even greater reason to vote in a local or state election, particularly in those places where a policy or candidate would be against the common good of that locality, for example, a candidate for membership on a school board. Or if a Communist were running for office in a city, county, or state and there were a favorable chance of his being elected, then the citizens would be obliged under pain of mortal sin to vote against the man, according to the principles of Pope Pius XII.

A point of practical application, particularly in the United States, is the obligation of voting in primary elections where they are had, as well as in final or general elections. It may well be that the duty of voting in the primaries is of even greater obligation, since in the primaries there is usually an opportunity of choosing a good candidate while in the general election it may become the matter of making a choice between two candidates equally unworthy. Because a large percentage of eligible voters do not vote in the primaries there is even greater chance of unworthy men being nominated and elected with the consequent danger of incompetent and selfish rule. Voting in the primaries, then, is as

¹⁸⁸ *Op. cit.*, 2, 322, c.

¹⁸⁹ *Compendium* 1, 485.

important, and often more important, than voting in the general elections.¹⁹⁰

When the question of aid to children attending parochial schools became an issue in Ohio, Archbishop McNicholas sent the following advice to his people in a pastoral letter of 1935. It serves as splendid counsel for people to vote habitually.

In our form of democratic government the responsibility rests, in the last analysis, with the people. The voters can and should govern the country. It is therefore most important that good, sane, informed citizens be thoroughly impressed with the importance of discharging their duty, since citizens, habitually voting, cannot but exercise a potent influence for good on the community. Many citizens of this class fail to realize that by not voting they frequently uphold bad government.

Today it is only too evident that active minority groups, extremists, propagandists, dishonest and unprincipled politicians who are not really interested in the general welfare of the community but are driven by partisan zeal or by motives of self-interest, are exercising too much power. The reflection that so many needless, and in many cases positively harmless laws are permitted to be written in our statute books by the voters, in the last analysis, rather than by the politicians, should scourge the consciences of the indolent, those preoccupied with business or pleasure, and the large class of those who consider voting at elections not worth while.

In our civic affairs it is very necessary, therefore, that good, intelligent, common-sense citizens shall fully realize their duty, that they shall resolve to make use of the power that is theirs by the ballot to rebuke those working against the common interest and to decide that sanity shall characterize our legislation.¹⁹¹

† There may be an added obligation of voting on special issues or against persons who support them. For example, if a state at-

¹⁹⁰ "This duty to vote applies to primaries as well as to the final elections. Indeed the most important work is done in the primaries. For if all the candidates nominated are bad, then the good voters have no choice. They become agents of corruption in electing corrupt officials." Walter Eliot, *Christian Ethics* (New York, 1924), 435-436.

¹⁹¹ Booklet published by Cincinnati chancery office.

tempted to put through a bill authorizing the appropriation of funds for birth prevention literature, methods, facilities, etc., then the citizen would be bound in conscience to oppose such a measure at the polls. If a candidate were known to advocate birth prevention, mercy killing, easy divorce laws, and the like and it were known that he would use his influence to push bills or legislation on such matters, then the citizen would be bound to vote against this candidate.

The whole point is that the citizen must be a man of principle and of intelligent action. The ordinary citizen alone is not powerful, but banded together with the rest of the people he helps to exert a combined force that rules the country. He must see what is right and do what is right, just as much at the polls as at Sunday Mass or at business. Indeed he may even have to sacrifice for the common good. Monsignor Ryan declares that at times the Catholic voter must disregard his economic interests for the sake of religious interests. "If any party were proposing and had the power to enact a law abolishing parochial schools," he cites as an example, "no amount of beneficent economic proposals would be an off-set. It would be the plain duty of the Catholic citizen to vote against the candidates of such a party."¹⁹² And this obviously holds in any danger of grave harm to the Church or state.

b. For Certain Persons

Although the obligation of voting binds all citizens, it would seem that it rests more on some than others. Moralists speak of the obligation of voting incumbent on "influential men" whose voting or non-voting would give example to others. Certainly the leaders in a community, prominent business men, teachers, professional men, and priests should manifest their interest in voting, for other citizens often look to them for example and follow their opinions.

If the community leaders are indifferent and apathetic the rest of the citizens will judge the elections to be of little or no importance and will act accordingly. The same principles apply to all the clergy and religious, for the faithful look to them for guidance

¹⁹² *Declining Liberty* (New York, 1927), 132.

and example, and consider them the models of Christian virtue. Archbishop McNicholas reminded the Sisters of their obligation in a pastoral of 1932:

We urge the members of our Sisterhoods, not bound by the restrictions of the cloister, to vote in all elections. The religious life of our Sisters breaks none of the bounds that bind them in love and service to their country, but only spiritualizes and supernaturalizes them. It is especially fitting that our Sister-teachers, who are required to inculcate love of country in their pupils and to teach them civic virtues, should themselves be an example.¹⁹³

The same principle stands with regard to the clergy since they are bound to exercise justice and charity towards their country as well as to give good example to the laity. Indeed by their position they are bound to a more serious obligation than the ordinary person. If a clergyman is careless or indifferent about the use of his vote, certainly the faithful will be affected. There is no reason to demand that the priest be a great civic leader, but fundamental patriotism requires that he take an active interest in his country and specifically in the matter of voting. The priest should remain free from politics as far as public opinions and party meetings are concerned, but he should be vitally interested in politics insofar as they affect the welfare of the Church and state. Archbishop McNicholas asked his priests to arouse interest among the laity, "to help in awakening a healthy interest in whatever pertains to the good of this city and all the cities of the archdiocese."¹⁹⁴ He then gave this further advice:

While priests will urge all our Catholic people to vote, they will never interfere with their liberty of action with regard to their party affiliations or the selection of candidates. There must be at no time a discussion of political issues or of political candidates from a Catholic pulpit. The parochial halls, however, can and should be used for the free discussion of all issues affecting the general interest of the community and country.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ Copy from chancery office, p. 2.

¹⁹⁴ "The Duty of Citizens," *Catholic Mind* 26 (1928), 254-255.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

Thus the dictum of this prelate can be followed by all priests. They should not consider interest in elections as foreign to their state for even Our Lord demonstrated in touching manner His own love for His native land and the Holy City. Although some priests are by nature and by circumstance more interested in social, economic, and political matters than others, certainly all should exert the bare minimum of intelligent interest in and the active exercise of the right to vote.

6. WOMEN AND THE OBLIGATION OF VOTING

From a previous reference we know that women were allowed to vote in some places in mediaeval times, as for example, in England.¹⁹⁶ In 1182 a law of Beaumont spoke of the voting right in every assembly for every widow, a daughter heading the home, or a wife in the absence of the head of the family. Women took part in the borough deliberations and in those of the parish assemblies.¹⁹⁷

Contrary to a popular belief, the French Revolution did not give women the right to vote, but deprived them of it, for where the faith was strongest, generally speaking, there women enjoyed the greatest civil rights. After the Revolution many women in France and England complained about their status but were unable to change it appreciably until John Stuart Mill signed his name to *The Subject of Women*, a book written mostly by his wife. Since the work bore his name it lent considerable support to the women's movement in England and soon after women were given the suffrage in municipal councils and in 1880 were admitted to those of the Comitatum.

The whole question of women voting brought forth many comments. Some people were actively in favor of it, especially the women. Others, such as Francis Parkman, predicted that woman suffrage would bring surrender to the Catholic Church because the priests exercised such power over women.¹⁹⁸ But the women had their own arguments and we may quote from one of them:¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ See *Tablet* (London), 185:5468 (Feb. 24, 1945), 90.

¹⁹⁷ See statement of Bishop Rastouil of Limoges in same paper.

¹⁹⁸ "The Woman Question," *North American Review*, 129:275 (Oct. 1879), 320.

¹⁹⁹ Lucy Stone, "The Other Side of the Woman Question," *North American Review*, 129:276 (Nov. 1879), 430-432.

"Say that women are different from men. It is for that very reason suffragists have always urged this different being must be represented by herself. Her feminine qualities should have expression and binding influence in a government where she and her children are invested. . . . The influence of women in government . . . will be . . . a conservative one, conserving the interests of the family and of the home."²⁰⁰

Although Pope Leo XIII wrote several encyclicals on political activity, he did not refer to women's role in the matter of voting, even in letters to England and the United States where the matter was a burning question.²⁰¹ But even if the Holy Father frowned on the movement his attitude should not be considered unusual for other prominent persons opposed it. Theodore Roosevelt²⁰² did not consider woman suffrage of importance; Grover Cleveland expressed himself against it; and so did Cardinal Gibbons. The prelate was outspoken in his denunciation:

Its sibboleth would seem to be: masculinity is greater than motherhood. . . . That woman was created to fill certain well-defined places in the world, no one familiar with her physical, moral and mental make-up can doubt. That many women today show a tendency to think slightly of those privileges and responsibilities which have come down as their best inheritance of their sex is a fact which faces us on every side of this country of ours. . . . I regard women's rights and the leaders of the new school of female progress as the worst enemies of the female sex.²⁰³

During the pontificate of Pope Benedict XV the woman suffrage movement won victories in the United States and in England.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ See William Faberty, *The Destiny of Modern Woman* (Westminster, Md., 1950), 29-30.

²⁰² "No sensible man has fear of injury to the company on account of such participation. It is the dangerous undetermined effect on the character of wives and mothers that we fear." "Women's Mission and Women's Clubs," *The Ladies' Home Journal*, 22:5 (May, 1905), 4.

²⁰³ "The Restless Woman," *The Ladies' Home Journal*, 19:1 (Jan. 1902), 6-7.

The pope spoke of the changed conditions of the times which "enlarged the field of woman's activity. An apostolate of woman in the world has succeeded the more intimate and restricted action which she formerly exercised within the domestic walls."²⁰⁴ But he went on to say that "this apostolate must be carried out in such a manner as to make it evident that woman, both outside and within the home shall not forget that it is her duty, even today, to consecrate her principal cares to the family."²⁰⁵

Some thought this statement an approval of the suffrage movement and Miss Anne Cristitch of the Catholic Woman's Suffrage Society of England (founded in London June 10, 1911) reported that the Pope had said in a private audience that he approved of the movement: "Yes, we approve. We wish to see women voters everywhere."²⁰⁶ When told of this remark Cardinal Gibbons replied: "The Pope has taken no position, either for or against woman suffrage; he is neutral."²⁰⁷ It is noteworthy to recall that Pope Benedict XV highly recommended Fr. Augustine Roesler's book, *Die Frauenfrage*²⁰⁸ which said that Pius X expressed himself against woman suffrage. Perhaps Pope Pius did favor the suffrage but did not consider it opportune at the time since Italy had not yet conceded it to women.

There were many writers for the suffrage and just as many against it. Typical of the reasoning against it was Father Owen Hill who wrote: "In the man the right to vote is natural in virtue of his capacity for headship in the family. In woman the same right is wholly unnatural."²⁰⁹ Elsewhere he said that the "slavery of women current with pagans and Turks was long ago abolished by Christianity, and that kind of emancipation is an accomplished fact, though Socialism proposes restoring the old order, and suffragettes are Socialism's helpers."²¹⁰ He held that women are citizens mediately, not immediately and that they should perform

²⁰⁴ Allocution of Holy Father to Italian Catholic Feminine Union (Washington, D. C., n.d.).

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ "Yes, We Approve," *The Catholic Citizen*, July 15, 1919, 1.

²⁰⁷ *The New York Times*, Dec. 21, 1919, 10:2.

²⁰⁸ Friburg, 1907.

²⁰⁹ *Ethics General and Special* (New York, 1920), 395.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 393.

their civic duties through the men. "In civic matters women must be protected by the men. . . . Woman must help man in civic matters by her advice, not by the ballot. Suffrage is none of her civic duties."²¹¹ But Father Hill did add that where women were permitted to vote, they should make use of the right.

Both Cardinal Vaughan of England and Cardinal Moran of Australia favored woman suffrage. The English prelate asserted: "I believe that the extension of the parliamentary franchise to women upon the same conditions it is held by men would be a just and beneficial measure, tending to raise rather than to lower the course of national legislation."²¹² And the other cardinal added: "What does voting mean to a woman? As a mother, she has a special interest in the legislation of her country, for upon it depends the welfare of her children. The woman who thinks she is making herself unwomanly by voting is a silly creature."²¹³

Several American bishops expressed themselves in favor of women voting at least in municipal elections, though the majority at that time (about 1912) inclined towards woman's abstention from politics, as did the bishops of Ireland. Archbishop John Spalding indicated his opinion in the following fashion:

Should women vote? The rule of the people is good only when it is the rule of the good and the wise among the people, and of these women, in great numbers, are part. The leadership of the best comes near to being the leadership of God. But the question of the suffrage for women is grave; it is one on which an enlightened mind will long hold judgment in suspense. . . . Active participation in political life is not a refining, an ennobling, a purifying influence. . . .²¹⁴

Then on the other hand Monsignor Joseph Mausbach wrote in *Die Stellung der Frau im Menscheitsleben*:

It seems venturesome to pronounce either for or against the political emancipation of women. Though custom and

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 392.

²¹² *Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York, 1915), 15, 696.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ *Means and Ends of Education* (Chicago, 1895), 108-109.

our traditional notions of female character, virtue and beauty seem to argue in favor of keeping her out of the political arena, yet it is difficult to say on which principle of Moral Theology we shall deny her the exercise of a general civic right. Modern civilization brings so many surprises that an unconditional veto or prophecy in such questions would be hazardous, even though one may personally hold the opinion that in the long run the female sex is likely to lose more than it can possibly gain by participation in politics.²¹⁵

Now Pope Pius XI left no single document on the question, but on May 18, 1923, he received twenty-five members of the American, French, and English delegations to the Congress in Rome of the International Suffrage Alliance. The *New York Times* gave this report of the meeting: "Pope Pius . . . told his visitors, some of whom as members of the Catholic Woman Suffrage Society, that he was in favor of the movement, but was unable to receive the congress officially, as he could not approve some portions of its program, especially relating to divorce."²¹⁶ But oddly enough, no report of this meeting appeared in the minutes of the Congress and certainly a condemnation, much less an approval, would hardly have passed by the Suffrage Alliance. It seems that the Holy Father's cordial reception of the Catholic delegates meant at least a negative approval of the suffrage movement.²¹⁷

Two years later the Pope made his first, and as far as is known, his only explicit statement on woman suffrage. Writing to *l'École normale sociale* in the name of His Holiness, Cardinal Gasparri said

In view of woman's participation in universal suffrage, which seems more or less to be approaching the point where it is an accomplished fact, the *École Normale Sociale* finds on the civic level a field of action which will be able to render very great service to Catholic activities in general. . . . There is no question here . . . of flinging women into the melee of the political parties, but rather of determining for them a more precise social action, one

²¹⁵ (Köln, 1913), 54.

²¹⁶ May 19, 1923, 7:2.

²¹⁷ Letter of Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt to Fr. William Faherty, S.J., June 14, 1946. Quoted in *Destiny of Modern Woman*, 84-85.

more specified through the apostolate which the Women's Social and Civil Union has created for that purpose and which the Holy Father encourages in its generous intentions for the common good. His Holiness wishes that Catholic Women take part in this great movement.²¹⁸

Thus the Holy Father commended and encouraged an organization which aimed to train women for political opportunities and responsibilities.

Pope Pius XII was even more explicit in his remarks about women voting. In fact the women may look to him as their champion in defending their right and obligation of taking part in elections. In an address to the Catholic Women of Rome, October 21, 1945, about two months after the end of the World War II, he declared:

The fate of the family, the fate of human relations is at stake. They are in your hands. Every woman has . . . the obligation, the strict obligation in conscience, not to absent herself, but to go into action in a manner and way suitable to the condition of each. . . . Accordingly the electoral ballot in the hands of the Catholic woman is an important means towards the fulfillment of her strict duty in conscience, especially at the present time.²¹⁹

She knows from experience that in any event this policy is harmful which must pay for it at the high price in goods and blood. Hence no wise woman favors a policy of class struggle or war. Her vote is a vote for peace. Thus in the interest of and for the good of the family she will hold to that norm and she will always refuse her vote to any tendency from whatever quarter it hails, to the selfish desires of domination, internal or external, of the peace of the nation.²²⁰

But even more explicit was his message to women shortly before the elections in Italy and France in 1946. He called voting a

²¹⁸ "Le christianisme et la femme" quoted by Albert Valensin, *Semaine Sociale de France* (Nancy Session 19, 1927), 163-164.

²¹⁹ *AAS* 37, 290.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 294.

"sacred right" and urged his audience to realize their responsibilities.

A good number of you already enjoy political rights. These political rights have corresponding duties—the right to vote, the duty to vote, the duty of giving your vote only to those candidates or lists of candidates that offer not vague and ambiguous promises, but certain guarantees which will respect the rights of God and of religion.

Think carefully. This right is sacred for you. It obliges you before God, because with your ballot you have in your hand the higher interests of the country. You are concerned with safeguarding and preserving for your people its Christian culture; for its women and girls their dignity; and for its families its Christian mothers. The time is serious. Know well your responsibilities.²²¹

The Holy Father further elaborated upon the obligation of voting for women in an allocution to the Congress of the International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues, September 11, 1947. He repeated the statement issued in March 1946 that abstention from the polls would be a grave and fatal sin of omission. But to quote his own words more fully:

There is a heavy responsibility, on the . . . woman who has the right to vote, especially when the interests of religion are at stake; abstention in this case in itself, it should be thoroughly understood, is a grave and fatal sin of omission. On the contrary, to exercise, and to exercise well, one's right to vote is to work effectively for the good of the people, as loyal defenders of the cause of God and of the Church.²²²

The Pope urged this group of women to work always "toward making woman always more conscious of her sacred rights, of her duties, and of power to help mould public opinion, through her daily contacts, and to influence legislation and administration by the proper use of her prerogatives as a citizen."²²³ Certainly

²²¹ N.C.W.C. news release, May 13, 1946.

²²² *AAS* 39, 496.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 487.

one means of doing this is the wise and intelligent use of the franchise.

The Pastoral Letter of the United States Hierarchy in 1919 gave attention to the voting of women. It declared that a woman by "engaging in political affairs, accepts with equal rights an equal responsibility. So far as she may purify and elevate our political life, her use of the franchise will prove an advantage; and this will be greater if it involves no loss of the qualities in which woman excels."²²⁴

The primate of Poland, Cardinal Hlond, spoke in a similar vein to a group of women in 1946. "A heavy responsibility lies upon the Polish women," he declared, "who, having equal rights with men, will not only do her duty as a citizen, recording her vote and paying her taxes, but will also according to her place in life, see to it that the structure of the State is a collective realization of the spirit and order of Christianity."²²⁵

From the sources quoted it is obvious that woman's vote in political life is important. Unfortunately, however, many women do not realize their potentialities for good and so refrain from using their ballot, while actually they should remind the men of their duties, as Archbishop McNicholas has said: "Although it is many years since the franchise was granted to women it is manifest that our Catholic women for the most part are not exercising it. This is wrong in principle."²²⁶ . . . The women voters should not only discharge their own obligation in this matter, but should remind their fathers, husbands, sons, and brothers to vote."²²⁷

Some theological authors call attention to the obligation for women. Koch-Preuss cites the duty as binding in the same way as upon men. "It goes without saying that where women have been granted the suffrage, Catholic women are in duty bound to use the vote honestly and intelligently and the same rules of conduct apply to them in this matter as men."²²⁸ Prümmer declares that there is nothing contrary to Christian teaching *per se* in per-

²²⁴ Guilday, *op. cit.*, 348.

²²⁵ *Tablet* (London), 188:5542 (July 27, 1946), 45.

²²⁶ 1939 pastoral, typed copy, p. 2.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ *Op. cit.*, 5, 509-510.

mitting women to vote, but he wonders if the Church and state receive any benefit from it. However, he hastens to add that various regulations will be followed in various countries.

Mrs. Clare Boothe Luce, prominent convert to Catholicism and former member of Congress from Connecticut, points out the benefit of women taking part in voting. She says:

Men voters generally (though not always) may be counted on to spot those candidates or laws which are inimical to the state. Women voters are apt to detect those which are inimical to the family as such. . . . I think that women's active participation—at a career level—in politics except in cases of unmarried women, widows with grown children, or in certain other rare circumstances should be marginal. . . . This does *not* apply to voting or community participation in good government, but it *does* apply where women leave homelife to run for political office.²²⁰

At the present time woman suffrage is extending more widely than ever before and since it seems that it is here to stay it must be considered. By way of parenthesis it may be well to note some data on woman suffrage. It was granted in New Zealand and Australia in 1887 and 1895 respectively; in Finland and Norway in 1907; Denmark in 1915; Austria in 1918; Germany and Luxemburg in 1919; in Estonia and Czechoslovakia in 1920; United States in 1920; in Poland and Ireland in 1921; in Hungary, 1922; Holland, 1923; Rumania, 1929; Turkey, 1930; Spain, 1932; Italy, France, and Japan in 1945. But in Belgium, Switzerland, and South American countries it has not been granted.²²⁰

Thus there is a definite trend towards universal woman suffrage. Certainly the women may regard the Holy Father as one of their principal defenders; certainly too they should follow his advice in voting wisely, for their right begets an obligation. It is a duty binding upon them no less than upon men, an obligation for which they are morally responsible in those countries where the right of voting has been given to them.

²²⁰ Faherty, *op. cit.*, 160-161.

²²⁰ Cahill, *op. cit.*, 441.

CHAPTER III

PARTICULAR DUTIES THAT FOLLOW FROM THE OBLIGATION OF VOTING

I. KNOWLEDGE OF PRINCIPLES

It is obvious that the obligation of voting implies a knowledge on the part of citizens as to how their government functions, at least in a general way, and what relationship they bear to it. Citizens must know their rights and their duties to take an active and intelligent interest in the city, county, state, and national government. Cardinal Hlond has stated the maxim in a clear, concise manner:

Every Catholic has a duty to know the political life of his own country and to take a lively interest in it. Only then will he be able to work effectively to fulfill the duties of the State. He should therefore acquaint himself with the moral conditions of the country, with its social and economic needs, with its history and culture. He must be sensible to the demands of social justice. He cannot be indifferent to human misery. He must desire a constant improvement in the living conditions of men.

Social and civic education, and the practice of the Christian virtues, especially of the social and civic virtues, will be of a great help. A Catholic respecting the State's authority and acting in accordance with laws aiming at the common good does what accords most likely with this good.¹

It is not enough simply to intend to do what is right. If a person wills the end he must take the necessary means to achieve that end. In a republican form of government there must be an active appreciation of the common good, a realization that each citizen has a role to play in the government and a conviction that one must bear his burden according to the talents, opportunities, and circum-

¹ *Tablet* (London), Nov. 16, 1946, 260.

stances in which Divine Providence has placed him.² Michael Roberts has phrased the need thus:

A liberal and democratic system calls for a high degree of political sagacity in the electors; it presupposes a sense of national unity and a willingness to recognize that disputes must not be carried to the point to which they put the common heritage in danger; it depends on a clear and widespread recognition of the difference between the authority of argument and discussion and the authority of force. In short, it depends on history and tradition as well as on a fair degree of education and prosperity.³

The citizen must understand that politics is subject to moral law just as surely as any other phase of life, that to do wrong is sinful, to do good is virtuous. He must realize that he has the power of promoting good or of advancing evil, by his attitude and his action in political affairs. As Pope Leo XIII said, the duty of a Catholic worthy of the name is "to make use of the popular institutions as far as can be honestly done, for the advancement of truth and righteousness, to strive that liberty of action shall not transgress the bounds marked out by nature and the law of God; to endeavor to bring back all civil society to the pattern and form of Christianity. . . ."⁴

Just as the Church cannot approve evil, the Catholic cannot assent to what is wrong. He must uphold and defend what is right in the same way that the Church champions truth and justice, even at the cost of sacrifice. If political affairs are at a low ebb, then the Catholic must have a kind of holy unrest to do all he can to promote good, never content with a mediocre *status quo*. Pope Pius XII has advised the faithful not to be disheartened by paganism, nor satisfied with mediocrity.

Do not be disheartened by the growing paganism of public life. Do not be led astray by false and unsound

² *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association, 1931* (Washington, D. C., 1931), 20-21.

³ *Recovery of the West* (London, 1941), 92.

⁴ *Immortale Dei*, AAS 18 (1885), 179. See *Great Encyclical Letters of Pope Leo XIII* (New York, 1903), 132.

theories. . . . But mindful and convinced of this sacred responsibility, see that in your heart of hearts you never remain fully satisfied with that mediocrity which pervades the whole of public life; with a condition of affairs in which it is impossible for the generality of human beings, apart from heroic acts of virtue, to observe the commandments of God which are always and in every case inviolable.⁵

Consequently the citizen cannot be a wishy-washy person, easily drawn from one side to the other; he must be a man of principle, standing on his own feet. "A Catholic, competent to take his place in modern society," writes Father Martindale, "ought to possess a *reasoned conviction* about the intangibility of the family, which involves a reasoned conviction not only about divorce, but about contraception, sterilization, companionate marriage, and self-control at large."⁶ Principles must guide a person's life. And training the intellect is not sufficient. The will too must be trained so that the citizen will cling to right principles and will exemplify them in his daily life. The training necessary for a good public-minded citizen has been well expressed by Mr. de la Bedoyere:

There can be no doubt that if the average man is to play the part in politics which democracy expects, he must be fitted to it; he must be educated. As far as that goes, the necessary education is only indirectly a matter of book-learning; it is really a matter of growing wise, and wisdom can certainly not be learned from primary or even secondary education; if it ever comes from books, it comes either from a very long acquaintance and meditation over text-books, or from reading the kind of books that do not figure in our school curricula. Wisdom, a sense of values, a certain shrewdness, and a knowledge of man, seem to be largely native endowments. . . .⁷

In ages past the Church exerted a profound influence upon the political character of governments. True, there were some abuses, but still a wholesome Christianizing leaven was working in politics

⁵ Pentecost 1941. *AAS*, 33, 204.

⁶ "A Catholic Programme," in *Church and State* (London, 1936), 327.

⁷ *The Drift of Democracy* (New York, 1931), 44-45.

as well as in all society. Today the same influence is needed, but this Christian force cannot be supplied except through the members of the Church. As Jacques Maritain observes, today the Church "is aware of her duty to contribute, after the fashion of the modern age, and thanks to the moral authority which is everywhere recognized as being hers to the salvation of our threatened civilization, to the social shaping of the world and the advent of a new order. As to the actual result, the efficaciousness of such a task depends in large measure both on the living faith and political enlightenment of the masses."⁸ In other words, citizens must take an active interest in politics and bring to it the life-giving spirit of Christian principles.

Unfortunately too often in the matter of voting, citizens are duped by pressure politics, by the suave promises of double-tongued men with a dual set of principles. As one editor recently observed: "Unless we become civic and governmental minded we are swayed by the masses—by mob psychology. We are influenced with electioneering campaign promises which evaporate the day after the election. Let us analyze our politics. Politics are good. Some politicians are bad. We must learn politics, good politics, in order to distinguish bad politicians. Those we can refuse our vote."⁹

The ordinary citizen's knowledge of public affairs need not be as astute or comprehensive as that of a member of Congress, but he should possess knowledge of the fundamentals and be able to evaluate issues and characters in public life.¹⁰ "Such an intelligent grasp of principles," says Father Higgins, "is necessary because a republican form of government is government of public opinion, and public opinion must be enlightened for a wise rule. Secondly, such a government demands that its citizens share the responsi-

⁸ *Ransoming the Time* (New York, 1941), 204.

⁹ *The Southern Cross*, San Diego, Cal., Mar. 8, 1946.

¹⁰ As Father Higgins remarks: "A citizen must have some knowledge of public life and its affairs, for no one can take a fitting and helpful part in community life unless he has some practical knowledge of the fundamentals of republican government. This knowledge should extend to the basic institutions of the land and to an evaluation of the principal characters in public life. It must be something more than a vague or general notion about the problems facing the legislators." *Man as Man* (Milwaukee, 1949), 544.

bilities of government; consequently, the uninformed person is an inefficient citizen."¹¹

Catholics should know and practice the rules of honesty and truthfulness. They should never lower themselves to offering or accepting bribes. In previous years the buying of votes was far more common than today, but even now there are other ways of using money to influence citizens, as Professor Jerome Kerwin has noted. "What is often common is the paying of workers a few dollars to do nothing in particular. I remember one organization meeting I attended some time ago where the leader of the faction came in and asked for about twenty-four hundred dollars to be spent on election day for the workers. He said if he failed to employ them, the opposition would, and he would lose a couple of thousand votes."¹²

The apathy current in community circles about the ballot and politics in general stems from the attitude that the affairs of the city, county, state, and nation have little to do with the individual citizen. Of course this is false. Apathy, negligence, indolence, is not virtue; it is shirking a responsibility that must be borne if republican self-government based on Christian principles is to survive.¹³

Moreover, the statement often made that the man who is exemplary in his private life makes the best citizen is not always true, as Monsignor Ryan ably illustrates. Fidelity to one's duties

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *The Great Tradition* (New York, 1947), 79.

¹³ "Many of most pressing problems are national in scope. Yet intelligent action on a community basis would go far toward solving them, and there would be less need for federal activity. In any average hamlet or town or city, there should be enough intelligence and good will on hand to do much that needs to be done for youth, for public health, for the spread of employment, for better housing, for the improvement of relations between capital and labor. The trouble is that the average citizen considers these things the business of somebody else. He rests and takes his ease and only arouses himself from time to time to deliver a diatribe against government spending. He is unwilling to forego amusement, to rub shoulders with all kinds of people, to risk being bored by uplifters, to attend meetings, to serve on committees, to make an effort to think and plan and do. He is unwilling to pay the price that Christian charity and the preservation of democratic self-government demand." Msgr. George Johnson, *The Practical Aspects of Patriotism* (Washington, D. C., 1941), 20.

in the family does contribute much to the common good, but it does not give man the knowledge required by the functions and obligations of citizenship. To quote the Monsignor :

Practice of the domestic and social virtues does not of itself equip the citizen with the specific knowledge of what he needs as a voter, nor with the adequate civic consciousness. Political relations are a distinct field of human conduct, and the duties which arise out of them are distinct from the duties in any other department of life. To know them, therefore, requires specific attention and specific effort. A good father is not necessarily a good citizen, any more than he is a good employer or good neighbor. A similar statement is true of the good man in every human relation outside of politics. Among the good men who are conspicuously bad citizens are those who fail to realize the extent to which good government depends upon the electors, those who lazily assume that politics is necessarily corrupt, and those who think that their full duty is done when they vote for an honest man without any reference to technical equipment or the character of his political principles and policies. In a word, the good man is not a good citizen unless he possesses the specific knowledge required for good citizenship.¹⁴

The need of the present time as indeed the need of all time is a Christian concept of life vivifying and spiritualizing politics. This does not mean that politics will assume a kind of sentimental religious character of maudlin charity and false justice, but that the principles of charity and of justice would be practiced as they are obliged to be practiced. There is nothing antiquated about the Ten Commandments or the Eight Beatitudes in achieving order in human living.¹⁵

¹⁴ *The Catholic Church and the Citizen* (New York, 1928), 68-69.

¹⁵ " . . . if it is true that in political life and in a just understanding of politics, honesty of instincts and inclinations is most important, then it is clear that what a democracy most profoundly needs is the development, in the mass of its citizens, of Christian instincts, both intellectual and emotional, with regard to their social and political life. . . . if it is true that politics is by its essence a special branch of ethics, as in its natural wisdom the Chinese civilization has for centuries recognized, it is apparent that the

The true Christian citizen takes an intelligent interest in elections and values his vote. He learns what he can of the candidates, of the issues at stake, and seeks God's assistance in prayer. An example of the role of prayer may be cited from the pastoral of the Hierarchy of England and Wales when they asked the clergy and laity to join in a novena to the English martyrs, St. John Fisher and St. Thomas More.¹⁶ Before the General Election of February 23, 1950, the Scottish Hierarchy sent out this directive:

... we beg that all voters take their duties most seriously, and that they ask Almighty God for guidance. The future of the country is not bright; the clouds of war seem to hover over us; only a government fully determined to defend Christian principles at home and abroad can be of real benefit to the nation. We therefore call you to prayer and intercession: we direct that where possible in every Church and Chapel throughout the country there should be Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament at which prayers appropriate to this grave hour be publicly recited; further that on Monday and Tuesday, February 20th and 21st, Holy Hours should take place at which similar prayers should be publicly recited. And let your prayer be that of your Fathers in God, the Archbishops and Bishops of Scotland, namely, that Almighty God through His Blessed Mother may deign to grant us the blessing of good government, dedicated to the advancement of the cause of peace and justice.¹⁷

Father Francis Connell has pointed out the need of prayer in time of voting in a radio address of 1950 over the Catholic Hour:

I wonder how many of our American citizens, before casting their ballot in an election, say a prayer that God will guide them to make a wise choice, and that truly

fundamental problem for which a Christian civilization must find a solution ... is the problem of the establishment of a Christian politics. And I mean a politics truly and vitally, not decoratively, Christian." Jacques Maritain, *Ransoming the Time* (New York, 1941), 216.

¹⁶ *Tablet* (London), June 23, 1945, 297.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 195:5726 (Feb. 18, 1950), 136. For the Catholic attitude towards government see the prayer for Church and Civil Authorities by Archbishop Carroll.

good men will be elected. If our citizens did say such a prayer, I feel sure we should have a far greater number of good officials to guide our nation. Nowadays, not only the welfare of America, but the welfare of the world demands that our government be administered by men of integrity, prudence, initiative, and especially unselfish devotion to their fellow men. And so, our minds and hearts should often be raised to God in humble petition that He will help us to choose for posts of public authority good honest men who will be able to restore peace and prosperity to our country and to the world.¹⁸

Each citizen should do his part to further the common good. Not everyone can be a congressman, but each can do his share to better the government by taking an interest in politics and by voting conscientiously. As Michael Roberts observes on this matter:

Aside from personal morality which is the groundwork of all political construction, the important thing in public affairs is the quality of effective thought given to them; quantity counts for very little, except insofar as it helps to select quality. That a large number of people should fret and worry over matters they cannot understand and cannot hope to influence is of no advantage to anyone: worry is not thinking, but a state of conflicting emotion and inconclusive judgment; and is often the result of an uncertain vision of the limits of one's own responsibilities.¹⁹

The citizen is responsible for judging the character and ability of his elected representative and to do this he has to know something about politics himself; but it is not his business to assume the anxieties and responsibilities of a cabinet minister.²⁰

It is not always easy to know the application of principles in

¹⁸ Francis Connell, *Morality and Government* (Washington, D. C., 1950), 26.

¹⁹ *Recovery of the West* (London, 1941), 222.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 223. Also: "In the long run, our duties, responsibilities, and obligations are not independently accepted; they are bound up with our aims and aspirations, and with our convictions of the value of existence; their recognition forms a surer basis of development and progress than the demand for rights, and their evasion leads to frustration and unhappiness." *Ibid.*

every given instance, but certainly there is no difficulty in knowing the general principles of honesty, sincerity, veracity, and prudence used in normal living. Education is helpful, it is true, but even more necessary is a conscious interest in political matters formed by one's desire to promote the common good. A Christian cannot be an "isolationist" in the field of politics. As Pope Pius XII has declared:

It is wrong for Christians to shut their eyes and to cross their arms, alleging that nothing can be done. To selfish and uncertain principles, Christians can oppose that fearless courage which indicates the presence of joyful optimism, and of a supernatural force fostered by faith, hope, and charity. By means of this force, a mighty breath of pure air will float over the whole world, dissipating the atmosphere of panic and paganism which threatens to poison it. Blinded eyes will reopen to a clear vision of truth and justice.²¹

Thus a Christian must employ Christian principles in his duties as a citizen. He must be a Christian citizen as well as a Christian gentleman, doing his best in political life as he does his best in private life. "In public life the Christian acts as a citizen, but even as a citizen it is a Christian who acts, since his higher ethical principles conform to the Christian law. And if they do not, he is a Christian in name only."²² (Ignio Giordani)

One of the primary means of developing an enlightened citizenry is the public press. But the press should report the news—that is its function—not judge and interpret it. If the press fulfills its function, which at times it sadly does not, it renders an immense service to the individual citizen and to the common good. Or in the opinion of Father George Clune:

In the present world it hardly seems possible for the ordinary people to exercise their voting power as they should and control the policy of the government. If the rank and file of the community is to be the final arbiter, it is necessary that they should desire to know the truth

²¹ *AAS* 39 (1947), 264.

²² *The Social Message of Jesus* (Paterson, N. J., 1943), 20.

and judge fairly, that they should have adequate information on the matter on which they are to pass judgment, and finally that they should be able to judge rightly. It is not often that these three needs are recognized. At any rate it is clear that an honest press, which, so far as it can, puts the truth before its readers, is of vital importance if the people are to judge intelligently. Unfortunately it is only too often true that the press does the judging and the reader merely borrows the opinions he finds in his daily paper.²³

2. KNOWLEDGE OF CANDIDATES

To vote conscientiously the citizen has to know the candidates for election, their policies, their platforms, and their characters. In ordinary life such knowledge is not always easily securable, though the obligation in principle still stands.

The moralists give a description of the type of man for public office as a person of strength of soul, a Catholic spirit, and insofar as possible, endowed with eloquence.²⁴ Father Francis Connell declares the qualities to be "integrity, prudence, initiative, and especially unselfish devotion to . . . fellow man."²⁵ And the Philippine Hierarchy spoke of the lofty character demanded in these terms: "Citizens who are entrusted with the government of their people should realize that theirs is a sublime and sacred obligation, to be fulfilled courageously and to the best of their skill, without favoring privileged classes against the poor, or accepting personal advantages that might come from a betrayal of their trust."²⁶ But Pope Pius XII has given us the most detailed statement of what to hope for and look for in a public servant.

To secure effective action, to win esteem and trust, every legislative body—as experience shows beyond doubt—should have within it a group of select men who are spirit-

²³ *Christian Social Reorganization* (Dublin, 1940), 258-259.

²⁴ See Dominicus Prümmer, *Manuale theologiae moralis secundum principia s. Thomae*, 3 vols. (Friburg, 1928-1933), 2, 603; A. Tanqueray, *Synopsis theologiae moralis*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1937), 3, 980; Ludovicus Fanfani, *Manuale theoretico-practicum theologiae*, 3 vols. (Rome, 1950), 1, 154.

²⁵ *Morality and Government*, 26.

²⁶ *Catholic Mind*, 47-1041 (Sept. 1947), 568.

ually eminent and of strong character. These men will look on themselves as representatives of the entire people and not as mandatories of a mob whose interests are often unfortunately preferred to what is really required for the general welfare. . . . They should be chosen because of their solidly Christian convictions, their straight and steady judgment, and their grasp of what is practical as well as what is equitable. True to themselves in all circumstances, they should have clear and sound principles, healthy and definite policies. Above all, they should have that authority which springs from unblemished consciences and inspires confidence, an authority which will make them capable of leadership and guidance, particularly in crises which unduly excite people and make it likely that they will be led astray and lose their way. The periods of transition are generally stormy and turbulent, agitated by passion, by divergent opinions, and by conflicting programs. A thousand fevers consume the people and the State. In these crucial days legislators should feel doubly obliged to infuse into them the spiritual antidote of clear views, kindly interest, impartial and sympathetic justice, and devotion to national unity and concord in the spirit of brotherhood.²⁷

For as the elected men must be men of principle, so must the electors. A person should vote for the man whom he judges fit for the office; he should not vote because of race or religion of the candidate or because of personal friendship but solely because he honestly thinks the man qualified for the office. This is vitally important for "... the question of higher moral standards, practical ability, and intellectual capacity of their parliamentary representatives is for every people living under a democratic regime a question of life or death, of prosperity or decadence, of soundness or perpetual unrest"²⁸ (Pius XII). The Pope then proceeds to speak of a clear appreciation of the purposes of human society and of a deep sense of the duties of social activity as needed in the legislators so that there may be present that "objectivity, impartiality, loyalty, generosity" demanded by leaders in a republican form of government.²⁹

²⁷ *Già per la sesta volta*, Dec. 24, 1944. *AAS* 37, 16.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

Citizens should vote for men who are worthy of the public trust, who subordinate their private interests to the public welfare. Then too, the men in office should not create useless jobs to take care of relatives, friends, or any other political attachés. Nor should those elected choose helpers who are incompetent or unworthy of the salaries they receive.

It is necessary that the people's representatives, whether in the Senate, the House, or state assemblies, that they should clearly understand the purpose of government, the teachings of the moral law, and have the qualities indicated by the Holy Father. Father Clune sums it up in this manner:

Christian social principles should be familiar not only to the members of the government, but to the ordinary members of parliament, and there should be some method of preparation to ensure it be so. A typist who applies for a position the weekly wages for which is ten shillings must have certain qualifications. Is it not entirely reasonable that those who would aspire to become members of the national legislative assembly should be required to have an explicit knowledge of the fundamental social principles to which all legislation should conform?³⁰

It is a most curious phenomenon that citizens will elect men to public office who are known to hold principles and perform practices contrary to the natural and civil law. Father J. Kelleher makes this observation:

It is strange enough that a moral community should elect immoral representatives for their public offices, but it is immensely stranger that any sane community whether moral or immoral, should elect representatives who cheat them, or is it that a sufficient number of men of upright character cannot be found in every community with intelligence enough to fill the various offices? If this were so, the case would be intelligible, but the fact simply incurable. But it is not so. In fact, what would particularly strike a strange acquaintance with the existing system, and what would particularly strike ourselves, if we were

³⁰ *Op. cit.*, 259-260.

not so accustomed to the phenomenon is the contrast between private integrity and public corruption.³¹

It is strange indeed that moral people should vote for immoral candidates. It is deplorable that those who are otherwise exemplary do not bring moral principles into their use of the ballot. Many seem to think it makes little difference for whom they vote and that they fill their duty by simply going to the polls. But careless and negligent voting can cause untold harm in civic and social life.

The voter should learn to evaluate candidates and to recognize who has the qualifications for public office.³² But he should not be naive enough to think that any honest man will fill the position. Indeed an honest man with false notions about the domination of our class in society, or the omni-competence of the government, may do more harm than a venal politician whose theories of government coincide with the natural law. A candidate must have or must be able to acquire efficiency in handling public business. There are intelligent and honest men who, because they totally lack political sense, could not succeed in political life. Thus the candidate should give promise of serving the community faithfully, industriously, and beneficially.

A man of evil propensities in private life is not necessarily unfit for public office. Though it is likely that a man immoral in private actions will also be such in public dealings, there have been kings, rulers, and administrators whose private lives were far from edifying, but whose public service was beyond censure.

Archbishop McNicholas has given this norm in the selection of worthy candidates: "Catholics should vote for men who will especially recommend themselves by reason of their sanity, their breadth of vision, their acceptance of responsibility, their belief in a personal God to whom they must ultimately answer for their exercise of divine authority in civil affairs, their acceptance of an unchangeable moral code, and their determination to serve the interests of the general public as far as possible."³³

This prelate also gave the advice that the voter should be for

³¹ "A Primary Civic Duty," *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 23:1 (Jan. 1908), 24-25.

³² "Duty of a Citizen," *Catholic Mind*, 1928, 254-255.

³³ *Ibid.*

"only genuinely good and competent men . . . the best men of the community regardless of creed or party affiliation."³⁴ It is vital "that the personal character of the candidate for public office be the first consideration. The dishonest, the unjust, the intolerant seeker of public office may change his policy, but will not change his principles. . . . I am not asking them [the faithful] to vote for Catholics. Let the voters rather consider the good qualities of the candidate—his integrity and his capability to serve the people in those things that belong to the State or to the city."³⁵

The Pastoral Letter of the Australian Hierarchy for 1950 stressed the importance of the candidates' character. It scorned the notion of a twofold set of principles. ". . . it is intolerable," read the document, "that those Christians . . . should follow two moral codes—one in their personal life, which does not permit lying or dishonesty or fraud or greed, and another, in their public life, which regards all of these as lawful instruments of policy."³⁶ It continued: "The Christian has but one conscience, and the principles which govern public and private life are the same."³⁷ . . . the Christian recognizes only one morality. If lying, dishonesty, and incitement to hatred are morally wrongful in private relationships, they are even more wrongful when employed in the course of public affairs."³⁸

Father Connell also points out the obligation of the voter to know the candidates and their records. The ballot should not be cast according to whim, fancy, or chance but according to Christian principles. Thus writes the prominent moralist: ". . . it is always possible to find out something about their previous record—what policies they have supported, what tasks they have accomplished, what moral principles they have upheld. The good citizen will try to secure information of this sort about the candidates, and will vote for the one whom he believes most likely to give the best service to the people."³⁹

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Catholic Mind*, 48:1054 (Oct. 1950), 639.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Morality and Government*, 26.

He also states that a person "who has the right to vote for a candidate for office has a corresponding duty to find out which of the candidates is best suited for office."⁴⁰ And he gives an excellent reason for doing so: "When we consider how carefully our freedom of choice is safeguarded in an election conducted according to genuine American principles—in contrast to the outrageous method of voting which prevails under a totalitarian government—we should be moved out of gratitude to God to use this right honestly and intelligently."⁴¹

Such are statements from various sources on the need of proper knowledge to vote for fit candidates. In these perilous times more than ever the citizen cannot be careless in casting his vote; he must give it to the man or men who support and practice Christian principles. The following words from Cardinal Hlond who felt so keenly the need of Christian men in his Soviet plagued nation of Poland form a fitting conclusion to this section.

The deeper the changes which occur in the State, the greater the responsibility of its citizens for the direction of public life. The greater the difficulties of the State, the stronger the effort that must be made for the common good. The greater the danger threatening the State, the more earnest and conscientious must be the fulfillment of civic duties. The deeper and more widely the authority enter human life and civic rights, the more important it becomes that good, competent, trustworthy and really Christian men should exercise authority.⁴²

3. KNOWLEDGE OF ISSUES

If it is necessary for the citizen to have a knowledge of the principles of voting and a knowledge of the candidates, it follows that it is necessary to have a knowledge of the issues. In the matter of public life, the individual Catholic cannot remain indifferent—just as the Church cannot. If it is the duty of the Church to speak when moral issues are involved, it is the duty of the Catholic citizen to exercise his rights for the benefit of the Church and of

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴² *Tablet* (London), 188:5563 (Nov. 16, 1946), 261.

society. He should try to know, insofar as he can, the issues involved in elections and act accordingly. The experts' opinions are to be received and welcomed, but likewise judiciously weighed, for the responsibility rests primarily with the voter as William Ebenstein has indicated: "The citizen cannot be relieved of his duty of judgment, after all the revelant facts have been brought to his attention. The expert can supply the raw materials that may enter into the final decision, but he cannot think for the citizen."⁴³

The Hierarchy of the United States pointed out the need for adequate knowledge in civic matters in their pastoral of 1919, a knowledge that can come only by an expenditure of time and energy:

Each citizen should devote a reasonable amount of time and energy to the maintenance of right government by the exercise of his political rights and privileges. He should understand the issues that are brought before the people and cooperate with his fellow citizens in securing the wisest possible solution; . . . our national life cannot develop normally without adequate protection for the rights of all and the faithful performance of duty by every citizen.⁴⁴

If citizens are apathetic about taking part in elections, they are probably indifferent to issues. But a republican form of government demands individual responsibility in facing squarely the issues and of attempting to solve them directly (as in a referendum) or indirectly by their choice of representatives. On this point Bishop Vincent Ryan has commented: "Too many are indifferent to their responsibilities as citizens. They leave to a few leaders all the thinking and all the planning. The average man is a joiner. He joins a political party, a labor union, or a farm organization, and then relies on the leaders of the group to take care of his interests. To make matters worse, he does not actually select the leaders. Again and again the result has been the same: the leaders sacrifice the welfare of the group to their own selfish interests."⁴⁵

⁴³ *Man and the State* (New York, 1947), 131.

⁴⁴ Peter Guilday (ed.), *National Pastorals of the American Hierarchy, 1792-1919* (Washington, D. C., 1923), 327.

⁴⁵ *The Church, Fascism, and Peace* (Huntington, Ind., n.d.), 21.

It is not always easy to know the issues clearly, particularly in these confused and complicated times. If all good men were on one side and all the bad on the other, there would be no difficulty, but the state of affairs is not so simply settled. Oftentimes the good take sides against the good. In clear cut matters such as Communism and materialistic Socialism there is no trouble in making a decision. The citizen must vote against these evils consistently and untiringly, exerting his influence to overcome these insidious forces. On the other hand there should not be useless and un-Christian bickering, as for example, in Chile when the Holy Father found it necessary to write to Cardinal Caro of Santiago to urge a reconciliation of thought and action in keeping with the social teachings of the Church. Unfortunately the apathy of Catholics was a contributing factor to the sorry conditions.⁴⁶

But even the experts do not always know the issues so that the ordinary citizen should not be censured for making mistakes. At times the specialists are misinformed and convey the misinformation to others. Christopher Dawson makes a sharp analysis of the leaders of public opinion in Europe which might be applied to other parts of the earth as well. "The greatest enemies of Europe," he says, "are the leaders of European public opinion. Whenever a fresh attack is made by the external enemies of Europe it is sure to find apologists and sympathizers within the camp. And these are not necessarily traitors, but are more often well-meaning enthusiasts who have no clear conception of what is at stake."⁴⁷

⁴⁶ See *Tablet* (Brooklyn, N. Y.), 42:6, 1. "It is obvious that the Church could not link herself with the activities of a political party without compromising its supernatural nature and the universality of its mission. It is the obligation of the faithful, though they may belong to different political parties, to practice charity with everyone, particularly with their brethren in the Faith, a charity that is the badge of Christians. They should always hold supreme the interests of the Faith, above those of their party and be always ready to follow their pastors, when, under unusual circumstances, they are called upon to unite in the defense of higher principles." Much social unrest came from strikes, the extensive movement to de-Christianize the schools, and the growing irreligious attitude in so many centers. How unfortunate in a country said to be ninety-five per cent Catholic!

⁴⁷ Christopher Dawson in preface to Carl Schmitt, *The Necessity of Politics* (New York, 1931), 14.

Even though the well informed can be mistaken, it is a fact that many citizens do not take the trouble to be informed at all. They seem to be content to let others bear the responsibility that they should shoulder. Such lack of interest and dearth of knowledge can have far-reaching effects not only in municipal matters but in national affairs. Lack of interest places evil men in power for they were able to secure their posts through the inactivity of many citizens. Moreover, if the citizens were duly enlightened on the issues at stake, they would not fail to vote or vote in such a way as to give victory to dangerous and evil forces, they would realize that they do not fulfill their obligation as citizens simply by voting, but by voting wisely and intelligently.

4. USE OF MEANS FOR WISE AND INTELLIGENT VOTING: ASSOCIATIONS, MEETINGS, ETC.

To acquire a knowledge of candidates and issues it seems advantageous for citizens to use the civic organizations operative in their localities. In many parts of the United States various groups work for the precise purpose of enlightening the voter. Usually these organizations work on a bi-partisan or non-partisan basis. And while there have been mistakes in these groups, as indeed in anything of a human foundation, still in principle they are good; in practice they fulfill a valuable end, and in some cases, a necessary role in society.

It is only reasonable that citizens should band together for the purpose of taking an intelligent part in political matters. They unite in trade unions, manufacturers' associations, chambers of commerce and professional societies for the promotion of their social and economic interests and if they would be better informed of political affairs, they would do well to organize into political associations. Too often citizens fail to see the need of such organization and leave the conduct of political groups to the professional politicians who are usually serving some selfish interest. Then when matters go from bad to worse they try to justify their aloofness by the reflection that politics is essentially corrupt. But as Monsignor John Ryan has remarked: "This lazy pessimism is not warranted by anything inherent in public affairs. It represents

a vain attempt to avoid moral responsibility. If politics is rotten, a large part of the responsibility rests upon well meaning but indolent citizens."⁴⁸ Tanqueray endorses such organizations so that the citizens may "prudently and freely be able to choose the more worthy among the various candidates"⁴⁹ by knowing the candidates and the issues. Some years ago Father Gillet also wrote in favor of such voters' organizations.⁵⁰

In the United States various leagues and associations have been formed to enlighten the citizens and to stimulate them to use their ballot. The largest and most influential of these have been organized among women voters and groups of labor unions.

The League of Women Voters with ninety thousand members and fifteen thousand non-members in nearly all the states seeks to interest women in politics and to get them to vote, since it is all too apparent that a large percentage of the American women do not demonstrate the proper interest or action in elections. People may be awed by the fact that fifty million votes have been cast in a general election, but they fail to realize that another fifty million should have been cast.

The National Federation of Women's Republican Clubs was formed in 1938 for members of the Republican Party, working on precinct, county, state, and national lines. It enables people to know more of the issues and to become more interested in politics, though there is the danger of following "party policy" rather than principle.

The principal groups in the labor field are Labor's League for Political Education (American Federation of Labor) and the Political Action Committee (Congress of Industrial Organization). To acquaint members of their programs and methods both organizations distribute a weekly bulletin.⁵¹ The C.I.O. set their plan in motion with a resolution at their national convention in November, 1944: "To continue and intensify the work of securing the fullest possible exercise of the right of franchise by organizations

⁴⁸ John A. Ryan-Francis Boland, *Catholic Principles of Politics* (New York, 1943), 207-208.

⁴⁹ John Ryan, *Church and State* (New York, 1932), 274.

⁵⁰ *Conscience chrétienne et justice sociale* (Paris, 1922), 385-386.

⁵¹ Both offices are in Washington, D. C.

for a maximum registration and vote."⁸² Labor's League for Political Action works in the A.F.L. with the identical purpose. In the election of 1948 this group sought to carry out a program of general education of the electorate and to promote a drive to get voters to register and to vote.⁸³ These labor unions support various senators, representatives, and other leaders as well as referenda submitted for the ballot, although the individual members are free to vote as they choose. In principle, it is perfectly legitimate for the unions to support one candidate in preference to another, though there is the obvious danger of excessive persuasion from the officials of the organizations. These labor groups publish a report of how Congressmen voted on bills presented, so that the men will know the record of those who represent them and act accordingly.

Catholics should not feel out of place in such organizations; indeed it is their right and duty to take part. The sad lack of militant and well-principled Catholics in the forefront of political life in the United States stems from a more general attitude that politics is non-Christian or a-Christian. A Catholic layman realizing the lamentable condition asks challengingly: "How many Catholic men are found in the civic reform groups in the cities? How many Catholic women work with the League of Women Voters? How frequently do priests devote sermons to the subject of Catholic morals [in public life]? How thoroughly and with how much conviction is honest political service taught in our Catholic schools?"⁸⁴ And whatever answer is given it is pitifully short of what the actual situation should be.

There is a definite need of some stimulus to vote, for in the elections of 1950 only 60.5 percent of the registered voters voted and only 43.7 percent of those eligible (according to age, etc.) used their right. While the proportion was relatively high in some localities, in others it was decidedly low. For example, in Alex-

⁸² See minutes of National Committee of the Labor's League for Political Education, St. Paul's Auditorium, Oct. 5, 1949; also minutes for meeting at Netherland Plaza Hotel, Cincinnati, Ohio, Nov. 7, 1948.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Jerome Kerwin, "Catholics and Politics," *America*, 75:24 (Sept. 14, 1946), 578.

andria, Virginia, in the General Election of November 7, 1949, only seventeen percent voted and in the state of Virginia only fourteen percent went to the polls.

Some people think that their one vote is of little importance, but records show that Thomas Jefferson, John Quincy Adams, and Rutherford Hayes won the presidency by just one electoral vote. Moreover, the Draft Act of World War II passed the House of Representatives by the same margin. And in 1948 when Mr. Truman carried Ohio by less than eight thousand votes only 56.5 percent of the eligible voters voted. More than two million remained away from the polls and the President carried the state and the electoral votes by an average of less than one vote in each of the 8,800 precincts in Ohio.⁵⁵ Franklin D. Roosevelt became governor of New York in 1928 by the small margin of 25,000 votes, a fact which had great effect upon his career. In 1944 a congressman from Missouri won his election with three hundred votes—and more than 63,000 voters stayed away from the polls. In Pennsylvania a congressman won by five hundred votes in a district where 40,000 did not vote.⁵⁶ In 1948 only forty-nine million voters used their ballot of an estimated eligible ninety million. Thus about forty million were too busy, or disinterested, to vote.⁵⁷ And in 1950 the ratio of non-voters was even greater so that the present Congress actually represents the vote of less than half the total number of adults in the nation.

Such is the problem of the "vanishing voter." There needs to be a deeper awareness of one's part in a republican government, a deeper consciousness that each person, each voter, does count either for good or for evil. To be a slave of party politics so that one follows "My party right or wrong" is bad, but to take a healthy interest in the political affairs of a city, state, and nation is not only good, but vitally necessary for the common good. Thus the citizen should do whatever he can to further the commonweal. If membership in voters' organizations will contribute to this end, then he should become a member.

⁵⁵ See booklet *Is Politics Your Job?* (Washington, 1946), 6-7.

⁵⁶ "Tis the Ballot Box," from *Tax Outlook*, 5:10 (Oct. 1950), 5.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

5. THE CLERGY AND THE OBLIGATION OF VOTING

The obligation of voting is particularly binding upon the members of the clergy to whom the laity look for guidance and example. More than any other members of the Mystical Body they should take an interest in political affairs, and especially if moral issues are involved. They have the duty of taking part in whatever advances the common good and promotes the welfare of souls. Nor is their duty limited to Election Day. They have the obligation of reminding the faithful of their duty, and in some cases, of making clear the issues at stake, especially if they be contrary to Christian morality and teaching or opposed to that liberty which the Church should enjoy.

It is true that the priest should not make his pulpit a political rostrum. But it is his duty to instruct his people in all their duties, both to the State and to the Church, as well as their responsibilities to themselves, their families and their neighbor. As Father Husslein has said: "In the first place, in his capacity as a citizen of a democracy, the priest should set an example to his flock in the full and faithful discharge of his civic duty, at the ballot box no less than elsewhere. But politics must strictly be kept out of the pulpit, and out of all his priestly relations with men."²⁸

Pope Pius XII pointed out the duty of the priest to instruct the laity in their civic duties (March 16, 1946):

The priest . . . is a minister of the Church and he has a mission which includes, as we have already indicated, the entire circle of religious and moral duties of his people. In the fulfillment of this mission the priest can therefore be obliged to give, under this religious aspect, counsel and instruction also regarding public duties. . . . As far as the fields stretch, so far extends the mission of the Church, and also the teachings, warnings, and counsels of the priest to the faithful confided to his care.²⁹ . . . it is the right, and at the same time, the essential duty of the Church to instruct the faithful by word and writing, from the pulpit and in all other normal ways on everything

²⁸ "The Priest and Politics," *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, 22:7 (July 1922), 743.

²⁹ *AAS* 38, 186-187.

that concerns faith and morals, or which is irreconcilable with the doctrine of the Church and, therefore, inadmissible for Catholics—whether it be a question of philosophic or religious systems, or of other purposes promoted by persons, or of moral concepts held by them with regard to the life either of the individual or of the community.⁶⁰

Cardinal Hlond said that the priest cannot be silent when asked about the obligations of voting, but “should point out the moral principles guiding the electoral law of the citizens. . . . The Church does not lead an electoral campaign, but points out the moral principles which should be adhered to by all parties if they wish to gain the votes of Catholics.”⁶¹ Such too was the point made by the fathers of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1884. They said that the priest should refrain from discussing publicly, especially in church, matters of a purely political and secular nature, but added that this admonition was not to be understood to mean that the priest must be silent on the grave obligation which citizens have in public matters at all times and everywhere and to work for the good of religion as well as for the good of the country.⁶²

Archbishop McNicholas told his priests “to remind the faithful of their duty” of voting and “to pray at all times for those who are our civic rulers. We believe that their authority is from God. We should ask for them the light and direction of the Holy Ghost that in all things they may do whatever is best for the people whom they serve.”⁶³ At the same time he urged his priests “to help in awakening a healthy interest in whatever pertains to the good of this city and all the cities of the archdiocese.”⁶⁴

In practice generally, and certainly in the United States, the priest should never mention a candidate by name unless the man

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Tablet* (London), 188:5558 (Nov. 16, 1946), 260.

⁶² “Quae tamen ita intelligenda non sunt, quasi omnino silendum esset de gravissima obligatione, qua cives tenentur enim in rebus publicis semper et ubique juxta conscientiae dictamen, coram Deo, pro majori bono tum religionis tum reipublicae patriaeque adlaborare.” *Acta et decreta concilii plenarii Baltimorensis* (Baltimore, 1886), n. 83.

⁶³ “Duty of Citizens,” 254.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

in question is obviously notoriously opposed to the common good of religion or of the State. But even then the priest should avoid any action that might be labeled "meddling in politics." But nothing would prevent him from urging and exhorting the faithful to fulfill their Christian duty of voting. However it would seem that the priest should simply inform the people of the nature of the issues, rather than to take any side on a political matter publicly, lest he alienate some of the faithful or lest he be attacked and the Church exposed to ridicule. On the other hand, this does not mean that the priest should hesitate to perform his duty as a leader of the people by instructing them in their duties as Christian citizens. Father Edmund O'Reilly has given some pertinent advice as to how a difficult situation might be handled:

Suppose, then, for example, the priest were to expatiate on the evils of godless education, and the moral duty of taking this into account. Suppose he were to tell them it was their moral duty to use their franchise to do away, as far as in them lies, with so ruinous a system, what would all this mean where one of the candidates was a notorious upholder of the education thus reprobated. Suppose, again, the priest were to tell his hearers what sort of a man was fit and what sort of a man was unfit to be a member of parliament, and to inculcate on them the moral duty of choosing a man of the one sort and of rejecting a man of the other sort, he certainly would not go a tittle beyond pointing out the line of moral duty which the judge allows him to point out; and yet the application would be or might in some cases be transparent. . . . He might speak of their being answerable to God, of their being bound in conscience. He might even bring in that condemned word *sin*. He might say everything that is really and genuinely conducive to the understanding of the phrase *moral duty*. For, if a thing may be spoken of, and spoken of as from its nature, a motive of action, that nature may be and ought to be fully declared.⁶⁵

Therefore the priest, following the pattern given by the Holy Father in modern times, and following the example of prelates all over the world, can and should enlighten the faithful on their

⁶⁵ *The Relation of the Church to Society* (London, 1880), 130.

obligation of voting in civil elections. It is not a question of assuming an undesirable role in politics, but of fulfilling a necessary duty as a servant of God watching over the souls entrusted to his care. Insofar as politics deals with morality it needs the guiding hand of the priest to assist it in achieving its purpose in human society.⁶⁶ And the priest cannot evade an inescapable duty.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The obligation of voting in civil elections is a duty binding in conscience upon all citizens possessing the franchise.

2. The exercise of the franchise is a political right granted by the state. In our opinion it is not a natural right.

3. Voting is an obligation of patriotism commanded by legal justice.

4. In general the obligation of voting in civil elections, according to the opinions of many moralists, is grave, because the purpose of voting is extremely important. Consequently if a citizen did not vote for a long time without any justifying reason, he would be guilty of grave sin. The sin is *ex genere suo* mortal that is, it may admit of parvity of matter and consequently not always be a serious sin. But the obligation of voting *in se* is *sub gravi*, although taken individually for ordinary elections, the obligation is *sub levi*. In particular cases, as for example, when a Communist is seeking office, the voter would be bound *sub gravi* to vote against the evil candidate if there were reason to believe that the Communist might win. Failure to vote in these circumstances, without any justifying reason, would be a mortal sin. Failure to vote in ordinary elections without any justifying reason would be a venial sin.

5. A citizen may be excused from voting if there is danger that his vote would bring physical or moral harm to himself or his family; or if the voting would be considered an acknowledgment of a tyrannical or illegitimate form of government. If the obligation to vote is grave, only a grave reason will excuse; if the obligation is slight, a slight reason will excuse.

6. A citizen would be permitted to vote for an unworthy candidate if the voting were limited to a choice of unworthy men. Then he should vote so as to exclude the more unworthy. He may also vote for an unworthy candidate if this is the only way to elect a worthy man, e.g., in voting the "party ticket" as is necessary in some parts of the United States. But in these instances the voter

should give only material cooperation and take care that his action be toleration and not approval of the unworthy men.

7. In the United States or any peaceful country one may not vote for a Communist candidate or list of candidates in accordance with an interpretation of a decree from the Holy Office of July 1, 1949. It seems difficult to know how this same decree should be applied to Russia and the countries she dominates because of the complexity of problems involved.

8. The clergy and religious are bound to vote, both to fulfill their duty and to give good example.

9. In nations where woman suffrage obtains, the women are bound by the same obligations as men.

10. The clergy are obliged to remind the faithful of their duty to vote, but as "ministers of Christ" they should refrain from any statements in the pulpit of a purely political character or from any declaration or action that might be construed as unwarranted intrusion into political affairs.

11. In order to vote intelligently the citizen should acquire a reasonable knowledge of the principles of voting, of the candidates, and of the issues brought up for election. He should use any means that will assist him in voting wisely, such as organizations, meetings, and the like.

APPENDIX

EPISCOPAL DIRECTIVES ON THE OBLIGATION OF VOTING

1. FRANCIS CARDINAL SPELLMAN, ARCHBISHOP OF NEW YORK

With the approach of Registration and Election Days it is opportune to consider the obligations incumbent upon all of us to register and vote every year. This is our civic duty, our patriotic duty and our religious duty.

As Americans every one of us is responsible for the preservation of our Democratic Republic. That Republic is our guarantee of liberty. The men and women elected to public office have the power to preserve or destroy that Republic. They wield that power as legislators, judges, and executives. We have the power to select good Americans for these public offices. We wield this power as voters on Registration and Election Days.

We must never forget that Democracy is government not only for the people, but also of the people and by the people.

For the continuation of our United States of America, and for the safeguarding of our God-given liberty, I ask every eligible man and woman to do his or her conscientious duty by registering and voting.

(October 4, 1949)

2. CARDINAL SPELLMAN

The freedom which we enjoy in our blest and democratic land is God's gift to us. But, like every gift, liberty can be lost, and, it will be lost if it is not preserved by us with the same constant and consistent loyalty as it was fought for and won. The secret ballot box is one means to defend our American way of life, for democracy means more than government *for* the people. Democracy also means government *of* the people and *by* the people. And, by voting we can prove our own devotion to the ideals for which our soldier-sons are still shedding their young and precious blood!

Therefore do I ask all of you who are eligible to register and vote, but I beg you remember that while this is your privilege and your duty, it is also your sacred responsibility to vote for honest and able men.

Dearly beloved, I pray you, be loyal Americans and true Catholics, protect your country, yourselves and your children: REGISTER AND VOTE!

(October 8, 1950)

3. MOST REV. JOHN MC NICHOLAS, ARCHBISHOP OF CINCINNATI

Our love of country imposes a strictly conscientious duty. True love of country means service. We classify love of country under the virtue of piety.

Filial piety is the virtue by which we discharge our duties to our parents. Patriotic duty is the virtue by which we fulfill our obligations to our country. This virtue of patriotism should make us love and serve our country from supernatural motives.

In our form of democratic government the people, in the last analysis, must be held responsible. The voters through their suffrage and by public opinion can and should govern the country. It is most important, therefore, that the good citizens be thoroughly impressed with the importance of voting. Those who habitually vote and those who habitually refrain from voting can not but exercise an influence for good or for evil on the community.

Today it is clearly evident that too much influence is being exercised by extremists, propagandists, and groups engaged in subversive activities. These destructive groups, without thought of the general welfare, often fanatical in their zeal, are attempting insidiously to destroy the structure of our government. This reflection should scourge the consciences of the apathetic, the indolent, those preoccupied with business or pleasure, and the numerous class of good citizens who consider voting at elections not worth while.

In our civic affairs it is most important that the good, informed, common-sense citizens fully realize their duty, that they determine to make use of the power which is theirs by the ballot to rebuke the propagandists and to check unprincipled politicians. Citizens who have at heart the best interests of our country should decide that sanity shall characterize our civic legislation and that only good officials should be chosen to govern the people.

We must not be understood as having in mind any particular issue. We are espousing no particular party and are not favoring any set of candidates. We do not wish to advance the cause of any individual. We are merely discharging the obligation imposed upon us by our office to make clear your duty as citizens. Your motive in the discharge of your civic duties should be a supernatural one, because your holy religion teaches you that civil authority is from God, and that your love and service of a country have their source in God and must be referred back to Him.

There is no doubt that our Catholic people in too many instances refrain from voting. Too many feel that a single vote is of no consequence. Too many do not familiarize themselves with the issues at stake and are not informed as to the character of the many candidates seeking office. Too many excuse themselves from their obligation by considering issues of no importance at this or that particular time. Too many have the intention of voting, but allow trivial things to prevent them from doing so. Although many years have passed since the franchise was granted to women, it is manifest that our Catholic women, for the most part, are not exercising it. This is wrong in principle.

In many places of the Archdiocese the Catholic element is very strong. This is true of our metropolitan area, and yet it must be said with great frankness that Catholic voters in these parts exercise practically no in-

fluence. We urge our Catholic people to give serious thought to this state of affairs.

We direct especial attention to the following:

1. Every Catholic citizen, man and woman, should resolve to form the habit of voting. Whether or not elections seem important, the principle of voting habitually is important. Only a conscientious judgment, seriously formed, can justify the voter in remaining away from the polls. The women voters should not only discharge their own obligation in this matter, but should remind their fathers, husbands, sons, and brothers to do the same.

2. We urge the members of all our Sisterhoods, not bound by the restrictions of the cloister, to vote in all elections. The religious life of our Sisters breaks none of the bonds that bind them in love and service to their country, but only spiritualizes and supernaturalizes them. It is especially fitting that our Sister-teachers, who are required to inculcate love of country in their pupils and to teach them civic virtues, should themselves be an example.

3. Every Catholic citizen must enjoy the greatest possible liberty in voting.

The Church desires only that good men of balanced judgment whose honesty has been thoroughly tested, whatever be their creed or political affiliations, be favored by our votes. It is always important that the Catholic body of voters exert their influence to secure candidates worthy in every way of the office to which they aspire. Catholics should vote for men who will especially recommend themselves by reason of their sanity, their breadth of vision, their acceptance of responsibility, their belief in a personal God to whom they must ultimately answer for their exercise of divine authority in civil affairs, their acceptances of an unchangeable moral code, and their determination to serve the interests of the general public as far as possible. It must be recalled that the inhuman and tyrannical conditions now prevailing in Russia, Germany, and Mexico are, in the last analysis, due to leaders of governments who reject a personal God and all the implications of a supreme intelligent Being, to whom individuals and nations must render an account.

4. The Catholic voter should not be influenced either for or against a candidate because of his religion, race, or color. He must give an example, in word and deed, of a true spirit of toleration and of love of neighbor which his divine religion teaches.

5. It is extremely important that previous to an election the issues presented be seriously studied, and that the character of the candidates be investigated. No word, however, must be spoken from the Catholic pulpit either in favor of a candidate or against him, either in favor of or in opposition to any issue, unless it be a moral one.

6. Whenever there is certainty, or even serious doubt, of moral turpitude in certain questions the Catholic Church will fearlessly speak out her mind. She knows no compromise with such hideous perversions of the natural law as birth prevention and sterilization. Nor can the Church ever accept divorce, because of the divine positive command. Promoters and venders of filthy

literature, which destroys the innocence of youth, should be exposed and publicly condemned. There can likewise be no compromise with Communism, subversive forces, anti-God movements, and anti-Christ agents that would destroy both Church and State.

7. There is danger in a government controlled by blocs and groups such as those now so active in the Old World. The individual must have a sense of responsibility. In the domestic society of the home there must be responsibility in the best governed communities, either of State or of Church, authority must develop as much responsibility as possible in each individual. The Catholic voter is asked to consider whether we can have any real responsibility in our civil government except through recognized political parties, which will be held responsible to the people and which will merit either their approval or condemnation. The voter is asked to decide for himself what method of government or what party system will impose the greatest responsibility on those who should exercise authority for the general welfare. This decision should be made according to the conscientious judgment of each individual. We repeat that we must not be understood as either opposing or favoring systems prevailing in Cincinnati or in any locality of the Archdiocese.

We direct that this letter be read in all churches and chapels of the Archdiocese on one of the Sundays of September and that a copy of it be transmitted to all Catholic societies.

(Sept. 1, 1939)

4. AUGUSTUS CARDINAL HLOND, ARCHBISHOP OF WARSAW

(Italicized words were crossed out by censor.)

We are living under the shadow of elections. That is evident; they are our civic and national right, a necessity of our State life and a test of our independence.

Our attitude towards the elections should also be clearly defined in the light of Christian morality, of which the bases are unchanged, no matter what constitutional or political conditions prevail. For the elections are neither a matter of indifference to us nor a question of pure State technique, but keenly affect us, as does every one of our rights and obligations.

1. Why do we speak about Elections?

Catholic social morality gives the answer. Its moral imperatives have been recently set forth by the Holy Father. "It is a fundamental right and duty of the Church to teach the faithful both by word and precept about everything which concerns faith and morality. The exercise of the right of voting carries with it a great moral responsibility, especially in the election of those who have to give the country its Constitution and rights is concerned. Thus it is an obligation of the Church to explain to the faithful the moral obligation involved in the right of voting." (Pius XII.)

The Church has the right and obligation to teach the faithful about the duties imposed by the Gospel in the words: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God those that are God's." (Matthew xxii, 21.) It is for the Church to define what one should render to Caesar and what to God. It is the Church which has taught man's moral duties towards the State most effectively up to now. Wherever this teaching has been lacking the State has found itself in difficulties, and has even bordered upon anarchy.

The Church is the guide of the conscience of the people. When asked by the faithful, she is obliged to give an answer, in order to instruct the ignorant and counsel the doubtful.

Therefore priests cannot keep silent when asked by Catholics about their obligations concerning their act of voting. They should point out the moral principles guiding the electoral law of the citizens. Giving an answer to those questions, the Church does not involve herself in party political discussions, but only states moral and religious principles according to which Catholics themselves should form their electoral conscience. The Church does not lead an electoral campaign, but points out moral principles which should be adhered to by all parties if they wish to gain the votes of Catholics.

2. The Democratic State and Electoral Law.

The nearer the Constitution of the State is to democratic ideals, the greater the duty of the citizens to take an active part in public life, to exercise their rights, and to fulfill their civic obligations. For democratic organization consists in calling all the citizens to take part in governing the country, and in allowing them to cooperate and to share responsibility with the State. Because all the citizens cannot fulfill these obligations to the full, they appoint by means of elections those whom they trust to act for them in the worthy fulfillment of their civic duties.

Those who are in power in a democratic organization do not exercise this right in their own name, but in the name of those who conferred the power upon them. They are not completely independent in exercising this power. They are subject to the surveillance of the citizens who exercise it by election the framers of the Constitution and those who will govern, and by defining their programme of action, checking the manner in which they govern, and can put them out of office by withdrawing their support.

In the light of these explanations the link between the democratic State and the citizen's right of voting becomes clearly visible. The elections are a legally defined means of expressing political tendencies, and of making known one's attitude towards public affairs and towards the rulers of the country. The citizens have the duty to express themselves by means of elections. This right is secured by all modern and progressive Constitutions of countries that are wisely governed.

The more freedom the citizens have in exercising their right to vote, the more the elections are a test of the democratic organization of the State. But the duties of the citizens increase, and they are an indispensable condition of the maintenance of a sane political democracy.

In an organization in which the characteristics of the authority, its rights and the very laws of the State, depend on the elected members of parliament, the citizens have a special duty not only to take a great interest in political life, but to take an active part in it. It depends on the accepted laws, and on their execution by the Government, what are to be the laws governing education, whether religion is going to be taught or not; whether the matrimonial law will be Catholic or pagan; whether the State will respect the religious rights of those suffering in hospitals or condemned to death, of those serving a term of military service in barracks; whether the value of religion will be respected by the State, or whether it will be a matter of no importance to it. The laws depend on the members of parliament, and they depend on the elections. This is the sequence of cause and effect.

3. What are the duties of Catholics in public life?

The Church has taught the faithful for a very long time that it is their duty to give their strength and abilities for the service of the community and towards cooperation for the common good of the whole community. It is a demand of social justice, which tells us to break from the narrow circle of our private affairs, to take account of our fellow-beings, and to direct our strength towards the service of the community.

One cannot properly fulfill the demands of social justice to collaborate for the common good without taking part in governing, and thus in political life. The obligation increases for us Catholics, because being educated on the basis of a healthy Christian outlook, we understand human and divine affairs better, because nothing is strange to us.

We have the duty to do good to everybody. "Therefore, whilst we have time, let us do good to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of the faith." (Epistle to the Galatians, vi, 10.) This precept of the holy Faith turns us toward our fellow human beings, towards social needs, towards political demands, in order to bring into human life as much good as possible. We must revive in ourselves the desire for good for all which is the beginning of all social reform.

Political life is one of the most important forms of temporal life, because it has to serve the common good. It must be directed by good men in order that they may act in a good manner. The vocation for this life is the vocation of fulfilling the social moral virtues. Morality is the basis of political life, and its condition. Only those who respect morality can demand power, which means only those who understand the essence of the common good of the citizens, who desire this good, and who seek to work together in order to achieve it.

Every Catholic has a duty to know the political life of his country, and to take a lively interest in it. Only then will he be able to work effectively to fulfill the duties of the State. He should therefore acquaint himself with the moral conditions of the country, with its social and economic needs, with its history and culture. He must be sensible to the demands of social

justice. He cannot be indifferent to human misery. He must desire a constant improvement of the living conditions of men.

Social and civic education, and the practice of the Christian virtues, especially of the social and civic virtues, will be of great help. A Catholic respecting the State's authority and acting in accordance with laws aiming at the common good does what accords most closely with this good.

4. The Electoral Duties of Catholics.

These are evident in the light of the above propositions. Participation in voting is an essential necessity for a democratic State, and is both a right and an obligation for all citizens. From this the following conclusions result:—

1. Catholics, as members of a State community, have the right of expressing their political convictions.
2. Catholics have the right to decide by their votes the most essential laws of Polish public life.
3. Catholics have a civic, national and religious duty to take part in the elections.
4. *Catholics may not belong to any organization or parties the principles of which contradict Christian teaching, or the deeds and activities of which aim in reality at the undermining of Christian ethics.*
5. *Catholics may vote only for such persons, lists of candidates, and electoral programmes, as are not opposed to Catholic teaching and morality.*
6. *Catholics may neither vote for nor put themselves forward as candidates for electoral lists the programmes or governing methods of which are repugnant to common-sense, to the well-being of the nation and the State, to Christian morality and to the Catholic outlook.*
7. Catholics should only vote for candidates of tried probity and righteousness who deserve confidence and are worthy representatives of the well-being of the nation, of the Polish State, and of the Church.
8. Catholics cannot refrain from voting without a fair and wise reason; for each vote, given according to the above recommendations either promotes common good or prevents evil.

5. Appeal

The deeper the changes which occur in the State, the greater the responsibility of its citizens for the direction of public life. The greater the difficulties of the State, the stronger the effort that must be made for the common good. The greater the danger threatening the State, the more earnest and conscientious must be the fulfillment of civic duties. The deeper and more widely the authority of the State enters human life and civic rights, the more important it becomes that good, competent, trustworthy and really Christian men should exercise authority.

Two tendencies toward transformation are at present shaping themselves; one seeks to build the life of the country on solid Christian foundations; the

other seeks deliverance for the world in the omnipotence of a godless and materialistic State. These two tendencies conflict. Which will win? Everyone is asking this.

Modern States seek to be omnipotent. Although some of them call themselves democratic, they go so far in their tendencies that they do not recognize any other force besides themselves, even the voice of the people, nor even any moral authority, even that of God.

Some States seek to push religion aside from any influence upon public life, aiming at the separation of religion from life, of the Church from the State, seeking to enclose the Church within the four walls of the temples.

These attempts are contrary to the teaching of the Church, as is everything which derives from them, namely the secularization of public life; the setting aside of religion influences in the schools, in the armed forces, and even in prisons and hospitals. An attempt is even made to emancipate from religious influence the small children in preparatory schools, in order to protect them from the "danger" of God.

Separating themselves from religion and the Church, modern States do not cease to interfere in purely religious matters; they lay down laws concerning the rights of the Church and the truths and dogmas of the Faith and Christian morality, entirely without knowledge of the Church and behind her back. The Church is constantly injured in her rights under the pretext of the separation of Church and State.

Under such conditions, elections for Catholics are all the more important. For it is not a matter of indifference to us to whose hands will be entrusted our affairs with God, our religion and our Church.

We live through a period of crucial changes. While recognizing the importance and the necessity of political, social and economic changes, we consider that they can be carried out on the basis and within the limits of the natural law and of the law of God preached by the Church. And although many things may and should change, God's law must be respected.

In times when political life encroaches upon religious matter, "Catholics and all those who believe in God personified cannot let themselves be frightened and should realize their strength" (Pius XII—letter of January, 1946). It is not a physical or armed strength. But Catholics should know that the Church possesses a splendid truth and aims which have great importance for the State. The State can have no greater asset than a Christian, religious and upright citizen.

When religious matters are so closely linked with political affairs we have no intention of loosening or of breaking this link, *but we do not want this link to consist in the liberty of the State to fight religion and the obligation upon Catholics who are oppressed to keep silent.*

Not only the fate of the State but that of the Church is at stake during the elections. It is not a matter of indifference to us who govern the country—*people who believe or the enemies of God. Elections at this time are not*

only the fulfilment of civic duties, but also a confession of faith and a defense of religion.

Catholics! Fulfill your civic duties towards the nation, the country and the Church! Keep complete freedom in choosing political programmes. Remember that you have to fulfill your electoral duties in God's ways.

[The letter concludes by quoting 2 Thessalonians, iii, *passim*]

(September 10, 1946)

VITA

Titus Cranny was born April 15, 1921, in Sioux City, Iowa. After receiving elementary training at Blessed Sacrament parish school of this city, he enrolled in Trinity High School conducted by the Marianists from which he graduated in 1938. He entered St. John's Atonement Seminary, Graymoor, N. Y., September, 1939, received the habit of the Friars of the Atonement in 1941 and was professed July 14, 1942. He took studies in philosophy and theology at the Catholic University of America and was ordained to the priesthood April 4, 1948. He received the degree of Licentiate of Sacred Theology from this University in June, 1948, Master of Arts in Philosophy in June, 1949. After serving as Catholic chaplain for Howard University, Washington, D. C., he entered the School of Sacred Theology at Catholic University as a graduate student in the autumn of 1949.

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