

A MANUAL OF CATHOLIC ACTION

By
MGR. LUIGI CIVARDI

Translated by
C. C. MARTINDALE, S.J.

With an Introduction by
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Azione Cattolica* by Mgr. Luigi Civardi.

TRANSLATION

From Rome.

September 23, 1933.

Most Reverend Monsignore,

With keen pleasure I have treated it as a matter of urgency to place in the august hands of the Holy Father the two volumes of your *Manual of Catholic Action* in its seventh edition ; and I am happy to inform you that His Holiness was particularly gratified by your filial homage.

A work such as yours, indeed, with its orderly enunciation of the principles on which Catholic Action is founded, and with its most opportune exposition of the practical rules for the constitution and life of the organisations that compose it, has not only in past times served to make known an apostolate so providential and so necessary, but will be, in the future, a guide, both safe and enlightened, for all who shall turn their minds to such beneficent activities.

The Holy Father, therefore, not only prays that your valued work may be widely spread abroad and thus provide a new and efficacious contribution to the increase of Catholic Action which is so dear to him, but wholeheartedly sends you the Apostolic Blessing.

I gladly profit by this occasion once more to express to you, Most Reverend Monsignore, my special and sincere feelings of esteem.

Giuseppe Pizzardo,
Tit. Archbishop of Nicea.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The following pages contain the translation of the first volume only of the Italian original. The reason is twofold. First, it was desired to keep the book sufficiently short and inexpensive, to ensure the wide circulation it deserves. Second, because the second volume deals chiefly with Catholic Action as it exists in Italy ; and, though the Holy Father is pleased when Catholic Action anywhere approximates in its main lines to what it is in Italy, he naturally does not expect it to do so in detail. In fact, the statutes of Catholic Action in France and in Poland (to be found in Archbishop Pizzardo's short brochure on the subject), and our experience of it in the Argentine and Australia, exhibit considerable varieties of method and emphasis, though not of principle.

The author therefore permits us to make such slight omissions and abbreviations, even in this first volume, as may seem in this limited sense appropriate, but wishes that the rest should be translated exactly. He himself has sacrificed brevity to clearness and completeness, since he was writing a scientific manual, not a literary work. Hence here and there our translation is bound to have a Latin rather than an English flavour ; and again, owing to the richness and flexibility of his native tongue, the author can put into a single word what we hardly can—*diocesanità*, *parrocchialità* can hardly go into a single English word save as “parochiality,” which is odd but convenient, whereas “parochial character” is

relatively clumsy. We ask readers, then, to forgive us if sometimes we awkwardly put into one word what the author can do so successfully, even if he has to invent it.

Indeed, it seems impossible to translate even *Azione Cattolica* adequately. Catholic Action does not accurately represent it ; still less does Catholic Activity. Possibly Lay Apostolate would be more satisfactory ; however, Catholic Action, though a mechanical reproduction of the words rather than a true translation of their meaning, has become normal and cannot but remain so. Anyhow, since the book is meant by its author for close study, not for cursory reading, we may trust that the value of the words will emerge gradually and according to the mind of the Sovereign Pontiff who has canonised them.

We have prefixed the translation of a letter from Archbishop Pizzardo to Mgr. Civardi.

C. C. Martindale, S.J.

FOREWORD

What we require to know about Catholic Action.

I. We need to know—

- (a) its generic and theoretic aspects; e.g., what it is, what it aims at, its properties, its connections, etc. ;
- (b) its historical background, ancient and modern ;
- (c) its practical aspects ; e.g., how it is constructed, what it does, how it does it, and so forth.

We require therefore a triple investigation—theoretical, historical, and practical. The theory provides us with the *idea* of Catholic Action ; history shows us how this idea was realised in the past ; the practical account must display how it works itself out at present. The first volume will deal with the theory alone.

2. The generic and theoretic aspects of Catholic Action are those which change least along with the changing times and the vicissitudes of society, since they are rooted in the nature of things and reflected in the most solemn pontifical documents. Catholic Action can be studied on its theoretic side in two ways—in itself, and in its relations with other entities, institutions, and activities. Hence this volume falls into two parts—

Part I. Catholic Action in itself.

Part II. Catholic Action in its relationships.

3. Separate chapters of the first part will discuss the Notion, the Aims, the Apostolate, the Organised Form, and the Necessity of Catholic Action ; further chapters will discuss, in Part II, its relationships with the Hierarchy, the Clergy, Political Life, Auxiliary Works, and Social-Economic Works. Our chapters are therefore disposed as follows :

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INTRODUCTION

It is with great pleasure that I write these few words of introduction to the English translation of Mgr. Civardi's well-known *Manual of Catholic Action*. The fact that this Manual has already been translated into seven languages gives some indication of the value which is attached to it throughout the Catholic world. The wealth of information contained in its pages, on every aspect of Catholic Action, will more than satisfy those who are anxious to master the principles of this organised apostolate of the laity which has been urged insistently by successive popes since Pius IX as a *necessity* of our times.

After explaining precisely the meaning of Catholic Action and pointing out that it does not mean merely Catholic activity, the author shows also how it differs from our existing Catholic associations and confraternities, and how, by its organised unity, its subordination to the Hierarchy, and its comprehensiveness of programme, it is a unique and most efficacious instrument for restoring, defending, expanding and consolidating the Kingdom of Christ in a world which, to a great extent, has dethroned Christ and apostatised from God.

We commend this book to clergy and laity, to the former whose duty it will be to assist and stimulate Catholic Action, to the latter whose privilege it is to be

called to this apostolate. May it be to all a source of inspiration and an incentive to follow the call of our Holy Father for the re-Christianisation of individuals, families and society, and for the universal establishment of the “Peace of Christ in the Kingdom of Christ.”

Φ Richard,

Archbishop of Liverpool.

A MANUAL OF CATHOLIC ACTION

PART I

CATHOLIC ACTION IN ITSELF

CHAPTER I

The Idea of “ Catholic Action ”

I. THE MEANING OF THE NAME

‘ Catholic Action ’ is a name susceptible of various interpretations. Hence it is but logical that we should fix the meaning of the *name* before discussing the *thing*. In this way it will be easier to avoid ambiguities and misunderstandings.

Activity and Institutions

1. Catholic Action, in its most obvious sense, is simply an act conformable to the principles of the Catholic Religion. Into this the idea of apostolate does not enter, at least explicitly.

In another, more complex, sense, Catholic Action can signify an act not only conformable to, but in favour of the Catholic Religion. And into this the idea of apostolate does enter explicitly. This is the sense in which we understand it.

2. Further, the expression ‘ Catholic Action,’ thus understood, is used to mean not only an apostolic activity, but also those institutions or organisations through which that *selfsame* activity expresses itself. In reality, the

apostolate of Catholic Action, as we shall see in a moment, develops into a collective and organised form, and accordingly takes concrete shape in certain institutions. Thus in his letter *Quae Nobis* to Cardinal Bertram, Bishop of Breslau (November 12, 1928), H.H. Pius XI writes :

“ Catholic Action is a true apostolate, in which Catholics of every social class participate, and come thus to group themselves, in thought and work, around centres of sound doctrine and manifold social activity, legitimately constituted, and assisted and sustained accordingly by the authority of the bishops.”

In these words we see how the apostolate (activity), being exercised by many, must take concrete form in centres of doctrine and work (institutions).

A few examples will make this notion clearer.

When I say “ Catholic Action is a duty alike for clergy and laity,” I use the word in its first sense : activity. But when I say “ Catholic Action in Italy was reorganised by Pius XI in 1923,” I clearly allude to an institution, an organism. And at times the expression can have both the one and the other meaning, as when I say “ Catholic Action is a necessity of our times.”

Wider and Narrower Sense

I. In order to avoid some easy ambiguities, we ought to keep in mind another fundamental distinction.

Catholic Action can be understood in a wider or narrower sense.

For Catholic Action to exist in the wider sense it suffices that an association or work should have an apostolic scope, and be approved by Ecclesiastical authority. For example, work on behalf of the educational

theatre, pr cinema ; a society on behalf of the Catholic Press, an anti-blasphemy league, or a league of public morality.

2. Catholic Action, properly so-called, and in the narrower sense, is constituted by that organic whole of associations, in which the laity carry out every form of apostolate for the assistance of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and not only with its approbation, but at its special behest and in direct dependence on it, and having rules decided on and sanctioned by its authority.

Catholic Action, when endowed with all these requisites, can call itself official in the sense that it is officially willed and recognised by the Church as a sacred possession of hers.

When we speak of Catholic Action without qualification, it must be understood as used in the narrower sense.

To it belong all organisations of men and women, of young people, male or female, which, in fact, lay claim to belong to it.

Pontifical Teaching

I. This distinction is founded in the nature of things, but it also possesses an explicit sanction in certain pontifical documents of recent date.

In a letter from the Cardinal Secretary of State to Comm. Ciriaci, President of the Catholic Action of Italy (March 30, 1930) we read :

“ Besides Catholic Action *properly so called*, there are other institutions, associations, and enterprises, which, in wonderful variety, tend towards a more intense ascetical culture, be it the practices of piety and religion and especially the apostolate of prayer, be it the exercise of Christian charity in all its applications and extensions ; and these produce, in fact, a wide and most efficacious apostolate, individual and social alike, under

organisational forms no less varied and appropriate to their several enterprises. But for this very reason they differ from the organisation proper to Catholic Action. They are, consequently, works that cannot be said without qualification to belong to Catholic Action, though they can and ought to be called its true and providential auxiliaries."

H.H. Pius XI, in a discourse to the Marian Congregations, spoken that same day (March 30, 1930), and referring to this same letter, said :

"It does not imply that all these forms of good works (auxiliary works) are truly, formally, and literally what we may call official Catholic Action : it is exclusively laid down that they can and should assist the central initiative of Catholic Action."

2. In a letter to the Argentine Hierarchy upon Catholic Action (February 4, 1931), the Holy Father returns to this distinction, and writes :

"Besides this great institution, that might well be called *official* Catholic Action, you have among you other associations, of which the purpose is to promote piety and religious formation, or charity and benevolence ; associations that we once called strong auxiliaries of Catholic Action, such as those which correspond to not a few of the aims of Catholic Action, and can and must provide it with well-prepared and active elements."

This manual is intended to illustrate Catholic Action properly so-called. But the reader will easily understand that much that we shall say, especially in this first part, can well be referred also to Catholic Action *in genere*.

II. ELEMENTS ESSENTIAL IN CATHOLIC ACTION

The Classical Definition of Pius XI

i. Pius XI defined Catholic Action as "the participa-

tion of the laity in the apostolate of the Church's Hierarchy."

The Holy Father himself has affirmed that this definition was given "after due thought, deliberately, indeed, one may say not without divine inspiration." (Discourse to the Young Women's Section of the Catholic Action of Italy, March 19, 1927). And it does, in fact, contain all the elements essential to Catholic Action. It is, therefore, a perfect definition, according to sound logic.

In his speech to the directors of the Catholic Action of Rome (April 19, 1931) the Holy Father, having repeated the words of the definition, added: "These words are few; but they contain many things, much meaning, and all that there should be in a definition"; for a definition, as we know, if it is to be a true one, must contain in germ all the elements essential to what is to be defined.

2. This definition, used to-day by all who want to offer an exact and complete conception of Catholic Action, can already be found implicit in the first encyclical of Pius XI, *Ubi Arcano Dei* (December 23, 1922), where we read:

"Say to your faithful laity that when they, united to their priests and their bishops, share in works of apostolate and of individual and social redemption, then more than ever are they the *genus electum*, the *regale sacerdotium*, the *gens sancta*, the People of God, hymned by St. Peter (1 Peter ii. 9)."

In these words exist all the ideas of the classic formula quoted above, a formula that recurs in so many words later on in a large number of documents that we need not enumerate. In some of these, 'collaboration' is sub-

stituted for 'participation.' In the encyclical *Non abbiamo bisogno* on Catholic Action (June 29, 1931) the two words, being practically synonymous,¹ are found side by side.

3. In certain documents the definition receives a larger development ; some of its elements are expressed therein in a more explicit way, for example, in a letter from the Holy Father to the President General of the International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues (July 30, 1928). Here Catholic Action is defined as

"the participation of the Catholic Laity in the Hierarchic Apostolate, for the defence of religious and moral principles, for the development of a wholesome and beneficent social action, under the guidance of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, outside and above political parties, with the intention of restoring Catholic life in the family and in society."

Its Contents

1. We now examine the essential elements contained in the formula : "Participation of the Laity in the Hierarchic Apostolate of the Church." The principal ones seem to us to be as follows : *Apostolate*—lay, auxiliary to and subordinated to the Hierarchy, organised, and consecrated to the triumph of the Kingdom of Christ.

2. We prove this briefly—

(a) *Apostolate*.—Catholic Action is a participation in the hierarchical apostolate ; it is therefore itself an apostolate, for the part derives its nature from the whole. Apostolate : that is, a mission for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. This is the generic element in

¹ We lay "practically synonymous," not only because absolutely synonymous words do not exist, but also because the word "participation" seems to us to bear a richer meaning, as we shall say in the proper place (Chapter III, on the Apostolate of Catholic Action).

Catholic Action ; it is therefore common both to it and to other institutions.

(Z) *Lay*.—Catholic Action is the participation of the laity in hierarchical apostolate. The special material of Catholic Action is therefore the laity ; the laity is its efficient cause. All others than the laity—clerics and religious—exercise their apostolate within the Church in other ways and measures ; and, though they play a necessary *rôle* in Catholic Action, they are not its specific material.

(c) *Auxiliary to the Hierarchy*.—Catholic Action is a participation in, collaboration with, the apostolate of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. So in the Church there are two distinct apostolates : that of the Hierarchy, which is the principal, true, and strictly so-called apostolate ; and that of the laity, which is secondary, and auxiliary to the former. Laymen in the army of Catholic Action are not called to act on their own initiative. Their *rôle* is to help the Hierarchy in every event, and as best they can.

(d) *Subordinate to the Hierarchy*.—This element is a necessary and logical consequence of the preceding one. An auxiliary apostolate cannot but be a subordinate one. Indeed, the collaborator cannot but be subject to the principal agent.

There is, too, the positive fact that our Lord entrusted to the Apostles and their successors alone the fulfilment of the apostolate ; all the other members of the Church have to exercise their own in dependence upon these.

(e) *Organised*.—Catholic Action participates in the apostolate of the Hierarchy. But the Hierarchy is an organic unity, and acts in an organised manner. So

Catholic Action, too, subordinated to and co-ordinated with the Hierarchy, must develop itself in an organised way. Therefore, the apostolate of Catholic Action is collective, made up, that is, of various forces. And these are not disconnected and independent among themselves, but co-ordinated, moving beneath the impulse of a single directive force. Catholic Action is therefore like a single force, composed of several. It is an organisation.

(/) *Consecrated to the Triumph of the Kingdom of Christ.*—This is the supreme ‘ end ’ of Catholic Action. And it is, further, contained in the pontifical definition. Indeed, if Catholic Action participates in the hierarchical apostolate, it must share in its desires and aims. Catholic Action must therefore desire precisely what the Hierarchy does, that is, what the Church does. But what has she ever desired, if not that Christ may reign in each soul, in families, and in society at large ? Catholic Action has, consequently, no other aim than this—the triumph of Christ’s Kingdom.

Other Explanatory Formulas

We have thus briefly illustrated all the constitutive elements of Catholic Action, contained, as in a grand synthesis, in the succinct but comprehensive formula of Pius XI. Desirous now of displaying these elements in a more ample and intelligible form, we can say that !
 qj Catholic Action is : “ The apostolate of the laity, in organisation, developed in aid of and directly dependent on the hierarchy, in view of the triumph of the Kingdom of Christ in individuals, in the family, and in society at large.” In this formula we see Catholic Action is envisaged as an activity. But should we wish to consider it rather as an institution, we could define it thus : “ The

organisation of the Catholic Laity, consecrated to the apostolate in aid of and in direct dependence on the hierarchy, in view of the triumph of the Kingdom of Christ, in individuals, in the family, and in society at large.”

CHAPTER II

The Ends of Catholic Action

I. ITS VARIOUS AIMS

One's aim, or end, is that for which one does something. It can also be called the 'final cause' of one's action, because it actually does flow into the production of the effect, by moving the agent to act.

All things work for an 'end.' Every organisation has its own proper end. The end determines the nature, the properties, the object, and the instruments of any institution, according to Aristotle. The end is the reason and measure of all that tends to that end. It is therefore logical that we should begin with the end of Catholic Action, and then pass on to its other substantial elements which in a measure depend upon it.

Aims—Exterior and Interior

The aims of Catholic Action are many and various, but they all converge towards one that is general and supreme.

I. In relation to the organisation they fall into interior and exterior aims.

Interior aims are those which are realised within the organisation itself, such as the spiritual formation of the members, the discipline and efficiency of its sections, the co-ordination of all its organised forces. The enterprises directed towards these ends constitute the internal activity of Catholic Action.

External aims are those realised outside the bounds of the organisation in the vast social field. They can be reduced to the various forms of apostolate, and are made concrete by means of an activity which, too, must be called external.

2. Internal aims are ordered towards external ones, for Catholic Action is essentially an apostolate. Thus, for example, Catholic Action must instruct its own members in their faith (internal cultural activity) ; but the members, once instructed, must in their turn instruct those outside their ranks (external cultural activity). In other words, members of Catholic Action must educate themselves in order to educate. The lamp receives oil from the careful housewife, burns it up, and changes it into light, and this in its turn illuminates all that are in the house (Matt. v. 15). Similarly, each member of Catholic Action having received the oil of Christian doctrine, must then change it into light of truth and warmth of life, to give light to every soul. They, too, like the Baptist, must be a " burning and shining lamp " (John v. 35), since they are to announce Christ to the world.

A Scale of Aims

I. In Catholic Action, as in any institution, there is a scale, a hierarchy of aims. At the head there is an aim that we shall call supreme and general. Under this come subordinate and particular aims, that can be regarded as means towards the former ; we call them * particular ' because they realise only a part of the vast complex programme of Catholic Action. At the base of all these is an aim that we can call " immediate," which is the formation of consciences.

2. Philosophers have formulated the principle that what comes first in intention comes last in execution. That is true, and, also, applicable to Catholic Action. Catholic Action—we insist—wishes to Christianise the *whole* of society ; that is its ‘maximum’ programme, its supreme aim—what comes first in its intention. But to arrive at this distant goal many a stage must be travelled, and it must begin by realising little by little the nearer aims, beginning with the immediate one—the Christianising of Consciences. This is what must come first in execution. Victory is the supreme aim of a mobilised army ; but to conquer one must begin with the drilling and equipment of the troops and the providing of munitions. In this chapter we shall speak separately of: (i.) the supreme and general aim ; (ii.) the particular aims ; (iii.) the immediate aim.

II. SUPREME AND GENERAL AIM

The Advent of the Kingdom of Christ

I. Catholic Action is the participating in the hierarchical apostolate, *i.e.*, the apostolate developed by the Catholic Hierarchy. Hence its general aim cannot but be identical with that of the Hierarchy. What is that aim ? Pontifical documents tell us.

Pius X, in his first encyclical, *E supremi apostolatus cathedra* (October 4, 1903), wrote :

“The supreme end towards which all our efforts must converge, is to establish the human race under the rule of our Lord, Jesus Christ.”

Later on, in the encyclical *II ferma proposito*, on

Catholic Action, June 11, 1905, he wrote the following clear words :

“The Church, while she diffuses the Kingdom of God where it has not yet been preached, studies in every way how to repair the losses that the realms already conquered have endured. *Instaurare omnia in Christo* has always been the motto of the Church, and in particular our own motto in the anxious hours that we are traversing.”¹

This, then, is the supreme aim of the Church—the triumph of the Kingdom of Christ.

2. It is, further, the supreme aim of Catholic Action. The selfsame Sovereign Pontiffs assert it explicitly. Documentary evidence of this is abundant. We shall limit ourselves to but a few quotations.

Pius X, in that same encyclical *Il fermo proposito*, uses St. Paul's words, *Instaurare omnia in Christo*, both as motto and as programme of Catholic Action, when he writes : “Catholic Action, since it sets before itself the restoration of all things in Christ, constitutes a true apostolate to the honour and glory of the selfsame Christ.” The reigning Pontiff, in his *Ubi Arcano*, synthétisés his programme in the well-known formula, *Pax Christi in Regno Christi*, and asserts that to Catholic Action belongs “indissolubly the restoration of the Kingdom of Christ, and the consolidation of that true peace which belongs to that Kingdom alone—*Pax Christi in Regno Christi*.” And he declares more explicitly in the letter of November 6, 1929, to Cardinal Segura, Primate

¹ The Church, in order to spread the reign of God “where it has not yet been preached,” makes use, as we know, of “Missionary Action”; to repair “the losses that the realms already conquered have endured” she makes special use of “Catholic Action.” “It is,” said Pius XI, in his speech to Catholic journalist» (June 26, 1929), “in fact a work of re-evangelisation.”

of Spain, that “Catholic Action sets before itself the diffusion of Christ’s Kingdom among individuals, in the family, and throughout society.”¹

The supreme ideal of Catholic Action is therefore the advent of Christ’s Kingdom. It is the militia of Christ the King, and on its standard is written the motto—Thy Kingdom Come. Therefore the Feast of Christ the King, instituted by Pius XI in the encyclical *Quas primas*, and kept on the last Sunday of October, can well be called the feast of Catholic Action, and should be specially observed by it.

Religious Aim

i. Our Lord said : “ My kingdom is not of this world ” (John xviii. 36). This means that it is not a material but a spiritual kingdom, not civil but religious, not natural but supernatural. Hence Catholic Action, which works for the advent of this kingdom, must have a religious aim. And since it is the aim that specifies the act, Catholic Action is a ‘religious’ action. This fact, too—which flows from the nature of things—is explicitly affirmed in several pontifical documents. Let this suffice : “ Catholic Action does not belong to the material, but to the spiritual order ; to the heavenly, not the earthly ; the religious, not the political ” (letter to Cardinal Bertram, *Quae nobis*).

2. From this an illegitimate deduction might be made—illegitimate, because wider than its premisses—that Catholic Action should dedicate itself to purely religious

¹ In other pontifical documents it is said that the aim of Catholic Action is the glory of God and the salvation of souls. This is in perfect harmony with what was said above, because the Kingdom of Christ seeks, precisely, the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

activities, as do certain associations called, owing to that very fact, * religious.' Such are Pious Unions, Confraternities, etc.

Here a mistake is being made owing to the confusion of the nature of the end with that of the means. Now, though it be true that the means must always be *proportionate* to the end, it does not therefore follow that *all* the means must be of the *same nature* as the end. Hence a material means may be apt for obtaining, at least in the long run, a spiritual end. This is the case here. The supreme aim of Catholic Action is to establish the Kingdom of Christ ; to lead souls to God. But, even as the ways by which God comes to the soul are many, so too there are many by which the soul reaches God. And Catholic Action must tread all the paths that Providence opens to it. So it must develop also certain activities which, though in themselves they be not religious or spiritual, still do lead up to a spiritual aim. One must, from time to time, provide amusement to preserve the spirit, cure the body to heal the soul, attend to the material interests of the people if we are to safeguard their spiritual values. In a word, the supreme aim of Catholic Action is of the spiritual order. As for its means, some are religious (and these are the most efficacious, and so preferable) ; others, though not religious, are good in themselves, apt in view of the supernatural aim, used with that end in view, and so, in a sense, *super-naturalised*].

1 In an official document of the Catholic Action of Italy we read : " The constitutive organisations of Catholic Action are essentially religious in nature, yet develop, as the means that they use, cultural, educational, benevolent, propagandist and other sorts of works." Letter from the President of the Central Committee of the Catholic Action of Italy to the head of the Government, November 13, 1928.

Social Aim

I. The scope of Catholic Action is also social. This has really been explained in what has already been said. For Catholic Action works for the advent of Christ's Kingdom. But where must Christ be King ? Only in individual consciences ? Only within the family ? No ; also in society at large. Pius XI wrote :

“ There is no difference between individuals and domestic or civil relationships ; because men, united in a society, are not less under the dominion of Christ than they are when living one by one. It is He alone who is the source of salvation whether private or public : *et non est in aliquo alio salus* (Encyclical *Quas primas* : on Christ the King).

Hence Catholic Action, like the Church, to whose service it is dedicated, must work that Christ may reign not only in the secret shrine of the conscience, or the narrow walls of the home, but also in the vast and sun-soaked fields of social life. It must work for the social triumph of Jesus Christ.

2. Hence Catholic Action is truly a social action, because it develops within society and by means of society in order to reconsecrate it to Christ. Pius XI states this as follows :

“ Catholic Action also justly names itself social action, for it aims at expanding the Kingdom of Christ, and to obtain thus for society the maximum good, and then, all the other benefits that flow therefrom, that is, those that belong to the good ordering of a nation, and are called ‘ political ’ ” (Letter *Quae Nobis* to Cardinal Bertram).

3. Nor let it be thought that the reign of Christ is a peril to or an infringement of civil rule. On the contrary, it is its safeguard and ennoblement. “ He snatches at no mortal crown, Who gives to man a heavenly throne ”

(Hymn for the Epiphany). Christ clutches at no man's sceptre ; He governs men by His divine authority, and destines them to heavenly issues. His reign is beneficent alike for ruler and for ruled. This is why Catholic Action turns out to be socially, too, beneficent, and deserves to be not merely tolerated, but approved by the public power. The Holy Father affirms this in the following calculated words :

“ It is clear that Catholic Action merits every favour and support not only from bishops and priests, who know well that it is to us as the apple of our eye, but also from the heads and magistratures of any and of every State. And if it indeed shall rejoice in this common support, it will certainly issue into a magnificent abundance of fruit for Catholic peoples, and, by reawakening the religious sentiment in souls, will forward not a little civil prosperity as well ” (Letter to Cardinal Bertram).

The Integral Aim of Catholic Action

1. Catholic Action, we said, aims at fulfilling a work of restoration ; it desires to “ repair the losses in the Kingdom of God already won to Him ” (Encyclical *Humani Generis* of Pius X). These losses, everyone knows, were brought about by secularism, which engineered the social apostasy from God. Catholic Action is in a manner a dyke against the overwhelming tide of secularism, which Pius XI calls the “ plague of our times ” (Encyclical *Quas Primas*). Secularism had appropriated the cry of the Jews : “ We will not have this Man to reign over us ” (Luke xix. 14) ; and Catholic Action answers : “ It is *necessary* that He reign ! ” (1 Cor. XV. 25).

2. But we must not think that Catholic Action has only a repairing function, so that it might be thought super-

fluous where secularism has not strewn its ruins around, or where the Kingdom of God has suffered no melancholy losses, or where these have already been made good. No ; the work of restoration is the principal and most imperative one, so long as there remain ruins to be rebuilt or hopes to be satisfied—but it is not the only work. Catholic Action, co-operating with the hierarchic apostolate of the Church, must dedicate itself to all the tasks of that apostolate, and so, not only restore, but also defend the conquests of the Reign of Christ, widen its frontiers, consolidate its positions, increase the number of its faithful subjects, enrich its spiritual patrimony—all without limits to its progress.

3. This is confirmed by pontifical documents, which do not attribute a merely restorative work to Catholic Action, as in the texts quoted above, but other functions too, no less essential. Some instances :

“The supreme aim of Catholic Action is the diffusion, defence, and application of the Faith and of Christian doctrine to life, alike individual, domestic and civil ” (Letter to Cardinal Bertram). “The hierarchic apostolate of the Church, and Catholic Action, which co-operates therewith, aim at the entire programme of the Heart of God : the foundation, expansion, and consolidation of the Kingdom of God in souls, in families and in society—in all its possible expansions, its extrinsecations, in all the depths that human activity can sound when the Grace of God is helping it ” (Speech to the Directors of the Catholic Action of Rome, April 19, 1931).

Hence the supreme scope of Catholic Action is to restore, defend, expand and consolidate the Kingdom of Christ.

III. PARTICULAR AIMS

The particular aims of Catholic Action are many, and can be arranged in a graded series. We shall note only

the chief ones, explicitly mentioned in pontifical letters that we shall quote as we go. They are as follows :

Co-operation with Life of Religion : the Diffusion of Christian Culture : the Christianisation of the Family : the Defence of the Rights and Liberties of the Church : Co-operation in the Scholastic Field : the Press : the Moralisation of Manners : the Christian Solution of the Social Question : the Christian Inspiration of all Civil Life.

Co-operation in the Life of Religion

I. Catholic Action, as assistant of the clergy, aims above all to help it in promoting the fulfilment of all religious duties, especially within each parish. Catholic Action associations were authoritatively called : “ The invigoration granted by God and by the Church to the mind and heart of the Parish Priest ” (Letter from Cardinal Gasparri, Secretary of State, to the President of the Unione Popolare, May 19, 1921). Well, it is evident that this ally must be of service to the parish priest in all that concerns parochial religious life. The associations of Catholic Action have the task of giving the clergy, in this field, all the co-operation that is possible to the layman. Particularly they co-operate :

In preparing and ensuring the success of religious functions and feasts, of processions, of courses of sermons, of missions, etc.—In the administration of the Sacraments, *e.g.*, by helping the clergy in the preparation of children for Confirmation and First Communion, and of the sick, for Viaticum and Extreme Unction, etc.—In teaching catechism in the parish schools and in any way that circumstances may dictate.—In liturgical matters and church music, especially the Gregorian chant.—In

the equipping of the church and anything else that is necessary to divine worship.

Since the parish, says Pius XI, is “a family in which the parish church is the home, and the altar the hearth whence Jesus Christ gives food to the family, along with all His graces and blessings and even His own adorable Body” (Speech to the Associations of the parish of the Rosary at Rome, June 27, 1926), it is clear that such sons of this family as are the most anxious to help its father, *ijty* the parish priest, in providing for all domestic necessities, ought to be members of Catholic Action.

2. Pius XI has mentioned explicitly, on various occasions, this task of Catholic Action. For brevity's sake, we quote two such testimonies only. The former concerns the apostolate of Catechism. He says :

“We warmly recommend to all Catholic societies, whether of men or of women, to give good example by assisting at the catechetical instructions that take place in their parish, and, on due occasions, to assist the clergy, so as to render themselves * well-deserving ' of the Church in this kind of ministry too. It is one that must appear to every Catholic as the supremely holy and necessary one ” (Motu *Proprio* on Christian Doctrine, June 29, 1923).

The second quotation concerns the Church's chant. In an autograph letter to the Italian Association of St. Cecilia, February 6, 1927, the Holy Father prays that

“the Cecilian delegates and associates may persevere with ever more ardent zeal in their art-apostolate for the sendee of divine worship, that is to say, of faith and Christian piety in their highest and most magnificent expression, the Divine Liturgy. We keenly desire that they may find an ever wider and more laborious recognition, both among the clergy secular and regular, and among the Directors of Catholic Action and among all the Faithful.”

Diffusion of Christian Culture

1. The diffusion of Christian principles is an essential task of Catholic Action, and clearly is a 'cultural activity.'

We have seen that there is an interior cultural activity, evolved within the bosom of our organisations, for the spiritual formation of their members (and we shall speak further on this, as of an 'immediate' aim of Catholic Action); and there is an exterior cultural activity conceived for the diffusion of Christian culture throughout the people, outside and beyond the confines of Catholic organisations. It is of this that we are here speaking, and we can comprehensively call it the Cultural, or Intellectual Apostolate.

2. This apostolate is not only essential to Catholic Action, but preliminary—it must precede every other kind of activity. For Catholic Action, we have said, intends to reconstitute the 'Christian State' in all its elements, and to do this by actuating Catholic principles in all sections of social life. Now it is evident that if these principles are to be 'actuated,' they must be asserted and diffused. Hence cultural propaganda, or a wide dissemination of ideas, must precede every other activity. This belongs, as a matter of fact, to the very nature of things. It derives from the immanent psychological law that the will follows the understanding. Man, in fact, acts as he thinks; thought is the mother of action. If the opposite happens all too often, that is because the human free will is smothered by passion and violates and deforms our nature, offending one of its fundamental laws. We call this offence 'falsehood,' 'incoherence,' and it puts to shame the very man who commits it.

History shows that the Christian apostolate was always a cultural apostolate—a diffusion of ideas. The

Apostles, before the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, were thus accused : “ You have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine ” (Acts v. 28). History further shows that the epochs of ruinous heresies and spiritual decadence were, as a rule, countersigned by a deep and extensive religious ignorance.

3. Many a pontifical document has set forth the cultural aim of Catholic Action.

In the Encyclical *II Fermo Proposito* Pius X affirms that Catholic Action has been created “ not alone for the sanctification of our souls, but also to diffuse and ever better to expand the Kingdom of God among individuals, families and society, procuring the good of our neighbour by the diffusion of revealed truths.” And Pius XI, in one of his speeches to the University student members of Catholic Action, exhorted them to become “ bearers of a wide patrimony of ideas . . . and givers of faith. . . . Happy rivalry with the munificence of God ! By means of Faith received, the gift of Faith is obtained for others ! ”

The Christianisation of the Family

I. The family has been defined as the ‘ cell * of society. Hence society cannot be healed in a Christian way unless the healing of the Family has first been ensured. There is special need of this to-day, for epicurean-materialist doctrines have prevailed so long that they have dislocated the family structure, involving thus the profanation of the domestic shrine. This profanation has taken place, and is all too truly taking place, even in Italy, though not yet to the terrible degree or with such ruinous consequences as it has elsewhere.

“ Even in Italy, especially in our days, we have to lament a relaxation of domestic ties, and a slow but progressive deca-

dence of the institution of the family, owing to the disregard of those moral laws that find their clearest sanction in the Church of Christ, and their strongest supernatural assistance.” (Letter of the Cardinal Secretary of State to the President of the Central Committee of Catholic Action, during the 13th Social Week held at Genoa, September, 1926. Its theme was *The Christian Family*).

We must therefore restore to our Lord His royal throne in every home. And Pius XI says that

“ Jesus Christ is king within the family when it has been formed through the sanctity of the true and genuine Sacrament of Matrimony instituted by Jesus Christ, and preserves inviolate its character of a sanctuary, where the authority of the parents models itself on the divine Fatherhood, from which it descends and derives its name (Eph. iii. 15), the obedience and piety of the children on that of the Child of Nazareth, and where the whole of life draws its inspiration for sanctity from the Holy Family ” (Encyclical *Ubi Arcano*. His Holiness describes the principles of Christian family life in his Encyclical *Casti Connubii*, December 31, 1930).

2. Pontifical documents declare that Catholic Action must take special concern for the Christianising of families. In the letter from the Cardinal Secretary of State quoted above, we read :

“ If it be opportune that Catholic Action, aiming at the Christianisation of Society as a whole, should attend to economic or political problems, when these are complicated with moral and religious ones, it is no less fitting that Catholic Action should call the attention of (Italian) Catholics towards the institution of the Family, from whose right functioning depends the good of civil society itself.”

This is then a task for the whole of Catholic Action, but in particular for its adult organisations, which look towards the formation of parenthood.¹

¹ These organisations and their specific duties are spoken of in Part II.

The Defence of the Rights and Liberty of the Church

i. Catholic Action, then, aims at restoring to our Lord His throne in society. But, as Pius XI has said :

“He is King when that position is recognised for His Church which He Himself assigned to her within human society, giving her the shape and constitutions of a Society which should be, in virtue of its object, perfect and supreme in its own order by establishing her as the depository and interpreter of His divine intention, and because she is the mistress and guide of every other Society whatsoever ” (Encyclical *Ubi Arcano*).

Two things are therefore asked for the Church of Christ—that she should have within society that position “ which He Himself assigned to her ”; and that she may be able truly to make herself “ mistress and guide of all other societies.”

If these sacred rights are threatened or violated, her defence becomes a duty for all the sons of the Church, and especially for those who are dedicated to her service. Further, the rights of the Church are but the rights of Jesus Christ Himself; and they are the rights of every religious conscience. Our Lord, in fact, bequeathed them to His Church, for the good of all men.

2. Unnecessary to say that in this defensive work Catholic Action will always maintain itself within the limits of the law, for the Gospel does not allow us to defend our own rights by violating those of others; that is, evil may never be done that good may come. The State, therefore, just as it has nothing to fear from the Church, need fear nothing from Catholic Action, her knight. We shall say that the defence of the rights and the liberty of the Church is actually a benefit for society, and a service rendered to civilisation itself; for, as

Pius XI has written : “ The world’s true civilisation is a Christian one ” ; and “ by the very force of things, the Church is in fact guardian and protectress of Christian civilisation ” (Encyclical *II Fera Proposito*).

3. Catholic Action, as we have seen, arose as a kind of reaction against secular domination. That is why its function was at first chiefly defensive. The rights of the Church and of the Apostolic See were then its main objectives.

4. Is this duty of ‘ defence ’ likely ever to grow less ? The Gospel does not authorise any such hope ; indeed, it foreshadows the opposite. Our Lord predicted indefectibility for His Church—not peace. “ The Church,” Pius X also wrote, “ knows that the gates of hell will not prevail against her ; but she also knows that in the world she will have tribulation, that her apostles are sent out like lambs among wolves ; that their followers will always be covered with scorn and hate, even as their Divine Founder was saturated with them ” (Encyclical *II Fera Proposito*). Our Lord said to His apostles : “ The servant is not greater than his lord : if they persecuted Me, so also will they persecute you ” (John xv. 20). “ In the world you shall have tribulation ; but be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world ” (John xvi. 33).

Twenty centuries of history confirm the prophecy of Christ. The Church on earth has always been militant ; the City of God has always been confronted by the City of Satan. Yes ; the fight has not at all times been equally severe ; the combatants change their positions, their weapons, their military tactics. But the war has been continuous, with its damage done and its mins. And so there has always been need of defence and of repair.

4. The Popes have assigned this matter of defence, too, to Catholic Action.¹ Pius XI has called our Catholic organisations the ‘ Guards ’ of the Church (see Encyclical *Iniquis Afflictisque*, on the conditions of the Church in Mexico, November 18, 1926). And, through his Cardinal Secretary of State he wrote :

“ Though Catholic Action, of its very nature, must put itself above all rivalries of parties, it cannot all the same renounce the right and the duty, which is indeed essential to its aim, to watch and act, to the utmost of its powers and conformably with the direction of the Holy See, for the protection of the common good and above all of moral and religious interests, which are alike its basis and its crown ” (Letter from the Cardinal Secretary of State to the Archbishop of Milan, September 18, 1925).

Co-operation in the Scholastic Field

I. The school is among the most efficacious instruments of propaganda of ideas and of education. The enemies of Christ know this well, for at all times and places they have always tried to seize its monopoly. Hence Catholic Action puts, among the chief items of its programme, co-operation in the scholastic field—co-operation with the Church, which has well-defined rights in regard to schools. The Church has, above all, the right of founding her own schools and educational institutes of whatsoever grade, being the perfect society constituted by Christ for preparing and leading souls to their supernatural end? The Church has, in fact, always

¹ Pius X, in his Encyclical *Il Fermo Proposito*, reckons die following as among the aims of Catholic Action : “ To defend, to support, with a truly Catholic spirit, the rights of God in all things, and those, not less sacred, of die Church.”

* “ The Church has the right to found schools of whatsoever grade, not only elementary, but also of intermediate and superior standing ” (Canon Law, c. 1375). The Canons concerning what follows are 1373, »374» »381, »38».

exercised this her native right over a wide field, becoming thus a beacon of intellectual light for the whole world.

Besides this, the Church has rights over all other schools to which Catholic children go. Her only aim is that such schools be entirely Catholic, that is, conformable to all the rights of the Church and of Christian families.

2. Now when is a school truly such ? Pius XI, in his Encyclical upon Christian Education, answers thus :

“ A school does not become conformable to the rights of the Church and of the Christian family and worthy to be attended by Catholic children, simply because religious instruction is given there (too often parsimoniously. . .). That a school may be such, all its teaching, all its arrangements, teachers, programme, and books, at all levels, must be inspired by the Christian spirit, under the direction and maternal vigilance of the Church, so that religion be truly both foundation and crown of all instruction, in all grades, not only primary, but also intermediate and higher.”

Now Catholic Action puts itself at the side of the Church in the scholastic area too, helping her in these two noble causes, the foundation and maintenance of her own schools and the Christianisation of all the rest.¹

3. As for this particular task of Catholic Action, we again have the witness of the Popes. Pius X (*Il Fermo Proposito*) places among the aims of Catholic Action

“ the bringing back of Christ into the schools.” Pius XI said that “ of all the fields devastated by secular legislation, the school is that into which Catholic Action, ever more richly provided with members and leaders wisely instructed, must

¹ This help given to the Church is, moreover, a duty for all Catholics, sanctioned by Canon Law in these words : “ Let die Faithful not omit to give all their help and collaboration in the foundation and maintenance of Catholic y-hooh ” (Canon 1379).

descend with all its forces, for a still more tenacious defence of the supreme interests of Religion, of the family, and of the Fatherland ” (Allocution to the Consistory of December 14, 1925).

More explicitly, the same Pontiff in his Encyclical on Christian Education writes :

“ Everything that the Faithful do to promote and defend the Catholic school for their children is a genuinely religious work, and therefore a primary task for Catholic Action. Hence all those Associations are particularly dear to our paternal heart and worthy of high praise, which attend with so much zeal to so necessary a work.”

In the same Encyclical the Pope makes the following declarations :

“ Let it be loudly proclaimed, and well understood and acknowledged by all, that in procuring Catholic schools for their children, Catholics in whatsoever nation of the world are not performing a work proper to party politics, but a religious work which their conscience exacts from them. They do not at all intend to separate their sons from the nation’s body or soul, but rather to educate them in the way that is most perfect and most conducive to national well-being ; for the good Catholic, precisely in virtue of Catholic doctrine, is by that very fact a better citizen, a lover of his land, and loyally submitted to the constituted civil Authority proper to any and every legitimate form of Government.”

The Press

The ‘ good ’ Press is another strong instrument for the propaganda of ideas, and in fact of Christianisation. Hence it enters into the programme of Catholic Action. But what is to be understood by ‘ good ’ Press ? Every publication (book, periodical, newspaper) that not only does not offend dogma and Christian morals (negative aspect), but makes itself an instrument for their diffusion

and defence (positive aspect). It is at the same time a means of preservation in so far as it hinders the effects of the bad Press, and a means of education, carrying into minds a breath of Christian spirituality. Such are the characteristics, such the function, of the good Press. And only so has it the right to call itself also the Catholic Press.

2. In this field Catholic Action has to accomplish two separate tasks—preparation and diffusion—enterprises that should proceed in perfect harmony, because wide diffusion presupposes a good preparation, which on its side is not usually possible without the former. Each, moreover, presupposes that Catholics are conscious of the necessity and efficacy of the good Press, which at present they are but seldom and in a very imperfect way. Hence Catholic Action must definitely harness itself to this job—the formation of consciences in regard to the fundamental problem of the Press, especially of the daily Press.

Besides this, it ought to prepare its own Press ; not merely a Catholic Press, but a Catholic Action Press, a faithful interpreter of the thought and direction of the Hierarchy, and meant to diffuse the orders of the directors and nourish the virtue of the general members.

3. The Popes have always recommended the good Press, as a very efficacious method of apostolate and as a chief function of Catholic Action.

Already Leo XIII, in his Encyclical *Etsi Nos* to the Bishops of Italy (February 15, 1882), wrote :

“ Writing must be countered with writing, so that the very method which is so powerful to destroy, be turned to the salvation and benefit of mankind, and that from the source of poison and death may flow forth remedies for the future. So

it is desirable that in every province newspapers or periodicals be established—and, so far as possible, daily papers.”

The reigning Pontiff has often hymned the power of the Press, especially of the “tiny page that devours space.” And, commenting on the famous phrase, “Had St. Paul been alive to-day, he would be a journalist,” he remarked :

“We may doubt whether this would come literally true ; but in spirit it certainly would. For there is no doubt that St. Paul, who, despite material difficulties, by his letters and writings that he so wonderfully multiplied, from this day onwards has carried the Gospel over so great a part of the world, there is no doubt but that this man of ardent soul would have used to the widest possible extent that great means of propagating thought and ideas that is the Press.” (Discourse on the heroic virtues of Ven. (now St.) Claret, apostle of the Good Press, January 5, 1926).

The same Pontiff, speaking to the Catholic Action Men's Associations during the assembly of Catholic Young Men's Societies, November 2, 1928, gave them this behest : “The Catholic Press is increasing as it ought to do. Wherefore let it be supported by a wider diffusion, and a better propaganda.” On another occasion he explicitly asserted that the good Press is one of the most important functions and activities of Catholic Action (Speech to the Catholic journalists of Italy, July 26, 1929).

Good Morals

i. It is all too evident that Catholic Action, called to work for the Church for the salvation of souls, must pay diligent attention to the moralisation of manners public and private. The words of Christ are clear : “If thou

dost wish to come to eternal life, keep the commandments ” (Matt. xix. 17). Herein the task of Catholic Action is double : positive, the education of consciences ; and negative, the defence of public good behaviour. Thus it imitates the farmer who, wishing to gather in his harvest in the autumn, does more than merely plough and sow his field, but fences it round about, preserves it from disease, and repairs the damage done by nocturnal depredations.

2. Positive work for the moral education of conscience must hold the first place. For all defensive methods are but fragile foil-work, when the moral sense of a nation is dead or even weakened.

Now what we have to lament to-day—it is, in fact, the evil of our era—is not so much widespread ill-behaviour—the scourge of other times as well—as the loss or distortion of the moral sense. Especially owing to the long de-Christianising work of secularism, the fundamental principles of Christian and moral life (we can even say of the natural law) have in many consciences been quite obscured, even when they have not been wholly annihilated. Such consciences have lost the very notion of ‘wrong,’ and so remain deaf to all appeals. Hence Catholic Action, with its manifold propaganda, strengthened by the supernatural assistance of religion, has developed not only with the limits of its own body, but also outwards, towards the great masses, and wants to awaken and revive that moral sense, so that each may find in himself the force to stand upright, or at least to rise after his falls.

3. This involves the whole labour of defending public good behaviour. This is done by getting rid of scandals, easy abuses, the many focuses of infection, like porno-

graphy, immoral spectacles, indecent fashions, white slave traffic, prostitution, blasphemy and degraded speech, alcoholism, gambling, and so forth. In this field Catholic Action wishes to collaborate not only with the Church, but also with State authority and institutions, to the principal effect that the legislature, which is the guardian of behaviour, should respond better and better to its own end, and be applied in all and by all ; for many and many a cause is in conspiracy against it, perpetuating Dante's line : " The laws exist, but who puts a hand to them ? " (*Purg.*, xvi, 97). But for the defence of public morals, the trenches and bastions of the laws and public institutions are insufficient. We need also private works of assistance and prevention, like clubs for young men, circulating libraries, moral plays and amusements ; works with which the apostolic zeal of the clergy and militant laity has long since covered our countryside.

4. The Holy See has indicated this precise aim of Catholic Action as well. Pius XI attributes to it the great social merit of

" maintaining and defending the foundations of the survival and well-being of the peoples, such as the integrity of morals and the inviolability of domestic life " (Letter to Cardinal Bertram). He also declared that " not only questions of individual and domestic morality, but also those of vaster importance, that is, social morality, cannot escape the Church's apostolate, nor therefore, in due proportion, Catholic Action, which desires to co-operate in that apostolate " (Speech to the Directors of Catholic Action in Rome, April 19, 1931).

The Christian Solution of the Social Question

I. This is another of the particular tasks that the Holy See has assigned to Catholic Action. Indeed, it derives from the very nature of Catholic Action, since society

cannot be said to be Christian-wise restored, so long as all social relations be not conformed to the principles of the gospels.

To the solution of all those problems which fall under the general heading of ' Social Question ' Catholic Action contributes in two ways : (i.) indirectly ; by educating consciences in Christian principles, and creating thus an atmosphere favourable to their moral realisation, that atmosphere without which all laws and institutions, even if they remain in existence, become mere vain exterior apparatus and scene-painting ; (ii.) directly ; by promoting and assisting all the organisations and enterprises that set out to apply Christian principles to politico-social life.

2. We shall speak more fully of this important function of Catholic Action later on, illustrating the relations between these and actual socio-economic works, and recalling the pontifical teachings on this matter. Here we limit ourselves to but a single reference. In the speech quoted above, Pius XI, when explaining the programme of Catholic Action, said :

“ Until the social question, and, first of all, the labour-problem, shall cease to be a merely material question, an affair of economics or, as they say, of the stomach and digestion, and until it becomes a question regarding conscience and human dignity, and in a word a supremely moral question, the Church, the Holy See, the Hierarchy, the Apostolate, for the sake of the divine mandate which is theirs, not only cannot refuse to themselves to come to the succour of all, but cannot dispense themselves from doing so, considering this as a definite and primary duty.”

The Christian Inspiration of the Whole of Social Life

i. Catholic Action, as we have said, has for programme “ the diffusion, the defence and the application

of the Faith and of Christian doctrine in life individual, social and domestic " (Letter to Cardinal Bertram). It must therefore contribute to the Christianisation of all the elements of civil life—laws, ordinances, public institutions.¹ Again, to carry this out, Catholic Action displays a double function : (a) indirect, by way of the Christian education of consciences, and the study and propagation of Catholic principles in public life ; and (&) direct, by way of intervention with the public powers for the safeguard of the rights of the religious conscience, and by the realisation of Catholic principles in laws and public institutions.

2. Here, too, we have the explicit teaching of the Holy See. Among the aims of Catholic Action that the Encyclical *Ferrno Proposito* of Pius X records, is the following :

" To labour that the public laws be inspired by justice, and that those to which justice is opposed be corrected or suppressed." And Pius XI has written : " Catholic Action, while keeping itself, as such, above all party politics, will co-operate for the public good, either by the diffusion or actuation of Catholic principles, which are the foundation and guarantee of all public prosperity, or by way of an accurately Christian formation of consciences, which shall ensure to the State a phalanx of citizens, exemplary not only for the well-being of the Church, but also solicitous for the general good, no less than for individual or domestic well-being. But if political questions are entangled with religious and moral interests, then Catholic Action will be able to and should intervene directly when useful, directing the forces of Catholics outside of merely personal views, with a disciplined action, towards the superior interests of souls and of the Church." (Letter to Cardinal Segura, Primate of Spain. See Chapter VIII, on the relations between Catholic Action and politics).

¹ 'Civil' life is from *civitas*, State. It is in the same sense that * political ' life, from *palis*, or 'public' or even 'social' life are used.

IV. THE IMMEDIATE AIM

I. The immediate aim of Catholic Action is, as we have said, the formation of consciences ; and this has the value of an indispensable means in regard to every other of its aims. Here we are speaking of the formation of the members of Catholic Action, but we know already that this formative work must extend itself to the whole population by way of the ' cultural ' apostolate.

That the formation of consciences must be the very first undertaking of Catholic Action is a fact frequently stated by the Holy See. Pius X wrote :

“ Catholic Action is a true apostolate to the honour and glory of Christ. Divine grace is needed if we are to understand it properly, nor is this given to one who is not united with Christ. Only when we shall have formed Jesus Christ within us, shall we be more easily able to give Him back to family and society ” (Encyclical *Il Fermo Proposito*, June 2, 1905). Benedict XV expressed himself no otherwise. “ It is not enough that the clergy and faithful who are devoted to Catholic Action should organise the people : it is supremely necessary that it should be instructed in the truth of the Faith. In a word—Christ must be formed in the conscience of each Catholic, before Catholics can be apt to fight for Christ ” (Letter *Accepimus*, to the Hierarchy of Colombia, August 1, 1916). The witness of the reigning Pontiff is very full. “ The profoundly Christian formation of the members of Catholic Action is presupposed : fruitfulness comes second ” (Letter to Cardinal Segura, November 6, 1929) : “ Since Catholic Action is co-operation with the apostolate of the hierarchy, it is demanded that its members be above all good Christians. The priest himself cannot work for the sanctification of souls, if he be not first a saint himself, since ‘ no one gives what he has not got ’ ” (Speech to a group of Argentinian priests, March 6, 1930). Hence Catholic Action must be primarily a formative, educative action.

2. “ It is the organisations for the young,” wrote

Pius XI in his letter to Cardinal Segura, often quoted, "that principally must attend to the spiritual formation of the members." This is natural, for it is they that welcome the individual during the period of his formation. The formative task, therefore, becomes in their case, if not exclusive, at least predominant. Not but what adult groups must also work for this end. Men must, indeed, be educated all their lives long, seeing that they must reproduce in themselves Jesus Christ, our inexhaustible model. Hence the necessity of a continuous spiritual perfecting. (This was the preoccupation of St. Paul—the formation of Christ in souls, that he said he carried in his heart "till Christ be formed within them"; Gal. iv. 19.) Secondly, adult education requires to be brought up to date proportionately with their new conditions of life and new relative responsibilities.

3. The formation of the members of Catholic Action must be complete, both in width and depth. It is so when it is religious, moral, social, and apostolic. We must say a word or two about each of these characteristics.

Religious Formation

I. By religious formation we mean the preparation of man for fulfilling his duties towards God. In other words, formation in view of piety.

This formative action will aim especially at avoiding certain defects in 'piety,' or at correcting them if they exist. The main ones seem to be : (a) religious sentimentalism, vague and inconclusive, unaccompanied by the practices that the Church prescribes ; (b) cultural exteriorism, consisting of empty ceremonies, barren exterior practices that do not arise from the springs of interior life ; (c) religious egoism, that reduces all or the

most of religion to petition, and, indeed, requests for temporal favours.¹ On the other hand, a good religious formation must prepare a man for all the acts of religion, first, interior ones and then exterior ones, which are but their necessary forthshining. We have also to make sure that religion becomes the good leaven that lightens and sweetens the whole of life; the motive force that arouses and directs every action, private or public, towards our supernatural end. Finally, the Christian must take his way towards the heights of sanctity by having Jesus Christ put before him as model of perfection, whereof he will seek to be the true reproduction.²

2. All Christians are therefore called to holiness. But what must we say of those who “by a special grace from God are called and chosen for a work so similar to that of a priest?” (Pius XI to the Archbishop of Malines, August 15, 1928). For them sanctifying action must naturally be more intense. And it is the same Pontiff who teaches this, when, making a comparison between the young people’s associations of Catholic Action and the other associations to which religious assistance is conceded, he writes that the former must obtain for young people “not only that minimum of Christian and

¹ This spurious religiosity is very frequent to-day among Catholics. It turns religion into a sort of insurance society against the mishaps of life. It is not so very different from paganism. Pagans, too, prayed to their mysterious divinities, but only to render them propitious, ready to keep disasters afar and to lavish on them their favours. You will not, speaking generally, find any other relation between worshipper and worshipped in pagandom; neither adoration, nor love, nor trust, nor generous self-devotion. This is an egotist’s religion, a business-religion.

* Pius XI, in his Encyclical *Rerum Omnium* for the 300th centenary of St. Francis de Sales (January 26, 1923), exhorted the clergy to spare no pains to make the Faithful thoroughly understand that sanctity of life is not the privilege of a few to the exclusion of the rest, but that all are called to it, and that on all its obligation rests.

supernatural life, which shall save it from the flood of neo-paganism, but that greater abundance of life, to provide which the divine Redeemer declares that He has come: 'Ego veni ut vitam habeant et abundantius habeant' " (to Cardinal Schuster, April 26, 1931).

Moral Formation

1. Moral formation consists in the preparation of the will for the exercise of the moral virtues. Among these, the 'cardinal virtues' take precedence—prudence, justice, temperance, fortitude, to which we refer all others, even 'religion,' it, too, a 'moral' virtue, super-excellent because of its immediate object—the worship of God. Here we speak of the *other* moral virtues. Now, while 'religion' has for its object our duties towards God, the other moral virtues have for object our duties towards ourselves and to our neighbours.

2. Assuming this, we must add a few rules concerned with a complete moral education.

First, we must form the will in view of the performance of all the moral duties, easier and more difficult alike, not arbitrarily mutilating the decalogue, not tearing out any page of the divine Scriptures, the Gospel, or of the Church's law.¹

Second, we must adapt our moral lessons to the conditions of life and psychological requirements of each, since duties differ according to state of life, and different are the paths to perfection according to individual situations. Thus the duty of chastity differs before and

¹ The command of Christ given to the apostles (and in their person to all Christian teachers) is very clear: "Go, teach all nations, commanding them to observe *all* that I have commanded you" (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20). A "totalitarian mandate," both by reason of subjects to teach, and persons to be taught.

after marriage. But the substance of education remains the same, however different be the means and methods of teaching.

Third, we must guide the will towards the observance not only of the precepts, but also of the evangelical counsels, so far as this is compatible with the duties of a man's proper state, but always aiming here, no less than in religious formation, at the highest ideals of Christian perfection.¹ But if all Christians should put before them so lofty an ascetical ideal, all the more should those who fight as members of Catholic Action, which shares in the mission and the dignity of the priesthood.

3. But a distinction is here necessary if we are to avoid a very dangerous mistake. The 'maximum programme,' which must always come first in our intention, need not exclude the 'minimum' programme, which may come first in execution. We arrive at ascetical perfection, as a rule, one step at a time, and the physical law, that Nature takes no leaps, is verified also in the moral world. Whence the educator must be wide awake and discreet—must place upon shoulders no more than the weight that they can carry; nor increase the load till the shoulders be more robust. Anything else might produce disheartenment in the pupil, and make him cut short at the outset a path that might have led him very high. Of course, this rule admits of exceptions, as in the case of souls endowed

¹ It is an educational and ascetical error to suppose that the evangelical counsels constitute a programme for religious alone. The difference between religious and ordinary Christians is simply this: that the former have solemnly promised to God the observance of the evangelical counsels, and have put themselves into easier conditions for realising their ideal. But be it very clear that all Christians are called to the perfection of the evangelical counsels in the measure allowed to them by the duties of their state (Tanqueray, *Compendium of Ascetical and Mystical Theology*).

with very great generosity, or favoured with special graces.

Social Formation

I. Man has duties not only as an individual, but also as a member of society. Therefore social formation consists in the adjustment of the will to the exercise of social duties.

Hence we see that social formation is nothing but a necessary completion of moral formation. Our religion is not, as some seem to think, a well-drawn-up formulary of dogmatic truths, nor yet just a splendid liturgy. Christ's gospel is also a volume of sacred and indefeasible duties ; and of duties that embrace the whole of human activity, not only private and domestic, but also public. Now social education teaches us how we should translate the evangelical precepts and counsels in social life ; that is, in the life of the working man, the professional man, the citizen, the elector, the legislator ; how social and political problems should be solved in the light of Christian thought, and on the lines marked out by the Church.

2. There is special need of such an education to-day. The political and social scheme of society to-day attributes, as a rule, to every citizen certain rights that for long were denied to him. The people is, to-day, not merely a spectator in the theatre of public life, but an actor. Whether or no a duty corresponds to every right, at least we have the duty of exercising our rights in a way consonant with their aim, and with the supreme principles of divine law. A practical consequence : the Catholic citizen will have to exercise all his political and social rights in harmony with the principles of Christian morality.

Now this is precisely where we discover deplorable shortcomings. What has happened, in the field of faith, after the political and social transformations of the last century? Consciousness of religious duties, under the influence of atheist and materialist theories, has become enfeebled and obscured, though on the whole it has not entirely died out. But that political and social duties must be harmonised with religious duties is a sense that in very many indeed is not even conceived, or is at best in an embryonic state. Hence even among Catholics the strange phenomenon of a double conscience often repeats itself—one conscience for private life, another for public life; religious at home and in church, unreligious (if not anti-religious) in public offices, in political and social life. The chief cause of this melancholy phenomenon was certainly liberal doctrine, which turned religion into a private affair, creating a double morality, and again, political and economic amoralism.

3. This phenomenon of unawareness, of dislocation, this wide-diffused spiritual sickness, requires careful treatment; this is, precisely, the social formation that Catholic Action wishes to give first to its own members, and then to everyone. More than once has the reigning Pontiff called upon Catholic Action to tackle this task of social education. Already in his first Encyclical *Ubi Arcano* he declared that Catholic Action must form “consciences so accurately Christian as to know—at any moment in every situation of private or public life—how to find or at least thoroughly to understand and apply the Christian solution of the manifold problems that present themselves in the several conditions of life.” And later, speaking to the members of Catholic Action, he said :

“ We wish to solve all problems of life, whether of public or of private life, of civil or of political life. And in view of this we need minds to have been prepared and formed in Catholic doctrine ” (Speech to the Young Men’s Associations of Rome, October 19, 1923).

Apostolic Formation

i. This is the preparation needed for the exercise of the apostolic virtue. And since, as we have shown, every Christian must have some apostolate about him, he must be educated in this department too Pius XI, speaking to the students from Bamabite Colleges, April 14, 1930, said that “ young men are educated Christian-wise and Catholic-wise, not merely for their own advantage, for the salvation of their own soul, but also for another task—that of apostolate.”

The apostolic virtue is composed above all else of generosity, being in itself an effusion of spiritual charity. But also of courage, yet not apart from prudence, which tempers every virtue. In its turn, Christian fortitude generates apostolic courage, which, however, has nothing to do with braggadocio or violence. It was to this courage that Pius XI was in a day of test and trial exhorting all the soldiers of Catholic Action when he cried :

“ Away with fear, with all fear, save for one fear only, the fear of God, a filial fear—‘ Come, my sons, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord.’ This is the fear of offending, of grieving our Father, of not honouring our Father as He deserves : and this is the fear that casts out every other fear. When we fear God, we no more are afraid of men, or of human change and chance ” (Speech to the members of the General Assembly of the Catholic Action of Italy, May 17, 1931).

2. The organised members of Catholic Action require to be educated with a particular care in view of the virtue

of 'apostolate,' being "a pacific army of apostles, wishful to win souls to Christ and to the Church" (Letter to Cardinal Segura). Pius XI says further that "in order to make the laity share in an apostolate such as the hierarchic one, divinely instituted and proceeding straight from the hands and heart of Jesus Christ, we must first form the apostles, the co-apostles, the participators in His divine mission" (Speech to the Directors of the Catholic Action of Rome, April 19, 1931). Hence every Catholic Action association, but especially of its younger members, must be a school of apostolate.

3. Participants in the hierarchic apostolate need a formation not only more intense than the average one, but also more specialised. Thus only will it be adequate to the special exigencies and duties of the apostolate itself. Hence the absolute need of making them thoroughly understand the nature, end, programme, and organisation of Catholic Action, for, as we have said at the outset, you cannot do a thing well if you do not love it, and you cannot love it if you do not understand it. Hence, from the close of childhood itself, elementary ideas about Catholic Action must be given to the young aspirants towards membership; ideas that embrace more and more in proportion as age and general culture advance. Thus alone can a complete formation be given to the Catholic Action associate.

CHAPTER III

The Apostolate of Catholic Action

I. PRELIMINARY NOTIONS

The Two Main Divisions of Catholic Action

I. In Catholic Action the formation of consciences is not an end in itself; it is a means, a preliminary. Formation has action in view.

The programme of Catholic Action contains, in fact, two distinct parts. The former, preparatory, consists in the formation of its members (interior activity); the latter, that we can call * executive,' in the various forms of apostolate. So teaches Pius XI :

“ Catholic Action must consist of two things—it must fall into two parts not necessarily successive ones : two divisions, ideal and moral. A work of formation, in any case. Catholic Action must have as preliminary the individual sanctification of each one of its members : so that the supernatural life abounds and superabounds within them. But after this first and formative element, comes the second—the distribution of this life, the action of apostolate, which means putting into practice, in all its extension and in all its possibilities, the first apostolate of all, that of the Twelve Apostles ” (Speech to the Directors of the Catholic Action of Rome, April 19, 1931).

Again, he writes :

“ Catholic Action does not consist in attending exclusively to one's own perfection, though this must be its first and supreme intention, but also in a true and genuine apostolate ” (Letter to Cardinal Bertram).

2. The Holy Father explained this truth clearly in an audience granted to the President of the Catholic Youth Movement of Belgium, and made his meaning very manifest :

“ When we are preparing a Missionary, we think at first of his interior formation. But if the Missionary kept this interior life for himself, the world would never be converted. He must, too, preach, perform various works, act exteriorly. So must Catholic Action do. Its first care must be to form good Christians. But the Christian, once formed, must extend outwards the vitality he has received. He must carry forth everywhere this treasure of Christianity and make it profitable in every field—family, public life, the political field included. For what we wish is that Christ should reign on earth as He does in heaven ; and that His royalty over the world become once more effective.”

Catholic Action and Apostolate

1. The first division of Catholic Action (formation) is therefore ordered towards the second (apostolate) ; so much so that we can say that Catholic Action is substantially an Apostolate. Pius X, in his Encyclical *11 Fera Proposito*, wrote : “ Catholic Action, since it proposes to itself to restore all things in Christ, constitutes a true apostolate on behalf of Christ Himself.” And the reigning Pontiff defined it not as a preparation for the hierarchic apostolate, but as a participation therein. It is then itself an apostolate, since the part takes its nature from the whole. Its very name indicates the selfsame truth : Catholic—not Prayer nor Education—but Action. It could be called still more clearly Apostolic Action, in so far as, we shall see, the notion ‘ apostolic ’ is included in the adjective ‘ Catholic.’

2. This does not certainly imply that Catholic Action

is neither prayer nor education, but that apostolate stands as its characteristic and specific element, which distinguishes it from other associations or religious works having the personal sanctification or the worship of God as their proper and exclusive end. Had the Apostles, after Pentecost, remained inside the Cenacle, in prayer and contemplation, the world would not have been converted to Christ, nor would they have deserved the name of Apostles. Similarly, the members of Catholic Action must sanctify themselves in order to sanctify others—must be Christian, but also Christianising, souls. Pius XI has given them the noble name of co-apostles, and finely termed them : “ Centres whence activity and beneficent actions ray forth ; radio-active focuses—the loveliest and most sublime of all radio-activities ! ” (to the University Students of the Catholic Action of Italy). So the associations of Catholic Action shall, indeed, be cenacles of prayer and of spiritual formation, but not cenacles with closed doors. Like that of Jerusalem long ago, they aspire to pour forth upon the world the Gospel’s light, and to distribute to man all the precious things of heaven. In Chapter IX we shall see that the associates of Catholic Action must live a ‘ mixed ’ life, active and contemplative in one.

The Generic Idea of Apostolate

Here we must go a little deeper into the generic idea of ‘ apostolate.’ ‘ Apostolate,’ from the Greek *apostello*, “ I send,” means a sending, a mission. Christ said to His Apostles : “ As the Father hath sent Me, so send I you ” (John xx. 21). “ I send you as lambs among wolves ” (Luke x. 3). So the Apostles were truly men sent by the Lord. And ‘ sent ’ with what aim ? Listen

to our Lord Himself: "Go into all the world; preach My Gospel to every living creature. He that shall believe and be baptised, shall be saved: he that believeth not shall be condemned" (Mark xvi. 15-16). When changing Saul into Paul, Christ Himself was to say: "This is a vessel of election to carry My Name before peoples and princes and the sons of Israel" (Acts ix. 15). The Apostles therefore were sent—to preach the Gospel, to save and sanctify souls, and to lead them to their eternal destiny. So, in the Church, every apostolate must form itself upon that of the Twelve, and we can define the Christian apostolate as a "mission for the spiritual salvation of our neighbour."

Everyman has the mission to save his own soul; the apostle has a wider one, to save the souls of others along with his own; or, better, to save himself by means of

2. In the evangelical idea of apostolate are embedded the ideas of movement, search, and toilsome conquest. This is the explicit command of Christ: "Go, teach all nations" (Matt. xxviii. 19): "Go through all the world, and preach . . . (Mark xvi. 15). First go; then instruct and preach. And the Apostles were not to be mere travellers, but also fishers. "I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. iv. 19). So said our Lord when He called them to follow Him. But it is not the fish that come to the fisherman—he goes to them! Our fishing involves movement, hunt, labour. The Christian Apostolate is a spiritual fishing expedition! This is a notion rich in much doctrine, and many a practical conclusion. And Church history tells us that certain notable apostles were called "hunters of souls"; here, too, motion, search, and toil!

The Characteristics of Catholic Action Apostolate

1. Having thus analysed, though briefly, the generic notion of apostolate, we now wish to know what are the characteristics with which the specific apostolate of Catholic Action clothes itself. Some are common to all forms of apostolate ; others are unshared, and so they distinguish it both from the general apostolate of the Hierarchy, and also from other forms of lay apostolate. According to Papal doctrine, Catholic Action apostolate is : Lay, Auxiliary, Obligatory, Universal, Organised, Necessary, and cannot be delegated.

2. In this chapter we shall treat of the first four of these characteristics only, referring readers to Chapters IV and V for the others, because some of them merit a special attention and a deeper analysis.

II. A LAY APOSTOLATE

This is the fundamental and most strongly marked characteristic of Catholic Action. It presents itself, at the very first glance, as a phalanx of laity at the service of the Church (the word 'lay' comes from the Greek *laos*, people).

The Church's Laity

i. Canon Law has clearly defined the notion, the rights, and the duties of the laity. " By divine institution there exists in the Church the clergy as distinct from the laity : but not all the clergy are of divine institution " (Canon 107).

Who, then, are these clergy ? Canon Law (108) answers : " The clergy are those who, from the first tonsure up, are dedicated to the divine ministry." All other members of the Church, therefore, are the ' laity,' or the ' faithful.'

2. Besides clergy and laity, Canon Law recognises a third category of persons, 'religious.' These, living in community and recognised by the Church, bind themselves to the observance not only of the precepts, but also of the evangelical counsels by means of the three vows : poverty, chastity and obedience (Canon 487). Religious can be either clerics or lay. Are the latter to be included in the 'laity' that constitutes Catholic Action ?

In itself, no. The word 'laity,' in connection with Catholic Action, is to be understood in the narrow sense, *i.e.*, in reference to those members of the Church who are neither clerics nor religious. These, in fact, are already actually serving the Church, each in their proper order, according to their special rules and constitutions. This restrictive interpretation of the word is, moreover, authorised by the same Church Law. The second book of Canon Law treats of 'persons,' and includes three categories—clerics, religious, and laity. Herein, too, is spoken of associations of the * faithful,' positively excluding those of 'religious,' be they clerical or lay. Thus : "Those of the Faithful are to be praised who give in their name to associations instituted by the Church, or at least approved by her" (684). Here the word * faithful ' certainly has its narrower sense ; and among the associations alluded to Catholic Action must evidently be comprised.¹

1 If, in the following articles of Canon Law, Catholic Action has not got its separate position, this is, we think, because at the time of the compilation of the Codex, Catholic Action was not so closely bound to the Hierarchy as now it is. It is certain that to-day Catholic Action possesses, within the Church, its own position, not merely a moral one, but even (in the wide sense) a juridical one, sanctioned in many a pontifical document. Nor can we exclude the probability that the principles and regulations concerned with Catholic Action, and emanating from the Holy See by way of the documents mentioned, shall one day receive their own codification.

A Lay Militia

I. But we possess more than a juridical reason in favour of our interpretation ; we have an historical reason. The Church has, and always has had, the two categories of persons—clerics and religious—at her service. Now at a certain point of her history—and precisely, after the assault of secularism—the Hierarchy saw that these two brave and faithful services were no more sufficient for the new needs of the new times. And then she thought of mobilising also the other members of the Church, who occupy by far the largest sector—the laity. Forthwith Catholic Action ! As a matter of fact, the laity (as we shall see) have always come to the assistance of the clergy. But latterly the Church has desired to enlarge and organise this assistance, so as to create a true lay militia to operate on the flank of the two others.

2. Catholic Action therefore is composed of the laity. This is its efficient cause, if we consider Catholic Action as an activity ; and its material cause if we regard it as an institution.¹

But anyhow, both clergy and religious not only can but ought to give their full possible contribution to Catholic Action. And this by the express will of the Hierarchy. This contribution, as we shall prove, is more

¹ See Chapter I, “The Meaning of the Name,” for this distinction between activity and institution. In philosophical language, ‘efficient cause’ is that which by its action produces something that is called ‘effect’ ; *i-g.*, the sculptor is the efficient cause of the statue. Material cause, on the other hand, means the material from which the effect emerges—thus, marble or wood in the case of the statue. Now Catholic Action, as activity, is produced by the laity (efficient cause), and as institution turns out to be composed of the selfsame laity (material cause).

than useful ; it must be termed necessary (see Chapter VII).

Many are Called— Few Chosen

1. We must now add that all the laity is called to take part in Catholic Action. This is like the vineyard in the gospels, wherein all the workmen were invited to labour (Matt. xx. 1-16). There is not one Catholic who can exempt himself with the excuse that “ No one has hired us.” The father of the family, Jesus Christ, in the person of His Vicar, has invited all—“ Go ye also into my vineyard.” The excluded, the unemployed, have none but themselves to blame.

2. Pius XI has defined this too : “ Catholic Action is a universal and harmonious action of all Catholics, without exception of age, sex, social condition, culture, or social or political tendencies ” (Letter to Cardinal Bertram). And, indeed, what does the word ‘ Catholic ’ mean save ‘ universal ’ ? By this its characteristic, Catholic Action is distinguished from all other associations composed only of determined categories of people, because these correspond only to subordinate aims.

3. But not all the workers in the gospel answered the invitation. And the parable concludes : “ Many are called but few are chosen.” So, too, Catholic Action. Its universality is in the Vocation, not the Election. In its regard, too, can be quoted, in a sense, the words of Christ : “ Not all can take this saying ” (Matt. xix. 11). And so Catholic Action is, and always will be, when confronted by the great mass of the Faithful, an elect battalion, a sort of spiritual aristocracy ; not but what, since numbers provide a special advantage (function), one must try to increase it as much as possible.

III. AN AUXILIARY APOSTOLATE

The laity, in Catholic Action, participates in the apostolate of the Hierarchy. So we ought to know what the hierarchical apostolate is, for thus will the value and dignity of participation therein be the better appreciated.

The Hierarchical Apostolate

i. The first and true Apostle, the 'Sent' *par excellence*, is Jesus Christ. He describes Himself as 'sent by the Father' (John xx. 21). And St. Paul (Heb. iii. 1) writes : "Contemplate the Apostle and High Priest of our Faith."

Besides this, Jesus, when he had fulfilled His personal mission upon earth, communicated His powers to certain men, 'sending' them into all the world to continue, in His Name, His saving work, and making them 'apostles' : "All power is given Me in heaven and earth ; go therefore, teach—baptise . . . (Matt, xxviii. 18, 19). To the Apostles, therefore, were communicated these three powers—sanctification, by means of the administration of the Sacraments and the celebration of the Holy Mysteries ; instruction, by means of all the truths and precepts uttered by Christ ; and Government, in regard of all the Faithful, that is, the members of the Christian society. Ministry, Magisterium, and Government. These, as a whole, constituted the Apostolate.

2. All the apostolic powers were transmitted to the successors of St. Peter and of the Apostles—the Pope and the Bishops ; these form the divine Hierarchy. Hence the name of Hierarchic Apostolate, which means the plenitude of apostolic powers and functions exercised by the Hierarchy. (Of course, the Apostles received

extraordinary powers as well, like the gift of tongues or of miracles. These could not be transmitted ; and here we are speaking only of the 'juridical' Hierarchy.) This, then, is the apostolate in the more strict and accurate meaning of the word. And it belongs only to the ecclesiastical Hierarchy, because only to the Apostles did Christ confide this triple power, which passed on to the Hierarchy alone. This is a truth of dogma.†

Two Apostolates in the Church

I. The laity, having inherited no powers from the Apostles, are therefore not capable of a 'true and proper' apostolate. But we must be careful not to deduce from this true premiss any conclusion that is too wide, and by that very fact erroneous, such as that the laity possess within the Church a *purely passive rôle*. On the contrary, they can have therein an active one by participating in the work of the Hierarchy as 'collaborators.' The Holy See has constantly taught this. Leo XIII wrote :

"The ministry of preaching, or teaching, belongs by divine right to the Masters 'that the Holy Spirit has constituted Bishops, to govern the Church of God' ; but none the less let no one think that it is forbidden to private persons to

† Pius XI has recalled that Catholic Action co-operates with the "true and properly so-called apostles—the bishops and priests" ; Protestants and other heretics have taught that the power of the Church resides in the Faithful, from whom it is transmitted to the Hierarchy. Thus the Church would, by divine institution, be a society of *equals*. This error was condemned in the Vatican Council, Sess. VII, Canons 10 and 11. Pius X, in his Encyclical *Vehementer*, February 11, 1906, wrote further these clear words : "The Church is, of its own nature, an 'unequal' society, comprising two categories of persons, the shepherds and the flocks, those, that is, who have their place in the various grades of clergy, and the multitude of the faithful. And these categories are distinct from one another, in that the right and authority of moving and directing the members to the proper end of the society resides in the hierarchy alone."

co-operate diligently with this ministry. . . . When occasion demands it, these cannot indeed play the 'doctor' (teacher), but can communicate to others the truths that they have learnt, and become as it were the echo of the voice of their Masters " (Encyclical *Sapientiae Christianae*, January 10, 1890).

Co-operation : to be the echo of the Hierarchy ; here is the special *rôle of* the laity in the Church. Hence, under the hierarchic apostolate, there exists another open to the laity—an auxiliary apostolate. It, precisely because it is auxiliary, must be subordinate to the former, as the collaborator cannot but be subordinate to the principal agent (see further Chapter VI).

2. History shows that these two apostolates, hierarchic and auxiliary, always existed in the Church, one beside the other. The latter is, indeed, like an emanation from, a prolongation of, the former. The laity has always co-operated with the Hierarchy, and not only in its teaching office (where co-operation is at once easier and more necessary), but even in its sacred ministry and in the government of the Church. This collaboration is now individual, now collective ; now in one form, now in another, according to circumstances and the exigencies of time and place.

Catholic Action as " Auxiliary " to the Hierarchy

i. Catholic Action is one—and the most recent one—of the forms of this auxiliary apostolate. This is confirmed by an immense number of pontifical documents. Pius IX—the first ' Catholic Action ' Pope—wrote on September 25, 1876, on the occasion of the National Congress of Catholics at Bologna :

“Ecclesiastical Authority being held close in chains, you, dear sons, are called by Divine Providence to assist it ; and it is a joy to Us to consider the zeal with which you, like a compact phalanx, bind yourselves to your pastors to safeguard the honour of God and to fight for the rights of religion and the Church.” These words outline the characteristics of Catholic Action, and specially its auxiliary function. Leo XIII in his turn wrote : “ We judge extremely necessary for the support of the work of the clergy those associations that are like its auxiliary militia, for the promotion of Catholic interests ” (Encyclical *Cum multa sint*, to the Bishops of Spain, December 8, 1882). Pius X further emphasised the auxiliary mission of Catholic Action, by affirming that : “ Catholic Action, at all times and always, came as a help to the Church, and the Church has always favourably welcomed and blessed this help, though in accordance with the times it has expressed itself in various ways ” (Encyclical *II Fera Proposito*). Benedict XV declared that Catholic Associations are “ the arm given by God and the Church to the mind and heart of the parish priest ; and the true artificers of all exterior progress of religious and social action on the part of the Catholic people ” (Letter from the Cardinal Secretary of State to the President of the Unione Popolare of Italian Catholics, May 19, 1921). Finally, the reigning Pontiff has perpetuated this thought of his predecessors in many a writing and speech, and has consecrated it, so to say, in the classic definition of Catholic Action. Explaining this, he said : “ Catholic Action, in the long run, is nothing else than the apostolate of the Faithful, who under the guidance of the Bishops place themselves at the service of the Church, and help her to fulfil integrally her pastoral ministry ” (Letter to the Primate of Belgium, August 15, 1928).

Catholic Action is therefore a service, a help, and an “ integration ” of the hierarchic apostolate.

Catholic Action as the Hierarchy’s “Mandatory ”

i. Here we have to add that Catholic Action is something more than a mere auxiliary apostolate ; it is an

official apostolate, owing to an explicit *mandate* given by the Church.

Nothing prevents good laymen joining together to exercise the apostolate in such forms as seem to them most apt. Enough that they should have the approval of the Hierarchy, on whom all apostolate necessarily depends. But Catholic Action has not only its approbation ; it has a vocation, a mission. It is the Hierarchy itself that has ordered this levy of laymen, constituting it a chosen militia for its service. Pius XI stated this openly :

“ The call to the laity to participate in the hierarchic apostolate constitutes a Vocation truly and properly so called ” (Speech to the Directors of the Roman Catholic Action, April 19, 1931) : “ The chosen band of Catholics, united to be at the disposal of the Hierarchy, receives from them its mandate, and from them receives their vigorous impulsion ” (Letter to Cardinal Bertram).

Christ said to His Apostles : “ As the Father hath sent Me, so send I you : I have chosen you and destined you to go into the world to bear fruits of life ” (see John XX. 21 ; xv. 16). And the Church says to-day to the Catholic Action laity : “ As Christ has sent me, so I send you : I have chosen you from among all Catholics, to go out into human society and bear fruits of spiritual life.”

2. Through this special mandate, Catholic Action is, as it were, engrafted or incorporated into the Hierarchy. We can say that there is an organic bond between them, as between the arm and the body, the branch and the tree trunk. People often say that Catholic Action is the ‘ long hand ’ of the Hierarchy, nor is the metaphor a bad one. All laymen who act ‘ apostolically ’ are, so to say,

side by side with the Hierarchy. The Catholic Action laity are *united* with it, and form with it one thing.¹

The Dignity of Catholic Action

i. Whence, two consequences :

- () Catholic Action is something that belongs to the Church, a sacred thing. “What is done, or allowed to be done, for or against Catholic Action, is for or against the inviolable rights of conscience, and the Church ” (Consistorial Allocution, May 23, 1923).
- () Catholic Action is different from and superior to any and every other form of lay apostolate. Its insertion into the Hierarchy confers upon it a special value and dignity.

All apostolic action shines with a divine radiance. “Of all divine things the most divine is to co-operate with God for the salvation of souls.” Was not this the mission of Christ Himself—the salvation of souls ? Well, if this sovereign glory can be attributed, in a measure, to every apostolic act, in its fulness it belongs only to the hierarchic apostolate. And since Catholic Action participates with special intimacy therein, the more generously does it share therewith in its dignity and glory.

¹ Hence it is seen that in the definition of Catholic Action the expression ‘participation’ is more adequate than ‘collaboration.’ For any Catholic who does apostolic work collaborates at least indirectly with the Hierarchy. But Catholic Action laymen collaborate with it directly, being expressly called to do so ; and *n.b.*, they are called to have a part in the hierarchic apostolate, that is, to participate in it. In the former case of simple collaboration, you have but a ‘moral’ union—union at least of intentions ; in the second case of true and genuine participation, we find a union that can be called ‘juridic.’

2. So teaches Pius XI :

“ Those who fight in Catholic Action, were by a special grace from God called to a work similar to that of the priesthood ; for Catholic Action is nothing else than the apostolate of the Faithful who, under the guidance of the bishops, supply their co-operative work to the Church, and in a certain sense ‘ integrate ’ its pastoral ministry. Hence we see how great is the dignity of this institution ” (Letter to Cardinal Segura, November 6, 1929 ; the first words are also found in the Letter to Cardinal Van Roey, Primate of Belgium, August 15, 1928).

Catholic Action is, therefore, a *quasi-priesthood*. Pius XI, in his very first Encyclical quoted above, uses St. Peter’s words, ‘ a royal priesthood,’ of Catholic Action. “ Say to your faithful lay folk that when they, united with their priests and their bishops, participate in the work of the apostolate and of individual social redemption, then more than ever are they the ‘ chosen race,’ the ‘ holy people,’ the people of God extolled by St. Peter ” (1 Peter ii. 9). Finally, we must add that Catholic Action, by reason of this its intimate union with the Hierarchy, achieves not only its highest title of dignity, but also the secret of its strength and the pledge of its continuance.IV.

IV. AN APOSTOLATE OF DUTY

Hitherto we have shown that the laity *can* participate in the active life of the Church ; now we have to add that they ought to.

1 Speaking to the Italian Catholic Action Women’s Union (October 24, 1929), His Holiness recalled the words of St. Paul : “ The apostles of the churches are the glory of Christ ”—added that the members of Catholic Action “ Participate in this glory.” And in another speech to women (March 19, 1927) he said : “ Co-operation with the apostolate of the true apostles properly so-called, priests and bishops—this is the whole of the great and divine substance of Catholic Action, and the point from which all else follows.”

Apostolate, in general, is a duty for both priests and laity, though in different ways and measures. And this specific apostolate, Catholic Action, is also a matter of duty. We reserve the topic of the duty incumbent on the clergy for treatment elsewhere ; here we speak of the duty of the laity alone. First let us consider this duty in respect of apostolate in general ; then in respect of the specific apostolate of Catholic Action. We propose to prove our thesis first by an extrinsic argument, drawn from authority ; then, by an intrinsic one, from the very nature of Apostolate as such.

A Precept of the Church

I. The apostolate of the laity has been so strongly inculcated by the Fathers and Doctors of the Church and by the Sovereign Pontiffs that we can call it a ' precept ' of the Church. All the Fathers and Doctors of the Church join in affirming that the laity, too, have the duty of working for the salvation of their brothers. We limit ourselves to two quotations only. St. John Chrysostom treated of this topic with frequency and force. In his Homily *Saulus adhuc*, speaking to the laity, he wrote :

“ Part of your duty is to labour for the salvation of your brethren, and to bring them to us priests despite their resistance, their cries and lamentations ! All this reluctance and laziness shows you are dealing with children. Be it yours to change their poor little imperfect souls ! Yours is the duty to teach them at long last to become men ! ” And St. Thomas Aquinas writes (S.T. II-IIae, Q. iii, art. 2 ad 2) that “ each has the duty of communicating his faith to others, either by instructing or confirming his fellow-Christians, or by repressing the assaults of unbelievers.”

2. The Holy See has often taught the same doctrine. In the Acts of the Vatican Council (*Constit. Dei Filius*) we read these earnest words :

“ In the Heart of Jesus Christ do we conjure all the Faithful, but especially rulers and masters, and we command them in the Name of God and of our Divine Saviour, that they shall utilise all their energies to cause errors within the Church to cease, and for the diffusion of the light of the most pure faith.”

Leo XIII, in his Encyclical *Sapientiae Christianae*, speaks at great length about the duties of the laity concerning the apostolate, and writes among other things as follows :

“ Among the duties that bind us to God and to the Church, let this one especially be mentioned—that each one, according to his powers, must exert himself to defend the truths of Christianity and to beat back errors.”

Pius X, in his Encyclical *E supremi apostolatus*, writes in his turn :

“ We know that God commended to each one the care of his neighbour (Eccl. xvii. 12). And so, not only priests, but all the faithful without exception, must labour for the interests of God and of souls.” Finally Pius XI proclaimed that “ all are held to co-operate for the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, because all are the blessed subjects of that dear reign ; why, the members of any family ought all of them to do something for it. To do nothing is a sin of omission, and it may be extremely grave. AH must act, and for all there is a place and a way ” (Speech to the Directors of the Apostleship of Prayer, September 29, 1927).

And again he wrote :

“ Apostolate is nothing else than the exercise of Christian charity, which is obligatory upon all men ” (Letter to the Argentine Hierarchy on Catholic Action, February 4, 1931).

These last words touch on an intrinsic reason, the strongest of any, from which the duty of apostolate is deduced. We propose now to examine it attentively.

A Duty of Charity towards God

The Apostolate is above all a duty of charity towards God.

1. He who loves God cannot but desire His glory. It is the law of friendship : “ To love the same and to hate the same—that is a solid friendship ! ” Now “ God wills that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of His truth ” (i Tim. ii. 4). Conclusion : He who truly loves his Creator, works for His glory and for the salvation of His creatures. That is, he who loves God is an apostle.

2. Observe that this co-operation with God for the salvation of men is necessary. For God Himself, who created souls by a simple act of His will and without any man’s co-operation, wills to save them with the co-operation of us men, thereby associating His tiny creatures to the great redemptive work. We know that Christ came on to this earth that all might be bom again into supernatural life : “ I came that they might have life ” (John x. 10). But this life, too, even as the natural one—He wills to be distributed not directly by Him, but by the mediation of men as His intermediates. Thus, He created the apostolate, which is, precisely, the distribution of supernatural life, the gift of truth and faith. Such is at least the ordinary method of Providence and Salvation. Now and again, of course, it acts directly, “ the hand of the Lord is not shortened that it cannot save ” (Is. lix. 1). In view of this, St. Paul could write : “ I make up in my flesh what is lacking in the sufferings

of Christ, on behalf of His Body, which is the Church ” (Col. i. 24). Yes; the Apostle completes, in a sense, the very Passion of Christ by distributing the treasures of redemption to the redeemed.

3. Add that the Apostolate is an act of gratitude to Christ our Redeemer. As to this, Pius XI wrote to the Argentine episcopate :

“ Besides the motive of charity, the Christian apostolate is obligatory as an act of gratitude rendered to Jesus Christ. So, when we cause others to participate in the spiritual gifts that we have received from His divine largesse, we satisfy the desires of His most loving heart, which asks but to be known and loved, as He Himself said in the gospels : ‘ I came to send fire upon the earth, and what will I, but that it should be kindled ? ’ ” (Luke xii. 49).

The apostle quenches the thirst of Christ upon His cross, which was a thirst for souls. What better act of gratitude for the gift of redemption ?

A Duty of Charity to our Neighbour

Apostolate is also a duty of charity towards our neighbour.

I. This duty is implicit in the command to love our neighbour as ourselves. And certainly no one truly loves himself if he does not seek to procure the salvation of his own soul. For the same reason no one can say that he loves his neighbour if he has no care for his eternal salvation. Besides, as Pius XI says in the letter quoted above : “ He who loves God cannot do less than wish that all may love Him ; and he who truly loves his neighbour cannot do less than desire to work for his eternal salvation.” Love, in fact, must not be affective merely, but also effective. St. John exhorts us to it thus : “ Let us not love in word and with the tongue,

but in deed and truth ” (i John iii. 18). To love one’s neighbour means to help him in his needs, and these are of two orders, spiritual and corporal, and the former are more urgent than the latter, even as the spirit is superior to matter. Well, then, what else is the Apostolate if not a loving succour given to the spiritual needs of our neighbour ?

2. God has also commanded this spiritual succour *explicitly*. “ He gave to each one of them a command concerning his neighbour ” (Ecclus. xvii. 12). No one doubts but that here it is spiritual care that is being primarily spoken of. The Lord manifested this His will also through the Chief of the Apostles, who wrote : “ Let each make part of the gift he has received to others, as good dispensers of the manifold grace of God ” (1 Peter iv. 10). The gift of faith—principle of life—is therefore like the lamp that “ no man lights and puts it beneath a bushel, but on the lampstand, that it may give light to all that are in the house ” (Matt. v. 15). And it is like the talent in the gospels, that no man should bury, but that one should make to bear fruit both for one’s self and for others. Otherwise one becomes base and profitless servants (Matt. xxv. 26).

3. But if only a few grasp their entire duty in the matter of material charity, still fewer are those who understand and practise that of spiritual charity. And worse, people imagine that the spiritual care for one’s neighbour is an affair of priests only, whereas, if indeed it is for these a duty of sheer justice, for the simple laity it becomes, precisely, a duty of charity. Hence people fancy they have done everything when they have taken thought for their own soul. If God turned to-day to each Christian and asked the same question that He once asked of Cain,

the majority would give Him the same answer : “ Am I my brother’s keeper? ” (Gen. iv. 9). This spiritual egoism—a widespread and most harmful disease—can be cured by prompt and energetic treatment. And the best is this : to teach and inculcate the duty of the apostolate, which is a holy altruism, a spiritual charity. “ Contraries are cured by contraries.”

The Doctrine of the “ Our Father ”

The duty of the apostolate is taught also in the Our Father. Pius XI named it the “ sublime formula of Christian Apostolate ” (Speech to the directors of the Apostleship of Prayer, September 20, 1924).

1. In the first part of the Our Father, God commands the apostolate for His own glory. “ Thy kingdom come—Thy will be done—Hallowed be Thy Name—*on earth*, as it is in heaven.” How could these aspirations ever be sincere if they were not accompanied by a resolution to work, and to translate them into actuality ? Without it they would sound ironical to indecency point. He that calls out for the Kingdom of God pledges himself thereby to work as hard as he can for its triumph.

2. The second part of the Lord’s Prayer inculcates the duty of the apostolate for the salvation of one’s neighbour. For we ask from God the following favours : Bread for body and for soul ; forgiveness of sins ; liberation from temptation and from every bodily and spiritual ill. But for whom do we ask that ? Just for ourselves ? No ; for all men. The formula of the prayer is plural—“ we, our ” ; not “ I, my.”

God commands us to pray for all, because we are all brothers. We had, indeed, stated this truth and the very beginning of our prayer, in the invocation—so simple

yet so comprehensive—of ‘Our Father.’ Now between brothers the law of solidarity should be sacrosanct. The Our Father, then, is the Catholic and Apostolic prayer, and the divine consecration of the duty of apostolate, both for God’s sake and for our brothers.

Baptism Obliges Us to This

We ought to be able to see that the Apostolate is a duty of the Christian life, even apart from the explicit command of God, for it enters into the obligations arising from baptism, and this is easily shown.

1. Baptism makes us Christians ; we thus acquire right of citizenship in that immense religious society that is the Church. Well, in any society all the citizens are agents—though not all on the same plane ; that is, all make some contribution somehow or other to the well-being of the collectivity. Anyone who acts differently is a detestable parasite. Sometimes one’s offering may have to become so vast that it turns into the sacrifice of one’s very life.

“ Now,” wrote Leo XIII, “ *if* the law of nature tells us to love and defend the society within which we were bom, and to love it so much that every citizen ought to give his life-blood for his fatherland, far greater should be the love that every Christian must bear to the Church. For She is the Holy City of God, organised by Himself ; and though she be but a pilgrim upon earth, she calls and guides her citizens to the eternal happiness of heaven ” (Encyclical *Sapientiae Christianae*).

2. The same conclusion is reached by considering the Church as a living organism.

Thus is she represented in the Scriptures. Our Lord compares Himself to the vine, and His Christians to the branches (John xv. 5). Vine and branches form a single

organism. For St. Paul the Church is the mystical Body of Christ : “ As in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we are many in one Body, in Christ ” (Rom. xii. 4, 5) : “ He is the head of the Body, the Church ” (Col. i. 18). This incorporation into Christ comes about by means of Baptism : “ All we are baptised in one Spirit, to be one Body ” (1 Cor. xii. 13).

Now in every organism there is unity of life, universality of action. No member is purely passive or receptive. Every member, furthermore, has some active function, even though very small, within that marvellous laboratory that is our living organism. Give and take is the alternating action of every vital member.

There is, moreover, in any organism a solidarity of interests. If one part be healthy, the whole profits by it ; if one be sick, the whole body suffers.

Similarly, as within the Church, every Christian must be a living and working member. As it receives from the treasury of the Church, so it should pay its own special tribute. And how comforting, here, is the dogma of the Communion of Saints ! Like St. Paul, the Christian should cry out : “ Who is weak, and I am not weak ? Who is scandalised, and I am not ? ” (2 Cor. xi. 29). Religious individualism finds in these dogmatic truths its open condemnation.

Confirmation Obliges Us to This

i. The duty of the Apostolate appears yet more clearly among the obligations arising from Confirmation.

Baptism makes us Christians, citizens of the Church ; Confirmation makes us into perfect Christians, soldiers of Christ. This Sacrament, by increasing sanctifying

grace within us, gives us a spiritual maturity, and that robustness of vigour that renders us apt to engage in warfare and endure the fatigues and dangers of the spiritual campaign. But what is any militia if not an altruism, an absolute self-abandonment to a collective interest? A selfish soldier is nonsense; as well say an unbelieving priest, an ignorant professor, an unjust judge.

2. Now the Christian warfare is simply the Apostolate, seen under its epic aspect of struggle and sacrifice. On the path of the apostolate we shall certainly encounter obstacles and perils so many and so great that every apostle cannot but be a fighter, and every fighter necessarily must be an apostle. Warfare and Apostolate are two equivalent words in the Christian vocabulary'.

Many Fathers and Doctors of the Church and theologians teach that the Confirmation is the consecration of the Christian to the apostolate, and a sort of 'lay priesthood.' Suffice it to quote St. Thomas Aquinas:

"The sacrament of Confirmation confers the fulness of the Holy Spirit in view of the spiritual vigour that befits the adult man. Now man, when adult, begins to communicate his actions to others, whereas at first he lived only to himself" (ST. III, Q. 72, a. 2c).

But is not intercommunication of one's activity an apostolate?

Catholic Action is apostolate and militia. Pius XI has defined it as "a holy battle engaged on every front at once" (*Ubi Arcano*). But, as we have seen, it is a *selected* army.

And so the layman, who places himself beneath its standard, is in a better position for fulfilling the obligations arising from his confirmation, somewhat as one who binds himself by vow to the warfare of religious life is in

better condition for the observance of the evangelical counsels. Confirmation could well be called the Sacrament of Catholic Action.

But the dogmatic truths, from which the duty of Apostolate comes forth as practical corollary, are but little known, little meditated by Christians. In them, too often, the Catholic sense is lacking, and the noble instinct of Apostolate. Catholic Action must therefore especially study this Sacrament, and educate all who have given in their names to it for the Apostolate. The Liturgy, well and lovingly understood, gives great help herein.

The Duty of Catholic Action

I. The lay Apostolate is therefore a Christian duty. But Catholic Action is only *one form* of this. Does it, however, amount to being a duty for every Catholic? The answer is in ecclesiastical documents. Popes and Bishops, in harmony, have in these recent times not only called upon the laity to enrol themselves in Catholic Action, have not only declared its necessity and that we cannot transfer our responsibility, but have explicitly affirmed its obligation. Pius IX, the first Pope of Catholic Action, appeals to

“the zeal of all Catholics, so that each of them, considering the cause of the Church to be his own, should unite himself to the others and give them a cordial support” (Brief to the 4th Italian Catholic Congress, September 24, 1877).

“To consider the cause of the Church as his own”—is not this the foundation of the duty of Catholic Action? Leo XIII, in his Encyclical *Graves de Communi*, recommends social action to Catholics, and writes:

“ We are dealing here with the loftiest interests of society and of religion ; and all good men *must* safeguard the honour of the one and of the other, as of a sacred thing.”

2. But undoubtedly the chief Pope to elucidate and inculcate this duty is Pius XI. From his first Encyclical onwards he declares that Catholic Action “ belongs undeniably to the pastoral office and to Christian life ” ; that is, to all the Faithful. He provides the proximate reason for this by adding that “ the restoration of the Kingdom of Christ is connected indissolubly with Catholic Action ” ; and in this, as we have seen, every Catholic is bound to collaborate. This idea is repeated and developed in a series of successive documents.

“ Catholic Action must be viewed by the Bishops as a necessary appurtenance of their office ; and by the Faithful as a duty of Christian life ” (Letter to Cardinal Secretary of State, January 24, 1927) : “ The apostolate of Catholic Action is obligatory upon priests as much as upon the laity, though each enters upon it in a different way ” (Letter to Argentine Hierarchy on Catholic Action, February 4, 1931). “ Catholic Action is to-day indispensable, almost like (*quasi come*) the priestly office ; and with it all, at least * *ad minimum* ’ must co-operate ” (Speech to the parishioners of S. Maria in Traspontina of Rome, December 4, 1924) : “ Catholic Action means Action in the full and perfect Christian sense, according to the will of Jesus Christ, interpreted in the legislation of the Church. Hence you can realise how your mission is executive of the desires and of the precepts of our Lord ” (Speech to the Diocesan Assembly of the Catholic Action of Rome, March 9, 1924).

A Scale of Obligations

i. The duty of sharing in Catholic Action is universal—the pontifical documents leave us in no doubt about that—but still, it cannot be said that it binds all the Faithful

in the same way or degree. Hence we can establish a sort of scale, or gradation of obligations.

When an army is mobilised in any one country, not all the citizens can fight in the front line, nor even all of them put on uniform. All, however, must contribute to victory by helping the actual combatants in their arduous enterprise. Whence 'civil mobilisation,' no less necessary than the military one. There is, at the least, a negative duty for every citizen—not to hamper the work of the army in the field, nor to go in for defeatism. But positive duties, too, exist : to help the staying-power, physical and moral, of the combatants ; to prepare food and munitions for the combatants ; to contribute to the expenses of the war, and so forth. Almost the same should hold good for Catholic Action, which is " like an army in battle array " (Cant. vi. 3).

2. This idea of a gradation of obligations is found, clearly expressed, in the letter from the Cardinal Secretary of State to the President General of the Italian Catholic Action (October 2, 1923) :

" As every Catholic must feel the need and the duty of dedicating himself or at least of contributing to this work of apostolate (Catholic Action), so must he feel the need and duty of co-ordinating himself, so far as possible, with the recognised organs of action, if he does not wish to expose himself to rendering his efforts sterile, if not actually disturbing and hurtful."

Here, then, three definite obligations are asserted—self-dedication, contribution, co-ordination with Catholic Action.

The first obligation, self-dedication, is fulfilled by fighting in the ranks of Catholic Action. It is the most direct and efficacious form of service. But not all are apt

for this military service ; and not everyone can render it—for some it is impossible. These should contribute to Catholic Action in other ways, *e.g.*, by prayer, propaganda, and help, both moral and material (for even Catholic Action requires to be subsidised and financed $\hat{\text{I}}$).¹

Finally we have the obligation of co-ordination with Catholic Action ; and this is for those who exercise their apostolate in organisations which Pius X calls ‘ auxiliaries ’ of Catholic Action. We shall speak further below of this co-ordination, which is a most effective form of contribution, and shall study the relations between Catholic Action and the said auxiliary works.

V. UNIVERSAL APOSTOLATE

Catholic Action is a truly Catholic apostolate, *i.e.*, a universal one. Its universality is a multiple one, by reason of variety of subject-matter of its object, of the means taken, and place. The subject-matter (*i.e.*, *who* carries out Catholic Action) is the whole of the laity without distinction. We have seen this already and need not insist upon it. Here we consider the universality of Catholic Action by reason of the object upon which it

¹ The Holy Father, speaking to the Directors of the Apostleship of Prayer (September 29, 1927), said : “ There are different sorts of apostles—apostles of prayer, of action, of the pen, of the spoken word, and even of the purse ; of the purse, *ix.*, the financial apostolate, because even finance is needed for the works of God among men. But not all these forms of apostolate are for each, for when a thing is not possible, the duty of doing it comes to an end. But everyone can exercise the apostleship of prayer, for all can pray.” Cardinal Lepicier, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Religious, when asking the Sisters to collaborate with Catholic Action, wrote : “ We do not limit our request to Teaching Sisters, but to all nuns without distinction, even those who devote themselves exclusively to the contemplative life, begging from them the supernatural assistance of their prayer ” (letter to the Assistant of the Catholic Women’s Union of Italy, May 30, 1930).

acts, of the means it takes, and of the place where it is carried through.

Universality of Object

I. We know that the Advent of the Reign of Christ is the supreme aim of Catholic Action. To Christianise—that is its whole purpose. But Christianise *what*? The answer provides the *objective* of Catholic Action—“To Christianise everything.” Indeed, we have seen that Catholic Action, like the Church, wishes to “restore all things in Christ.” “Everything”—not only individuals, but families and society as a whole. The Christianisation of individual consciences is the specific aim of many a religious association. Catholic Action goes further on ahead; through each member it wishes to reach the whole social body.

2. Certainly its Christianising work must begin within individual consciences. It is axiomatic that he who wishes to reform the whole must begin with the parts. You cannot build a solid edifice if each stone be not solid. Further, we have to Christianise the *whole* individual. Pius XI wrote (to Cardinal Bertram) that Catholic Action “must embrace the whole man, in private and public life, by promoting the best religious and civil formation.” And we have further to Christianise *all* individuals, without exception, because God wishes all men to be saved. Catholic Action must say with St. Paul: “I have become all things to all men, that all men might be saved. I do all things for the Gospel” (i Cor. ix. 22).

3. After individuals, come families and society (Chapter II). Catholic Action wishes to Christianise society as a whole, *i.e.*, all its constituent elements, its activities and manifestation—schools, Press, literature,

public behaviour, laws, social and civil enactments, and so forth. To Christianise, therefore, not only all men, but all things. Such is the Church's programme. And Catholic Action, the official coadjutrix, sets no limit to its apostolic work other than the Church's own. The one and the other proceed within the same confines. Having their end in common, they have in common also their field of action, though they do not use identical instruments—as they used to say: “The accessory attends upon the principal.” This is what distinguishes Catholic Action from other associations and enterprises that develop a partial apostolate, contained within a definite order of things, like culture, benevolence, the Press, art, film-work, and so on. Such works are auxiliary to Catholic Action (see Chapter IX).

4. This universality of Catholic Action is affirmed in many a pontifical document. Thus in his Encyclical *II Fermo Proposito* Pius X said :

“Vast indeed is the field of Catholic Action ; for, in itself, it excludes nothing at all that in any manner whatsoever belongs to the divine mission of the Church.” (The Pope says ‘in itself’; because, as we shall see, *‘per accidens’* and owing to outside or interior circumstances, its programme may have to be limited.) In the name of Benedict XV, Cardinal Gasparri, Secretary of State (to the President of the Popular Union of Italian Catholics, January 8, 1919), wrote : “Catholic Action, above and beyond all problems of a purely material and political sort, embraces all the manifestations of human life, and spurs them all forward with an efficacious impulse, with a prudent co-ordination of means and an unchangeable unity of direction, along the shining paths of civil progress.” Pius XI, too, uttered the following words, so full of good sense : “Catholic Action must come wherever are to be found the glory of God, the good of souls, judgment between good and evil, the laws of God. . . . Wherever the

hierarchical apostolate must come, thither too must come Catholic Action, summoned by that Apostolate itself. . . . Catholic Action, according to the very terms of its mandate, has a field without limits, however much, within that field, it may always have its appropriate way for unfolding itself" (Speech to the Directors of Catholic Action in Rome, April 6, 1931).

Universality of Means

I. Catholic Action has to Christianise all things and all men, with all the means possible and permissible, developing all the activities approved by laws divine and human. 'All' means—individual and collective, private and public, religious and social, material and spiritual.

Pius X, in *Ferm a Proposito*, wrote :

"Catholic Action rightly must approve itself by making use of all those means which the progress of economic studies, experience already gained elsewhere, conditions of civil intercourse, and the public life of modern States itself, place in its hands." And Pius XI has declared his will that from Catholic Action "no form of activity must remain excluded or be disesteemed, so far as it in any sense belongs to the Church" (Letter to Cardinal Bertram).

Now the Church, as experience teaches, has always made use of every means, has always displayed every form of activity, even material, that could in any way help towards her lofty spiritual end. To-day she says to her sons, fighting under the flag of Catholic Action, what St. Paul said to the first Christians : "Think upon whatsoever things are true, honourable, just, holy. Do what you have learnt, received, heard and seen in me" (Phil. iv. 8).¹

¹ These words were actually referred to the Catholic Action 'soldiers' by Pius XI in his historic world broadcast, February 12, 1931.

2. Over against this universality of means and of activities can be placed two extremes, both erroneous.

The first is proper to those who wish to mutilate the programme of Catholic Action, on, so to say, the right, by excluding from it religious activities as though these were exclusively proper to pious unions and confraternities. The second mutilates it on the left, cutting out all social activities, considered as profane, and so, opposed to the religious end of Catholic Action. At the back of this second error there is a misunderstanding, which we have already indicated—a confusion between end and means (see p. 15). (Note that this error, common enough among Catholics too, was certainly caused by the prejudice of liberalism, which considers religion as a merely private affair and the Church as devoid of any social function. Below (Chapter VI) we shall see that while religious activities enter directly into the direct mission of both Church and of Catholic Action, the other activities enter into their indirect one.)

3. It is no doubt true that the means of action can change, having to make themselves adequate to changeable affairs and the other possibilities of times and places. Thus at one moment religious means may prevail, and, again, social methods. So, while the ideal programme of Catholic Action is immutable, its immediate and practical programme can and does change.

When, in any determined field, Catholic Action seems to find its practical possibilities diminished, it should not, for that, consider that its task is fulfilled, for other forms of apostolate remain open to it at the side of the Hierarchy. For charity is irrepressible; hampered in one direction, it finds other roads to its goal. It does not suffer its fires to be put out by rain or winds: “Alany

waters cannot quench love ” (Cant. viii. 7). Authentic apostles will never be out of work, for they will always be able to find something to do for the glory of God and the spiritual benefit of their neighbour.¹

4. A final observation. To Catholic Action belong all those works that can be ‘provided by the laity? All and only. This implies that the universality of Catholic Action, in regard of the means it uses, is not absolute, like that of the Hierarchy, but relative, *i.e.*, proportionate to the powers of the laity in the Church. We saw that in historical fact Christ gave the fulness of the apostolic powers only to His Apostles. The ordinary means of sanctification are in the hands of priests alone. The layman can lead his brother in his need up to the threshold of the shrine ; there he must entrust him to the priest, who alone possesses the keys of the heavenly treasure. To the question : “ What is the practical programme of Catholic Action ? ” we reply : “ The programme of the Church herself, so far as it can be carried out by the laity.”

Universality of Place

Pius XI said : “ Catholic Action has no limits of times or places : we can say of it—Always and Everywhere.”

¹ On this point **HI.** Abp. Pizzardo, Ecclesiastical Assistant-General of the Italian Catholic Action, said : “ Catholic Action, being a collaboration with the hierarchic apostolate, must embrace all that is proper to this collaboration. Lay action restricts or expands itself according as circumstances render the clergy more or less in need of help. Hence all apostolic work, for which the clergy is at any given moment insufficient, and that can be supplied by the laity, belongs to Catholic Action. Hence it comes that Catholic Action in one country, *e.g.*, in Italy, can have special tasks that are not always the same as those in other lands, *e.g.*, in France ” (speech to the reunion of diocesan ecclesiastical assistants in Italy, September 16, 1930).

(Speech to the Catholic Action Directors, April 19, 1931). Catholic Action possesses therefore as a right, universality too of place. Wherever the Hierarchy stands in need of the laity, there can Catholic Action arise. And we can now affirm that the right has become a fact. Catholic Action has its battalions, more or less perfect, in all parts of the world. Pius X said in other circumstances : “ In our days Catholic Action throughout the world, wherever the Church pitches its tents, shows how precious a thing it is in the eyes of the Church itself ” (Speech on the heroicity of the virtues of Ven. Vincent Pallotti, January 24, 1932).

Indeed, not only in all civilised and Catholic countries, but also in missionary lands—China, India, Japan, and even in black Africa—associations of Catholic Action have arisen which help the work of the missionaries. This is a significant fact, which shows how truly Catholic Action is a work for new times, and brought forth by the maternal heart of the Church.

CHAPTER IV

The System of Catholic Action Organisation

We have made it clear that Catholic Action is an organised apostolate. Pius X has said that “even as Catholic Action has its own proper nature and end, so it must have its proper organisation, unique, disciplined, and able to co-ordinate all other Catholic forces ” (Letter to Cardinal Segura). This organisational form is an essential note of Catholic Action, and a characteristic, we may add, that constitutes the novelty of Catholic Action as actually existing. Catholic Action, in its generic element of lay apostolate, has always existed within the Church from the time of the Apostles, as we shall have occasion to explain more fully. We should, passing from the universal to the particular, from abstract to concrete, first set forth a few ideas on organisation in general (concept, legitimacy, efficacy), and then speak in particular of that form of organisation which is proper to Catholic Action and of its utility.

I. ORGANISATION IN GENERAL

The Notion of Organisation

I. We may define organisation as the free union of several individuals making for one and the selfsame end. Any organisation implies—

- (i) plurality of individuals joining among themselves ;

- (2) unity (at least substantial) of their aim ;
- (3) solidarity in use of means, *i.e.*, each member has the duty of making, in some determined measure, his personal contribution for the achievement of the common end.

Hence an organisation is not a haphazard aggregate of several elements, as a vague mob would be. Its distinctive note is order, which means unity in multiplicity. Multiplicity of forces, unity of movement. The principle of unity is an identity of aim, which causes wills to converge towards a single goal in a determined direction. However, an organisation is not a reunion of many elements, in due order but inactive, like the stones of a building. Another of its distinguishing marks is the activity of all its members for the achievement of their common end. And, note well, this is not a mechanical, extrinsic activity, started from outside, but vital and intrinsic, springing from the selfsame operative subject. An organisation, then, has not the order and activity of a mere machine, but that of a body ; for in a body you will find several distinct elements (limbs), which all work harmoniously for a single end (life), under the influence of a single interior principle (the soul).

2. We have said already that the distinctive element in an organisation (as, indeed, in anything) is its end, that is, the end intended by each and every member of the organisation. The diversity of organisations is determined by that of their end ; and to this the means are always subordinated. Hence an organisation is called religious, or economic, or political, according to the nature of the end towards which it moves.

Catholic Action, having, as we saw, something religious and supernatural for its supreme end, must be ranked

among religious organisations, even though it may make use of means of a different nature, though always proportioned to its aim. So we pass at once to the proof of the legitimacy of organisation as such, showing that it is a natural, Christian, and civil right.

A Natural Right

i. Man, because of his innate limitations, cannot, by himself, provide for all the spiritual and material needs of his nature. Hence he has to unite himself with other men in a society, interweaving his work with theirs. This is why man is called 'social by nature.' Human society, therefore, is not a phenomenon produced by the arbitrary will of its components, but is imposed by nature itself, by the fact that only in society can man find means adequate to the full satisfaction of his manifold and natural needs.

"Man," wrote Leo XIII (Encyclical *Immortale Dei*), "is by nature ordered towards civil society; for, being unable in isolation to provide himself with all necessities for life and intellectual and moral fulfilment, Providence so disposes that he comes to birth congenitally bound to unite himself with others, either in the domestic society (family) or in civil society, which alone can furnish him with all that suffices him perfectly for life."

But besides these exigencies which, by force of human nature, are common to every individual, every man experiences further personal exigencies, due either to his social situation, or to the legitimate aspirations of his soul, or to other special causes. It is, for example, evident that the personal needs of an employee differ from those of an employer; those of an artist from a commercial man's; even as the religious needs of a Catholic differ from those of a Buddhist.

Now human society cannot produce from within its own self, vast though it be, enough to content the legitimate yet most varied desires of each one of its own sons, so as to suffice for their complete achievement. On the other hand, the individual, taken by himself, has not sufficient richness of energy to provide, always and sufficiently, for all his personal necessities. This, precisely, is why he feels himself inclined, and as it were constrained, to fuse his personal energies with those of other individuals, who find themselves in the same accidental circumstances, who have an affinity of interests, of profession, or ideal, etc. From this fusion of individual forces is generated a new mighty collective force, which alone can conquer all the obstacles in the way of the achievement of their common end.

2. Forthwith, organisations, private societies arise, which soon naturally engraft themselves upon the great trunk of civil society. "Naturally," said we. For private associations, though constituted by the free will of their members, must be considered as of 'natural right,' in the sense that they arise from the fact that man is naturally insufficient for winning, within civil society, all the means necessary for his gradual prefectioning. And even as this is imposed on him by nature, so, by the logic of things, the selfsame nature must allow him the use of all the means apt for such an end, among which are, precisely, private societies. These, therefore, are a natural right of man's, in so far as they are a necessary integration of civil society.

3. We are glad here to recall the authoritative teaching of Leo XIII, who wrote in his Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* that

"The feeling of his own weakness spurs man on to wish to unite the work of others to his own. The instinct of this

natural inclination moves him both towards civil society, and towards other particular societies, small enough, maybe, and imperfect, but still, true societies. Between the former and the latter exists a great difference, owing to the difference of their proximate ends. The end of civil society is universal, inasmuch as it looks towards the common good, to which each and all citizens have right, in due proportion. Hence it is named 'public,' since by means of it men imite and communicate for the purpose of forming a State. On the other hand, the other societies that arise within it, are called private, because their aim consists in the private utility of each of their members."

A Civil Right

i. From the fact that liberty of association is a natural right, it follows that the State cannot legitimately suppress it ; on the contrary, it should recognise it and cause it to be respected. This is what usually happens. Hence organisation is also a civil right. The State cannot suppress any natural rights, because it did not create them, but found them already constituted by that eternal universal law which is the expression of the inviolable will of the Creator. The State has the specific function of safeguarding all the natural rights of the citizens.

This, of course, does not mean that the right of association is unlimited. The State can, for reasons of a superior sort, discipline, limit, and even, in certain circumstances, completely suppress the use of it, prohibiting the formation of this or that association. This can happen when

- (a) the object of an association is bad, *e.g.*, contrary to public morals, to the personal security of citizens, etc. ;
- (A) the means made use of are illicit ; *e.g.*, armed force, terrorism, etc.; for the State cannot admit the

Machiavellian principle that the end justifies any and every means ;

- (c) the right of association clashes with superior rights, such as the common good, social peace, etc.

2. Here, too, the ideas set forth by Leo XIII in the same Encyclical, *Rerum Navarum*, are very clear :

“ Albeit private societies exist within the State and are as it were so many parts of it, yet, speaking generally and absolutely, the State cannot prohibit their formation ; for man possesses the right to form social unions by nature, and the State must not destroy but protect natural rights. By forbidding such associations it would contradict itself, because the origin of civil community, like all other forms of intercourse, is founded precisely on the natural sociability of man. Situations can, however, arise which render a veto legitimate and obligatory. When particular societies set before themselves an end manifestly contrary to honesty, justice, security of civil intercourse, the State rightly opposes them, either by preventing their formation, or by abolishing them when formed. But the greatest caution must be here observed, so as not to invade the rights of the citizen, and not to do harm under the pretext of the public good. Laws oblige us only in so far as they are in conformity with right reason, and thereby, with the eternal law of God.”¹

A Christian Right

I. Holy Scripture sanctions the right of association when the end is good. In the Old Testament the union

¹ The State can intervene so as to discipline the right of association in three ways—repressive, preventive, and mixed. The best is that which answers best to the actual conditions of society. In democratic States, as a rule, the repressive system will be used, according to which the State intervenes when an association, already constituted, goes outside the limits of the laws. As a matter of fact, nearly all modern States recognise the right of association up to a point. When this right is disallowed, history shows that secret societies arise in great quantities, with aims and means usually most dangerous to the process of public life.

of several men, for mutual help and defence is not only regarded as legitimate but recommended (Eccl. iv. 9-12). Again, our Lord made His own special command to consist in brotherly love ; He exalted and reinforced the concept of fraternity and human solidarity, which is the soul of every association.

Besides, our Lord, when He founded His Church, resolved to give it the form of a 'perfect' society, and entrusted to men the task of helping and saving other men.

2. History shows that the spirit of fraternity was always alive and active in the Church. From its very cradle we find that "the multitude of the faithful were of one heart and one soul, and no man could say that anything that he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And there was no man needy among them, for all who possessed lands or houses sold them, and brought the price of what had been sold and laid it down at the Apostles' feet, and it was distributed according as each had need" (Acts iv. 32, 34). According to the opinion of De Rossi and other scholars, Christian communities, even before the edict of Constantine (313), which gave freedom to the Church, could have a juridical existence and the right to possess by constituting themselves into * funeral associations,' recognised by Roman law, with the aim of providing a common tomb to their associates. Monasticism and religious orders ; associations for the propagation of the faith, for worship, for liberating slaves, for armed defence against the enemies of the faith ; the manifold charitable institutions that blossomed in every age upon the evergreen trunk of the Church—all these prove to us that the idea of association has always been blessed and encouraged by Christianity.

We are then well advised in concluding that organisation is a Christian right.

Its Efficacy and Utility

1. The efficacy of organisation is a truth of intuition. Experience confirms it. The proverb—'Union makes Strength'—always had facts upon its side. Organisation does not merely make a simple addition of forces ; it multiplies them, so that the total effect of the forces organised is greater than the sum of the separate items. A bundle of sticks, a torrent, are stronger than the rods and rills, merely added, that compose them.

2. The utility of organisation resides in its efficacy. It is useful to the common cause no less than to the interests of each, because it realises the formula of solidarity—each for all, all for each. Compare the human body. Each member lives and works for the life of the whole organism, but the life of the organism as a whole is useful and necessary for each member. In the modern order of things, organisation is useful not only for private life but even for public and social life, so much so that it often becomes necessary for the enjoyment of a right no less than for the accomplishment of a duty. A "disorganised citizen," wrote Manzoni, "is like an earthen vessel being jostled about among a number of iron ones ! "

3. The world war has impressed an accelerated and sometimes tumultuous rhythm, so to say, on the 'associative' movement, which had appeared towards the end of last century as an inevitable reaction against liberal individualism. Aspirations towards new forms of economic and political life—aspirations much encouraged by the rhetorical promises made during

wartime—explain this accentuation of a phenomenon which is one of the most noticeable characteristics of our age.

II. FUNDAMENTAL LINES OF ORGANISATION

In the pontifical definition of Catholic Action—participation of the laity in the hierarchic apostolate—the notion of organisation is included, and precisely in the word ‘Hierarchic.’ More than this : the definition itself, by indicating the relation between the hierarchic apostolate and Catholic Action, lays down the basic lines of the organisation of the latter. “ This definition states both the ‘organicity’ and also the whole beauty of Catholic Action ” (Pius XI ; speech to the Catholic Action University Students, September 8, 1929).

An Essential Property

1. A ‘hierarchy’—which means a Sacred Rule or Power—results from a series of persons exercising power not in a separate and independent way, but in subordination and unitedly. They form a single chain—and organisation. (See Canon Law 108 : Clerics are not all of the same rank, but there exists amongst them a sacred hierarchy, in which the one is subordinated to the other.)

2. Hence two simple conclusions :

- (a) the law of anything’s action is always in harmony with that of its being—action follows essence. If then the Hierarchy is an organisation, its apostolate will necessarily be organisational.

- (b) Catholic Action is a participation in, an accessory of, the hierarchic apostolate. But 'the accessory follows the principal'; hence Catholic Action, too, is by nature an organised apostolate. An organisational form is, therefore, as we have always said, an essential property of Catholic Action.

The Jurisdictional Hierarchy

1. Now we must see what are the basic lines of the hierarchic structure of the Church, because those of Catholic Action will have necessarily to correspond with them. Catholic Action adheres to the Hierarchy, and so must take its form as clothes take that of the body. The Hierarchy on which Catholic Action depends is a jurisdictional one. Now this, by divine institution, "issues from the Supreme Pontificate and the Bishops thereto subordinate: other grades have been added to these by ecclesiastical institution."—(Canon 108).¹

2. Parish priests, then, clearly do not form part of the hierarchy of jurisdiction as established by Christ. In reality, and in the strict sense, they have no jurisdiction *in foro externo*. However, the Church has conferred certain jurisdictional powers on parish priests. In Catholic Action, as we shall see, they play an important part. Hence we can say that at least so far as Catholic Action is concerned, the hierarchy of jurisdiction results from the Pope, the bishops, and parish priests; these last being considered as legitimately constituted by the Bishops to rule a certain part of the Christian folk.

¹ The Church contains, of course, also a hierarchy of *order* composed by divine institution of bishops, priests, and deacon?.

Centrality, Diocese, and Parish

1. Hence certain clear practical consequences :

Catholic Action must depend from the Pope, the Bishops, and Parish Priests, according to their respective competency in the matter of hierarchic authority. Catholic Action will therefore possess its formations and directive organs in the centre of the nation, in dependence on the Pope and his representative ; in each diocese, in dependence on the Bishop, and in each parish, dependently on the parish priest. Centrality, diocesanity (to coin a word), and parochiality are, therefore, three essential characteristics to Catholic Action, simply because Catholic Action is by nature subordinated to and co-ordinated with the Hierarchy.¹

2. In the parish, which is the cell of the vast ecclesiastical organism, exist the primal unities of Catholic Action, that is, parochial associations. These, united among themselves, issue into diocesan directive organs, which, in their turn, are bound up into the central directive organs. Hence Catholic Action develops itself by way of three interconnected storeys, like a well-built house. The organisational character of Catholic Action is therefore hierarchic, unitary, and concentric.²

¹ We said that the central organ of Catholic Action is in dependence on the Pope or his representative. Outside Italy the Pope is represented either by one person, *e.g.*, the Primate, or by a collectivity of persons, such as a Council of Bishops. The centrality of Catholic Action evidently exacts the existence of an authority superior to the dioceses ; this exists, as in its source, in the Pope. The organ used by this power can vary according to circumstances.

² The 'parochiality' of Catholic Action, *ij.*, the parochial character of the associations that compose it, can admit exceptions. Thus interparochial associations are possible. Of their opportuneness, ordinary ecclesiastical authority is judge. We note, in passing, that the name 'association' is preferably reserved to parochial groups ; that of 'organisation' is usually given to diocesan or national formations, issuing from the combination of more than one unit

The Unitary Form and the National Basis

1. There are those who do not see, in this unitary and concentric formation, an essential characteristic of Catholic Action. But they forget what we have already asserted ; that the Hierarchy forms an indivisible *unit*. The Bishops possess a jurisdiction, in so far as they are united and subordinated to the Roman Pontiff, in whom all powers are focussed. Not even dioceses can picture themselves as entities standing each on its own footing, separate from one another. On the contrary, they are parts of a whole, *i.e.*, the Church. Now in the Church of Christ, besides the unity of faith and of moral law and of means of salvation, there is also a unity of command. Hence not only a moral unity emerges, but a juridical one, and this covers all her energies and activities, Catholic Action included, seeing that it is a sacred possession of the Church.¹

Naturally, as in the other fields of ecclesiastical activity, so in this one of Catholic Action, the unity of supreme command cannot act to the detriment of the several diocesan activities nor of local initiatives ; on the contrary, we shall soon see how it issues into the advantage of all of them.

2. Catholic Action develops, in its unitary form, within the frontiers of each nation ; *i.e.*, its form is unitary with a national basis.

The principal cause of this is that, though as a whole

¹ The authoritative *Cir'iltà Cattolica* wrote, January 16, 1932, 'Intorno alla definizione dell'A.C.': "It is the unity of command, willed by our divine Founder, and the corresponding obedience of all Catholics to the authority of the Church, which alarms the politician. Now is not this a puerile panic ? Our unity, so much feared, as a matter of fact has no wish save to render actual what is involved in the very nature and constitution of the Church, its monarchical system, and of all its social organism, which is divinely constituted for the well-being of civil society itself, as well as of religious society, for the salvation of souls."

Catholic Action has but a single objective and obeys a single command, yet it works, on the social terrain, within the limits of the laws and institutions of each country ; that is, in moral and political climates of the most varied sorts, and with various exigencies and possibilities of apostolate. Hence it must adapt its activities, immediate objectives, and means of action to its own vital social environment. (This does not prevent the identity of general objective and of supreme spiritual command from establishing some points of contact between the 'Catholic Actions' of various lands, when no external reasons interfere. In this matter, obviously the supreme authority of the Church is alone competent to judge.)

It remains that anyone can see how the exterior apostolate of the Church, quite apart from Catholic Action, but especially where the Hierarchy exists, develops and organises itself within the framework of a nation, and in view of its particular well-being, while duly subject to the Supreme Head of the Church and keeping in mind the Church's general requirements. Now, if other Catholic activities develop on a national basis, *a fortiori* Catholic Action will do so, being the apostolate of the laity, with aims at once religious and social.¹

III. UNITY AND MULTIPLICITY

We have, so far, examined the organisation of Catholic Action in its relation to the Hierarchy. We mean now

¹ On this point *cf.* Mgr. Pizzardo's words to the French Seminary in Rome (December 8, 1930 : he is the Assistant-General of the Italian Catholic Action) : "This characteristic note of Catholic Action, tie., its unitary national structure, in regard of the autonomy of its various parts and of the different dioceses, constitutes its unity in multiplicity ; and this is the prerogative of every vital organism, and was the chief purpose of the reorganisation of the Indian Catholic Action in 1922-1923."

to examine the interrelationship of the forces that compose it. Forthwith we confront the problem of co-ordination.

Co-ordination

1. Catholic Action is the resultant of many various forces. Thus in its vast embrace are contained groups, specialised according to age, sex, and civil conditions of their members. Its typical organisations, so to say, are four: two for adults (men and women), and two for younger people of either sex. Pius XI alluded to this fourfold formation when writing to Cardinal Segura: "Catholic Action must form one great family of men and women, including the youth of either sex, stirred by the selfsame desire of participating in the sacred ministry of the Church, and, at her bidding, to co-operate in the spreading of Christ's kingdom in individuals, families and society."

2. Each of these organisations has its proper and specific end, since it is clear that the demands of education and possibility of apostolate differ according to age, sex, and civil situation. In consequence, each has its proper organisational structure and its proper functions, is governed by special statutory norms, and is ruled by directive organs proper, whether to the national centre, the dioceses, or the parishes. Hence, if we consider Catholic Action horizontally, we have a field in four sections—men's, women's, young men's, young women's. Vertically, we have a triple plane—national, diocesan, and parochial.

3. But albeit the specific and immediate ends of each organisation be different, the supreme aim of each is one and the same. If many be the paths by which each

moves, the ultimate goal is identical for all, nor is it other than that of Catholic Action itself—the advent of Christ’s kingdom in individuals, families, and Society itself.

Hence the need of a cohesion, a co-ordination, so that there may be realised the principle that presides over the life of every organism, physical or moral: unity in multiplicity. We have seen that identity of end is in itself a coefficient of unification. Hence Catholic Action, which has one identical end, cannot but form, to use the Pope’s expression, ‘one great family.’ Now in a well-ordered family, the members do not ignore one another; they attend to and help one another, each as best it can, and in its proper place. Co-ordination, then, is of use not only for the avoiding of clashes, collisions of forces (negative aim), but to multiply their effects and improve the collective and final upshot (positive aim).

4. The Holy See, when recommending Catholic Action, has also always recommended the union and concord of all the forces organised within it. Pius IX, writing to the first Italian Catholic Congress, which was, too, the first attempt to co-ordinate the Catholic forces in Italy, used these memorable words :

“ Seeing that from all sides, in various ways and with various stratagems, our holy religion is attacked . . . it is a good thing so to unite our Catholic forces that the action of all should be one, although their individual aims and enterprises have separate objectives ” (Brief of May 27, 1874). “ Catholic Action,” wrote the Reigning Pontiff (to Cardinal Segura), “ is a compact, unitary, and disciplined army. Now’ a plurality of organisations, reciprocally contrasted within the same order, and a multiplicity of directions divergent among themselves, would annul the forces of such an army, and hinder its harmony and any hope of success : this must at all costs be avoided.”

The Instruments of Co-ordination

1. Co-ordination demands suitable organs, or instruments. Experience shows that when various forces are operating in any one field, having the same purpose, there must exist, over all and each, a single and centripetal force to direct them and cause them to converge towards that goal. What then are our co-ordinative organs ?

Listen again to the Pope : “ Catholic Action must have its own proper organisation, single, disciplined, and able to co-ordinate all Catholic forces, so that each, for its part, may preserve and scrupulously execute the obligations and duties confided to it, and that all, taken together, may co-ordinate their activities in a due dependence on Ecclesiastical Authority.” The forces of Catholic Action therefore find their disciplinary and co-ordinative centres chiefly in Ecclesiastical Authority itself—Pope, Bishops, Parish Priests, on whom all their organisations depend.

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2. Still, Catholic Action, being an apostolate of the laity, will be found to possess also a lay-direction, though subordinated to the higher command of the Hierarchy. It is then suitable that within the lay directive itself there be organs of co-ordination, and these, by the force of things, must function in the centre of the nation in direct dependence on the Holy See, in the dioceses, on that of the Bishops, and in parishes, on that of the parish priest. We said ‘ suitable,’ not ‘ necessary,’ for we could not prove that such organs are part of the very nature of Catholic Action as such. But it is certain that they, as a long experience has shown, turn out extremely useful for the achievement of all the ends of Catholic Action itself.

3. Such organs are, in fact, desired by the Supreme

Authority. Many explicit declarations of the Reigning Pontiff prove this.

“ Catholic Action must be in intimate relations with and subordinated to the Hierarchy ; and this subordination displays itself in their filial homage and obedience in regard of the bishops, and the Pope, and through them, of Christ. The Pope and the Bishops have naturally their specific, qualified, immediate organs for exercising their mandate in this matter, as indeed the nature of things demands—these are, the Central and the Diocesan Committee ” (Speech to the Ecclesiastical Assistants of the Young Men’s Department of Catholic Action, September 14, 1925). Here then are two co-ordinative organs. Again, he said that “ the Central Committee must give its directions to the whole of Catholic Action, like blood that from the central vessels is propelled to the capillary extremities. The Central Committee itself is directed and assisted—by the Pope, by the Bishops ; nor could a framework, other than this, yet simple and clear, be conceived ” (Discourse to the Directors of the Diocesan Committees of the Italian Catholic Action, May 16, 1926). Another very explicit pontifical text is as follows : “ The various forms of organised Catholic activities must find their disciplinary centre in the Hierarchy. Hence the functioning of parish councils, of diocesan committees, and of the Central Committee in direct dependence on ecclesiastical authority”. Naturally, these organs must possess, in regard of the various associations, high and authoritative functions ; for only thus will all Catholic energies find a single direction and a vigorous impulse ” (Letter from the Cardinal Secretary of State approving the general statutes of the Italian Catholic Action, October 2, 1923).¹

¹ H.E. Mgr. Pizzardo, in the speech quoted above, said : “ It is this unitary form of Catholic Action, worthy of greater respect than that of other activities, that the Holy Father has so often recommended. His personal desire is that a great organisation, Catholic Action, should be constituted in every land, having a ‘unitary’ character, within which, while each several activity must be left a legitimate development proper to its own nature, all the vital forces of Catholicism may find themselves orientated towards the supreme aim—the Peace of Christ in the Kingdom of Christ.”

The Autonomy of the Component Parts

1. Here a doubt may arise. In each parish there are distinct associations of men, women, etc., each with its own council of directors ; parochial associations of one definite kind are united in diocesan organisations which, they too, have their own directive organs ; diocesan organisations of the same sort constitute a national organisation, and this too is directed by a superior organ.

Hence all the organisations have their proper 'specific' directive organs in parishes, in dioceses and at the national centre. Now will not the co-ordinative organs interfere with activities, suffocate all spirit of initiative, and become stumbling-blocks instead of causes of progress ? Such is the difficulty.

2. The danger is not hypothetical. All that is needed, and sufficient, to avoid it is that the co-ordinative organs maintain themselves within the limits of their natural competency, which is to co-ordinate the activities of the several organisations in view of achieving the general aims of Catholic Action. Its activities are, for this very reason, 'general,' while all the rest are to be called 'specific.' Well, in order to maintain their specific activity, the various organisations must enjoy a just and necessary autonomy, by which word we mean a relative independence, extending to a determinate order of activity, not an absolute one, which extends to any and every such activity.

In particular, the autonomy of organisations must include (a) the activities they make use of in view of their specific ends ; (δ) the activities that each displays in the matter of recruitment and formation of members and their application to all the duties proper to Catholic Action. In these two fields the organisations proceed

under the direction and responsibility of their statutory organs, independently of the co-ordinative centres.

3. Pontifical documents speak of the necessity not only of co-ordination of forces, but also of their autonomy.

Pius XI : "We need to put the various activities into contact, and to co-ordinate them. We have not said, to fuse them, but to co-ordinate them ; this means, to reduce to a moral unity ever more intimate and close all the branches of Catholic Action . . . a true organic body, composed, therefore, of distinct elements, not entering the one into the other, but none the less all of them concurring into one and the same vitality, each intent upon its own functions, yet having as aim that unity of endeavour, of thoughts, and of work without which no real success is possible " (Speech to the Superior Councils of the Italian Catholic Action, June 28, 1930).

It would be impossible better to delineate this characteristic of Catholic Action ; that is, its perfectly unitary structure, along with the autonomy of each part ; and this was well defined also in the letter of the Cardinal Secretary of State, when he sanctioned the reform of the Italian Catholic Action, October 2, 1923. He asserts that the new Statutes are "aimed at disciplining our great Catholic organisations, so as to give them unity of direction . . . without diminishing the autonomy of each."

4. In the organism of Catholic Action, or of anything else, we have then to keep clear of two extremes : that of division between the parts, which leads to dissipation of energies and often to harmful clashes between them, and that of an absorption of the parts into the whole, which suffocates the spontaneity and efficacy of the organised forces. The former is an excess of liberty—particularism ; the latter, an excess of authority—which we can call totalitarianism or centralisationism. Perfection stands between the two, and is represented by

Organicity, which harmonises authority with liberty, and unity of direction with autonomy of parts.

Illustrations

1. The admirable harmony which produces itself in a material body must be produced in Catholic Action by the free will of its members. What St. Paul said of the Church, that she consists of many members in one body (1 Cor. xii. 12) can be said too of Catholic Action, for it is comparable to a body, and in fact *is* a moral body. Well, in a body, all the members live from one and the same principle, under a single directive force, and for the same synthetic end, *i.e.*, life. But in spite of this, each member preserves its autonomy. The arm, while remaining attached to the body, loses nothing of its necessary liberty, even while it derives its force and vitality from the whole. In fact, it would lose both, were it to wish to detach itself from the trunk through love of a liberty neither just nor necessary.

2. But the structure of Catholic Action can still better be compared with that of an army. In a mobilised army you observe various specialised sections — artillery, engineers, infantry, etc.—each with its own commanding officers. Over them all is the Supreme Command, which has the task of examining and fixing the general objectives, and of directing thereto the action of each section ; and these have the duty of tending harmoniously towards them, by fulfilling the particular functions assigned to them, on the general scale.

This does not prevent the sectional commanding officers from tracing, each of them, as good a plan as possible, so as to carry out as well as possible their special tasks. They may do so, and they *must*. Above

all, each particular command must provide in anticipation for the instruction and equipment of his own men, so that these may fulfil their proper task when the moment comes. Such is the officer's specific job ; such his field of activity, and in it he enjoys a just autonomy. This is more or less what happens in Catholic Action, which is precisely like a mobilised army—'in battle array.' Here, too, you will find specialised divisions—the organisations—with their several and special officers ; and over them there is a general and supreme command, with its local organs.

Substance and Accidents

1. So far we have but traced the main lines of the organic structure of Catholic Action ; the lines that give it a characteristic and immutable stamp. Yet, within these, what a variety of details, what adaptations, are possible ! A house must have four walls, a roof, a door, a window. But to these essential elements the architect can add a thousand forms and different developments, according to the needs of place and climate, and the tastes and possibilities open to those who are to inhabit it. So, too, for the structure of Catholic Action. Here, too, we have to distinguish between substance and accident ! The latter is the mutable element, and history shows that it does in fact change according to conditions of time, place, and social environment.

2. And no wonder. The Church herself changes in her externals. Pius X, announcing in 1905 the revision of the rules of the Catholic Action of Italy, wrote :

“ The Church, in the long course of her history, has ever and always displayed most clearly that «he possesses a marvellous power of adapting herself to the variable conditions of

human intercourse ; so much so, that provided no injury be done to changeless faith and moral law, or to her sacrosanct rights, she readily and flexibly adapts herself in all that is contingent and accidental, to the changes of the times and to the new needs of society ” (77 *Fermo Proposito*).

The reigning Pontiff, speaking to the representatives of the diocesan committees of the Italian Catholic Action (May 16, 1926), said :

“The Church has two remarkable prerogatives—a firmness, an immutability that have ever been the despair of those who place themselves against her, and always will do so, because there are lines traced by the hand of God, so that the Church can say : ‘ Thus far and no farther ’—and, together with this immutability, a no less remarkable adaptability to all circumstances whence some good for souls may be extracted, for that is the supreme end of the Church herself.”

This supreme ideal—the salvation of souls—which explains the changes in the exterior conformation of the Church, explains equally the changes in the organised structure of Catholic Action, the Church’s instrument in her spiritual mission in the world.

IV. THE UTILITY OF THIS ORGANISATIONAL FORM

We have spoken of the utility of organisations in general, and this naturally holds good also for Catholic Action. But the organic form of Catholic Action in particular, and especially its unitary and hierarchic form, gives it particular advantages which it is fitting that we should here point out.

This form is useful in view both of the interior and the exterior aims of Catholic Action. The interior ones are the formation and spiritual assistance of its members, and especially their apostolic formation. The latter concern the apostolate itself, and can be reduced to two—

doing good (its positive aim) and preventing harm (negative).

For the Formation of Members

1. Herein the experience and talents of the heads are of the greatest help ; the instructions, exhortations, strong succours that come from the central directors, like the life-giving blood that flows widening from the heart, through the arteries and blood-vessels, through the whole texture and cells of the organism. Enough to reflect on the benefit derived from the printed matter used in formation—books, reviews, pamphlets, etc.—none of which would be possible were our forces dissipated.

Mutual good example and edification given and received as between the members of so vast a family are of value to the same end—in Catholic Action a brother is assuredly helped by brother ! (Prov. xviii. 19). Further, Catholic Action, whose members exist in all dioceses and parishes, can follow them up when, as so often to-day, they change from place to place. And, having specialised sections for every age, sex, and condition of life, it can accompany its members through the various phases of their life, and assist them according to their ever-changing needs. Thus in Italy a child can be inscribed in the children's section at six ; at twelve he enters the section of ' aspirants ' to the * Youth ' circle, and at fifteen into its * effective ' section : when he marries, or at thirty, he passes into the men's section, and thus remains always within the same family, merely changing his place according to the rhythm of life itself.

2. The organisational structure of Catholic Action is specially favourable to the apostolic formation of its members, and this is, we have seen, an outstanding

aspect of spiritual formation (see Chapter III, p. 45). The mere fact of finding oneself united with many others, for a common cause, and all dependently on the supreme head, the Pope, is enough to light up in the mind of each that 'Catholic sense' which is the sense of universal solidarity, and the renunciation of that spiritual egoism and religious individualism that we have deplored. The imposing mass of the members, and its compactness, soldiers, too, in the minds of each the sense of trust in the goodness of our enterprise and the common victory, and favours that combative spirit and apostolic courage that urges us to fight and suffer for the cause of Christ and of His Church.

3. If there is one thing to regret to-day it is the fact that the timidity of the good so often leaves the field free to the audacity of the bad. Pius XI himself has deplored this. In his Encyclical *Quas Primas* he wrote :

"It is the duty of Catholics to hasten and accelerate the return of Christ (into society), by means of action ; but many of them, as a matter of fact, seem not to possess that place and authority in civil intercourse which is fitting to those who carry the casket of Truth. Such a state of things may perhaps be attributed to the apathy and weakness of the good, who abstain from the fight or resist but languidly. From this fact, the Church's enemies draw but new audacity and rashness. Now when all the Faithful understand that it is their duty to fight with courage and always under the standard of Christ their King, they will further equip themselves with apostolic enthusiasm to bring rebels and the ignorant back to God, and will put forth all their strength to maintain the rights of God inviolate."

Now it is clear that Catholic Action, even if it did no more than give to each the sense of numbers and of solidarity, helps much towards conquering that timidity,

and to establish the courage and apostolic ardour of which the Pontiff speaks.

To Spread the Good

1. The organisational form of Catholic Action is still more useful when it is a matter of realising its external aim of apostolate. Pius XI, when speaking to Catholic associations, has often announced this truth : “The organisation of good is the multiplication of good.” We have already explained the general grounds for this. But there is also a particular reason which concerns ourselves ; and it is that the diffusion of good, in contrast with any other enterprise, is confronted by a multitude of obstacles raised up by the passions of men and the fury of Satan. To surmount them we need to be many in one.

2. We need to be many—many associations, many associates. Here is the ideal—not one parish without Catholic Associations !

Pius XI, speaking to the university students of the Italian Catholic Action (December 22, 1928), said, on this matter : “ If, to initiate great enterprises, we need men * few but good,’ there comes the moment when numbers too are necessary to actuate them. Sheer mass has its importance ; it will always need to be inspired and directed ; but mass of itself can, definitely, gain vast and solid positions.”

But mass and multitude are not enough. Progress must go forward with union of forces. In an army numbers count; the preparation and valour of the soldiers count, but the discipline and compactness of the sections count still more. The same Pope, recommending the “ unity of the directives and the organicity

of co-operation," said to the Belgian Catholic Youth Society that "without union, even the most generous forces are wasted, and provide but a small percentage of the great fruit they could produce." It is then evident that in Catholic Action unity of command makes much for union of forces and discipline of sections ; like a motive power, it descends through every hierarchic grade to the ultimate units, creating thus a wonderful harmony of movement and operation.

To Hinder Wrong

i. The * negative ' scope of the Christian apostolate is to hinder wrong and defend the right against it. Herein the utility of being many in one is even more patent. The ministers of evil are certainly both many and united. Here assuredly then is the time for opposing arms to arms and organisation to organisation. Indeed, we must not speak any more of mere utility, but of necessity good and true ! And this is why we prefer to postpone the development of our argument to the next chapter, where we shall speak of the necessity of Catholic Action precisely as an organisational fact.

2. We beg leave, however, to offer what should be a practical conclusion. We have seen that the ' unitary ' form of Catholic Action is of the highest utility in regard alike of its external and of its internal aims. The minds of individual members are united, and so are all its associations, under one sole command, and in view of a single end.

In consequence, all ' particularisms ' and localisms are to be frankly disapproved. They are bom of the tendency to act on one's own initiative, from an ill-understood love of liberty, that refuses any bonds, any federative responsi-

bility. This tendency, that forbids one to see a step beyond the shadow of one's own church steeple, is a sign of a narrow and short-sighted mind ; of a soul that cannot see the duty of Christian solidarity, nor knows how to belong to a family vast as is the world. And it is the negation in practice of Catholicism as a universal religion.

CHAPTER V

The Necessity of Catholic Action

We now wish to explain the necessity of Catholic Action, and ask first whence it arises. Here is what Pius XI wrote to Cardinal Segura and the Spanish Hierarchy :

“You clearly see the manner of times in which we are living, and what they demand from the Catholic forces. On the one hand, we deplore a society growing ever more pagan, wherein the light of the Catholic faith is growing faint in souls. In consequence, the Christian sense, and the purity and integrity of morals, are also waning within them to a really alarming degree. On the other hand, we grieve because the clergy is quite insufficient to cope with the necessities and needs of our times. This is so, either because in certain places it is not numerous enough ; or, because among many sorts of persons, refractory to its beneficent influence, it cannot cause its voice and the force of its admonishments to achieve contact. Hence it is necessary that all men be apostles ; it is necessary that the Catholic laity do not stand idle, but be united with the ecclesiastical Hierarchy, and ready to obey its orders, and take its share in the holy warfare, and, by complete self-dedication, and prayer, and strength of will, and action, co-operate for the reflowering of faith and the reformation of Christian morals.”

From these words it is clear that Catholic Action is necessary because—

(i) Society is growing ever more pagan (upshot of the destructive work of secularism) ;

(2) The clergy cannot suffice for the work of restoration, and so stands in need of the help of the laity ;

(3) This help has to be given in union with the Hierarchy and at its orders, which is exactly what happens in Catholic Action, for which in this sense, therefore, no substitute can be offered. In the following chapter we propose to explain these three reasons for the necessity of Catholic Action separately.

I. THE PAGANISATION OF SOCIETY

The Effects of Secularism

i. Before the French Revolution, Society, with but rare exceptions, was organised on a Christian basis. Political and social ordinances, public and private justice, and institutions, were all inspired by Christian principles. Governments had not only to respect but also to protect the rights of the Church, and the public profession of the Christian religion was imposed upon rulers. We certainly do not mean to say that this theoretically ideal state of things did not give rise to abuses and improprieties. These existed, indeed, and to a terrible extent. There were governors who made use of religion not as an inspiration to right government, but as a machine for ruling ; not as mistress, but as slave, at the service of their iniquitous intentions. Hence the protection granted to the Church could become so strict and intimate as to be more like a strait-waistcoat than anything else.

But all these abuses, as deplorable as you will, could not prevent the religious idea from remaining as the inter-connecting network of the whole social organism. Atheism, religious indifferetism, were in those days but erratic phenomena, sporadic diseases. Hence Catholic

Action, in its actual form and with its actual programme, had then no reason for existence. But Liberalism, child of that bloody mother, the French Revolution, and grandchild of rationalist Protestantism, broke up the framework of the Christian *civitas*, that glory of bygone days, by proclaiming religion to be but a private affair, and relieving the governments of any duty in its regard. Thus was born Secularism, which from the outset could not but mean religious agnosticism, non-religionism, disregard of God.¹

2. The practical consequence of this principle was the separation of religion from every manifestation of collective life.

Hence, separation of State from Church ; separation of science, literature, and art from religion ; separation of the law from Christian morality. And hence secularism—the de-Christianisation of all political and social ordinances, of all public institutions, of all State services. Schools were secularised and handed over to the State ; by means of civil marriage, the family was secularised ; the army was secularised by the suppression of chaplains and religious services ; benevolence was secularised by

¹ In itself, 'laicism' should not mean more than 'popularism,' supremacy of the people. Leo XIII, in his *Immortale Dei*, explains clearly how it took on its modern signification : " Since Liberalism considers the People as the source of all rights and all power, it is but logical that the State consider itself relieved of all obligation towards the Deity ; that it profess officially no particular religion, nor feels itself bound to seek which religion, among the many, is the true one, nor gives anyone the preference over the others, but leaves them all equally free, provided that no harm thus accrues to public order. It will further be but logical to hand religion over to the individual conscience ; to give full freedom to each to follow which religion he prefers, or none, if so be that pleases him. Hence freedom of thought, of press, of cult, of conscience." This theory had already been condemned by Gregory XVI in his encyclical *Mirari Vos* (August 15, 1832) and Pius IX in the *Syllabus* of 1864.

the removal of beneficent works from the control of the Church ; the law was secularised, and so were all the organs of public life. The Church was thus deprived of her immemorial social function, and shut up within her sacristies. * Keep the priest in his sacristy ! ' was the first cry of secularism.

But not even there was he left alone. The un-religious State soon became the anti-religious State ; separation turned into persecution, secularism, anti-clericalism. This was bound to happen. Did not Christ say : " He that is not with Me, is against Me ! " ? (Luke xi. 23).

How Catholic Action Came About

I. This is enough, we think, to make it clear how the Catholic laity, in such a state of affairs, felt the need no more to remain inactive, but to organise itself on the terrain of its- common, liberties, -and to Stand alongside of the Hierarchy in its work of defence and of Christian restoration. That is, indeed, what happened ; and thus was born Catholic Action. It represents, in short, in its origin, the Catholic reaction against the de-Christianising work of the French Revolution, which broke out in 1789, and was thereafter propagated throughout Europe.

Catholic Action therefore was born to fulfil a work of necessary and legitimate defence. It is like the outer rampart of the Church, and nothing but its vast and solid organisation can give it the necessary strength. It is again the modern Crusade, destined to set free no more the tomb of Christ, but Christ Himself, made prisoner within the souls redeemed by Himself. It is the ' secular arm ' * that in past centuries the public powers offered for the protection of the Church. Fr. Liberatore, S.J., in his classic treatise,

Il diritto pubblico ecclesiastico, has written : “ The State of to-day has substituted the sovereignty of man for that of God. It has separated itself from the Church and gives her no more its aid. In such a situation nothing remains for the Church, in the civil order, save the support of the Catholic laity.”

But, as we have already said, Catholic Action has not only the task of defence, but also and specially that of restoration. It must help the Church to build up again ' what secularism has destroyed. It has made the cry of the prophet its own—“ It is time to act, O Lord ; they have destroyed Thy law ” (Psalms).

2. Another consequence of the French Revolution would seem to be Catholic social-economic action. This / action was begun, in fact, to solve that sinister social question which was made actual the very day that the actors in that monstrous revolutionary drama solemnly proclaimed the principle of free competition, and sacrificed to this the right to organise. All check upon industrial speculation was removed ; the working man was cast out into impotent isolation ; it became possible to defraud labour of its fruits, and that spurious phenomenon named Capitalism was bom, under the empire of which the so-called right to work (the only resource left to the workman) became the right to die of hunger.

Leo XIII, in his *Rerum Novarum*, alluded to the causes of the ‘ social question ’ and said :

“ During the past century, corporations of arts and crafts were suppressed and nothing was substituted for them, at the very time when laws and institutions went further and further away from the Christian spirit. So it came about that the working man little by little remained alone and hHpfcss, at the mercy of the cupidity of his employer and of an unchecked competition.”

But Hunger is a bad counsellor. On the other hand, the labouring man has a right to what is necessary to life ; this explains why Catholics, guided and stimulated by the Holy Father's words, felt the duty of promoting institutions and good works for the succour of the labouring classes in their needs, material and spiritual.

Appearance and Reality

1. But is it really true that secularism has done so much damage ? Is it really necessary to re-Christianise contemporary society ?

It might be doubted by a superficial observer, who could not penetrate into the substance of reality, but remained content with skimming over the mere surface of things. Because the cross still shines on the steeples of our churches, because our many bells still ring, because incense still smokes before our altars and the symbols of our Faith still rise high above our funerals, such an one will placidly assume that our society continues to be Christian. And so the determination of Catholic Action to appropriate St. Paul's motto—To restore all things in Christ—will appear to him exaggerated. This motto might, indeed, ring true upon the lips of the Apostle of the Gentiles, who had before him the task of moulding the whole great mass of pagan peoples from head to foot ; but to-day, such an one would feel, it is worth no more than a sensational catchword—apt, if you like, to stimulate the languid, but not to designate a programme of action. And is not our society called, precisely, Christian, in contrast with the old one, which was pagan ? Catholic Action, then, would *not* be what we call it, * necessary.'

2. Let us be clear. We readily and proudly recognise

that modern society bears indelibly engraved upon it the shining traces of Christ, who has passed our way. In Italy, especially, such traces may be impressed more deeply than elsewhere. Science, arts, literature, the noblest monuments, the grandest institutions, feasts, the calendar, the whole of her national history, all of it speaks of Christ.

It is also true that modern civilisation, in all that it has of fine and spiritually pure, is illumined by the rays that stream from the gospel pages. Why, the triple motto of the French Revolution itself—Liberty, Equality, Fraternity—what is that, in its true sense, but an irradiation of Christian Truth ?

3. But the point really is : Is the spirit of modern society still Christian ? Is Christ still enthroned, in the midst of our people, as a venerated Master ? Is His gospel still the supreme rule for private and public action ? Is the immense social value of His light-giving doctrine still appreciated, recognised, and utilised ? Alas, we cannot but answer these questions in the negative. The society of to-day, despite appearances, is ‘ void of Christ ’ (Gal. v. 4). Even in those countries where the ruinous action of secularism has ceased or been diminished we see the land still encumbered by those melancholy signs of destruction. So that the work, of reconstruction will have to last yet for a while. Hence Catholic Action, in its restorative function, must be called *necessary* in our day.

Army τ. Army

I. We add that Catholic Action is necessary precisely as an organised entity. The enemies of Christ, divided amongst themselves on many a point, are always at one

the moment it is an affair of combating the Church and de-Christianising consciences. They perpetuate the story of Pilate and Herod (Luke xxiii. 12). They are bound close into a phalanx. The words of the prophet are to the point to-day : " They have joined together, against the Lord and against His Christ " (Ps. ii. 2).

It is clear that the organisation of evil can be beaten only by the organisation of the good. Hence the necessity of Catholic Action, a vast and compact phalanx, army *versus* army, raised against the serried attacks of Christ's enemies.¹

When the enemies of the Church unite to repeat their *Tolle ! Tolle !* ' which they cried one day under the Praetorium of Pilate, it would be a crime to renew, I will not say, the treachery of Judas, but the flight of the Apostles. Nor is it possible to remain blameless if one remains isolated in the defence, since isolation takes away all chance of victory.²

Nor let it be said that the times are changed. Jesus

¹ Pius XI wrote, in his *Quadragesimo Anno*, May 15, 1931 : " When the sons of darkness fight against the Church of Christ they suppress their differences and form a single compact army, so as to follow up their common intent by union of their forces. . . . Let then all men of goodwill unite Likewise all those who, under the guidance of the Pastors of the Church, are pleased to fight this good and peaceful battle of Christ.

* Leo XIII, in his encyclical *Humanum Genus* (April 20, 1884), commenting on the harm done by Freemasonry, wrote : " Through an iniquitous alliance and a secret identity of aims, its adherents, join everywhere together, grasp each the other's hand, and the one kindles the other to dare ever new deeds of evil. So bold an attack demands a defence that is no less bold. We mean that every right-minded man should league himself with the others in a vast society of action and of prayer." And the late Cardinal Xiatfi wrote, in his Pastoral on Catholic Action : " Our enemies assail us in serried ranks and with well thought-out tactics ; how necessary, then, for us to march—not one by one, to become an easy prey, and towards inevitable discomfiture, but, on the contrary, compact and firm within those disciplinary laws on which alone Victory will smile."

Christ and His Church will always have their enemies on earth, and these will always be united more or less, for Satan knows too well the power of numbers and of union. So the army of the ' sons of light ' will have to remain every day in battle formation against the squadrons of the army of the Prince of Darkness.

Pontifical Declarations

That Catholic Action is necessary to-day as a means of defence and of Christian restoration is the unanimous declaration of the Popes of recent times. And they are certainly in a position (if only by reason of their rank as supreme command) to realise better than anyone else the necessity in which the Church stands to-day of this auxiliary apostolate. A few quotations shall suffice.

Leo XIII, in his Encyclicals, constantly speaks of the need of Catholics "countering, to-day, press by press, school by school, association by association, action by action" (Letter *Custodi della Fede* to the Italian people, December 8, 1892). In particular, he writes (Encyclical *Nobilissima Gallorum Gens*, to the French Bishops, February 8, 1884): "It is *necessary* that the better laity, who love the Mother of all men, the Church, and can, by word or writing efficaciously support the rights of religion, should multiply their efforts in defence of religion itself." Pius X, in his first Encyclical *Œ supremi* (October 4, 1903) asserted that "modern times demand Catholic Action"—a notion soon repeated in his *Motu Proprio* on Popular Christian Action, December 18, 1903. It begins with these words: "Ever since our first Encyclical addressed to the world-hierarchy, echoing all that Our Predecessors had established in regard of the Catholic Action of the laity, we have declared this enterprise to be most praiseworthy, and indeed necessary in the present conditions of the Church and of civil society." Benedict XV, in a letter to the Colombian Hierarchy (August 1, 1916), wrote: "We recommend those institutions which collectively bear the name

of Christian social action. We know that among yourselves, too, the actual circumstances imperiously exact them."

It would take too long to quote all the witness given by the reigning Pontiff upon this matter. We have already referred to what he said in his letter to the Spanish hierarchy. Here we shall but recall that in his first Encyclical *Ubi Arcano* he called Catholic Action a "sacred war on behalf of the defence of the rights of religious and domestic society." And to the Catholic Journalists of Italy (June 26, 1929) he said that as in apostolic times, so to-day, "it is necessary that all should concur with the work of the Hierarchy, because what we have to cope with is a Re-Evangelisation." Catholic Action, to be candid, forms our *Home Mission*.

II. THE CLERGY IS INSUFFICIENT

The second reason for the necessity of Catholic Action is that the Clergy cannot suffice for the needs of Christian restoration to-day. It cannot suffice because its numbers are too few, because it was dispossessed by secularism, and because it is unequal to the enormousness of the enterprise. We propose briefly to examine these reasons which are but of an accidental sort. There are, moreover, others of an absolute sort, which render the collaboration of the laity more or less necessary at all times.

The Clergy are too Few

I. "In certain places," wrote the Pope in the letter we have quoted, "the clergy are but few in number." In fact, how many Bishops are to-day constrained to repeat the lament of Christ—** the labourers are but few ! " The workmen in the vineyard, priests, are *few*

(Matt. ix. 37). Tragic coincidence ! Just when the field for labour widens, the ranks of the labourers grow thin.

2. Nor should this surprise us. The multiplication of work to be done, and the withdrawal of those who should do it, are closely interconnected phenomena, and each derives from the selfsame cause, recently mentioned here—Social Secularisation. In fact, on what does the numerical insufficiency of the clergy depend, if not chiefly on that pagan spirit which seeps gradually into Catholic families themselves, and has hidden the glory of the priestly vocation alike from the eyes of parents and of sons ? Hence the need that right-minded laymen should enter the arena and multiply the hands of the unrecruited clergy. Pius XI has said that the hierarchic apostolate “ inevitably needs to multiply its own activity by many hands, many arms, many lips, many wills, as our Lord did in His own day, when He sent His disciples ahead of Him, to prepare the ways for His own evangelisation ” (Speech to the Directors of Roman Catholic Action, April 19, 1931).

The Clergy has Lost Authority

I. But we have to deplore not only numerical insufficiency, but also a loss of moral authority among the clergy. “ The clergy,” the Pope continued, “ in the case of many classes of persons refractory to its beneficent influence, cannot make its voice heard nor bring home the force of its admonitions.” This is once more the fault of secularism, which has stripped the head of the priest of its halo of superhuman dignity ; which has made him, in the eyes of the world, a professional man with vested interests ; and has thus pointed him out to

the contempt of the masses as a detestable parasite of society. The priest therefore often finds himself incapable of helping those who stand in the greater need of his help.

2. Now here comes in once more the providential work of the lay-apostolate. The layman is not surrounded by that net of prejudice and distrust that secularism has woven around the sacred person of the priest ; he is not suspect of pleading his own cause, or of fulfilling a professional job ; and so he can penetrate into areas where the priest can never set his foot ; and can gather great sheaves where the priest would find nothing but dry and prickly stubble. Militant Catholics are, in the Church, like a vanguard in action, which destroys the spiritual obstacles that the enemies of Christ have raised against His ministers, making it possible thus for them to penetrate and carry the holy succours of religion to all who need them and even to their enemies.

This was affirmed to Pius XI himself, writing to Cardinal Bertram that Catholic Action must be made use of as a means “ that seems granted to us by order of Divine Providence itself, so that the Church may lovingly draw to the doctrine and law of the Gospel those who, having no relations or contact with the clergy, may easily fall into the fallacious and depraved ruses of seditious men.”¹

¹ Cf., too, Fr. A. Garagnani, S.J., in *Stella Matutina*, the official organ of the Marian Sodalties of Italy (April, 1929) : “ A protracted period of schism between Church and State and of official secularism has penetrated right up to recent times into public institutions, especially the school, infecting them with a spirit of hostility towards religion. The result is that vast numbers of men have been withdrawn from the circle of the Church’s and the clergy’s influence ; many a bridge has been broken ; many a barrier raised ; and in whole districts, and in our cities, what one may call pagan zones

The Clergy cannot Cope with so Vast an Enterprise

1. But even were the priestly band more numerous, even were its moral power intact, and its feet unshackled, we should still have to conclude that the clergy, by themselves, would not be equal to the vastness of the enterprise. What that enterprise is we have already learnt—to repair the losses of Christ's kingdom due to secularism, and to restore all things in Christ. 'All things'—not only individual consciences, but families, and society in all its constituent elements, in all its vital manifestations : science, art, literature, school, Press, morals, public amusements, economics. It suffices to place so vast a field for activity before one's eyes, to realise that the work of the clergy, howbeit intense, cannot but be disproportionate to the objective, and how necessary must be the co-operation of the laity.

2. Moreover, the clergy, by the force of things, including the reserve imposed upon him by his vocation, cannot even be present at all the strategic points that have been occupied and ravaged by the enemies of Christ. The priest then needs * long hands,' that can reach where he cannot go in person, yet where his saving work is not least necessary. Such a ' hand ' is, we have already seen, Catholic Action.

The Holy Father has written (to the Argentine Hierarchy, February 4, 1931) the following clear words upon this subject : “ The work of parish or other priests,

have been formed, into which no priest can enter. Here then is the necessity of a lay apostolate, which, like the Baptist, shall prepare the way for Christ, and form the link between the Church and modern society, and take from the hands of the Church the lamp of light and life and hold it aloft where the Church's minister can no more go, and, like a new Tarcisius, take from the priest's hands Jesus Christ Himself, to carry Him to those who have such need of Him.”

however fervent and diligent, is insufficient for the great needs with which the apostolate must confront the time we live in. It is fitting then that the clergy seek out chosen men, who can be side by side with them in their apostolic work, and fling forth everywhere the fertile seed of religion. And it is through the associations of Catholic Action that the laity will provide this assistance." Catholic Action has, indeed, its offshoots in every sector of the vast social field ; its members are scattered everywhere around—in families, factories, fields, business houses, offices, barracks, parliaments ; and there is nowhere where they cannot let fall the evangelic seed, and in every ear they can cause the Church's saving word to sound.

3. Catholic Action, moreover, being composed of lay-folk of various ages, of both sexes, belonging to every social class, can be of an exceptionally great benefit to the cause of Christianisation ; it can accomplish, and on a large scale, the most efficacious of apostolates, what Léon Harmel called " the apostolate of like upon like "—that is, working man upon working man, student on fellow-student, professional upon colleague. An apostolate of every place and every hour, which can know from near at hand the needs of the human heart, and the safest and swiftest paths for reaching them and conquering them to Christ ; an apostolate that none but the laity can fulfil.

4. This is why the apostolate of the laity has always existed in the Church, and always was more than an advantage—a necessity ; it was a necessary integration of the hierarchic apostolate, though more or less needed according to times and circumstances. On this the Holy Father has said (in his speech to the parishioners of Su

Camillus at Rome, April 12, 1926) : “ Priests must work for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. . . . But what could they do if they found no one to help them in the accomplishment of this their first and sacred duty ? The Twelve Apostles certainly had the duty of calling the whole world to the Cross of the Redeemer. But what could they have done if they had had to remain working all alone ? They would not have been able to fulfil their mandate save in virtue of a continual miracle of Divine Providence, such a miracle as Divine Providence as a matter of fact does not work.” And in every period of the Church’s history, and especially in our own, this miracle to a greater or less degree would always have been required.

Catholic Action is not a Novelty

I. Hence we may judge of the worth of the objection that Catholic Action is a ‘ novelty,’ that we have always got on without it, and that things went better thus. So, if it be not decided that it is harmful, at least grant that it is not necessary ! This objection is due to ignorance, or hostility, or laziness, or dislike for any novelty, or to all these things together.

The Holy Father has answered it more than once. Here are some words of his, clear as though caned in marble :

“ Catholic Action is not a pretty innovation of our own times, as some people imagine—people who are not disposed to accept it, or who do not *like* this * pretty innovation.* It existed, and did so better than it does, and ever so long ago. The first diffusion of Christianity, here too in Rome, was achieved like that—was done by means of Catholic Action. How should it not be ? What would the Twelve have done—lost in the world’s immensity—if they had not called aloud to

others—men, women, the aged, children, and said : “ Let us carry forth the treasure of heaven ; help us to distribute it ” ? It is grand to read the historical evidence of this antiquity of Catholic Action ! St. Paul ends his letters with a whole litany of names—a few priests, many layfolk, women included : “ Help the women that have laboured along with me in the gospel ” (Phil. iv. 3). He seems to say : “ They belong to Catholic Action ! ” (Speech to the active members of the Young Women’s Associations of the Italian Catholic Action, March 19, 1927).

2. The Holy Father has also told us (Letter to Cardinal Segura) the reason why the apostolic action of the laity has always existed side by side with that of priests in the Church :

“ It is derived, on the one hand, from the fact that the Bishops have always felt the need of having co-operators among the Catholic laity, and, on the other, from the need that the laity must experience, alive in their hearts, of giving their own vigorous co-operation to the clergy in the work for the peaceful triumph of the Reign of Jesus Christ.”

The continuity of the lay apostolate is explained therefore by this double need, which is always actual : the actual need of it in which the Bishops stand ; and the moral need that the laity must feel of rendering it.

3. What about that other argument : ‘ When there was no Catholic Action, things went better ’ ? Things may, indeed, have gone better once. But no one will conclude, let us hope, that this was because there was no Catholic Action ! That w’ould be in any case a clumsy fault in logic—the sophism known as *falsa causa*—the assertion : ‘ along with this—therefore, because of this.’ We should, rather, admit the fact, but come to the opposite conclusion. ‘ To-day, things are not so good ; therefore, Catholic Action is needed.’ Why, we have

actually proved that the modern Catholic Action has been created above all to remedy the ills due to modern secularism !

What is Old, What New, in Catholic Action

1. The pontifical letter quoted above tells us, further, in so many words, what is old and immemorial in Catholic Action, and what is truly novel. "Catholic Action in its substance is as old as the Church : but in its actual shape it has taken form in these last times, according to the indications given by our more recent predecessors and the direction frequently expressed by Ourselves." The actual history of this formation will be outlined in a second volume. Here we observe that the primitive substance of Catholic Action consists wholly in its proud prerogative of being an auxiliary lay apostolate ; its new shape consists in the method and means according to which that selfsame apostolate develops itself to-day ; that is, in its organic structure and its programme in the concrete.

2. Novelty of form is imposed on it, obviously, by the new forms of modern life itself and consequently new needs. "In a world ablaze with electric light," wrote Cardinal Maffi (in his pastoral on Catholic Action), "a man would be looking after himself but ill were he obstinately to keep to poor little oil or tallow lights ! And who could so delude himself as to stop short at the venerable but laggard printing-press of Gutenberg, and hope to pit it with success against the torrential output of modern engines ?

Examine, examine our new needs, that our new forms of life have created, and you will see how you must hasten to alter your way of speaking ! You will have to

say that Catholic Action, with its half-military discipline, far from being a 'novelty,' is a most urgent and serious necessity.

Another Objection

1. Here is another objection. There are those who repeat that Catholic Action is a useless, cumbrous, and therefore harmful superstructure, and that its external activity causes a spiritual dissipation. What is really important, say they, is that Christ should be bom in souls, and forthwith everything else will become Christian. And for this the churches, pious works, the pure preaching of the gospel, without adulteration, or arbitrary appendices are sufficient ! The Gospel is the sovereign remedy for modem ills, and enough for the re-Christianising of all society.

2. In this objection, which at first hearing is impressive, the terms of the problem are displaced. That religion, that the Gospel, suffice for the healing of all ills, and the re-Christianising of the whole of society, who could ever doubt ? "Christ is the solution of every difficulty." But the question should be differently formulated : How are we to cause religion to be reborn in hearts ? How put the Gospel back into men's esteem, so that it become the rule-book of life, public and private alike ? Is the liturgy enough ? Are sermons in church enough ? Are pious works enough ? Placing ourselves on the rough soil of realism, we must recognise that along with all the good things we have mentioned, Catholic Action, too, is needed.

3. Doubtless the preaching of the Gospel, which should, of course, be genuine, is and always will be the sovereign means of Christian redemption. "Faith comes from hearing" (Rom. x. 17). But if this Word be not

preached outside the churches too, and in varied forms, we shall never succeed in bringing back to religion those—and they are many—who are no more willing to sit beneath our pulpits. Again, it is certain that divine worship is the primary Christian duty and provides the nourishment without which the apostolate cannot do. But worship in church, by itself, will never, never succeed in neutralising the effects of a bad Press ; of the cinema ; or in Christianising the schools or public institutions ; or in safeguarding the rights of the Church and of Christian consciences.

But all of this is necessary if society is to be restored to Christianity ; and that is, as we know, the specific task of Catholic Action.

III. NOTHING CAN BE SUBSTITUTED FOR CATHOLIC ACTION

There are those who admit the harm done by secularism, and admit that the clergy cannot suffice for the task of restoration, but still they think that Catholic Action is not necessary because other Catholic associations or good works can be substituted for it, or even the State and its institutions when these are inspired by religious principles. We now hope to show that this opinion, too, is erroneous.

Other Catholic Associations or Good Works as Substitutes

I. There are various associations and enterprises, composed of or directed by priests or laymen, with the approbation and blessing of the Church, which further have (directly or indirectly) apostolic aims ; yet they do not enter into the framework of Catholic Action. Can they therefore be substituted for it ?

2. We answer at once that they cannot be substituted for it, though they can and should help it in its execution of its mandate. And the reason consists in their diversity alike of end and form (see Chapter IX). It is certain that the unitary organisational form of Catholic Action, its perfect adherence to the Hierarchy, and its supremely comprehensive programme, render it a unique and most efficacious instrument of apostolate, the best adapted to the needs of the times, and—in the actual circumstances—irreplaceable. The Holy Father has affirmed this explicitly :

“ Catholic Action is the form of apostolate that corresponds best to the needs of the times ; and we have proved it with the practical experience of each day of the vast ministry that we have for some time been exercising ” (Letter to the Argentine Episcopate, February 4, 1931). “ Catholic Action is not only legitimate and necessary, but also irreplaceable (*insurragabile*) ” (Speech to the Directors of the Roman Catholic Action, March 19, 1931).

No more explicit or authoritative testimony could be required.

The State cannot Replace Catholic Action

I. Some will understand the necessity of Catholic Action in an anti-religious, or even a non-religious or agnostic State, but not in a State that recognises and favours religion, that wishes to animate its institutions with the principles of religion ; and accordingly wishes to give religious instruction and assistance to its citizens, especially to youth, by means of those same institutions.

Now we affirm roundly that even in such rare and happy circumstances, that is, on the assumption of a perfectly Catholic State, Catholic Action will still have its reason for existence, even though some of its aims

would not be so prominent. Some, not all ; nor, indeed, its more substantial ones. This is why the State and its institutions will never in any case prove a substitute for Catholic Action.

2. The reason consists in the patent fact that State and Church (and therefore State and Catholic Action) have different aims, and accordingly different fields of activity. Leo XIII, writing in his Encyclical *Immortale Dei*, affirmed that the two powers, ecclesiastical and civil,

“are both supreme, each in its own order ; they both have their own limits within which they should confine themselves, defined by the nature and end of each ; wherefore each is encircled as it were within a sphere, within which each acts *jure proprio*,”

Next he explains what is this distinct sphere of action of each :

“Everything in the world that is sacred, everything that concerns the salvation of souls, and Divine Worship, whether it be so by its own nature or because of the end to which it is referred, falls beneath the jurisdiction of the Church. Everything else that is enclosed within the sphere of civil and political activities is justly submitted to the civil authority, Jesus Christ having expressly commanded us to give to Cæsar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what is God’s.”

Hence we see that the State can never be substituted for the Church, and *vice versa*. And since Catholic Action, being a participator in the hierarchic apostolate, moves within the same sphere as the Church itself, and for the same ends, it is clear that the State cannot substitute itself for Catholic Action either.

Further it is an historic fact, massively demonstrable, that the State, even though Catholic, cannot act as surrogate for Catholic Action nor make it superfluous,

and this in Italy provided its first and most concrete manifestation in the pontifical States themselves.¹

So that, even admitting a State in its most perfect adhesion to Catholic principles, the work of the Church such as was assigned to her by her Divine Founder, would subsist, always integral, legitimate, and necessary ; nor could it ever submit itself to the activities entirely proper to the civil power. Even should there come into existence, as once it did, and as still it glimmers on the horizon of history, a Carolingian State as Dante once portrayed it, the tasks, responsibilities, the duties and rights of religious and of civil society would continue, without possibility of confusion, as they were originally created by Providence in the one field and the other for the good of humanity in time and hereafter.

Now there is no doubt that Catholic Action, that form of Christian apostolate which the laity exercise, is participant in the mission of the Church herself ; develops in its own field for those spiritual interests, which we see to have been exclusively entrusted to the religious power ; nor can we suppose that it could ever represent an anachronism, or arrogate to itself what by right really concerns the State, or represent superfluous or harmful * doublets ' in opposition to the legitimate initiatives of civil and political society.

State Institutions

i. The State cannot even act as substitute for Catholic

¹ An article in the *Osservatore Romano*, December 4, 1926, called "Catholic Action and its Reasons for Existence," says very clearly : "The mission of the Church and that of the State, though they regard the same subjects or identical subjects (*i.e.*, men and society) are distinct and differentiated because the essential objects of the former are the spiritual interests of individuals and peoples, and of the latter their material interests."

Action by creating and maintaining institutions or works that give religious assistance and instruction like the schools, youth organisations, syndicates, or other works proper to or patronised by the State ; because, as we said before, all these works, however good, have ends different from those of Catholic Action, since they work within the sphere of the State, which is distinct from that of the Church.

And in truth religious institutions and assistance are not a formation for the apostolate, still less an apostolate itself, or an apostolate auxiliary to that of the Hierarchy, or a universal apostolate, in which, as we know, the substance of Catholic Action consists.¹ The fact always remains that the State, in the field of education, should help and integrate the work of the family and the Church, but not ever substitute itself for these or eliminate their specific institutions.²

¹ The Central Committee of Italian Catholic Action in its Reunion of January 18, 1926, observing the rise of State-education enterprises, noted "with satisfaction how public authority intended to take into due account the marvellous educational force that the Catholic Religion is"; but added that it was as necessary as ever that Catholic Action should continue the integral development of its programme in all its concrete forms, because that programme could not be diverted or replaced by any other institution or enterprise, seeing that it aimed at the specialised formation of a definite class of Catholics, militant so-called, with the aim of equipping and making use of them in the various works of religious and social apostolate in the service of and in direct dependence on the Church.

* This is, of course, the teaching of the Church. In his Encyclical on *Christian Education*, Pius XI said: "In the sphere of education the State has the right, or better, the duty, of legally protecting the prior right of the family over the Christian education of its children and in consequence of respecting the supernatural right of the Church over such Christian education. . . . It belongs to the State to promote the education and instruction of youth; first and foremost and in itself by favouring and helping the initiative and work of the Church and families and also by completing this work when it cannot suffice or does not succeed, even by means of schools and institutions of its own."

2. The same Pontiff explicitly affirmed that Catholic Action could not regard State institutions as substitutes for it. In his speech to the Directors of Catholic Action in Rome, April 19, 1931, he said :

“ In a society or country that wishes to be Catholic and show itself so, even in the various directions of human activity, technical, industrial, commercial, military and scholastic, a religious element, religious assistance cannot and should not ever be lacking, because without such an element and ingredient, even though in very small doses, these human activities, just because they are purely human, would always risk becoming pagan. This is the experience of all history throughout the world. Let him who should, see to it ; let it be seen to, as it should, at least so far as possible. But the action of the Church and the co-operation of Catholic Action are not limited within these minima ; they are not limited to the bringing in of the necessary minimum of religious elements such as should hinder the paganisation of society in its various conjunctures ; the action of the Apostolate and the hierarchic apostolate, and of Catholic Action co-operating with it, aim at the entire programme of the Heart of God, the foundation, the diffusion, and the stabilisation of the Reign of Christ in souls, in families, and in Society in all its possible expansions, in all its self-expressions, in all the depths that human activities can probe when helped by the Grace of God.”

Now could this ever be the programme of a State institution ?

The Legitimacy of Catholic Action

I. The State must not only not substitute itself for Catholic Action, but has the duty to recognise, and indeed favour it, in its own interests, just as it is to its interest and is its duty to recognise and favour the mission

of the Church, of which Catholic Action is a legitimate and necessary means.¹

We said “legitimate means” because the Church instituted by Jesus Christ as a perfect society has an inviolable right of choosing all the means that she thinks necessary or essential for attainment of her ends. She alone can be judge in this matter, because He alone who has competency in regard to the end has obviously competency also in regard to the means. This is manifestly true.²

On the other hand, Catholic citizens have themselves, too, the right to help the Church in her Apostolic mission in those ways which the Church herself considers most opportune. This right derives from the duty of the apostolate of which we speak in Chapter III. Besides, as the Holy Father said (Speech to the Directors of Catholic Action in Rome, April 13, 1931) :

“All souls, in whatsoever condition of life they may be, can have not only need of but also the right to the help both of the hierarchic apostolate and of the help of the co-operation given to that Apostolate which is given by Catholic Action.”

2. Catholic Action is legitimate, not only in its nature, but also in its organisational shape ; that is, its very end legitimatises its actual shape, as we have already shown

¹ Leo XIII, writing in his Encyclical *Immortale Dei* : “States cannot neglect Religion as a foreign affair of no importance. Governors should have care above all things of God’s honour, and should treat as supreme among their duties to favour Religion, to assist it with all goodwill, and make it the shield of the authority of the Law, nor ever institute or prescribe anything that should injure its safety.”

* Leo XIII, in the same Encyclical, says : “The Church is a Society juridically perfect within its kind, possessing as she does by the Will and Grace of her Founder in herself and through herself all that is required for her *existence* and her *action*.”

in Chapter IV. As to this the Pope said in his Encyclical *Non Abbiamo* on Catholic Action, June 21, 1931 :

“ All who understand and live the life of to-day know that there is no initiative or activity, from the most spiritual and scientific down to the most material and mechanical, which has no need of organisations and practical methods of organisation. However, neither the one nor the other identify themselves with the end of the various initiatives and activities, but are merely the means for better achieving the ends that each sets before itself.”

If organisation is licit when its aims are merely human, though doubtless good in themselves, shall it not be licit when we desire to realise the loftiest of all aims—the glory of God and the salvation of souls ?

3. We add that Catholic Action realises other very noble aims, reaping immense advantages for civil life itself. It is indeed evident, as we read in a notable pontifical document,

“ that its supreme end, *ije.* the good of souls, includes all other lofty and noble ideals, and since the Catholic name implies respect for every legitimate authority, Catholic Action is for that very reason an efficacious element of order and of tranquillity, of moral education and civil progress. Hence comes the precious contribution that Catholic Action can but give to the achievement and maintenance of true peace. Hence it has the right in the interests of civil society itself to be recognised and safeguarded in the free development of its programme ” (Letter from the Cardinal Secretary of State to the President of Italian Catholic Action, October 2, 1923).

Catholic Action is therefore legitimate, both in its aim and in its form, and we like to conclude by repeating the words of the Holy Father which have an absolute value : “ Catholic Action is not only legitimate and

necessary, but can have no substitute.” (Speech to the Directors of Catholic Action, April, 1931).¹

¹ The Concordat between the Holy See and the Italian Government, February 11, 1929, Article 43, says: “The Italian State recognises the organisations dependent on Italian Catholic Action in so far as they, according to the dispositions of the Holy See, develop their activities outside of all political parties and in immediate dependence on the hierarchy of the Church for the diffusion and actuation of Catholic principles.” Catholic Action was recognised also in Latvia and Lithuania in their Concordats with the Holy See.

PART II

CATHOLIC ACTION—ITS RELATIONSHIPS

CHAPTER VI

Catholic Action and the Hierarchy

After considering Catholic Action in itself, that is, its nature, its aims, and its essential properties, we are bound—even in so summary a manual as ours is—to consider it in its relationships with various bodies and activities.

We begin with its relations with the ecclesiastical hierarchy—the most intimate and most necessary of all ; those which impart to it its specific difference and its unique features. These relations can be summed up in the single word “Subordination.” We have already said in passing that Catholic Action is auxiliary to the Hierarchy, and cannot but be subordinate to it, but dealing with so fundamental a concept we ought here to take it up again to go deeper into it and to elucidate it. We must first, therefore, explain the idea of the Hierarchy, hitherto barely touched on (Chapters III and IV). Thus we shall show that Catholic Action depends, and directly, on the Hierarchy ; and thirdly, we shall look at the relationship between the Hierarchy and the lay directors.

I. DEPENDENCE ON THE HIERARCHY

The Double Hierarchy

I. We have seen that in the Church of Christ there exist Clergy and Laity. The Clergy are those who have

consecrated themselves to the service of God. But they are not all on the same footing. There exists among them a hierarchy ("sacred command"), owing to which some are subordinate to others. It means therefore "sacred power," and ought strictly to be referred only to the sacred authority of the Church.

The Hierarchy is double, *i.e.*, hierarchy of Order—Bishops, Priests, and Deacons ; and hierarchy of Jurisdiction—composed of the Pope and the Bishops. These grades of the two hierarchies are of divine institution. The Church, owing to the powers she received from Christ, has added other inferior grades, which can, indeed, be considered as implicit in the former. No hierarchic power is conferred by the people or by civil authority. The powers of Order are conferred along with Ordination ; the powers of Jurisdiction by way of Canonical Mandate, except that of the Supreme Pontiff which is conferred by Divine Right in consequence of legitimate election and the acceptance thereof (Canons 108 and 109).

2. What are the powers of these two hierarchies ? The answer is in the Gospels, antecedently to Church Law. Christ entrusted certain powers to the Apostles : first of all, the sanctification of souls by means of the administration of the Sacraments, the distribution of Divine Graces, the Celebration of the Holy Mysteries : "Baptize in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost" (Matt, xxviii. 19). "Whose sins you remit they are remitted" (John xx. 23). "Do this in memory of Me" (Luke xxii. 19).

This is "Power of Order" ; power over holy things ; over the True Body of Christ.

The Apostles received yet other powers from

Christ, *i.e.* to teach the nations and to govern the Church :

“ Teach all nations, commanding them to observe whatsoever I have commanded you ” (Matt, xxviii. 19, 20).

“ He who heareth you, heareth Me.” “ He who despiseth you, despiseth Me ” (Luke x. 16).

“ Whatsoever you shall bind on earth it shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose on earth it shall be loosed in Heaven ” (Matt, xviii. 18).

These faculties constitute the Power of Jurisdiction, *é.*, power over the mystical Body of Christ, the Church. Such were the powers of the Apostles. They have passed in their entirety to the Church's hierarchy, and to it alone. Therefore they are also called “ Hierarchic Powers,” and they constitute, as we have seen, the Hierarchic Apostolate.

Pope, Bishops, Parish Priests

1. Catholic Action depends entirely on the Hierarchy of Jurisdiction which alone governs the Church. This Hierarchy, as we have said, is composed of the Sovereign Pontiff and the Bishops ; and from these, therefore, Catholic Action essentially depends. But Canon Law notes that other grades have been added by the institution of the Church (Canon 108). Amongst these we must here mention Parish Priests.

2. Parish Priests do not really possess any Church jurisdiction in the strict sense, *in foro externo*. It is, however, certain that the Church has granted to Parish Priests certain definite powers, and that by force of their office, conferred on them by the Bishop, Parish Priests have the right and duty to exercise the works of the ministry and the apostolate, amongst which is Catholic

Action. It is further certain that pontifical documents explicitly attribute to the Parish Priest the supreme direction of Catholic Action in their own parishes.

The following is applicable to all : “It is necessary that the various forms of organised Catholicism should find their disciplinary centre in the Hierarchy. This is how Parish Councils, Diocesan Committees, and the Central Committee function, in dependence on ecclesiastical authority ; and the Statutes of the Catholic Action of Italy approved by the Holy See affirm that the Parish Council, that organ in each Parish of Catholic Action in general which promotes and co-ordinates, functions under the supreme direction of the Parish Priest (Art. 5).**

We have, in fact, already seen that Catholic Action possesses its directive organs in the centre of the nation, in the diocese and in the parishes depending respectively on the Pope, the Bishops, and the Parish Priests. Hence for Catholic Action the Hierarchy of Jurisdiction is composed of Pope, Bishops, and—in a sense—Parish Priests (see Chapter IV).

Every Apostolate depends on the Hierarchy

I. From the fact that the apostolic powers have been passed on to the Hierarchy alone, two consequences flow :

- (a) Laymen, even though invested with high civil powers, have not of themselves any powers in the Church, either of order or of jurisdiction.

They constitute the Church that learns and obeys.

- (A) The laity, who, under whatever form or guise they enrol themselves as soldiers of Christian doctrine, and publicly exercise their apostolate and fight for religion, must receive authorisation from the Hierarchy, and precisely from the Hierarchy of

Jurisdiction. They must ever subordinate themselves thereto.

2. On this Leo XIII, in his Encyclical *Sapientiae Christianiae*, on the principal duties of Catholic Citizens, of January' 10, 1890, said :

“ The Church not only is a perfect society and by far more noble than any other, but she was formed by her Maker as to be apt to battle for the salvation of mankind like an army in battle array. This organisation and form of the Christian society cannot in any way be altered, nor can anyone be permitted to work simply at will or to follow in this warfare those tactics merely that he likes ; for he who does not gather along with the Church, scatters ; and he fights not with Him, and the Church fights against God.”¹

In the same Encyclical the Pontiff, after having rebuked the “ carnal prudence ” of those Catholics who refused to fight for Christ and the Church, continues :

“ On the other hand, not a few, moved by a false zeal, or, worse still, by false aims, arrogate to themselves a task which does not concern them. They would in fact demand that the conduct of the Church should be subordinated to their ideas and whims. Now this means anticipating, not following, legitimate authority. It means a wish to transfer the office of the pastors to private persons, seriously inverting that order which God has established in His Church and must be violated by none. . . . They do their duty really well who, when necessary, do not refuse the fight . . . but in the battle preserve with all care and diligence their due submission.”

3. This ample and explicit public teaching confirms what is in the logical order of things established by Christ our Saviour ; which is that in the Church every form

¹ Cf. I Alice xi, 23 : “ He that is not with Me is against Me ; and he that gathereth not with Me, scattereth.” And he that is not with the Church is not with Christ.

of public apostolate, by whomsoever and howsoever exercised, must depend on the Hierarchy of Jurisdiction. This dependence is the condition of its validity. Christ says to those apostles in disunion from their legitimate officials "I know you not" (Matt. xxv. 12).

Catholic Action depends on the Hierarchy in a Special Way

1. This dependence on the Hierarchy, while necessary for every apostolate, is all the more so for Catholic Action, given its nature of *auxiliary*, but *official*, apostolate. Catholic Action is a participation in or collaboration with the hierarchic apostolate. Now what participates is united and submitted to the principal participant; the collaborator depends on the principal agent. This is clear.

On this point Pius XI said to the Catholic Associations of the Parish of San Carlo ai Catinari in Rome, May 5, 1932:

"Participation, and so, union with Bishops and your Priests—therefore not an action dissipated or arbitrary but reposing on and subordinated to the principal works of the Bishops and of the Priests."

2. Catholic Action, besides being an auxiliary apostolate, is also an official one. Its soldiers are not only the collaborators of the Hierarchy, but also its mandatories; and its Directors are expressly its delegates; hence a still clearer and stronger reason for obedience. A mandatory cannot think of himself otherwise than as at the full disposition of the giver of the mandate, like a brush in the hands of the artist.

It remains clear then that Catholic Action, more than any other Lay Apostolate, must depend on ecclesiastical

authority, and is, and would be, apart from such dependence, a contradiction in terms—a *reductio in absurdum* in practice.

The Witness of the Holy See

i. Many pontifical documents have sanctioned this duty of dependence. From Pius IX, the first Pope of Catholic Action, to Pius XI, all the Pontiffs who promoted and encouraged Catholic organisation, also gave to it its disciplinary rules, vindicating for themselves the right of its supreme direction. Pius IX, in the Brief of May 2, 1868, ever memorable, recognised and blessed the first National Catholic Organisation in Italy, the Society of Italy's Catholic Young Men, and declared it devoted to the service of the Church and dependent thereon.¹

From this National Congress was born and developed the national work of Catholic Congresses and Committees, the first to incorporate and co-ordinate all the Catholic forces of Italy. It, too, placed itself in dependence on the Holy See, and the Pope approved its Statutes and nominated himself its President.

Leo. XIII, in the Encyclical *Graves de Communi* on Christian Democracy, when the Christian Democrats threatened to break every bond of submission to religious authority, wrote accurately as follows :

“ Let individuals and Catholic Societies, when giving effect to any deliberations whatsoever, remember that they owe full obedience to the authority of the Bishops.”

¹ Under Pius IX in 1874 Italian Catholics first met in a Congress at Venice, and, before starting their work, made a memorable declaration of their purpose and an act of complete disciplinary submission to the Apostolic See. It begins with these words : “ . . . Catholicism is the doctrine that the Supreme Pontiff, Successor of Saint Peter, Bishop of Rome. Vicar of Christ, Infallible Teacher in Faith and Morals, does in *fact* teach. . . . The Congress [therefore] submits its deliberations to the supreme judgment of the Supreme Pontiff.”

Pius X, in the Encyclical *Fermo Proposito* of 1905, when the secessionist tendencies of the Young Democrats had been consummated, reaffirmed the duty of submission to the authority of the Church in these words :

“Enterprises, primarily instituted to restore and promote in Christ the true Christian civilisation, which constitute Catholic Action, cannot in any way conceive themselves as independent of the advice and supreme direction of the ecclesiastical authority.”

2. Very frequent and explicit are the statements of the reigning Pontiff. For example :

“From the nature and aim of Catholic Action it is clearly necessary that it must perfectly adhere and be docile to the Catholic Hierarchy, from which alone it can receive its mandate and its directive rules ” (Letter from the Cardinal Secretary of State to the Primate of Poland, April 10, 1929).

“The whole of Catholic Action must be in the closest relationship and subordination with the higher hierarchy ; a subordination which expresses itself in its homage and filial obedience to the Bishops and the Pope, and through them to Christ ; because in these three elements—Bishops, Pope, and Christ, the hierarchic structure and the magnificent solidity of the Church consist ” (Speech to the Ecclesiastical Assistants of the Society of Italian Catholic Young Men, September 14, 1925).

The same Pontiff, recommending to the Associations of Catholic Action due dependence on the Bishops, recalled the famous expression of St. Ignatius Martyr : “Nothing without the Bishop ” adding “This is a great sentence, a great motto for Catholic Action ” (Speech to the delegates of the Students and Aspirants of the Catholic Young Men’s Society, November 3, 1929).

II. DEPENDENCE : DIRECT AND INDIRECT

Hitherto we have shown that Catholic Action must depend on the hierarchical authority of the Church. Now dependence can be direct and indirect. Catholic Action depends on it directly. In this it differs from other Catholic organisations and works which depend on it only indirectly. This we must show in recalling the doctrine of the mission of the Church and the notion of direct and indirect dependence.

A Double Mission

1. In his Encyclical *Ferme Proposito*, Pius X wrote that Catholic Action excludes no activity which “in any way, direct or indirect, belongs to the divine mission of the Church ” (see Chapter III). Hence there are activities which belong directly to the mission of the Church, and others which belong to it only indirectly. This amounts to saying that the Church has a Double Mission—Direct and Indirect.

Pius X, in the same Encyclical, defines the objective and ambit of the one and the other. He says :

“ Besides these supernatural good things there are a great number which belong to the natural order. To these the mission of the Church is not directly ordained, but they arise from it as natural consequences.”

He further adds that we must

“ restore in Christ not only everything that belongs properly to the Divine Mission of the Church, which is to lead souls to God ; but also that which flows spontaneously from that Divine Mission, namely, Christian civilisation in the complexus of each and every element that constitute it.”

2. Hence into the direct mission of the Church there enter all religious activities properly so-called ; that is,

those whose immediate aim is in the supernatural order, such as Divine Worship, sanctification of souls, the diffusion of revealed truths, the practice of Christian virtues, etc.

Into its indirect mission other activities enter, whose aim is immediately of the natural order but having manifest relationships with religion and good morals. Thus the Church has the right and duty of entering also into the domain of Science, Literature, Art, Politics, and Economics, and all the other elements of civil life. This right accrues to it through its indirect authority ; an authority over temporal matters, not as such, but in so far as they are connected with spiritual and supernatural order.¹

3. Catholic Action participates in both the Church's missions from the same motives and in the same way. It, too, like the Church, reaches in the material object only the spiritual element, for even as man is composed of spirit and of matter, so in much else too will you find a material and a spiritual element. Such things are described as being "mixed " in nature. Like the Church, Catholic Action in no way enters into the domain of purely temporal things. On this point, too, we have the explicit statement of Pius XI, who said :

"Catholic Action always has its own way of expressing itself. There is no field in which Catholic Action cannot find its place under the guidance and immediate command of the hierarchy. But it is clear that the hierarchy cannot claim for itself technical, mechanical and financial functions accruing

¹ In the canonical ruling of the Church those things are wholly temporal which have no relation with the spiritual and supernatural end of man. Over such purely temporal things the Church has no jurisdiction, direct or indirect, her nature being of a supernatural order essentially.

to the various departments of which is composed that complexity of relationships which constitute Society ” (Speech to the Directors of the Roman Catholic Action, April 19, 1931).

And again :

“ Catholic Action is not ordered towards material and earthly ends . . . and, if owing to the inevitable demand of circumstances it has to descend into the economic or social field and make contact even with political questions, it never does so save in view of the supernatural interests and moral and religious uplifting of individuals and of peoples ” (The Secretary of State to the Bishops of Italy, October 2, 1922). See also Chapters VIII and X.

Indirect Dependence

i. There can be and are associations and works whose immediate aim is of the temporal order, but connected with the spiritual one and subordinated to superior ends ; *e.g.* scientific, literary, artistic, economic, professional, and other associations whose inspiration is Christian and which aim to Christianise. What is their relationship with the authority of the Church ? Pius X, in his Encyclical *Fermo Proposito*, writes :

“ All those works which are a direct help to the spiritual and pastoral ministry of the Church and accordingly set before themselves a religious end in view of the direct good of souls must in every smallest matter be subordinate to the authority of the Church, and hence also to the authority of the Bishops who are placed by the Holy Spirit to rule the Church of God in the dioceses assigned to them. But also other enterprises . . . cannot in any way conceive themselves as independent of the counsel and supreme direction of ecclesiastical authority, especially in so far as they must animate themselves with the principles of Christian doctrine and morals ; still less could one conceive them as in more or less opposition to that authority. It is certain that such works, given their nature, must have due and reasonable

liberty, the responsibility of their actions resting on themselves especially as regards temporal and economic affairs and in those of public life, administrative or political, and alien or foreign to the purely spiritual ministry. But as Catholics always lift high the Banner of Christ, for this very reason also they lift that of the Church, and so it is fitting that they should receive it from the hands of the Church, and that the Church should watch over its unstained honour, and that Catholics should submit themselves as docile loving sons to her maternal vigilance."

2. From these words we can deduce :

- () Organisations and works which come directly to the assistance of the pastoral office (having an aim which is immediately of the spiritual order) depend directly on the Church.
- () Organisations and works which come to its succour only indirectly (whose aim is of the natural order) depend on the Church indirectly (see Chapters VIII and X).

The Nature of these Two Dependences

Here we can assign as footnotes to the Pontifical documents the nature of direct and indirect dependence on ecclesiastical authority.

I. Dependence is direct when the organisation develops its activity under the responsibility of ecclesiastical authority, which indicates not only the remoter and generic aims of the organisation, but also its immediate and specific ones (spiritual in nature) ; writes and approves its rules ; controls its activity through its representatives (the ecclesiastical assistants) and nominates, directly or indirectly, its supreme directors. In this case the authority of the Church embraces the whole activity *of* the organisation.

2. But dependence is only indirect when the organisation develops its activity under the responsibility of its own directors. In this case the ecclesiastical authority does not indicate its immediate and specific aims (these being of a material nature) ; it does not ratify its statutes or deliberations, it does not intervene in the nomination of its directors, nor does it watch over its activities through special representatives ; the organisation being subject to the Church only through the moral orientation of its programme, which as such falls under the competency of religious authority. This authority, therefore, does not embrace the whole activity of the organisation, but only that part which is related with its spiritual nature ; that is, its religious and moral element.

3. All the organisation and works which constitute official Catholic Action, that is, in the strict sense, depend directly on the Hierarchy. What depends on it only indirectly can be considered as Catholic Action in a wide sense (see Chapter I). It is the business of the hierarchic authority to judge and decide whether organisations must depend on it directly or only indirectly, since it alone is the judge competent with regard to their nature and object.

Indirect Power claimed by the Pontiffs

I. The indirect dependence of organisations and works, and even individual action, on religious authority, derives from the indirect power which it has over temporal things, as we have noted. Theologians have irrefutably proved the existence of this power. None the less this power is obstinately denied by those who demand an illegitimate liberty of action and of absolute independence from the Church. Now the Pontiffs, and especially the

recent ones who have had to protest against the errors and attacks of lay Liberalism, were unanimous in claiming such an authority, especially in the economical and political field where it was more definitely rejected.

2. Pius IX condemned in the Syllabus (24) the thesis that the Church possesses no coercive power nor any other kind of authority, direct or indirect, over temporal matters. Leo XIII, in *Rerum Novarum*, affirms his right of intervention in the social question in the following explicit words :

“ We enter with confidence into this discussion, and are fully within our rights, for we are treating of a question of which no adequate solution can be found without recourse to religion and the Church.”

And the same Pope speaks no less explicitly of the authority of the Church in political matters :

“ The Church cannot be indifferent to State Laws, not as such, but when—outstripping their due frontiers—they invade the rights of the Church. So it is a duty imposed by God always to resist a ‘ policy ’ when it does damage to religion, and to work with all care that the spirit of the Gospel should animate popular laws and institutions ” (Encyclical *Sapientiae Christianae*).

Pius X writes that “ history itself witnesses to the public recognition of the authority of the Church in all matters that in any way concern conscience, the subordination of all State Laws to the Divine Law of the Gospel, and the concurrence of the two powers of the State and of the Church so as to procure the temporal good of the nations so that they should not suffer the loss of that which is eternal ” (Encyclical *Ferma Proposito*).

Benedict XV affirmed that

“ the social question still awaits its solution, but it must not be solved apart from the Church lest it be solved in opposition to the Church ” (Speech, of March 18, 1919).

Pius XI, in his *Ubi Arcano*, writes :

“The Church does not wish to, nor should she without just excuse, intrude herself into the direction of purely human things, but neither can she allow nor tolerate that the political power take occasion from this to injure what is good in the superior (supernatural) order, or to attack the Church's Divine institution, or violate the rights of God himself over civil Society.”

3. To this doctrine of the Pontiffs, renewed in all periods, their method of government has always corresponded. Anyone who reads history will meet with Pontiffs who condemn unjust laws or anti-Christian institutions ; who proscribe political doctrines, economic or social systems, scientific or artistic tendencies, which are adverse to the principles of Christian doctrine or morals. Nor because of this have they gone outside of their legitimate functions ; they have, indeed, fulfilled their sacred duty to the benefit of humanity and of civilisation.

Answer to an Objection

I. Our critics are apt to attach themselves to a somewhat plausible pretext for exempting themselves from indirect dependence on ecclesiastical authority, especially in matters of politics or economics. They reason as follows :

“It is obvious that we must obey the Church in religious and moral matters, seeing that therein ecclesiastical authority is not only competent but infallible ; but in other matters the Pope can make mistakes like anyone else. In fact, how many such mistakes does not history record ! And even to-day we observe that political and social directions differ from Pontiff to Pontiff, and even are not consistent within one pontificate. Hence there is no duty of obedience to the authority of the

Church in non-religious matters, but freedom of thought and action.”

2. The answer to this is easy. First, the argument proves too much and therefore nothing. For were it valid, what earthly authority could ever claim obedience ? None, save the Pope when he spoke *ex cathedra*. Such a system would logically lead to anarchy. Hence the conclusion is false ; so, therefore, were the premises.

3. It is true that the Pope, in matters of pure politics, economics, science, art, etc., can err like anyone else ; but it is also true that the Pope does enter as judge into such affairs in so far as they are connected with moral and religious doctrine. And in faith and morals the Pope has a competency certainly superior to anyone else, even when not speaking *ex cathedra*. This much our critics will concede us.

Finally, even though this Pope or that should have erred in matters of political and social economics, what of it ? Unhappy society if we lay down the principle that a superior's mistake dispenses his subjects from obedience ! Is a soldier free to disobey because his commanding officer once and again has given a mistaken order ?

4. Nor can changes in direction render independence legitimate, for such changes may be due to prudent reasons which repose on concrete circumstances variable according to place and time. Remember what we have already quoted from Pius X. He spoke of the two marvellous prerogatives of the Church : her firmness and immutability in specific things, *i.e.*, her principles, and her adaptability in all that is purely accidental. It remains true that even changes in direction given by superiors never have been, nor will be, a sufficient motive

for subjects to dispense themselves from obedience. Again, can a soldier disobey simply because his general changes his tactics ?

III. LAY DIRECTION

Catholic Action, as we have seen, depends directly on the Hierarchy, but it also has its lay directors. Does then Catholic Action obey two different commands ? Are the lay directive organs useless, or even a harmful duplication of the Church's hierarchic authority ? Are they mere empty ornaments, and not constructional ? Now what is the relationship between these two authorities, Lay and Ecclesiastical ?

The problem is a substantial and important one, and the solution is not easy, even in theory ; still less in practice. However, in the pontifical documents we find sufficient light here too.

Subordinate Direction

i. Pius XI said in his speech to the representatives of Diocesan Committees, May 16, 1926 (the supreme co-ordinating organ of the whole of Italian Catholic Action) that

“it directs but is itself directed. It directs because this holds good for the whole of Catholic Action, which should act under the direction of the Central Committee. But this Committee is itself directed and assisted along with all the other Committees by the hierarchy and the Pope, and it cannot be conceived outside of this clear and simple framework.”

What the Holy Father here says about the Central Committee holds good for all the other directive organs.

They direct, but are directed. They are directed by the Hierarchy : Pope, Bishops, and Parish Priests.

2. In Catholic Action there are accordingly two directives : the Hierarchy, which can be called the higher direction ; and that of Laymen, which is the subordinate direction but a true one. That it is a true direction, and not merely *pro forma*, is stated in a letter from the Cardinal Secretary of State to the President General of Italian Catholic Action, October 2, 1923 :

“ (Lay Directors) must possess in regard to their associations true authoritative functions because thus only will all the energies of Catholics find a unique direction.”

Executive in the Practical Order

1. Evidently these two directions must have separate competencies, else they would make but a useless, and indeed harmful, duplication. Papal documents again tell us what these are. The Cardinal Secretary of State, writing to the Bishops of Italy on October 2, 1922, about the revision of the Statutes of Italian Catholic Action, says that “ Catholic Action is not a Directive on the theoretic plane, but an Executive on the practical plane.” This statement was afterwards repeated in other important documents. Hence on the theoretic plane where principles and standards are concerned, the Hierarchy alone is the directive, but because it alone is Guardian and Teacher of Christ’s doctrine. Catholic Action is Executive in the practical order because it works “ for the diffusion and actuation of Catholic principles ” (Statutes, Art. 10).

2. The concept of this double order of things derives from the very nature of Catholic Action, for Catholic Action collaborate* with the Hierarchy, and he who

collaborates in an enterprise must follow the order of his Chief; while the business of the Chief is simply to fix the aims of the enterprise and the general rules of execution. Archbishop Pizzardo said to the Congress of the International Union of Women's Leagues, May 22, 1930 -

“Lay action is executive on the practical plane, giving concrete reality with a responsibility of its own to the various items in its vast programme.”

Executive Authority

1. We now ask “Does the executive task entrusted to Catholic Action exact special direction and responsibility?” Certainly, for executive agents, endowed with intelligence and free-will, cannot act mechanically like marionettes.

2. And, again, because execution has its own technique, which amounts to saying a complex of the principles and practical rules. Therefore, on the inferior plane of execution where Catholic Action moves, there must be a Director with his particular competency and responsibility. That is, there must be an executive authority.

3. For example, if you are building a house, who prepares the plan? The Architect. Who erects it? The masons. But these have need of a Director—the Clerk of the Works. He is both Director and Directed. He has to follow accurately the plan of the Architect, but also guide and supervise those who are executing it; and in this execution both the director and the workmen possess special technical abilities which are not those of the Architect. Well, then, Catholic Action wishes to rebuild Christian civilisation which secularism has demolished. The Hierarchy has prepared a prudent

plan, and Catholic Action workmen toil at its execution under the guidance and supervision of their technical directors.

4. Again, a mobilised army has to pursue the aim indicated by State authority, and all its diligence must follow out the general plan prepared by the Supreme Command ; but the subordinate commands have a directive task and a personal responsibility in the execution of that plan. They are directed, but direct. The executive directs. Catholic Action itself is an army involved in a holy war for religion. As Pius XI said :

(Ubi Arcano) “. . . and the soldiers of this Crusade when obeying the immediate orders of their Officers know that they are tending towards the aims assigned by the Church herself.”

No illustration is ever perfect, and these are not ; but at least they serve to show that the idea, “ Directing, yet Directed,” is not verified in the ranks of Catholic Action only.

The Competency of the Two Powers

So far we have defined only in general the competency of these two authorities. Now we must descend into particulars and indicate so far as possible their respective attributes.

I. Evidently it regards ecclesiastical authority to designate the aims of Catholic Action ; and since he who is competent with regard to the nature, is so also with regard to the means ; so must the same authority indicate the means of Catholic Action which are substantial and necessary. For example, it may make rules, and judge of the actuality and opportuneness of all the others. As Pius XI wrote to Cardinal Schuster :

“It is certain and evident that even as the Church and her hierarchy have the right and duty of confirming and directing Catholic Action, so have they the right and duty to organise it in the ways which conspire for the attaining of spiritual and supernatural ends according to the nature and demands of the several times and places.”

2. It regards the Directing Organs as competent :

- (a) to see to and direct the execution of initiatives undertaken by the competent ecclesiastical authority ; and
- (b) thus to promote initiative intended for the fulfilment of the purposes of Catholic Action, making use of the means indicated by ecclesiastical authority and of every other means of which it may approve.

3. The Directive Organs therefore have the right to deliberate, but their deliberations must have the approval, at least implicit, of the competent ecclesiastical authority ; that is, of the Pope, Bishop, or Parish Priest, according as the Central or Diocesan or Parochial Organs are concerned. Hence the ecclesiastical assistants, as representatives of the Hierarchy, have the power to suspend such deliberations as may find themselves in opposition to the higher direction, the Hierarchy itself.

It is in this sense that we must interpret the celebrated phrase of St. Ignatius Martyr : “ Nothing apart from the Bishop,” which Pius XI has often recalled into the Directors of Catholic Action ; *i.e.*, the deliberations of the Directors must always have the approval of the Bishop or his representative, and not in the sense that the Directors cannot deliberate, nor that the Bishop must do the whole of the deliberation.

But is it suitable that the executive power should be

in the hands of the laity ? Would it not be better if the Hierarchy should confide to priests who could be the assistants themselves ? And, indeed, there might be those who would take up arms on behalf of this purely priestly direction ; but ecclesiastical authority has decided otherwise, and for excellent reasons which derive from the nature and aim of Catholic Action itself.

We shall now indicate these.

Reasons for Lay Direction

1. We must never forget that Catholic Action is not a purely religious organisation with no other aims than worship and spiritual formation. In these the priest not only is exclusively competent, but also develops their activities as a whole, and so he can well be their Director. Catholic Action is different ; it is essentially an Apostolate—a lay auxiliary universal apostolate (see Chapter III).

Given this specific character, it could not—generally speaking—achieve all of its ends with entire efficacy had it not also a lay hierarchy subordinated to the ecclesiastical authority.

2. From this reason, which is fundamental, flow several others that we must examine. The chief ones seem to be :

- (a) Catholic Action works also in the social field where laymen who are present in all its sectors are aware of the needs, dangers, ills, and remedies which could not seldom escape the eye, however experienced and attentive, of the priest. Hence the experience of laymen can turn out extremely advantageous for the work of the social apostolate, and will be made much better use of when the laity themselves have a due part in the direction.

- (b) Catholic Action has also the task of protection and defence, so much so that it has been called the secular army of the Church in these our days (see Chapter II). Now this task could not be developed with full efficacy were there no laymen at the head of its department ; immediate representatives and mouthpieces of the great mass of the Christian folk.
- (c) Catholic Action is . . . *Action*. Its members receive and give. Now they will give all the more generously according as the examples and experience they possess are greater. Here, again, is the utility of having lay direction along with the ecclesiastical one ; the more so, as the free situation of the laity gives them a special influence on their fellows. It is a psychological law that “Like loves Like,” and therefore allows itself to be efficaciously influenced thereby.¹
- (d) Not only do the lay directors influence the activity of their companions, but they find themselves committed to develop a keen and energetic activity of their own. Anyone who has any responsibility in a decision feels himself the more spurred on to work for its realisation. In the long run this is a question of dignity and coherence. If a priest in any association makes all the decisions personally and carries every responsibility on his sole shoulders he deprives himself

¹ See Chapter V. Experience shows how much help a good President can give to the Ecclesiastical Assistant, both in the matter of formation and method of discipline ; and, indeed, it is right that the Assistant should not have personally to carry out ungrateful tasks, since his task is primarily doctrinal and not active.

of an efficacious collaboration in the work of execution.¹

- (e) There is a final reason which we feel to have great weight. The director of an organisation cannot also but represent it. In Statutes of Italian Catholic Action, approved in 1923, Article 2 says : “ The President General represents Italian Catholic Action.” What is more logical than that a lay organisation should be represented by laymen ? Remember, too, that Catholic Action has also an outward activity, and this indeed is its special characteristic. Hence we understand better still how participants with this lay movement should in its external relationships be represented by men who can speak for the laity and that they should be invested with responsibility of their own. And this responsibility must increase and appear more evidently in proportion as the activity becomes other than purely religious and enters into the social and civil field. For it is certain that in the religious field and in educational matters lay direction has fewer titles and less competency.

3. For all these reasons it should be laymen who occupy the directive posts, and especially the Presidency. This does not prevent that now and again, if ecclesiastical authority so decides, Priests can be Directors of Catholic Action in executive posts ; but it remains true that it is

¹ This fact, which rests upon an undeniable psychological law, explains the practical utility of deliberations carried through in the General Assemblies of the Associates. These like giving their assent and pledge themselves in that way to contribute also to the realisation of their decisions, and thus they become as collaborators ever more intelligent and active.

the laymen who should preferably occupy them. The brochure, *La Giunta Diocesana*, published by the Central Committee of Italian Catholic Action, wrote :

“ Given the nature of Catholic Action, *i.e.*, a Lay Apostolate, it is right that the President of the Diocesan Committee should be a layman. But this is not an absolute rule in view of the case when there should be no layman prepared or apt for so delicate a position ; or when for various reasons the better being of a diocesan Catholic Action should demand it, even a Priest could be called to that post. The Bishop is the exclusive judge as to the opportuneness of this.”

4. We can therefore conclude that the tendency to suppress or limit beyond what need be the proportion of laymen in the government of Catholic Action is due (if there be no other explanation) to a mistaken idea of Catholic Action ; that is, forgetting its nature and reducing it to an inferior and purely formative activity. Such a tendency, as must now be obvious, would lead to make this providential instrument, Catholic Action, *far less* efficacious in the hands of the Bishops.

No Juridical Disorder Involved

1. In spite of all the reasons for and advantages of lay direction, some may detect therein a juridical disorder, or a sort of new vintage of secularism, in that the laity take command in a field reserved to ecclesiastical authority and priests are subject to simple lay folk, which would mean the upsetting of hierarchic values.

2. But this is an error in perspective and a juridical scruple. We can soon show this with reasons which must be obvious after what has been said already :

- (a) Above all, remember that the laymen received their investiture from the ecclesiastical authority ; hence they must consider themselves as the

delegates or mandatories thereof, and delegates in a field of action where work is in any case obligatory on laymen.¹

- (6) Precisely because they are delegates the Lay Directors are themselves directed, and we saw that their deliberations must be approved by the Ecclesiastical Assistant, *i.e.*, the direct representative of the Hierarchy. "Catholic Action," writes Cardinal Pizzardo, "is a part of the hierarchic apostolate, and the hierarchy assigns and recognises the mandate or task of the organised laymen, and keeps them dependent on itself, however much it leaves to them a suitable liberty of action and therefore a personal responsibility."
- (c) Nor is it true that the clergy are subjected to the laity, because the Lay Directors, whether Central or Diocesan, do not give orders or direction to the Bishops or Parish Priests, nor yet the Ecclesiastical Assistants, but to their own respective subordinate directors, and these follow them out in dependence on the competent ecclesiastical authority. Thus the Central Committee sends its circulars to the Diocesan Committees, and these to the parish councils. When the Diocesan Committee turns directly to the Parish Priest it has an explicit order to do so from the Bishop, in which case it is simply the Bishop's mouth-

¹ Sometimes, as actually in Italy, it is the ecclesiastical authority itself which nominates the chief director; *ijt*[^], the President. But even if this does not hold good in every case, it is always the ecclesiastical authority which gives its approval, at least implicitly, to the nominations made by the Associates and always has the right of veto. Hence the nominations always involve its sanction.

piece. Should the circulars also be sent to the Bishops and Priests, this is only by way of dutiful recognition.

An Easily Avoidable Danger

i. But it can again be objected that, since we stand on the moral ground whose frontiers can never be assigned with precision, these two hierarchies—ecclesiastical and lay—will almost inevitably end in clashing ; and especially between the ecclesiastical assistants and the Lay Directors conflicts of competency will arise, harmful alike to interior discipline and exterior action.

We have no wish to deny that some difficulties could actually arise, but unlucky we if, for that sort of reason, we had to condemn the whole institution. Who then should be saved ? Common sense teaches that difficulties can arise from the nature of a thing, or from the bad use one makes of it. In the second and more frequent case, the difficulties deplored are accidental, and can therefore be got rid of. To allege a difficulty is not the same as solving it.

2. This is our own case. No one could ever show that the occasional conflicts alluded to derive from a defect in the nature of Catholic Action. Since we saw that the two authorities act on two different planes and have distinct competencies, so that no clashes or conflicts ought ever to arise ; and experience tells us that they never do when the Lay Directors are well formed, and appreciate their duty of obedience towards the Hierarchy and its representatives ; and, above all, where the Directors and Assistants draw their inspiration from this unique ideal, the good of souls. This is, indeed, the normal situation.

Hence we can conclude that where there is a danger of conflict it can be easily eliminated, and, indeed, measures can be taken to prevent its ever happening.

The Advantages of Union with the Hierarchy

We must finally allude to the advantages obtained by Catholic Action from this union with the Hierarchy, and if you think them out they will serve to keep the danger mentioned above at a distance.

1. Union with the Hierarchy procures for Catholic Action the necessary Divine assistance. This union, we said, was a condition of validity. We now add "It is a condition of fertility." Christ said: "I am the Vine and you the Branches. If a man be united with Me he will produce fruit, much fruit. For without Me ye can do nothing" (John xv. 5).

And if union with our Lord is necessary for any action to be perfectly fruitful, what shall we say of apostolic action which co-operates with Redemption itself, and requires special fortitude and sacrifice? For Christ communicates the stream of his vitality through the arteries of the Hierarchy constituted by Him, Guardian and Dispenser of the Divine Treasures. Only Priests are Dispensers of the Mysteries of God (1 Cor. ii. 1), and distributors of the truth of the Gospel and of Divine Grace, of that Grace which is the strength of the apostolate as spiritual journey money, without which he cannot make a step on the path towards the victories he dreams of. Hence we cannot perform our apostolate if we are not united with Christ; and we are not united with Christ if we are not also with the Hierarchy.

2. Union with the Hierarchy ensures to Catholic Action the correctness of its movements. The reason is evident.

Catholic Action wants to educate consciences according to Christian principles, and to inspire every man whatever his station, individual or social, by the same principles. But who could say with authority and security, where and what are these very principles which must guide Catholic Action in its double work of education and formation ? Evidently the Teaching Church, the Hierarchy. So, disunited from that, Catholic Action would not only be a self-sterilised thing, its vital nourishment would hardly reach it ; but also it would lose its way, lacking its necessary guide, and after so long a path it would have sadly to confess : “ Many steps, but on the wrong road.”

3. Union with the Hierarchy confers on Catholic Action its compactness and organic force.

If Union makes Strength, obedience to hierarchic authority makes Union ; and it is all the stronger the more closely linked it be with the Hierarchy. And this is still stronger in proportion as a hierarchy is well devised and constructed.

Now no hierarchy is so perfect as that of the Church, whereof the very hand of Christ has traced the fundamental laws ; and Catholic Action, as we have seen, models itself on those *very* laws (see Chapter IV). So it is subordination to and co-ordination with the Hierarchy and obedience to the Pope, Bishop, and Parish Priests which confers on Catholic Action its force and its own form of a compact army. Remove this adhesion to all the grades of the Hierarchy and you will have an army in fragments, easily defeated and incapable of great enterprises. So Catholic Action which wishes to be a rampart for the Church, receives therefrom alike its strength and its solidity.

4. Union with the Hierarchy ensures further to Catholic

Action a guarantee of continuity. The Holy Father has exhorted us to co-ordinate the work of the apostolate with the organic constitution of the Church itself; for he who is with the Bishops is with the Pope, and he who is with the Pope is with Christ, and so everything is in its proper place, and in those conditions in which the Divine Master said: "The gates of hell shall not prevail. I am with you to the consummation of the world" (Speech to the English and Scottish Knights of St. Columba, September 9, 1925).

And in his letter to the Argentine Episcopate on Catholic Action he writes that obedience to the Hierarchy constitutes a magnificent privilege and a guarantee of life, both fruitful and lasting. In fact, grafted thus on a trunk so many centuries old, on the Hierarchy, Catholic Action participates up to a point in the enduring, though troublous, life that Christ promised to His Church. This explains why Catholic Action in many countries can already reckon up a life neither brief nor fruitless, even in the midst of such various difficulties and the rise and fall of so many other associations.

5. Hence the practical conclusion: to deepen due obedience to ecclesiastical authority is for militant Catholics not only the exercise of a duty, but also a pledge which ensures to their action a greater fertility, rectitude, solidity, continuity. And this obedience will be the easier and more generous as one sees in the Hierarchy not a policeman who limits the liberty of his victim, but a wise and loving mother who watches over and is anxious for the good of her children—a mother who deserves not only obedience but loving gratitude.

CHAPTER VII

Catholic Action and the Clergy

HAVING studied the relationships of Catholic Action with the Hierarchy, we must now consider its relationships with the clergy, meaning thereby all priests who do not form part of the jurisdictional and divinely instituted Hierarchy. It might seem, at first sight, that Catholic Action being a lay apostolate, priests had nothing to do with it. On the contrary. Catholic Action is, indeed, a lay apostolate, but is so along with the *necessary assistance* of the clergy. This is so true that Catholic Action flourishes precisely where the clergy devote themselves to its assistance, and, where the clergy do not take it to their hearts, either it is never born or it dies in an hour. We mean then next to speak of the *rôle* of the clergy as within Catholic Action ; and second, of their *duty* of promoting, assisting, and favouring Catholic Action.

I. THE RÔLE OF THE CLERGY IN CATHOLIC ACTION

This is well defined in the letter of Pius XI to the Bishops of the Argentine (February' 4, 1931), where he writes :

Priests must assist the laity, lest their action leave the right road that it must pursue, and that it may ever, with due fidelity, respect the rules and direction of the Hierarchy. It

is, further, the task of the clergy to form the consciences of associates according to Christian principles, and above all, the conscience of those who are themselves to be directors ; for those alone who, by reason of Holy Orders, are ministers of Christ and dispensers of the mysteries of God, possess the resources necessary for this,”

Priests, therefore, have two essential tasks in the field of Catholic Action : to assist, and to form, its associates. We examine these two points separately.

The Task of “ Assistance ”

1. “Priests,” says Pius XI, “must assist the laity, lest its action deviate from the proper path.” It does *not* so deviate when (a) it respects, and applies, Christian principles ; and (b) follows the rules and direction of the Hierarchy. We have seen above that the Hierarchy alone can say where and what Christian principles are, and alone has the faculty of declaring the right rules and direction. Now the clergy is the authorised interpreter of the Hierarchy, and is charged with promulgating its teaching and supervising the execution of its laws. And this in every manifestation of Christian life, and so for Catholic Action itself.

2. The clergy is therefore the natural link between the Hierarchy and the militant laity, and the born guardian of the orthodoxy of Catholic Action. To apply a material but very expressive parallel, the directions of the Pope and Bishops are like the track along which the train of Catholic Action must run ; the clergy has the office of engine-drivers, and it is theirs to prevent both accident and disaster, due to getting off the lines. It is precisely in view of this that every directive organ and every association of Catholic Action has a priest known as the

Ecclesiastical Assistant, nominated by the Hierarchy. We now propose briefly to assign his juridical personality, stating first what he is not, then what he is.

The Juridical Rôle of the Ecclesiastical Assistant

1. The Ecclesiastical Assistant is not the Director of his Association ; *i.e.*, he has no direct authority to deliberate or to dispose. Matters are quite different in a pious association, where the priest possesses 'plenary' powers,' so to call them, and consequently the entire responsibility for direction—which is why he is called *Director*, and not *Assistant*. And this is a right system. First, because a child, unable as yet to judge and to decide, has to be guided in all things by authority ; next, because all these institutions aim exclusively at education or at assistance ; hence we can see why the priest, who plays therein the part of parent, possesses also full responsibility.

But in a Catholic Action association matters are quite different. Here we find men of matured consciences, able to think and to decide. Besides (and this is the substantial consideration), all Catholic Action associations have not only an educational and beneficent aim, but also and primarily one of apostolate.

Even in religious associations composed of adults the priest has the *rôle* of Director, not Assistant. For such associations are not aiming exactly at a collective apostolate, but at personal perfection, or the worship of God, as we hope to explain more in detail (Chapter XI).

2. The Ecclesiastical Assistant is the representative of the Hierarchy, and the channel between it and the associations.

Hence the Assistants of National Directive Centres

are nominated by the Holy See, and those of diocesan and parochial organisations by the Bishops.¹

If the Assistant of a parochial organisation be not the parish priest himself, he represents him immediately, and, by way of him, the Bishop. Hence he depends on the parish priest for all that concerns the general running of the association, and especially its relationships with other associations and the life of the parish as a whole.

3. The Assistant is the safeguard of the orthodoxy of the associations, and this precisely in his quality of representative of the Hierarchy. Hence he must always see that the association act ever in conformity with Catholic principles, with the laws of morality, and the teaching of the Church and the specific directions of the Bishops ; and he has the right and duty of suspending deliberations should they clash with any of these. This right is a necessary weapon, but, like any such weapon, must be used with great discretion and cautiously, lest it become an engine of destruction, not of protection. In an association well constructed and well guided, it will never be necessary to use it.

4. The Assistant is the moral *Consultant* of the Associations. His office demands of him that he gives his views, prudent and impartial, on all that regards the government and good running of the associations, nor will their Presidents embark on any deliberation without having first consulted him.

¹ The Holy Father called the Assistants "the Bishops' collaborators," addressing the Ecclesiastical Assistants of the Italian Catholic Women's Union, September 15, 1925 ; and again, speaking to those of the Young Men's Associations, September 14, 1925, he said : "As to the Ecclesiastical Assistants and their work, we must repeat what St. Ignatius Martyr said so well : 'Nothing without the Bishop' ; let all be always done in harmony with and filial obedience to the Bishop."

No one could suppose that the lack of a deliberative vote in any way diminishes the authority and influence of the Ecclesiastical Assistant. Being the representative of the Hierarchy, he cannot but possess an authority of a superior order ; hence he cannot be assimilated to the members of the Directive Council, who exercise, as we know, a subordinate direction (see Chapter VI). It is also true that his consultative vote, because of the authority with which he is invested, issues, in practice, into something far more efficacious than a merely deliberative vote would, for it allows him to remain *above* all legitimate disputes, in that atmosphere of serene impartiality, wherein his authority can shine with all its due prestige.

His Formative Task

1. But the clergy has yet another task as within Catholic Action, which the Holy Father defined as “ the formation of the consciences of associates along Christian principles ” ; adding that “ ordained ministers alone possess the resources necessary for this.” And, indeed, the clergy, as the authorised standard-bearers of Catholic Truth, are also the dispensers of divine graces—truth and graces that are the food of every virtue, the strength of all apostolate ; truth and graces without which “ the wit and work ” of every educator come to naught.

2. We do not want to depreciate by one jot the educative work of the laity within or outside of Catholic Action.

We know how solid a contribution is made by good directors to the formation of their associates, and by their delegates in subordinate departments. They are, indeed, far-sighted coadjutors of the priest in his formative and assistential *rôle*. But who, after all, has fashioned the consciences of these most worthy educators them-

selves ? Who has furnished these splendid soldiers with their all-necessary spiritual munitions ? Almost always, some priest or other, according to circumstances, a zealous parish priest, an indefatigable Ecclesiastical Assistant, or again, a pious confessor. After a while the plant lives by its own life, puts forth fine leaves, and flowers, and fruit. But the good gardener who attended to its roots, nourished and kept straight the slender stem, was a priest, who probably has remained eclipsed. Hence the noblest work of the clergy in the Catholic Action field is the formation of lay apostles. And it is particularly the duty of those priests to whom has been entrusted the post of Ecclesiastical Assistant.

The Assistant as Educator

1. We like to think of the Ecclesiastical Assistant chiefly in his capacity of 'educator,' of fashioner of souls. This is, especially in associations of younger people, his principal domain ; the title to his purest glory and the reason for his loftiest prestige. Indeed, as St. John Chrysostom asks, what art is more excellent than that which consists in 'modelling souls' ? "What can be greater than to govern the souls and form the morals of young men ? For my part, I esteem the man who can model souls as, without doubt, superior to any painter, any sculptor, and any other kind of artist " (Hom. 60, on Matt, xviii). Hence the name 'Assistant' is inadequate to the tasks of this most noble ministry, for it expresses but a part of it, and not the principal one. The Assistant is, in Catholic Action, above all else an *Educator*.

2. And his vocation is to educate—not just Christians, but lay apostles, his co-apostles. Hence an ever more splendid glory, but also an ever greater responsibility.

In his speech to the Diocesan Ecclesiastical Assistants of Italy (September 19, 1930) the Holy Father set before them all, as their divine exemplar, our Lord Himself, who caused Himself to be named an 'Assistant' by His great Apostle—"Christ, assisting (*adsistens*) as priest of good things to come" (Heb. ix. 11). And he explained the reason for this as follows :

"The aim of the manifold work of the Assistant is to help, in every way, by every method, but above all by means of holiness and example, in the formation of aids for the apostolate, that is, laymen able to come to the help of the apostolate of the bishops. Substantially, then, the Assistants must set before them the formation of lay apostles. Now, what is the great mission of Jesus Christ, *if not to* prepare apostles? He spent three years over this preparation, and everything that preceded them was, so to say, preparing for the preparation, *è., for the formation of the apostles.*"

Hence the Ecclesiastical Assistant is, even as the Divine one was, Educator of educators, Apostle of apostles.

The Guardian Angel

1. An artist, when he has finished his picture, takes care that it be well protected and preserved from all that might spoil it. The same for the educator, the Ecclesiastical Assistant. Artist of souls, he must not only form them, but protect them from all danger of corruption. And thus he also becomes their angel guardian, protecting their Faith and their morals.

2. The Holy Father said on this point (Speech to the Ecclesiastical Assistants of the Young Men's Society of Lazio, October 25, 1924) that the mission of the Ecclesiastical Assistant is

"well represented by the archangel Raphael, to whose keeping God entrusted the young Tobias. Like the Archangel, the

Ecclesiastical Assistant takes upon himself the formation and guidance of youth ; and, like him, follows their steps affectionately and untiringly, and watches their goings, ready always to protect them by example and advice, eyes turned to the light, listening ever to the voice which at all times and at every need makes itself heard through him from the Throne of Truth, the Chair of St. Peter."

We can see that this mission of guardianship belongs specially to the Assistants of * youth ' associations, since the young are the more exposed to perils against faith and conduct. ' Specially,' but not exclusively. For perils do not cease, even if they decrease, in middle age. Hence all Catholic Action Assistants must be also angel guardians !

The Soul of the Association

i. No metaphor draws nearer to the truth than the common one which calls the Assistant the ' soul ' of his Association. For, according to sane, x>., Christian, philosophy, the soul confers three fundamental properties on the body—its specific, substantial, and ' natural ' being.

Above all, its ' specific ' being, its essential characteristic, the physiognomy that distinguishes it from every other body. Well, it belongs to the Ecclesiastical Assistant to give its specific being to a Catholic association. So true is this that no genuinely Catholic association can really be conceived, destitute of *some* Ecclesiastical Assistant.

Second, the soul gives its substantial being to the body, its subsistence and consistency. When the soul leaves it, the body falls to pieces and dissolves. Here, too, we have what perfectly coincides with the Ecclesiastical Assistant ; he, through his educative work and his

Divine ministry, gives to the social organism the vital nourishment that it dare not forego, and its consistency'.

Third, the soul, by vivifying the organism, confers on it its operative powers, what philosophers call its 'natural' being. A body without soul is cold, stiff, motionless—what we call a "corpse." Well, what does a good Ecclesiastical Assistant do for that organism, which his association is ? He animates it, sets it astir, arouses its every best energy, directs all its useful activities ; and is, in a word, its vivifying force. Hence the Holy Father, speaking to the Ecclesiastical Assistants of the Catholic Action *youth ' associations (September 14, 1925), spoke words profoundly true : "The Catholic Youth Movement will be what its Assistants make it. These are words that involve either the highest praise and merit, or the gravest admonition and responsibility." And what he said holds good, in due proportion, for all Catholic Action Assistants, since one can say of each that he is the soul of his association.

2. The soul vivifies, preserves, moves, *but does not suppress* the body and its organs, nor does it eliminate specific bodily functions. Thus the priest in Catholic Action assists and guides and moves the directive organs, but does not substitute himself for them. Any such substitution would introduce enormous injuries into the life of the association, as we can argue from what has been said of the value of lay direction (Chapter VI).

Hence the Assistant will respect the statutory prerogatives of the President, and the respective competencies of his members. And even when—not through his personal intrusive and do-all temperament, but for the true good of the association, he sees himself constrained to do what someone else ought to do but, owing

either to negligence or incapacity, he does *not* do ; even so he must remember that he is the *soul* of the association ; the soul that is always active, never is discouraged, yet never is visible anywhere ! Hence he will at least respect appearances—his the deed—others win the meed !

3. Finally, young people always stand in greater need of assistance. Hence, in 'youth' associations, the intervention of the Assistant will have to go deeper. But even so, no deeper than inevitable. Here, as in many another set of circumstances, getting a thing done is worth more than doing it. Thus, by directing the directors, but not substituting himself for them, the Assistant ideally prepares co-operators in the apostolate. And the best of co-operators, since the directors ought to be precisely such as we have described.¹

II. THE DUTY OF THE CLERGY TOWARDS CATHOLIC ACTION

That it is a duty for the clergy to devote itself to Catholic Action by exercising the functions we have just examined can be proved by reasons both intrinsic and

¹ H'E. Abp. Pizzardo, who, speaking to the Reunion of Diocesan Ecclesiastical Assistants (September 15, 1930), said: "Given the nature of Catholic Action, it is clear that the priest, in the exercise of his normal function as Assistant, is and really must be the soul of his association, the inspiration of good enterprises, the source of zeal, and the fashioner of consciences. Moreover, in men's associations, which are the solid skeleton of Catholic Action, seeing that their associates by the very force of their age, are the better prepared for Catholic Action tasks, the normal function of the Assistant must be such as not to diminish energies and responsibilities, for it is right that these be left to the directors. But somewhat different must be the normal action of the Assistant in 'youth' associations. Here he possesses especially a formative task of the highest importance, and accordingly his action should be more ample, more intimate, more intense."

extrinsic. The former flow from the nature of Catholic Action and the nature of the Christian Priesthood ; the latter consist in the declarations of the Holy See, which constitute the best of all arguments from authority.

Owing to the Nature of the Christian Priesthood

1. It is possible to entertain an inadequate idea of the Catholic Priesthood, and so, to argue that when the priest leaves the altar and the church he must forbid to himself any occupation which does not directly concern the worship of God. No. The Christian Priest is, most certainly, a Minister of Worship, but not only that. He is also an apostle and an educator. The Gospel fully authorises us to say this.

Christ gave to His Apostles the power of celebrating the divine mysteries and of administering the Sacraments—i.e., the power of sanctifying souls. ** The High Priest,” writes St. Paul (Heb. v. 1), “is constituted on behalf of men in all things concerning God, that he may offer gifts and sacrifices for sin.” But our Lord also gave to His Apostles the power of preaching and teaching. Indeed, He gave it the form of a *precept* : “Go and teach.” Christ sent them into all the world, and made them fishers of men. In a line, He constituted them masters, evangelists, apostles, teachers, huntsmen of souls ; hence, as we saw, in the idea of ‘apostolate’ are included those of activity and of toilful and loving *search* (Chapter III).

2. On this, then, is based the character of the Catholic Priesthood. In the Hebrew’ religion, and in most of the others, the Priesthood was an exclusively liturgical institution. The priest was the minister of worship ; his office is to offer victims to the Deity and propitiate

it, thus obtaining favours and blessings for the people. That was all. He was not, so far, master or educator, and still less apostle. The task of educating the Hebrew people was confided by God to the prophets. Among other peoples it was philosophers who, so far as they could, played the Moralists. The idea of apostolate, as Christianity understands it, was unknown among other religions. Our Lord, on the other hand, made it the glorious prerogative of His religion and of His priesthood. His first priests were called by the name of Apostles. They sanctify themselves in the Cenacle ; they pray in the Temple ; but they preach in the public places, they travel over the whole world, they spare themselves no labour, they brave perils of every sort, they suffer death for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

3. The cry of the more recent Pontiffs, to ‘come out of the sacristy,’ to ‘go to the people,’ is simply the command of Christ—“Go, Teach.” Nor is the Catholic Action priest away from his proper place when he works outside the sacred walls of his church for the conquest of souls. Rather should we say that he is precisely *in* his proper place. His work is conformable with his office, and the exercise of a duty of his ministry.

Owing to the Nature of Catholic Action

i. That Catholic Action is obligatory for the clergy is argued not only from the nature of their office, but from its own nature too. It is a lay apostolate, for the coming of the Reign of Christ (Chapter V), and a *necessary* apostolate in view of that ideal.

now ask, how *could* the priest, who is Christ’s ambassador, absent himself from an enterprise that has no other object than the restoration of his King ? How

could the servant of Christ not be there, where men are working for the cause of Christ ? But more than this : Were the intervention of the priest, in such an enterprise, not absolutely necessary, his duty of taking part in it would be less urgent. But, even as Catholic Action *is* necessary for the complete Christianisation of society, so is the co-operation of the priest *necessary* for the life and fertility of Catholic Action.

2. His co-operation is supremely necessary for its life in that without him it hardly can be bom. The clergy is, as a rule, the originator and inspirer of every apostolic enterprise. As a rule, the inactivity of the clergy brings along with itself that also of the laity. And this is but natural. The moment that the faithful, well aware that it is the priest's duty to make use of every possible means of apostolate, sees him leave to one side the conspicuous means that Catholic Action *is*—they cannot but persuade themselves that Catholic Action is either useless or harmful. Wherefore the priest, in the field of Catholic Action, must be the commanding officer who takes the lead. Private soldiers—honourable exceptions to one side—do not fling themselves forward to the attack if the officer stands quietly to one side. The priest, again, must be that husbandman who, at every hour of the day, from dawn to dusk, goes out into the public places to call for labourers in the Lord's vineyard ; without that call of his there is a great risk that the majority will remain standing there “ all the day idle ” (Matt. xx. 6).

3. Further, the co-operation of the clergy is necessary as for the *life*, so also for the *fertility* of Catholic Action, as we said. And its fertility is, as a rule, proportionate to the intensity of priestly co-operation.

Our Lord said that His priests are the salt of the earth

and the light of the world (Matt. v. 13, 14). And what we have said warrants our adding that they are the salt and the light also of Catholic Action. Its 'salt,' because they prevent it from corrupting, from *humanising* itself, and give to it the savour of the supernatural. Its 'light,* because they illuminate its way with the torch of gospel truth and of the doctrine of the Holy See.

4. This is, moreover, the explicit teaching of Pius XI, who, writing to the Argentine episcopate, said : " That the clergy must have their part in this most holy work (Catholic Action) can be deduced from the fact that it, though by its very nature a layman's work, yet cannot, apart from the assiduous and diligent labour of the clergy, either begin, or prosper, or produce its proper fruits." Again, on January 30, 1932, he sent the following autograph message to the review, *The Ecclesiastical Assistant* : " Catholic Action says to each of its Ecclesiastical Assistants, in regard of the share entrusted to each— ' My lot is in thy hands ' (Ps. xxx. 16)."

We can then sum up our argument as follows : The clergy has the definite duty of procuring, by every possible means, the restoration of the Reign of Christ. But, if it does not devote itself to Catholic Action, it hinders the development of a work with which " the restoration of the Reign of Christ is indissolubly connected " (Pius X, Encyclical *Ubi Arcano*). It would then be falling short in one of its essential duties.

Proof from Authority

I. These intrinsic arguments can be followed by extrinsic ones, »>., those drawn from authority. And in our case these are of supreme value, the authority being nothing less than that of the Holy See. All the

Pontiffs, who, in these last times, have promoted and recommended Catholic Action, have also invited the clergy to give it their help and to regard this as a true and personal obligation. A few quotations only.

Leo XIII (Encyclical *Graves de Communi*, January 18, 1901) wrote :

** It is manifest how hard the clergy ought to exert themselves in all this changing order (Catholic Action). We Ourselves, and not once only, have thought it right to affirm that it is opportune in our days to *go to the people* and work along with it for salvation.”¹

Pius X (Encyclical *Fermo Proposito*, on Catholic Action) wrote :

“ Let the clergy exert itself to improve, within the limits of justice and charity, the economic condition, too, of the people, favouring and promoting all institutions that lead thereto.. . . Thus the assistance of the clergy in the works of Catholic Action has a sublime and religious aim in dew ; nor will it ever hamper their spiritual work, but indeed help it forward, by widening its field and increasing its fruits.”

Benedict XV wrote explicitly :

“ Let priests hold it for one of their duties that they must dedicate themselves as much as they possibly can to the theory and practice of social work, by way both of study and of action, and to help and co-operate in every way with those who are worthily working in our organisations ” (Letter to the Bishop of Bergamo, March 11, 1920 : the same thought is repeated to the Venetian Episcopate, June 14, 1920).

¹ Leo, from 1878 onwards—only a few months after his election—in his Encyclical *Quod apostolici*, first condemned Socialism, and then recommended to the clergy and to all Catholics to found workmen's and artisans' societies. He repeated this advice yet more solemnly in *Rerum Navarum* (1891) in *Longinqua Oceam* to the Bishops of the U.S.A. (1895), in *Depuis le jour* (to the French clergy, 1899) ; in *Fin dal principio* to the Italian bishops, 1902, and in other documents.

The same Pontiff wrote to the Bishops of Colombia (August 1, 1916) :

“The times in which we live *exact* (as you very well see) a clergy *that does not confine itself exclusively* to the sacred ministry : on the contrary, the clergy must teach, tend, heal, counteract all the means of perversion that the enemies of Catholicism are revealing day by day.”

2. Still more explicit on this point is the reigning Pontiff. We quote but a few from many sources. In his first Encyclical, *Ubi Arcano*, after having praised and encouraged the further development of all the organisations and works that go under the name of Catholic Action, he added :

“They are necessary, and are set among the chiefest items of the pastor’s work and of Christian life ; with them is indissolubly linked the restoration of the Kingdom of Christ, and the establishment of that true peace which belongs uniquely to that Reign. Tell your clergy that We are aware of their generous labours in these various fields, and that, having seen and watched them at first hand, we appreciate them most highly : tell them that when they give you their co-operation, united with you as with Christ, and guided by you as by Christ, then more than ever ‘they are with Us, and we are with you,’ and bless you.” And, writing to the Cardinal Secretary of State (February 24, 1927), he announced still more explicitly that Catholic Action “*must be considered, by priests, as a definite part of their ministry, and, by the faithful, as a duty of the Christian Life.*”

3. The duty of * assisting ’ Catholic Action concerns all priests in general, but particularly parish priests ; which is, after all, only the right order of things, since the latter have herein a duty not only of charity, but of *justice*, owing to the office they received from the Bishop. Now for one more explicit utterance of the Holy See.

The Cardinal Secretary of State wrote on January 19, 1924, to the Assistant General of the Catholic Women's Union of Italy :

“ No one can fail to see how much the co-operation of the clergy and parish priests in particular helps towards Catholic Action, and how necessary and obligatory it is. They, as shepherds of souls, are, in their burning zeal and laborious activities, constantly aware how precious a part of their ministry consists in help and assistance given to Catholic Action.”

No witness could be more authoritative or expressive. *Catholic Action is a part of the priestly ministry ; it is the office of the pastor, a pastoral duty, and among the ' chiefest ' of these. A corollary. The clergy needs to study Catholic Action. Here, again, the Holy Father is explicit : “ In view of the multiplicity of the pastoral ministry, and of the new ministry of Catholic Action, the pastoral theology of once upon a time is now no more sufficient ”* (Speech to the Ecclesiastical Assistants of the U.C.F.I., July 19, 1928). And in the letter from the Cardinal Secretary of State, quoted above, we read : “ The better Ecclesiastical Assistants know and make perfect the norms and criteria that must guide them in the delicate work of assisting the Associations, the more secure and fertile will be the fruits of their labour.” This is why the College of the Ecclesiastical Assistants General of the Italian Catholic Action founded in 1930 a review, destined (as we read in the pontifical letter of approbation) “ to help and guide the priest in the field of Catholic Action, which, owing to the manifold necessities of our times, belongs ever more intimately both to the Christian life and to the pastoral ministry.” The review is *L'Assistente Ecclesiastico*, Rome, via Aurelia 106.

Accusation of Partisanship

i. There seem to be those who, under pretext of true religious zeal, put forward the following objection : “ The priest who devotes himself to Catholic Action is guilty of partisanship. Like the Apostle of the Gentiles, he ought to ‘ make himself all to all, to save all ’ (1 Cor. ix. 22). His activity should not limit itself to certain persons, but be prodigal of itself to all in equal measure, for all have the same rights to it and need of it. But what happens ? By forming and cultivating particular associations, the priest creates privileged categories, to which he consecrates special care and favours, offending thus against the golden principle of Catholic impartiality. If there have to be exceptional favours, let these be on behalf of sinners rather than the just, according to Christ’s example.”

2. Here, again, this argument proves too much and therefore nothing. For, were the objection well founded, not only Catholic associations but all associations ought to be abolished, even those most definitely religious in character—confraternities, sodalities, congregations, etc.—which date from the earliest Christian centuries. Assuredly ** too much ” !

The principle of apostolic impartiality is, no doubt, excellent, and all priests should adapt their personal conduct thereto, since they, too, like God, should be no ‘ respecter of persons * (Acts x. 34). But please don’t exaggerate its practical application ! This does not demand that the priest distribute his activity among all individuals in a rigorously equal measure, like a father who bequeaths precisely the same amount to each of his surviving sons. For, apart from the fact that a certain number will refuse to play their part, it is dear that not

all have the same vocation, or moral dispositions, nor an equal need of spiritual help. The principle of impartiality merely demands that the priest should put himself at the service of each and all, according to the needs and claims of each.

3. Moreover, the priest does not shut the doors of his associations in anybody's face—provided he does not lack the needed qualifications. No, he opens them to all, and invites all to enter. His associations are not closed circles, cabals of esoterics. No exclusivist pre-conception controls them ; the excluded are self-excluded. We have, too, the fact that Catholic organisations are of value also to non-members. For example, the good behaviour of the members of a youth association is the most effective apostolate in regard of so many young men who have lost their way and are deaf to any other voice that calls them. He who educates one single apostle benefits a whole generation. This might seem to be an exaggeration ; but no, it is as clear as daylight and experience confirms it.

4. It is also very true that the priest, following Christ's example, must go in search of the lost sheep. But the consequence is no more than this—he must not so absorb himself in Catholic Action as not to have time or strength for this loving and laborious quest. Anyway, a zealous priest will always find time and energy to do the one and not omit the other.

If we really want to appeal to the example of our Lord, we may remember that it was He who, in a sense, formed the first association within the infant Church. What was the College of the Apostles, if not a tiny group of chosen men amidst the vast crowds of disciples ? To the members of this His * little flock,' as He called it, our

Lord devoted special and loving care. He revealed to them many a mystery kept hidden from the rest (Matt, xiii. 11) ; He called them 'not servants, but friends' (John xv. 15) ; He wished them to be His constant companions and to witness all that He did ; He dedicated to them special assistance because He meant to prepare them for a special mission. Similarly, the priest tends with loving care the members of his associations, because he wishes to make of them his precious aids in the Christian apostolate.

Hence no partisanship ! The priest, even when working in the narrow field of a Catholic association, has before his eyes the great Christian cause, which knows no frontiers.

Danger of Dissipation

1. A mistaken zeal might suggest another objection. "Catholic Action distracts the priest from the duties of his holy ministry, and easily dissipates his spirit. Absorbed in too different jobs—such as 'assisting' in Catholic Action demands—outside his natural orbit, which is the church, in constant occasions of profane distractions, the priest finds himself in grave danger of losing his first fervour and of preferring what is secular to what is spiritual."

2. Note that in any case dangers, and grave ones, beset the priest in other departments of his ministry. Ought we then to abolish these as well ? Let us grant that Catholic Action might distract the priest from the other duties of his ministry. But this is easily surmounted. A prudent and zealous priest will arrange his many and various duties in a wise gradation, according to their importance and his own strength. So no graver

or more urgent duty must be sacrificed to Catholic Action.

However, there is the more frequent danger of *dissipation*. This, too, a good priest can easily eliminate by harmonising the exigencies of the exterior apostolate with those of the interior life, which was so well defined as the 'soul' of the apostolate. Here, too, brilliant examples are set before our eyes. Our Lord, Master of all apostolates, spent every hour of His exhausting day in teaching and doing good, hedged about by the crowd that did not leave Him quiet for one moment ; but when evening came He escaped, and "recollected" Himself, and "passed the night in prayer" (Luke vi. 12). And His Apostles, while still at the beginning of their wearisome toil, chose coadjutors for their material ministry, the Deacons, so as not to be distracted from their preaching and their prayer (Acts v. 14).

3. And we are glad to finish with some wise advice from Leo XIII (Encyclical *Fin dal principio*, December 8, 1902, to the Bishops of Italy, on the education of the clergy). After having once more asserted that the clergy *must* go to the people, that great Pontiff added :

"But never forget that even in the midst of the crowd, the priest must preserve inviolate his character of Minister of God, being placed at the head of his brothers chiefly for the sake of souls (St. Gregory the Great ; Reg. Past., ii. 7). Any method of dealing with the people to the detriment of the dignity of the priesthood, accompanied by neglect of duties and ecclesiastical discipline, cannot but be most seriously disapproved."

CHAPTER VIII

Catholic Action and 'Politics'

We now need to see of what nature can be the relationship between Catholic Action and 'politics,' by which word we mean everything that constitutes the public life of a nation. The topic is of the highest interest, given the importance of 'politics' in individual and collective life, and also in reference to religion. Here, too, the procedure is simple. Catholic Action is a participation in the Hierarchic Apostolate. Let us then see, first, the nature of the relationship between the hierarchic apostolate and politics,¹ which means what are the powers and 'right of entry' belonging to the Church in political matters ? Thus it will be easily seen what the position of Catholic Action is in regard both of politics in general and of political parties. For the part follows the whole ; and Catholic Action, in the political field, too, will proceed just so far as the Church does, and no farther. The relation between religion and politics will further indicate what should be the behaviour of Catholics in the political field.

I. THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH IN POLITICAL MATTERS

We have already mentioned the indirect power of the Church in material affairs so far as they link themselves

¹ Though *politica* thus used is hardly 'politics' in our English sense, yet we shall assume the definition given by the author above to have been understood, and shall seldom put the word in inverted commas.—Translator.

up with the spiritual world. Among such things politics occupy a foremost place. But all too many refuse to recognise the indirect power of the Church, and specifically in matters of politics. It will then be useful to halt for a moment and examine and confute their alleged reasons. When this power has once been recognised, it will be easy to understand the relation of the Church to *party* politics as such.

The Separatist Theory of Liberalism

i. Liberalism denies to the Church all authority in political matters, because it separates, by a clean cut, politics from morals and religion, and professes a so-called 'political amoralism.' According to this theory, human activity, deploying itself in the political field, must not submit to the control of any ethical principle whatsoever. Political laws are neither moral nor immoral, but unmoral, like those that are deduced, by rigorous logic, superior to human choice, from the principle of Utility. If this is so, Liberalism concludes, religion itself, which boasts itself to be mistress and guardian of morals, has absolutely nothing to do with politics. Hence it follows that religion must be relegated into the mystical twilight of churches, while the sunlit fields of public life must be opened wide to politics, freed from the shackles of metaphysical and religious doctrines. Hence the Church can well be allowed to pass laws and utter verdicts in matters that are purely religious and moral, but must never intrude itself into political activities. Were it to do so it would be going outside the frontiers of its proper attributes.¹

¹ A famous politician, Raymond Poincaré, French President, said in the Chamber on July 16, 1923, that "We leave the city of God to the Popes ; but we shall not allow them to come out of

2. At the back of this separatist theory of the Liberals and autonomists lies a profound misapprehension, due to the confounding of *separation* with *distinction*. We readily admit that politics and religion are distinct from one another, *i.e.*, they are not one and the selfsame thing, seeing that each has its own nature and proper end. Hence the Church and the State, each in the sphere of its proper attributes, must be considered as sovereign and independent. But we cannot admit 'separation,' which is a very different thing; for this does not consist in the mere *lack of identity*, but in lack of any *unity*, physical or moral, «>., it involves absolute reciprocal independence, and the lack of *all* contact and relationship. On this Leo XIII said (*Encyclical Sapientiae Christianae*) : "Church alike and State has each its own sovereignty : and so, in the administration of what belongs to it, neither obeys the other. But from this it must not at all be deduced that they ought to be separate, much less hostile."

We easily can, and do, allow that two things can be distinct, and yet not separate. Body and soul, for example, are, in man, two distinct elements, of different

domain." And the City of God, for all true Liberals, was the Church, scene of purely religious activities. In regard of these relations between religion and politics, certain Catholics, usually known as *autonomisti*, had much the same ideas as the Liberals. They were led by Don R. Murri, towards the beginning of this century. They claimed that the Pope and Bishops must have entry only into the purely religious field, but never into political or social-economic ones. "Any group of citizens," wrote Murri in his *Rivista di Cultura*, "can assuredly organise itself for economic, juridical or political aims, nor should ecclesiastical authority in any way mix itself up with them." This is one of the errors of social modernism. At the same time, an autonomist current was becoming visible also in France, represented by the Sillon, a vast democratic organisation of youth, founded by Marc Sangnier. Pius X condemned it, but, unlike Murri, its ardent founder and defender did not rebel against the Church.

and indeed contrary nature, seeing that the one is spiritual and the other material. But are they therefore separate ? Not at all. So truly are they *not* that their separation implies death. So, to prove that religion and politics are separate, we should have first to show that there is between them no relationship, no point of contact, no possibility of interaction. But this is just what Liberals will never be able to prove. For religion, especially on its moral side, has relationships with politics that can never be suppressed. We mean, of course, 'politics' considered as such. For there are different sorts of politics, as we shall show.¹

A Fundamental Distinction

i. The very word 'politics' is extremely ambiguous ; it has, in fact, many senses. Hence, before proceeding further, we must accurately define what we mean by it. The word 'politics' (from *polis*, city, State) means, in the abstract, the science that teaches how to govern the people ; while in the concrete it means the act itself of governing. In a fuller sense we can call 'politics' the whole complex of acts that refer to the public life of a nation. In this sense we shall see that politics become not only a right but a duty. However understood, politics have a widely extended and complex object, which admits of various distinctions according to the point of view. Thus we have 'home' and foreign politics, legislative and executive, religious, scholastic, agricultural, fiscal, and other sorts of politics. We here

¹ Religion is not only a harmonious complex of dogmatic truths, nor yet only a ritual of liturgical rites ; it is also a code of moral rules regarding man's duties towards God and his neighbours. It is especially under this last aspect that it can come into direct contact with politics. See Cathrein, *Moral Philosophy*, ii, 4.

have to consider politics only in its relationship with religion ; and under this aspect there are two distinct * politics.'

There certainly is a politics that has nothing to do with religion or morals. This could be called politics in the strict, or technical, sense. Clearly the Church does not occupy herself with this—she remains outside and above it. But there is also a politics which includes ethical principles and religious interests ; we might call it a 'chapter of morality,' a politics that "touches the altar," as Pius XI said (Speech to the International Pilgrimage of Catholic Young Men, September 20, 1925). And this naturally enters into the competency of the Church.

2. The distinction is of radical importance. Nor was it drawn arbitrarily or for mere convenience in discussion. It is firmly based on the reality of things. Nor do you need sharp eyes to see this.

For anyone can see that in the vast field of politics sectors exist where purely technical activities deploy themselves, and questions agitated which, of themselves, do not touch moral principles or religious interests. Thus Parliaments can discuss Free Trade and Protection *ad infinitum*, *ententes cordiales* or international alliances, electoral systems, and even forms of government, without religion having to impose on legislators, in the name of faith or morals, this or that attitude towards them. Such questions have no direct and necessary relation with ethical rules, and so each may solve them in the way that seems to him best in the public interests. We said "necessary and direct," for even into these technical questions morality may enter, but accidentally, for contingent reasons. Thus to build a house is certainly

a technical enterprise, to be regulated according to the rule of the borough council. But if the house is to subserve an immoral end, *e.g.*, prostitution, the moralist will feel himself rightly called upon to judge whether such an undertaking be permissible.

Thus every *form of government* is licit in itself, *vis-à-vis* of Morals. But, by misuse, or through other contingent reasons, a particular form may hinder the attainment of the common good, which should be the aim of any and every government. Then the moralist would have to conclude that it must be condemned. Good in itself, it becomes bad *per accidens*.¹

3. But alongside of *Politico-technical* questions, others arise within the vast field of public life which we can call *politico-moral* ones, as having a direct and necessary relation with ethics, and finding themselves either in harmony or in contrast therewith. Such are all questions that cannot disregard the nature and end of man as such ; like those that relate to marriage and the family, schools and education, public morals, right to property or association, and so forth. Nor does this prevent the existence of a field reserved to pure * technique ' in the practical solution of such questions. There are also questions that we can call *politico-ecclesiastical*, because

¹ Such is the open teaching of Leo XIII (Encyclical *Au Milieu*, to the Catholics of France, February 16, 1892) : " Every form of government is good, so far as it knows how to go straight to its end, *i-e.*, the common good, for the sake of which social authority is constituted. . . . Catholics, like all citizens, have full liberty to prefer one form of government to another, precisely because none of these forms is opposed, *per se*, to the laws of reason or the maxims of Christian doctrine." Hence the Church declares herself indifferent in face of an absolute or of a democratic form of government. But she cannot remain indifferent when, for example, absolutism turns into tyranny, or democracy into mob-rule. Here the very *end of* social authority is at issue ; ethics are called into the field, and, along with ethics, the Church.

they regard directly the relations between Church and State, and public worship.

The Legitimate Intervention of the Church

1. Everyone can see that in these questions, that touch on morals and religion, the Church has both the right and the duty of intervening. She is mistress, guardian, and protectress of the Christian law, but also, of natural law, the expression of God's creative will. Hence the Church can intervene not only to point out, when need be, the path to follow, but to recall men to it when it is lost, or to protest when men deliberately desert it. This concerns a definite right and duty of hers, which he alone can dispute who does not recognise her divine title-deeds.

As for us, we can assert, without any hidden meaning, that the Church must never go in for politics *as politics*, seeing that they are foreign to her essentially spiritual end. But even in politics what Horace says is true : " There are definite limits, to this side or that of which the Right cannot exist." When such frontiers are violated, the Church has to raise her voice in admonition or in protest ; else she would betray a definite commandment of Christ's. Pius XI said as to this : " When politics lay 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 *duty* of following them " (Speech to the University Students of the Italian Catholic Action, September 8, 1924).

2. We can sum up our conclusion in the following principles :

() 'Politics' is really distinct from religion, since each has its different nature and end :

() Politics in itself can be considered as truly separate from religion when it treats of politico-technical questions ; but when it treats of politico-ethical ones, it must inspire itself from superior ethical principles and thus cannot consider itself as independent of religion :

(c) Politics, at its points of contact with religion and morals, falls under the legitimate competency of ecclesiastical authority which is the guardian and mistress of religion and morality :

(J) This competency of Ecclesiastical Authority is not 'direct,' because it does not act upon political material as such, but only indirect, because it acts upon political material *in so far* as it is closely connected with morality and religion.¹

The Church and Political Parties

From the principles set forth above we can easily deduce the relationship between the Church and organisations of political colour which are usually called 'parties.'

I. The Church remains *outside and above* the purely political activities and rivalries of parties. The teaching of the Holy See is consistent and clear. Leo XIII wrote what leaves no room for doubt (Encyclical *Sapientiae Christianae*) :

" It is certain that in public affairs a measure of conflict is

¹ On 'indirect power,' see Chapter VI. What has been said of politics in relation to the Church can also be said up to a point of economics, science, literature, art, and so forth. Architects are free to prefer the Doric, Ionic or Corinthian styles ; painters can use perspective, or not ; writers can fight for centuries over classicism or romanism—and the Church will not say a word. These are questions of pure art, and technical, to be decided by technical criteria and the canons of art. The Church declares herself incompetent therein. But if a painter or sculptor or author offends, in his work, against some canon of morality or dogma of the faith, the Church cannot hold herself aloof, but enters to speak her word of admonition or condemnation. Nor let anyone be shocked or call out 'Arbitrary !' For a field within her jurisdiction has been invaded and devastated. She puts no sickle into anyone else's field.

allowable, when—without injury to truth or justice—men fight for the triumph in fact and practice of those ideas or systems that seem best to conduce to the common good. But to drag the Church towards one party, and to wish that she should lend a hand in defeating one's political adversaries—this would be a hideous abuse of religion.”

Pius X gave the following warning to the clergy :

“ The priest, raised high above other men for the fulfilment of the mission that he holds from God, must maintain himself impartially above all human interests, all rivalries, all classes of society. . . . By acting thus, he remains superior to all opposition, he does not appear as a party man, favouritising the ones, adversary of the others ” (Encyclical *Fermo Proposito*).

Benedict XV wrote explicitly (Letter *Celeberrima* to the Portuguese Episcopate) :

“ The Church obviously cannot mix herself up with factions, nor serve political parties ; hence she must exhort the faithful to obey duly constituted authority, whatever be the form of government.”

And Pius XI gave the following instruction (Cardinal Gasparri, Secretary of State to the Ordinaries of Italy, October 2, 1922) :

“ Neither Bishop nor Parish Priest can be refused the right to have, as private citizens, their personal opinions and political preferences, provided these be conformable with the dictates of right conscience and the interests of religion. But it is no less evident that in so far as they are bishops and parish priests they must at all points hold themselves aloof from the strife of parties, high above every purely political rivalry.”

2. Yet the Church can “ assume an attitude of rebuke or blame towards parties, should these come to put themselves in opposition with the principles of religion or of Christian morality ” (letter quoted above). It is clear that the condemnation of the Church does not fall on the *purely political* programme of the party, but on its

politico-moral programme, concerning which, as we have explained, the Church has full jurisdiction.¹

3. A party is not rebuked by the Church when its programme and its activities contain nothing that * clashes with the principles of religion and of Christian morals * (Letter from Cardinal Gaspard quoted above). Hence in any one country several parties may exist in harmony with religion and morals. This occurs when they are differentiated only in those parts of their programme which are purely political. Thus two parties may co-exist, each inspired by Christian principles, of which one supports a monarchy, the other a republic ; one, proportional election and female suffrage, the other the opposite ; the one administrative decentralisation, the other centralisation, and so on. But each would have to contain nothing, in its politico-moral postulates, that clashed with Christian doctrine, even considered in its social contents.

4. Religion must be used as a mark of political differentiation, and no party can properly call itself * Catholic,' even though composed of Catholic citizens and inspired throughout by Christian principles. For, as we have said, there are various sectors of the political field into which religion does not enter at all. Within these Catholics can take different sides, and group themselves according to their views and personal preferences.

¹ It is well known that Leo XIII more than once condemned the principles of ' Liberalism * and ' Socialism.' And Pius XI condemned the " Action Française," not, as he himself declared, " owing to political preconceptions or preferences," but because that party or school of thought " placed politics before religion, so as to make the latter servant of the former," and exposed young men especially " to directions and influences most dangerous for faith and morals and for Catholic education and formation " (Consistorial Allocution, December 20, 1926).

II. THE POSITION OF CATHOLIC ACTION IN FACE OF PARTIES AND POLITICS

The competence and action of the Church in the political field inevitably defines the position of Catholic Action when confronted by political parties and politics in general. Here, too, Catholic Action collaborates with the principal agent and stands at the Church's side. As for parties, Catholic Action, too, remains distinct from and superior to them ("outside and above" them). None the less, it cannot, any more than the Church can, disinterest itself wholly from politics. And it concerns itself therewith in two ways : (i.) indirectly, by forming consciences and diffusing the Christian social principles which are to orientate all manifestations of public life ; (ii.) directly, when politics touch on morality or religion.

Catholic Action Distinct from Parties

1. That Catholic Action stands outside parties is a consequence of its end, which is not that of any party whatsoever. The end proper to a party, or indeed any political movement, is of the temporal order and culminates in the government of the 'polis.' And no doubt the government, if it be exercised by single-hearted Catholics, will inspire itself throughout by the social principles of Christianity, and will therefore turn out to be a strong means of Christian restoration. Yet the end proper to Catholic Action is, as we know, quite different, and is none other than that of the Church. We here confront a clean-cut distinction of aims, from which follows a distinction between programmes, organisations, directions, and responsibilities.

2. Catholic Action is further distinct from parties by reason of its subject. We have, in fact, seen that its

subject is the laity as a whole, without distinction of age, sex, social, or civil position, and even of political opinions. A truly 'Catholic' Action (cf. Chapter III). But not such is a political party into which those only enter who accept the whole of its programme. And in this, as we know, part is left to the free choice of Catholics. Hence the saying: "Religion unites, politics divide." And hence, again, the very name 'party' applied to such groups, for they contain only a 'part' of the citizens. For all these reasons the distinction between Catholic Action and political parties is no accidental one, but absolute, derived from the very nature of things. Catholic Action never was, and never can be, a party, or a party instrument.

3. But we have already seen that distinction need not imply separation. Hence we do not say that an abyss should exist between Catholic Action and parties, especially when these have a Christian programme, nor that no reciprocal influence can be permitted. Catholic Action, in fact, did it consist of nothing but its formative work and cultural programme, would render the best of services to parties and to politics in general, as we shall soon show. And on its side, a party that is Christian in inspiration can render notable services to the life and mission, both of the Church and of Catholic Action.¹

¹ "Catholic Action," wrote Abp. Pizzardo (speech to the first National Week of the Diocesan Ecclesiastical Assistants of Italy), "cannot be indifferent when confronted by the parties which, in different degrees, apply Christian principles in their work, just as it cannot forbid its adherents to belong to the permitted parties, provided that they remember to do honour to their Catholic name. Why, even when there is full identity of principles, and even were it a case of a party as good as possible from the point of view of Catholic principles, Catholic Action would still be substantially distinct even from a political party such as that."

Pontifical Regulations

1. That this distinction is not merely contingent or accidental can be argued from the fact that all the Popes, even in quite different political situations, have imperatively prescribed it.

Leo XIII promoted and blessed 'Christian Democracy,' which was meant to realise that Christian-social programme that he had himself proclaimed in *Rerum Novarum*. But he always most definitely set himself against any attempt to turn it into a political movement. In the Encyclical *Graves de Communi* he wrote words that won a historical importance :

"Let it never be permissible to give a political meaning to Christian Democracy. For, though the word 'democracy,* if you consider its etymology and the way in which philosophers apply it, serves to indicate a form of popular government, yet in our case all political meaning must be set aside, and it must imply nothing except a beneficent Christian action on behalf of the people. Inasmuch as the laws both of nature and of the gospel transcend, by their own right, all human events, they necessarily cannot depend on any form of civil government, but can agree with all of them, always presuming that these are not repugnant to justice and right behaviour. These laws are and remain outside of parties and the changeableness of things, so that, howsoever society rules itself, citizens can and must adhere to these laws, according to which we are ordered to love God above all things and our neighbour as ourself. Such is the constant discipline of the Church ; thus have the Roman Pontiffs ever been wont to treat with States, independently of their special forms of government. This much being laid down, the endeavours and action of Catholics who aim at promoting the good of the people, must not at all set before themselves a preference for one form of government rather than another, let alone prepare for it."

2. Pius X renewed the veto of his predecessor: "Christian Democrats in Italy must altogether refrain

from participating in any political action whatsoever ” (*Motu proprio* on Christian Popular Action, December 18, 1903). Benedict XV further ordered Catholic Action to maintain itself “ outside and above all problems of a purely material and political order ” (Letter from the Cardinal Secretary of State to the President of the Italian Catholic ‘ Popular Union,’ January 8, 1919). In consequence of this letter the Directive Committee of Italian Catholic Action met and affirmed that “ the mission of Catholic Action turned essentially towards the preparation of consciences for the work of the Christian restoration of society, outside and above that strictly political action which is left to the free initiative of citizens.” (Note that only the day before, January 18, 1919, the Italian *Partito Popolare* had appeared.) Pius XI has often and still more explicitly repeated this prescription :

“ Catholic Action, precisely because *Catholic*, neither must nor can enter into politics *for politics' sake*, we mean, the political struggle, *party* politics ” (Speech to the Italian Catholic Action University Students, September 8, 1924). “ Catholic Action arises and develops outside and above all political parties. It neither can nor wishes to go in for any party politics, nor to be itself a political party ” (Speech to the Men’s Union of Italian Catholic Action, October 30, 1926). “ It is certainly of the highest importance for the common good that Catholic Action—which must be promoted by all Catholics, being for the utility of all—be not restricted within the narrow limits of a party, nor mix itself up with politics ” (Letter to the Lithuanian Bishops, June 4, 1928). “ Catholic Action must not be confused with organisations primarily directed towards political aims, given its own nature and aims, which set it outside and above party rivalries ” (To Cardinal Segura, Primate of Spain, November 6, 1929).

How marvellously unanimous is the voice of the Popes

in this much controverted matter ! At all times, in all directions, when speaking to Italians, Lithuanians, Spaniards, Germans, Argentinians, the Chinese (Message to the Chinese people, August 1, 1928), it is harmonious with itself. This proves once more the transcendence of the Church in regard of all the purely political vicissitudes of peoples and of nations.

Superior to Parties

1. Catholic Action, by reason of its end, is not only outside all parties but above them, as the Holy See has said. For we know that the end proper to Catholic Action is none other than that of the Church—spiritual and supernatural ; but the objective of a party is natural, even though it be, as it ought to be, subordinated and directed to a superior end.

But another reason for the superiority of Catholic Action is the beneficent moral influence that it can exercise both upon public life as a whole and on parties themselves. Distinct from these, but not separated from them, it can influence them albeit indirectly by its double function of forming consciences and divulging Christian principles. And since spiritual formation is presupposed and at the base of every good work, so Catholic Action becomes the 'alma mater' of all collective activities that Catholics can deploy whether in the political field or in any other zone of social life.

2. This 'maternity' of the Church was already affirmed by Benedict XV in a speech which had great importance in view of programmes (to the representatives of the Diocesan Committees of Italy, April 29, 1920) : "Other activities may have but recently appeared in various fields ; yet they are only rivulets coming from

the royal stream. The rivulets of the Tiber may dwindle ; but the Tiber continues ever its majestic course, through cities and villages."

And later, when Catholic Action seemed to languish owing to practically all its vital energies having been drained off to fertilise other activities, the same Pontiff, through the mouth of his Secretary of State, spoke these words of austere admonishment to the Catholics of Italy (Cardinal Gasparri, Secretary of State, to the President of the Popular Party) :

" Albeit social and political action may, by its very nature, easily produce more showy and noisy results, yet, should Catholic Action, which must form consciences and create moral values, come to languish, the political and social action of Catholics themselves would fall fatally short of its aim ; and on no distant to-morrow they would have to lament not only the ruin of Catholic Action properly so-called, but also the exhaustion and dissolution of other organisations that take their inspiration from the dictates of the Gospel, and summon to themselves the social and political energies of Catholics."

And Pius XI, on the same topic, uttered these precise words :

" When consciences shall have been Christian-wise formed, equipped, and instructed, the rest will come of itself ; and whatsoever problem presents itself will be dealt with by a Christian mind, and find a Christian solution " (Speech to the Italian Catholic Action Young Men, September 2, 1922).

Education for Political Life

i. But he would be wrong who should think that because Catholic Action must remain outside and above parties, it cannot and should not exercise any influence on political life. In reality, it can and should, as we have said, exercise a double influence, direct and indirect, on

the political life of a country'. Indirect, above all, by sowing Christian ideas over a wide field, that should animate not only individuals and family life, but also social and political life in all its manifestations. Ultimately, this means the realisation of that programme of social formation of which we spoke in Chapter II.

2. This educative work enters rigorously into the Catholic Action programme, for two main reasons : (a) Because the Christian moral law is *one*, and embraces the whole life of man, whether private or public. "Not only the personal and private acts of men," wrote Pius XI (Encyclical *Ubi Arcano*, December 23, 1922), "but also their public and collective acts must be conformable to the eternal laws of God." And (b) because participation in the public life of his country is, for every citizen, not only a right, but a duty of social charity. We develop this idea below. Clearly Catholic Action, too, must fulfil this formative work, first among its own members, and only then must it extend it to the whole population, with the various means belonging to Christian cultural propaganda.

3. Very clear is the doctrine of Pius XI on this point too (Speech to Italian Catholic Action University Students, September 8, 1924) :

"Catholic Action, though not political itself, wishes to teach Catholics to make a 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 any party politics, Catholic Action wants to prepare men to be *good* politicians, *great* politicians ; it aims at preparing the consciences of citizens politically, and to form them, in this

matter too, Christian-wise and Catholic-wise ” (Speech to the Men’s Union, Italian Catholic Action, October 30, 1926).

Direct Intervention

1. Catholic Action can enter directly, too, into the political field, with the aim of obtaining, by means permitted by the laws, the application of Christian principles and the safeguarding of the rights of Christian consciences. The Church, we saw, has the right and the duty of entering even into the political field for obtaining its spiritual ends. Well then, Catholic Action, its servant and attendant, will follow her here too, and arrive where she arrives, aiming always at the same supreme objectives, the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

2. We provide a brief selection of pontifical utterances, clear as ever, on this topic.

“ Catholic Action is an action ordered not in view of material and earthly aims, but of spiritual and heavenly ones—it is not political but religious, and thereby wholly dependent upon the Church’s authority. But if, by the inevitable inter-connection of things, it has to descend also into the economic and social field, and actually touch upon political matters, it does so uniquely in view of supernatural interests and of the moral and religious uplifting of both individuals and peoples ” (Letter of the Cardinal Secretary of State to the Ordinaries of Italy, October 2, 1922). “ Catholic Action is not only a spiritual and religious action, in contrast with every other Catholic activity of a human and material sort, but is also, in the highest sense of the word, a social action, since it means to promote the supreme well-being of society, including that of political life, in so far as this touches upon morality and religion ” (Letter from the same to the President General of the Italian Catholic Action, May 10, 1925). “ Should political questions also involve religious and moral interests, Catholic Action can and must, when possible, intervene directly, directing all Catholic energies, high above particular

views, and by means of disciplined action, towards the superior interests of souls and of the Church ” (Pius XI to Cardinal Segura).

Such then are the politics of Catholic Action, no different from those of the Church, which aims at the “superior interests of souls ”; they are those of the Pater Noster, that tends solely to realise the Christian aspiration ; the politics that do not divide, but, on the contrary, must unite “all the Catholic forces, high above particular views, in a common force of action and defence.”¹

Religious Action in the Political Field

i. From what we have said so far it would seem that the * political action,' both of the Church and of Catholic Action, would better be called 'religious action in the political field,' seeing that their ends are always religious, and actions are characterised not by their environment, nor their means, but by their ends.

Pius XI, addressing a vast assembly of Catholic young men from every nation (September 20, 1925), uttered these precise and vigorous words :

“We must safeguard ourselves from a confusion that can arise when We, the Episcopate, the clergy and the Catholic laity might appear to be acting politically, when we are in reality acting only religiously. We are but acting religiously, we are but defending religion, when we fight for the liberty of the Church, for the sanctity of family or school, or the keeping holy of the day's consecrated to God. In all these

¹ It is now dear that when you hear it said that Catholic Action must stand outside and above politics, and not * go in for politics/ you hear what is true provided you use the word 'politics' in the strict and *current sense*. No room for error would be left were we to use the expression * party politics/ as Papal documents almost always do. Even in Article 43 of the Concordat between the Holy See and the State of Italy we read that Catholic Action must deploy its activities “outside of all *political parties*.”

cases, or similar ones, we are not going in for politics, but it is politics that have touched religion, and laid hands upon the altar. It is then Our duty to defend God and His religion that He has entrusted to Us ; and it is the duty of the bishops and the clergy ; and it is your duty, too, my dear young men, whatever be the nation you belong to ; your duty—you who hold so strongly to the glorious title of Collaborators of the Apostles.”

2. From such * politics,’ that form part of the Christian law, no good government has anything to fear. Hence governments should show towards it not only tolerance but favour, given that it is, at this time or that, both an affair of duty and beneficence, since it guards and promotes the interests not only of the Church and of souls, but those of civil society itself.

“ Catholic Action,” wrote Pius XI (to Cardinal Segura), “ though holding itself, as such, above party politics, will co-operate for the public welfare, whether by the diffusion and realisation of Catholic principles, which are the foundation and guarantee of all civil prosperity, or by a delicately Christian formation of consciences that shall ensure to the country a band of exemplary citizens, not only for the good of the Church, but also anxious for social good not less than for their own personal or domestic good.”¹

III. THE CONDUCT OF CATHOLICS IN THE POLITICAL FIELD

We have examined the attitude of Catholic Action in regard of politics and political parties. Now we want to

¹ There are those who accuse Catholic Action of going in for politics and being nothing but a political party camouflaged ; and there are others who accuse it of not being political, and remaining within the dim religious light of churches, or high on a heavenly Olympus exercising no beneficent influence upon society. We have said enough to refute these two opposite accusations, which anyhow cancel out.

know what should be the behaviour of each Catholic in the political field, whether a member of Catholic Action or not. We shall see, by the light of the Holy See's instructions, how they can and should share in political life ; how they can fight under a party standard—provided always that the party corresponds with certain definite prerequisites ; and how they can freely differ among themselves in matters of pure politics, however much they must be united on the religious and moral terrain.

Participation in Political Life

1. Though Catholic Action, as such, cannot go in for politics in the strict sense, each of its members can. They, on their private responsibility, can enter the arena of public life, and even share in political strife, provided they inspire themselves throughout by the dictates of Christian morals and in obedience to the Church. Such is the explicit teaching of the Holy See.

Pius X (Encyclical *Ferm a Proposito*), speaking especially of militant Catholics, said :

“ The modern ordering of States offers equally to all the chance of influencing public life ; and Catholics, provided they obey the obligations imposed by the Law of God and the ordinances of the Church, can with a perfectly good conscience profit by this, and show themselves equal to others and indeed better than they, in co-operating in the material and civil well-being of the people, and acquiring thus that authority and respect which shall render them capable of defending and promoting those higher benefits, which are those of the soul.”

2. Pius XI has laid down rules that are even more complete and precise :

“ Catholic Action shall not exclude its members from participation in any of the manifestations of public life : it

will even render them more apt for public office because of its austere formation to sanctity of life and the fulfilment of Christian duties. It is, in fact, absolutely bom to provide society with its best citizens, and the State with its most scrupulous and expert magistrates ” (Letter to Cardinal Bertram). “ No one can forbid the members of Catholic Action to make use, as citizens, of the civil right of voting : nor will this interrupt the work of Catholic Action as such.” (Letter to the Lithuanian Episcopate). “ Catholic Action must not be confused with organisations whose primary aim is political. . . . This does not mean that individual Catholics should not interest themselves in the various problems that regard public life, inspiring the while the whole of their personal activity by the principles of Catholic doctrine and the directions of the Church ” (Letter to Cardinal Segura).

Party Membership

I. Members of Catholic Action can also belong to parties corresponding to their personal opinions and political preferences, assuming that these are in perfect harmony with the laws of God and of the Church. This, too, is the explicit doctrine of Pius XI : “ Nothing prevents individual Catholics from belonging to parties, provided their programme and activities contain nothing contrary to the laws of God and the Church ” (£&). “ Catholic Action does not enter into political parties. . . . But nothing prevents Catholics from giving in their names to these, provided they give secure guarantees of respect for the rights of God and observe the laws of the Catholic Church ” (Letter to the Argentine Episcopate). Such then are the requisites that parties are to provide if Catholics are to subscribe to them ; not only in their programme, but also in their activities they must have nothing contrary to the laws of God ; and they must offer safe guarantees that these laws will be by them

respected. (It always regards Ecclesiastical Authority to pronounce verdict upon parties or rather on the principles that inspire them.)

2. In order to assist and emphasise the distinction between Catholic Action and political parties, it is a good thing, speaking generally, that its directors—who in a measure represent the interests of religion—should not hold responsible positions in any political party. Anyhow, in this matter, too, Catholics cannot do otherwise than follow the directions of the Hierarchy, which alone is competent to lay down concrete rules ; though these can undergo changes according to times and places.

The Duty of Social Charity

1. Now we have to say that Catholics, whether or no they belong to Catholic Action, can, and in some cases must, in the measure of what is possible, participate in public life. Pius XI again said :

“ Catholic Action not only does not prevent each man from joining in politics, but it creates a definite duty for them to do so.” And he adds the principal reasons for this : “ 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 herself ? ” (Speech to the Italian Catholic Action Men’s Union, October 30, 1926).

The Catholic citizen must then for two reasons contribute his maximum to the life of the ‘ polis ’ of the nation—by a duty of social charity, and owing to his duty of defending and promoting the interests of religion.

2. Above all, owing to his duty of social charity. We

are, in fact, obliged by duties of charity, both towards the individual and also the collectivity. And the more so when we are dealing with a collectivity of which we are *members*. We have already said that every member of the social family, even as he receives from it benefits that are indispensable to him, so must he render back the like, so far as his powers and position allow him to. No member, in an organism, may be purely passive (cf. Chapter III). Hence to disinterest oneself absolutely from politics, from the 'greater' politics that constitute the very life of a nation, is at once a form of egoism and of ingratitude. All the more so since in the field of politics our own and our neighbour's highest interests are concerned. Pius XI said, in other circumstances, that

"the field of politics, since it concerns the interests of society as a whole, is, under this aspect, a field for the vastest charity of all, the field of political charity, to which none other, we can say, apart from religion, can be superior" (Speech to Catholic Action University Students, December 18, 1927). This duty of political and social charity was also referred to by Leo XIII in his *Immortale Dei*: "Generally speaking, total abstinence from political life would be no less blameworthy than to refuse all co-operation of whatever sort for the public welfare; the more so, since Catholics, precisely because of their principles, are more than ever obliged to supply integrity and zeal in the management of affairs."

The Duty of Defending and Promoting Religious Interests

i. Participation in public life is, for Catholics at large, a duty not only of charity but also of religion. Indeed, as Pius XI rightly said, "The interests of religion itself may depend on" politics. Now Catholics ought to promote and, when need is, to defend such interests. As a matter of fact, between religion and politics there exist

not only these, so to say, ' ideal ' relationships, but very practical ones, mutually influential. Religion offers inestimable advantages to politics, both because it provides it with the ethical principles that form the very foundation of social life, and also because it confers on these principles a real value, a practical efficiency. Politics, on its side, exercise a great influence on the religious and moral life of a country. Just as it can cut short the liberty of conscience and of cult, so can it assist the religious mission of the Church.

2. Politics cannot simply ignore religion. An agnostic policy almost always, by the force of things, becomes an anti-religious one. We know why : politics and religion, which have their concrete expression in State and Church, are distinct, but should not be separate. Pius IX (*Syll.* 55) condemned the Liberal theory of separation between State and Church. Such separation can, now and again, be tolerated to avoid worse evils. But toleration does not imply approval of the principle.

In general, those who rule the people have a double duty in regard of religion : negative, not to injure nor trouble it ; positive, to defend and assist it. Well, these duties oblige not only those who actually direct a policy, but, in due proportion, those citizens too who can exercise a real influence on the swing of public affairs. And, given the modern disposition of things, all citizens to a greater or less extent can do so.

3. This is all the truer because, as things are, in many countries the abstention of Catholics from public life permits its destinies to fall into the hands of men who are hostile to religion, and therefore are harmful to the common weal. On this point Leo XIII wrote with the most limpid clarity :

** Catholics, by holding aloof, will allow men easily to arrive into power, whose opinions give no grounds for hoping that the State will be the better for them. And this would prove injurious to 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 good reason to take part in political life ; though they must not do so as to sanction what is culpable in actual systems, but so as to cause these very systems (so far as possible) to serve the genuine and true public welfare, and with the aim of making the spirit and beneficent influence of the Church to circulate in all the veins of the body social, like a life-giving blood or sap ” (*Immortale Dei*). The reigning Pontiff recalled this doctrine of Leo XIII in his Letter to the Bishops of Lithuania (June 4, 1928) : “ Catholics would be playing false 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.”¹

The Duty of Union in the Religious and Moral Fields

I. We said that Catholics can differ in politico-technical questions, such as do not of themselves involve moral principles nor religious values. Hence Catholics can be politically divided, and no one has the right to accredit his personal opinions and personal attitude by means of the authority of the religion they all share ; it must remain outside all such things. Pius XI (letter to the Lithuanian Bishops) wrote :

1 Evidently this duty obliging Catholics to mke part in political life can cease in certain circumstances, when it would clash with a superior duty or do harm to a superior cause. This was verified in Italy after 1870, when the Holy See imposed the *Son Expedit*. This, according to the authentic interpretation, meant a *prohibitum* upon Catholics taking part in politics (*Act. SS. Sedis*, vol. xii). Leo XIII alluded to this, too, in his *Immortale Dei*.

"We must avoid the erroneous opinion of those who confound religion with a party, to the extent of affirming that their adversaries have ceased to be Catholics. This is to cause the passions of politics to penetrate most unduly into the august domain of religion, and to attempt to destroy fraternal concord, and to open the door to a crowd of deadly disabilities." The Pontiff wishes that religion be kept high above political differences, and that among Catholics should reign concord of souls even amid a discord of opinions, according to the wish of the Apostle himself: "Let all that you do, be done in charity" (1 Cor. xvi. 14).¹

2. But there is a field in which all Catholics must be united religiously; that of politico-moral questions and the defence of religion. Here all sons of the Church must feel the duty of solidarity, and form a compact army. Here all discord is treachery. When the supreme interests of religion and morals are at stake, party interests and personal opinions must keep silence. For the salvation of souls all must be sacrificed.

This is the appeal of the Pontiffs to Catholics of all lands whensoever they find themselves under the necessity of defending religion against the assaults of the enemies of Christ and the Church. One or two examples. Benedict XV wrote to the Bishops of Colombia (August 1, 1916):

"Above all, exhort your flocks, and especially the clergy,

¹ It would seem to be in place here to recall the further advice given by the Holy Father: "Even as the motto of Catholic Action is *The Peace of Christ in the Reign of Christ,* so in the application of their activities let Catholics always keep present to their minds the fact that if errors need to be combated, yet men must always be the object of brotherly love, so that at least by the path of charity they may be drawn to acknowledge the beauty of our Faith" (letter of the Cardinal Secretary of State to the President General of Italian Catholic Action, October 2, 1923). This is for all, and in every field. But what charity should we not display towards our brothers in the Faith when they differ from us on matters that after all are *dùputable* f

not to allow party passions and the futile contests of the political field to dissipate their forces and to divide their souls, at a time when the fight both actual and imminent exacts from Catholics but a single thought, an identical will, one and the same activity.” And the ruling Pontiff, in his Consistorial Allocution of December 20, 1925, spoke as follows to the Catholics of France : “ It is unfitting, dear sons, that you should any longer hold yourselves divided and in conflict for merely political reasons ; it ill befits your land ; it ill befits religion. But it befits all and in all, yes, incalculably is it fitting, that all should be united on the religious field, and the terrain of the Church and her rights, of Christian marriage, of family, of school, of Christian education, and to sum up, of all the most sacred and most fundamental liberties.”

It was in this very allocution that the Holy Father condemned the programme or school that put politics before religion, and forced the latter to subserve the former ; and, if you notice, it is precisely the passion that puts politics before religion that is the fundamental cause that hampers and hinders the union of Catholics on the religious field.

3. We need hardly add that all the political duties hitherto discussed oblige in a special way those who are sworn to fight in the ranks of Catholic Action, since they have the duty, owing to their participation in the hierarchic apostolate of showing themselves in all circumstances the *best* Catholics and the *best* citizens.

CHAPTER IX

Catholic Action and its Auxiliary Works

“ Besides Catholic Action properly so called, other Institutions, Associations, and Enterprises exist. These, with a remarkable variety of organisation, tend, some to a more intensive ascetical culture, others to practice of piety and religion and especially to the apostolate of prayer, or again to the exercise of Christian charity in all its extent and applications. They deploy, in fact, a wide and very efficacious apostolate individual and social, under organisational forms of great variety, but appropriate to each several enterprise. But for this very reason they differ from the organisation proper to Catholic Action. They are therefore works which cannot simply be called Catholic Action, though they can and should be called its true and providential *auxiliares*.*

We have already quoted these words, to be read in the letter from the Cardinal Secretary of State to the President General of Italian Catholic Action, March 30, 1930. Speaking to the Marian Congregations on that same day, the Holy Father said that this letter had been thought over for a long time, and prepared with special prayer. It clearly and authoritatively defines the relations between Catholic Action, properly so-called, and all the other associations and works that the Pope himself calls providential, precious and auxiliary (cf. Chapters I and II). We now wish to examine these relationships, following here, too, the accurate instructions of the Holy See. To do so as adequately as may be, we must first study the differences between Catholic Action and those works,

among which 'Religious Associations' hold a primary rank and must be spoken of specially. Then we shall add a word on the relations that Catholic Action should maintain in regard of certain specified good works.

I. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CATHOLIC ACTION AND RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATIONS

Among the auxiliary works mentioned by the Holy Father, those occupy the first place which tend towards a more intensive ascetical culture, pious practices, especially prayer, and the exercise of charity. They constitute that admirable ring of sodalities and good works that are called 'Religious Associations.' These then form one *sort*—the most numerous and conspicuous sort—of works auxiliary to Catholic Action. But since Catholic Action too is, by reason of its end, a religious activity, it seems, to some, to form merely a useless duplicate of the others. We shall see that this is not so when we have examined the true nature of Religious Associations.

Religious Associations

I. Canon Law, in the section *On the Laity*, considers three classes of Religious Associations, calling them 'Associations of the Faithful,' and by * *Religious Associations* ⁹ we mean those only that Canon Law so names: by '*Catholic Associations*' we mean those that make part of the official Catholic Action. The Codex further expounds the rules proper to their constitution and good government (Can. 700-725), and these associations are:

(a) **Third Orders**, whose members "under the direction of some religious Order, and according to its spirit, aim at

Christian perfection while remaining in the world, and ² conformity with the rules that the Holy See has issued ² in their regard ” (702).

(6) *Confraternities*, i.e., “sodalities erected for the furtherance of public worship ” (707).

(c) *Pious Unions*, “associations erected for the exercise of some work of piety or charity ” (707).

2. These associations are canonically erected and have their own organisational form, whose fundamental lines are traced in the same Codex of Canon Law. Some, moreover, by apostolic induit, can aggregate others to themselves ** if they have the same title and the same end.” The former are called Arch-Sodalities, Arch-Confraternities, or ‘Primary Unions and Congregations’ (Can. 720, 721). The act of aggregation communicates to the aggregated society all the indulgences, privileges and other spiritual graces that the Holy See has conceded or shall directly concede to the aggregating association. But by this act of aggregation the aggregating association acquires no rights over the aggregated one ” (Can. 722).

3. It is easy to see the manifold differences—of end, of means, of persons—between such associations and Catholic Action now that we have seen the distinctive qualities and nature of each.

Difference of Ends

I. The end proper to Religious Associations is the Christian perfection of their members, the exercise of piety and charity, or the furtherance of divine worship. But Catholic Action is consecrated to a religio-social apostolate, and that is its true substance. True Catholic Action, too, shares in works of Christian piety and cult, and develops a deep formative action. But this by no means exhausts its programme. Its formation is in view

of *action*, a premiss of apostolate ; it is, then, not an end, but a means.

2. True again, apostolate is not a monopoly of Catholic Action. The Religious Associations, by forming good Catholics, form by that very fact hard-working apostles. Apostolate is born spontaneously in religious souls, like flowers on the rocky mountains. No one can truly love God without wishing everyone to love Him. But that apostolate is at most an individual one ; an indirect and ' mediate ' form of social Christianisation. Catholic Action is a collective apostolate that tends directly to the Christianisation not only of individuals but of families and society.

3. True, again, that some Religious Associations contain in their programme some form of collective apostolate. All the same, this never has the essential characteristics of Catholic Action, not being a *universal* and *official* apostolate. The pontifical letter quoted above aptly recalls that Catholic Action receives its mandate and direction from the Hierarchy, forming thus a great regiment of souls, all animate with the desire of participating in the apostolate of the Church and at her orders. An apostolate, therefore, vast and multiform as that of the Church (*universal*) ; an apostolate that develops itself at the mandate and at the orders of the Hierarchy (*official*)—here are two prerogatives to be found only in Catholic Action. (Recall what we said in Chapters II and III.)

4. Hence Catholic Action calls its soldiers to a ' mixed * life—contemplative and active—to action as well as prayer. Such, indeed, should be the life of the Christian apostle, well slimmed up in the meaningful words of St. Thomas Aquinas—*Contemplata aliis tradere*—giving to

others what you yourself have *seen* : “ As it is better to illuminate than merely to shine, so is it better to show to others what you have seen than merely to see it ” (S.T. 2a-2ae, Q. 188, a. 6).

Difference of Means

i. The end being different, so necessarily are the means. In any association its proper 'organisational form' is a primary means for achieving its end. And herein is a radical difference between Catholic Action and Religious Associations. The papal Letter alludes to this when it says that the auxiliary works have “ extremely varied forms of organisation, each adapted to the enterprises peculiar to each, and by that very fact differ from the organisation proper to Catholic Action.” Religious Associations, even when grouped into a ‘family,’ with one and the selfsame aim and identical rules, none the less have not a ‘unitary’ and hierarchic organisation. We saw, in fact, that even aggregation implies nothing but intercommunication of spiritual favours. The primary association has no powers over the aggregated ones. There exist between them only moral, not juridical bonds. On the other hand, Catholic Action has an organisation constituted on a unitary and hierarchic base. The fundamental reason for this is found in the same papal Letter : “ Catholic Action is by its nature co-ordinated with and subordinate to the Hierarchy.” Not only subordinated, but co-ordinated, so that it must have its organs alike in the national centre, the dioceses, and the parishes, dependent on and subordinated respectively to the Pope, the Bishops, and the Parish Priests (cf. Chapter IV).

2. As for yet other means, Religious Associations

mostly use those that conspire to and suffice for their educative and cultural aims—the Sacraments and Sacramentals, participation in the Liturgy, prayer, sermons, reunions, retreats, good literature, and so forth. But Catholic Action, setting before itself the direct diffusion and actualisation of Catholic principles also in the social field at large, and wishing to further what is good “in all possible directions and measures” (Pius XI to the Women Workers of the Young Women’s Section of Italian Catholic Action, March 18, 1927), must also use means that are not directly religious, but ‘social,’ like the Press, schools, social institutions, congress, and public assemblies, public propaganda, defence of public morals, intervention with the public authorities, etc. And it equips its numerous adherents so that they may prepare and use all such means within the limits of existing laws.

Difference of Persons

1. The difference of end determines further a difference of persons, both directors and ordinary members. As for the former, we know that Religious Associations are usually directed by some priest, albeit assisted by laymen. The priest is the true director and has all the responsibility. In Catholic Action, on the contrary, the directive function is fulfilled preferably by layfolk, albeit under the necessary dependence on authority (cf. Chapter VI).

2. As for what concerns the members, we know that all the faithful can belong to Religious Associations when they possess the qualities that their rules prescribe. Similarly all the faithful can fight in the ranks of Catholic Action, even though it be always actually destined to be a spiritual ‘aristocracy’ (cf. Chapter III). None the less, a certain difference exists even from this point of view.

Speaking generally, an association dedicated to the apostolate must ask from its adherents a greater spiritual perfection, while others need not set just that perfection before them as their aim.

The former, Catholic Action, should be able to presuppose it and to have care only for its maintenance and improvement (an apostle should be a perfect Christian) ; the latter, a Religious Association, needs to form this perfection in its adherents and cannot presuppose it in all alike at the moment of their entry ; it can content itself if there be a good foundation in each, whereon the spiritual edifice may be built. Hence we conclude that the recruiting in the associations of Catholic Action should be stricter than that for Religious Associations. This, we said, is the general rule ; in practice, many an exception must be allowed for, since, for a number of causes, Catholic Action cannot always presuppose in its members the perfection that should be theirs. And again, its younger groups have to devote themselves to a work that is predominantly formative (cf. Chapter II).

II. RELATIONS BETWEEN CATHOLIC ACTION AND RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATIONS

We begin by saying that both have their good reason for existing and their specific utility within the Church. Our Lord said : " In My Father's house are many mansions " (John xiv. 2) : but His Father's house is the Church, in which, since many and varied are the needs, many and varied must be the rooms. . . . And the Church is well represented in the person of that beautiful princess in the Psalms (Ps. xlv. 10) in her golden dress, surrounded with various adornments. And among these,

some of the loveliest, and most delightful, precisely because they are so varied, are the many good works and associations to which she, the Universal Mother, gives birth with her wonderful and imperishable fertility.

Neither Confusion nor Opposition

I. We now want to examine the relations between Catholic Action and these associations. Papal documents make it plain what they are ; and we can sum them up thus : No confusion, nor opposition, but *mutual goodwill, cordial understanding, and mutual co-operation*. Above all, there must be no confusion nor absorption, or even transformation, if only because their proximate and specific ends are different, as we saw.

This is, besides, the explicit will of the Holy Father, who, in the speech already quoted, said :

“These good enterprises need not renounce their own specific forms, which, in fact, should all of them survive : nor is it meant that they must transform themselves into other forms of organisation ; yet it is not meant that precisely because of *that* they are official Catholic Action, so to call it. Our point is simply that all these forms of good can and must help the central enterprise of Catholic Action ” (Speech to the Marian Congregations, March 30, 1930).

2. Still less can there be opposition, even in thought or feeling. And this, not only because there never should be opposition between good works, but also and above all because Religious Associations and Catholic Action have one and the same ultimate aim—the glory of God and the salvation of souls. They all, though by different paths and in different ways, are marching towards the selfsame goal. This is one more reason why there should be no opposition of any sort between them, but

that *mutual goodwill, heartfelt understanding, mutual collaboration*, that the Pope has expressly enjoined.

3. In the often-quoted letter to Cardinal Bertram (November 12, 1928) the Holy Father said :

“ Catholic Action does not establish a unique and exclusive form of action ; but it makes the most of and directs towards the social apostolate any and every good work or association, especially religious ones, whether they be specially aimed at the formation of youth and the progress of Christian piety, or whether their aims be of a civil or economic nature. Thus Catholic Action . . . while it will profit by the fruits that religious and economic Associations can provide, will not fail to bring them its own aid and fostering, maintaining a mutual goodwill and heartfelt understanding and promoting mutual co-operation between all, with that immense advantage for the Church and human society that you can imagine.”

These ideas, so far as Religious Associations are concerned, are repeated in the Pontifical Letter of March 30, 1930:

* The aims *of* the Auxiliary Works and the indications given by the Holy See, especially in recent Pontifical Letters, demand that a mutual goodwill and cordial understanding reign between these works and Catholic Action, and that that mutual co-operation be promoted amongst them which simultaneously multiplies and co-ordinates their efficiency for the good of souls and for the welfare of the Church ” (these Letters are especially those to Cardinal Bertram, Cardinal Segura, and the Argentine Episcopate).

Mutual Goodwill

x. Above all, mutual goodwill ; essential presupposition to cordial understanding and co-operation. This goodwill must be inspired, from this side and that, not only by the duty of Christian charity, but also because of the esteem that each party must have for the dignity and utility of

the other. This esteem is founded on the nature of things and on the official declarations of the Church.

2. It is the Church herself who gives a special position to Religious Associations in Canon Law, saying that those who become members of them are worthy of praise (684). And the Church calls their work "noble and necessary" (Letter from the Cardinal Secretary of State to the Abp. of Bologna, September 28, 1925); while defining them as "true and providential auxiliaries of Catholic Action" (see above). And again, the Church herself has declared that Catholic Action is "a duty of Christian life," ** a work comparable with that of the priest," in actual conditions "necessary"; that "anything done or allowed to be done for or against Catholic Action is for or against the inviolable rights of conscience and of the Church" (from documents already often quoted). Finally, the Reigning Pontiff has often declared that Catholic Action is "most dear" to him; "dear as the apple of his eye" (Encyclical *Ubi Arcano*, and often).

And he has proved this by many an act, even to the writing of an encyclical in its defence (*Non Abbiamo Bisogno*, June 29, 1931). Now how could a Catholic not love what the Pope loves so tenderly—not esteem what he compares with the priesthood, not resolve on what he defines as a Christian duty?

Cordial Understanding and Collaboration

I. Mutual goodwill makes these easy, since the former, at any rate, is but its expression and a cordial understanding between Catholic Action and the auxiliary' works is, as a rule, not only necessary' but a duty. Mutual love and esteem are no good if you remain in splendid isolation. Not to clash and not to hamper is not enough.

Merely parallel existence may suffice elsewhere, but not in the case of works tending to one ultimate end. They must draw near to one another and make contact, know one another, and intimately understand one another, so as to combine forces when need arises. This cordial understanding is, in fact, the necessary premiss to a mutual and efficacious collaboration ; and collaboration is a duty, for it is to the advantage of each institution and of the whole, and renders more profitable the course of each and of all.

2. The letter quoted above tells us also how mutual collaboration should be brought about :

“ Even as Catholic Action will take place to assist (the Auxiliary Works) as best it can, so these must continue to lend their providential aid to Catholic Action, either by the most efficacious and never sufficiently desired and begged for contribution of their prayer, or again, by making the grandeur, necessity, and advantages of Catholic Action better known, by exhorting and directing, on suitable occasions, their own members to take part in it. This is to be understood especially of those institutes and congregations that bring the young together, so as to preserve the fruits of their Catholic education.”

Here then is the concrete forms of collaboration between Catholic Action and the Religious Associations, which we can now examine in detail.

Concrete Forms of Collaboration

i. Catholic Action is to show favour as best it can to Religious Associations, and not only by ensuring that its members esteem them as they should, but also by directing them towards such associations as respond most fully to their spiritual needs. For such associations become precious auxiliaries not least in this—that by forming

good Catholics they cannot but be forming good apostles, *i.e.*, men well adapted to Catholic Action itself. Not that Catholic Action must therefore abdicate its own method of formation and hand it over to anyone else—the less so, since we saw how Catholic Action must give to its members a *special* formation (cf. Chapter II). But it remains true that you can hardly have too much spiritual formation, and members of Catholic Action may well find in this or that association a useful complement, educative or ascetic, that suits their special psychological dispositions and personal religious vocation. For in the religious and ascetical life many are the paths, many the vocations ; and each must follow whither the Lord calls him for his personal sanctification. Hence the marvellous variety of Orders and Congregations for Religious, within the Church ; and a similar variety of associations and pious works exists for the laity.

2. The latter proceeds to indicate three special forms of help that Religious Associations should offer to Catholic Action :

They should (a) pray for it, begging the heavenly fertilising rain for the furrows that its apostolate has opened ; (&) cause the grandeur, necessity, and advantages of Catholic Action to be better known ; and, indeed, how love and esteem what you do not know ? And alas, there is still all too great a cloud of ignorance, misapprehensions, and prejudices around Catholic Action, found even in pious souls (see Introduction) ; (c) encourage and direct their own members, especially the younger ones, towards Catholic Action. Before seeing why this special contribution is *obligatory*, see how *reasonable* it is ! After all, Religious Associations educate their members to the practice of *all* the duties

of the Christian life, and that is precisely what the Holy See has declared Catholic Action to be—a Christian duty. And since the exercise of the apostolate demands no ordinary spiritual formation, hence, too, it appears as reasonable that the associations should be anxious to offer their *best-formed* squadrons to Catholic Action.¹

And in his speech to the Marian Congregations already quoted, Pius XI also said :

“All those forms of good (the auxiliary works) can, and must, assist the central enterprise of Catholic Action. In a very special way, the Pope expects to see the best off-shoots, the best auxiliaries, coming from so many of its sons, so well prepared.”

A Few Practical Rules

To be still more practical and concrete, here are a few rules that can be laid down in view of cordial understanding and collaboration.

I. Catholic Action must not invade the terrain proper to the associations nor substitute itself for them. Hence it is in no way right that *sections* of Religious Associations should be formed within Catholic Action associations under Catholic Action directors. On their side, Religious Associations should not encroach upon what is proper to Catholic Action, substituting themselves for it or developing what is really a Catholic Action programme.*

1 “Religious Associations will be glad and proud to give the flower of their associates to the official of that Action that has been willed by the Holy See, because there, in the great army that exists under the Pope and Bishops, they will fight the great battle for Christ and for his Church.” Fr. A. Garagnani, S.J.: *Social Work of Nihil*, September, 1925, on Catholic Action.

» It is worth recording here what Pius X wrote, in his letter Terhaas, September 8. 1914, to the three Masters General of the Minor Orders : “Tertiaries will deserve well of religion if each, after giving him his name to some Catholic Association, pays individual

2. Since the programmes of the two parties, while different, have points of contact, it is well that the directors of Catholic Action and of the associations should come to an agreement so as to avoid clashes or overlapping. The advantage gained by each will also suggest that at times duplication can be avoided by combining forces and promoting simultaneously those functions or religious manifestations that suit both equally. Thus Catholic Action is consecrated to the Sacred Heart. Certain associations, *e.g.*, the Apostleship of Prayer, have a special devotion to it. Anyone can see that certain functions in its honour, especially in small districts, should be promoted by both together. Similarly, Catholic Action, where it possesses no house specially appropriated to retreats, could usefully make use of those belonging to the most praiseworthy work of retreats itself.

3. Then, since the subjects of the associations and of Catholic Action are often, especially within one parish, the same, an understanding can usefully be come to as to timetables, so that the audiences of reunions and other such events be not injured.

4. Both the Associations and Catholic Action will carefully abstain from using symbols, banners, etc., that already belong to the other.

Two Errors to Avoid

I. Here are two mistakes that could easily be made by those who do not thoroughly understand the programme attention to the pursuit of the special aim that each sets before himself. They are not forbidden to enter upon social work, such as is approved by this Apostolic See, but the Third Order as such must take care not to invade the field proper to each such association, nor usurp the end that is proper to each of them." We can extend this to all Religious Associations.

of our institutions. The first is to regard the Associations as useless and outpassed, since Catholic Action has come into being, especially as it contains in its programme certain activities which belong also to the Associations. Facts themselves refute this, and also the explicit will of the Church, as we have heard.

2. The second is that of those who are so impressed by the flourishing activities of the Associations that they think they suffice for all the needs of the time, and that Catholic Action is therefore a useless superstructure. This opinion, too, clashes with facts and the expressed will of the Church. Pius XI wills that

*' to the most noble and necessary work of religious associations be added the other work—religious-sodal apostolate, no less noble and necessary, and indeed, in the grave situation of to-day, most urgent '' (Letter of the Cardinal Secretary of State to the Archbishop of Bologna). And in his Speech to the Marian congregations he declared that in Catholic Action the apostolate and co-operation of the laity with that of the Hierarchy should assume forms and attitudes proper to and characteristic of itself, and more in harmony with the exigencies of the times, so as to render its activities more efficacious and more in keeping with what our days demand." 1

III. RELATIONS WITH OTHER APOSTOLIC WORKS

We remarked that, besides Catholic Action properly so-called, other associations and good works have arisen, and constantly arise, that have *a certain apostolic aim*.

and so can be called Catholic Action *in the wide sense* (cf. Chapter I). Here, too, we wish to point out how they differ from Catholic Action, yet should be in relation with it. Finally we shall say a word about those that can be called “ Church works.”

1. After what has been said of the special qualities of Catholic Action, it should not be difficult to detect the differences between it and other forms of apostolate [which vary according to countries, though some are international, *e.g.*, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.—Translator]. Thus Catholic Action is universal ; the others act within a special sphere of apostolate tied down to some particular objective—Christian culture, charity, the Press, art, the stage or cinema,* youth ’ organisations, working-men’s clubs, etc.

2. Another substantial difference is this : Catholic Action is an official apostolate, not only subordinate to but co-ordinated with the Hierarchy ; other enterprises are not so. Of course, since they perform an apostolate, they cannot do without ecclesiastical approbation ; they all depend upon the Church. But they do not act by her *m a n d a t e*, and so have no official character. And no doubt such works are sometimes federated on a diocesan or national basis. But, as we have seen elsewhere, their organisation has not that * unitary ’ and hierarchic nature of that of Catholic Action.

· * Auxiliary to Catholic Action ”

I. None of these works, for the reasons given, is Catholic Action in the strict sense. But since each realises part of the programme of Catholic Action, they can number themselves among its *Auxiliaries*. The Pontifical Letter on the Auxiliary works does, in fact,

speak of institutions and enterprises that devote themselves "to the exercise of charity in all its extent and applications, and indeed exercise a wide and most efficacious individual and social apostolate."

2. Explicit allusion is made to these apostolic works in the Encyclical *Fermo Proposito* of Pius X. After speaking of the Catholic Action Associations, he adds :

"This in no way prevents the favouring and promotion of other works of various kinds and variously organised, but all equally destined to this or that particular good of society and of the people, and to the re-flowering of Christian civilisation under various definite aspects. As a rule they arise thanks to the zeal of individual persons and develop within individual dioceses or even join in federations of wider extent. Now, provided always that the end they set before themselves be praiseworthy, and the Christian principles on which they act be firm, and the means they use be righteous, they too must be praised and encouraged in every way. And they must be left a certain liberty of organisation ; for, when several persons come together, it is quite impossible that they should all model themselves on the same exemplar, or be concentrated under one unique direction."

Co-ordination

I. Their relationship with Catholic Action is determined by their very nature of *Auxiliary Works*, and is expressed in the formula noted above—mutual goodwill, cordial understanding, reciprocal collaboration. To repeat the Pope's own words : "They *co-operate and must* help the central initiative of Catholic Action." Since it is the central initiative that is concerned, it is only logical that all the activities *of* the lay apostolate should converge towards it. This is the explicit will of the Holy See, expressed precisely in the act by which it sanctioned the reconstruction of Catholic Action :

“ Even as every Catholic must feel the need and duty of devoting himself or at least of contributing to this apostolic work (Catholic Action), so must he feel the need and duty of co-ordinating himself, so far as possible, with the recognised organs of action, if he does not want to expose himself to the danger of rendering his work sterile, if not actually disturbing and injurious ” (Letter of the Cardinal Secretary of State to the President General of the Italian Catholic Action, October 2, 1923).

2. We do not wish to repeat what we said elsewhere (Chapter IV) on the utility of co-ordinating all the Catholic forces that work in any way for the coming of Christ's Kingdom. Enough to say, here, that co-ordination can take the form of a true and genuine adhesion to Catholic Action, when, as in our case, it is a question of works that pursue a really apostolic objective and can confer a real contribution to Catholic Action, and receive from it, on their side, support and increase.

In the letter of Pius XI to the Argentine Episcopate there is an explicit allusion to this form of adhesion. After speaking of the auxiliary works, the Pope adds :

“ We rejoice keenly, along with you, that you make use of these worthy institutions to assist Catholic Action. This will happen all the more easily if, as we hope, you connect them with Catholic Action, arranging the forms of adhesion opportunely, so that they, preserving their own objectives and forms of organisation, may co-operate effectively with Catholic Action.”

3. Another form of co-ordination is this : the representatives of the auxiliary works can enter into the directive and co-ordinative centres of Catholic Action, or at least take part in their reunions, when subjects of common interest are being treated of.

The co-ordination of auxiliary works usually takes place

by way of the co-ordinative organs of Catholic Action (cf. Chapter IV, Unity and Multiplicity). Ecclesiastical authority must judge of and decide the best form of co-ordination.

Co-ordinate, not Concentrate

1. In the letter to the Argentine Episcopate we read that the auxiliary works must so connect themselves with Catholic Action as not to lose their own objective and form of organisation. That is, Catholic Action must co-ordinate, not concentrate. It must make use of the activities of these various works, for the general ends of apostolate, but not absorb them. It must respect their autonomy, and see that they remain faithful to their Christian and Christianising aim. Such, at least, is the general rule. Naturally, it admits of exceptions.

2. In reality, the very principle of division of labour advises that *for certain* definite aims of the apostolate there should exist particular and specialised works. No one in this world can do *all* the good work, because, simply, human energies have their limit. This law holds good not only for individuals, but for institutions. The system of excessive centralisation has always proved pernicious to the life and fertility of institutions, because it extinguishes energies and puts them to death, stifles responsibilities and creates a desert where it should put order. It is part of a government's wisdom to know how to reconcile the exigencies of order with those of fertility, unity of intention with variety of works.

3. Catholic Action shall be able of itself to create works *of* specific apostolic value where it shall think this to be necessary or useful ; and *if* it does so, it may keep them dependent on itself, though always leaving to them a just

and necessary autonomy in the technical field. But where similar works *already exist*, it will perhaps be more suitable to try to make use of these in the spirit of Christian solidarity.¹

The Works of the Church

1. Finally, we cannot but mention, among works of apostolate, some that the Church herself has initiated and controls directly, in virtue of the exercise of some particular function of her apostolic mandate ; for example, the Work of Catechism, Missionary Works, works for the Preservation of the Faith, Sacred Music, and so on.

It is obvious that Catholic Action must entertain, especially with these, relationships of cordial understanding and collaboration. This enters precisely into its programme. Official collaborator with the Church, it is but natural that she must collaborate with and contribute to all the works and enterprises of the Church herself. This collaboration will, of course, proceed by taking into account the attributes that the Church has entrusted to each of the two parties.

2. We like to conclude by placing as a seal on our tractate concerning the relations between Catholic Action and its sister institutions, the advice of the Apostle that has special worth for Catholics who labour in the apostolic

¹ The Central Committee of Italian Catholic Action, in a circular to the diocesan committees and parochial councils, wrote : “ In some dioceses enterprises on behalf of the Good Press have existed for some time, and have acquired authentic testimonials of worth. Diocesan Committees will see that a suitable connection be maintained with these, so that they keep themselves loyal to their end, and so that a mutual collaboration may be hsbshed between Catholic Action and the said works, to the benefit of both, and, what is still better, the benefit of the common cause. [Thia general direction is then applied to the special topic of Catholic libraries, circulating and other, aa they exist in Italy.—Translator.]

field : “ I implore you . . . ; be solicitous to preserve the unity of spirit in the bond of peace. Be ye therefore one body and one spirit, even as ye have been called to one hope of your calling. One Lord, one Faith, one baptism. One Lord and Father of all, who is above all, and through all and in us all ” (Eph. iv. 3–6).

CHAPTER X

Catholic Action and Social-Economic Works

Among the works with which Catholic Action must keep up good relations are those concerned, under Christian inspiration, with social economics. By these we mean all the organisations, institutions, and enterprises, promoted and formed by Catholics, which, inspired by Christian principles and the instructions of the Holy See, have care for the material well-being of their associates, subordinating it to the higher well-being of the spirit. It is thus only that they have an apostolic aim.

Some of these have a 'professional' character, and seek to safeguard the professional interests of a determined social class; such are syndicates, trade unions, etc. Others have a more definitely economic character, requiring a larger use of financial means; whence they are usually called economic works, such as co-operatives, rural banks, etc. Our comprehensive expression, "social-economic," is meant to include both kinds. Such works have features and aims proper to themselves, which distinguish them not only from Catholic Action properly so-called, but also from the auxiliary works studied in the preceding chapter, although social-economic works, too, are and ought to be auxiliary to Catholic Action. Hence Catholic Action maintains special relations with these, too, clearly defined by ecclesiastical authority. For these

reasons, and also because of the special importance of such works, we have thought good to examine them separately. We shall therefore consider first the 'ideal reasons' * for Catholic social-economic action, and especially the motives for which Catholics in general and Catholic Action in particular ought to promote and have care for this sort of work, and the several aims which are theirs. Then we shall examine the practical relationship which ought to exist between these same works and Catholic Action.¹

I. " IDEAL " REASONS

The Church and the Social Question

I. First and foremost, it can be asked why Catholic Action should interest itself in these works. The answer is simple : Because the Church, with which Catholic Action collaborates, interests herself in them. This is the fundamental reason which explains all Catholic Action activities. Better ask, Why does the *Church* interest herself in them ? This, too, can be easily answered after what we have said about the indirect power of the Church over temporal matters. Economics, being necessarily bound up with ethics, cannot but fall under that power. We must even add that this material has closer and more frequent contacts with morality than even politics have, since justice and charity, the two hinges of the moral world, are more frequently brought by it into court. Hence both the Church and Catholic Action have a special right and duty of intervening in

¹ Social Economic Action is more briefly called by some ' Social Action.' and they distinguish it thus from ' Catholic Action *'; we, not », for Catholic Aetna â a ' social action ' too.

the social-economic field, which has become all too often a scene of bitter strife, not always bloodless, between social classes, for it is there that the inflammatory topic of Thine and Mine is agitated.

2. This right and this duty have often been solemnly affirmed by the Holy See.

Leo XIII (*Rerum Novarum*), on the working-class question, wrote :

“ We enter confidently upon this discussion, and in our full rights, since we are treating of a question that can find no solution worth anything without recourse to Religion and the Church.” The reason for this, alluded to by the same Pontiff in *Graces de Communi*, is : “ The social question is supremely a religious and moral question, to be solved, above all, by following out the dictates of religion and of morals.” Benedict XV wrote (25th Anniversary of the Society of St. Joachim, March 18, 1919): “The social question still awaits its solution ; but it must not be solved apart from the Church, lest it be solved in opposition to the Church.” And Pius XI said (Speech to the Directors of the Catholic Action of Rome, April 19, 1931) : “ Until the social question, and, first and foremost, the labour problem, shall no more be a mere material and economic question—of, as they say, stomach and digestion—but a question concerned with conscience and human dignity, and so, a supremely moral question, the Church, the Holy See, the Apostolate—owing to the divine mandate that is theirs—not only cannot refuse, but cannot dispense itself from coming to the succour of all, considering this as a definite and primary duty.” The same Pontiff, in his Letter to Cardinal Schuster (April 26, 1931), declared : “ The duty and the right of the Church (and, in due proportion, of Catholic Action) to betake herself also on to the terrain of work, labour and social interests, not to usurp or interfere with activities known as ‘ syndical,’ or, indeed, by any other such name, which do not concern her—but to procure and safeguard everywhere the honour of God and the salvation of souls.”

These last words remind us that the activity of the

Church and of Catholic Action in the social-economic field is inspired in view of religious and moral ends. Let us see this more distinctly.

Aims of Social-Economic Action

1. Social-Economic Action, if Christian-wise inspired, wishes to realise a level of social justice that is conformable to the principles of the Gospel. No doubt the gospels neither teach nor prescribe any determinate social system. None the less, it is true that not every system can be called consistent with the principles of justice and charity contained in the gospels. Well, Catholics aim at precisely this: that in economic and social relationships these very principles may be realised, so that each may receive what is his due; and that the conditions of those who have less may be continuously bettered.

Leo XIII, in his Encyclical *Graces de Communi*, wrote explicitly about Catholic social-economic action (which was then called Christian Democracy):

“No one assuredly will find a way of rebuking an action that aims, according to the will of nature and of the divine laws, to this one end—to lead towards less cruel conditions those who work with their hands, so that they may gradually succeed in providing for the necessities of life.”

2. Catholic social-economic action is the actualisation of a duty of Christian charity.

Leo XIII, in *Graves*, further wrote:

* All the more praiseworthy does the beneficent action of Catholics in regard of the proletariat appear to Us, because it develops itself within the same field as that in which Charity, accommodating itself to the exigencies of the times, always laboured, actively and with good results, under the loving inspiration of the Church.”

Our Lord did not command the Apostles only to baptise and preach, but to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils, cure the weak, help the oppressed (Matt. x. 7-8 ; Luke xi. 3-9). He entrusted them not only with a religious mission, but a beneficent one. What else then is Catholic Action, when it aspires to alleviate the conditions of the poor and to promote social peace and justice, but a form of that corporal charity that Christ enjoined upon His apostles, and, in them, on all priests and laity ? Economic social action is, therefore, in perfect harmony with the whole of Christian tradition. Glance at the Gospel. Jesus did not limit Himself to preaching the message of good cheer, but “ went about doing good and healing ” (Acts x. 38). He said : “ *I have pity on the multitude* ” (Matt. xv. 32), and multiplied the loaves to satisfy the hungry throngs. He fulfilled the prophecy of Isaias (Matt. xi. 1) : “ The blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them.” And the Apostles, faithful interpreters of His thought and will, from the very beginning of their mission took thought for the material needs of the first Christian community, so much so that they created a sacred ‘ order/ the Deacons, to provide for the administration and equitable distribution of the patrimony of widows and orphans (Acts xvi.). And St. Paul, in the midst of his laborious apostolic travels, found a way of collecting help to send to the churches of Judea, harrassed by famine (Acts xi.).

In the light of these authoritative examples the Church of Christ has always devoted herself in succouring the material necessities of the people. Her beneficent activity progressively expressed itself in various concrete forms

and institutions, adapted to the nature and needs of the times, and found always munificent promoters in the Popes and the Bishops, and ardent practical aid from the clergy and the laity. Hence Catholic social-economic activity in favour of the proletariat can call itself the continuation of a tradition of the Church, never once broken throughout 2,000 years.

3. Catholic social-economic action aims at obtaining, along with economic well-being, the moral uplifting of the people.

Leo XIII, in *Graves de Communi*, wrote that the Catholic programme must aim at this: the working classes, once conditions of life are made less hard for them,

“ must consequently be able freely to satisfy their moral and religious duties in their homes and at large ; and experience that they are not brutes but men, not pagans but Christians, and hence the more easily and enthusiastically turn to what alone is necessary, that is, the supreme good whereunto we are bom.” And Pius XI exhorts Christian organisers to cause the material benefits of organisation to serve ” as means for the cultural, moral, and religious perfection of their associates, reaching thus the true uplifting of the people, which consists not only in a greater economic well-being, but in its emancipation from the fatal tyranny of error and of vice, and the ensuring to them of the inestimable advantages of the admirable light of the Gospel ” (Cardinal Gasparri, Secretary of State, to the German Catholic Working-men’s Association).

Material benefit *disposes* the mind to receive the spiritual benefit. And so, by caring for the body, we arrive more easily at healing the soul. And social-economic action smooths the way for religious action as such.

4. Christian social-economic action has further the aim of garrisoning faith and morals in the Working Man.

This is a ‘ negative ’ aim ; but for the Church and every

Catholic it carries great weight. To-day the working class has a consciousness of its rights that never will be suppressed, and tends to achieve them especially by way of organisation. If Catholics leave their legitimate interests in the lurch, they further leave the road free for economic systems which, under pretext of material welfare, effect a tragic massacre of souls.

“Poor working-men,” wrote Leo, “besides being because of their condition more than anyone most worthy of charity and relief, are particularly exposed to the seductions of the fraudulent and the swindler. So they must be assisted with the maximum of generosity, and brought into good associations, lest they drag out their existence in a brutalised condition” (*Humanum Genus*). Benedict XV wrote to the Bishop of Bergamo that the eternal salvation of the soul itself was in danger upon the economic field. And the reigning Pontiff has affirmed that “the discontented masses of Labour, seduced by the unhealthy propaganda of materialism with its consequence of revolution, cannot be freed from the errors that set it astray, nor find the peace with their employers that they long for, save by way of the social principles of the Church, well understood and diffused among the laity too, who must be informed with the spirit of Apostolate proper to Catholic Action” (Letter to the German association quoted above).¹

The Call of the Popes

The aims of Catholic social-economic action, thus set forth by us, correspond to the desire and the express will of the Holy See. It would take too long to quote all that is relevant from the encyclicals and allocutions of

¹ It is clear that this being but one, and not the whole of, the aims of Catholic social-economic action, that action would still be justified, even though that aim were but imperfectly achieved, or if the faith and morals of the working-class had no snares laid for it by atheist and materialist organisations.

Leo XIII, the 'Working-Man's Pope.' Let this suffice, from *Rerum Novarum* :

"Most worthy of applause are those many Catholics who, understanding the needs of the times, exert every effort to improve in worthy ways the lot of the working-man ; and take their cause in hand and study how to increase their personal and domestic well-being, and to regulate equitably the relations between employee and employer." Pius X, in his Encyclical *Fermo Proposito*, called on Catholics "to take the interests of the people supremely to heart, and particularly those of the working-man and the farm-labourer, not only instilling the principle of religion—the only fount of consolation in the pressures of life—into the hearts of all, but seeking to staunch their tears, to ease their pains, to ameliorate their economic conditions with wisely regulated provisos." Benedict XV said (Speech to the Representatives of the Diocesan Committees of the Italian Catholic Action, March 3, 1919) : " We turn to the adepts of Catholic Action, who have accepted Our call to become co-operators with Ourselves ; and with most keen interest exhort them to turn special attention and special care towards the working-classes." Finally, the reigning Pontiff, in his *Quadragesimo*, praises all priests and hymen who " members of Catholic Action, concern themselves, along with the Pope, and with special zeal, with the Social Question." He further declared openly that "one of the chief tasks of Catholic Action is the study of social needs " (Speech to the Young Women's Section of Italian Catholic Action, March 19, 1927).

Practical Relations

Catholics, in pursuance of the explicit call of the Holy See, have given life and development to many different social-economic works which, though their immediate aims belong to the material order, aim also at those religious and moral objectives that we have indicated at the beginning of this chapter. We may now examine what practical relations can exist between such works

and the Church and Catholic Action. We shall understand this the better if we once more point out what the differences are between Catholic Action and the works under discussion.

The Differences

1. As to the end. The proper end of Catholic Action is the advent of the reign of Christ—a religious end (cf. Chapter II). Social-economic works, on the other hand, have as proper and direct aim the material well-being of their associates—an economic aim, however fully it be subordinate to higher aims of a religious and moral order, such as the spiritual improvement of the associates, the realisation of the principles of Christian justice, and so the advent of the Reign of Christ. But these higher aims, which for Catholic Action are direct, for social-economic works are only indirect, >., are sought and realised by way of other specific aims.

2. Hence the object, and their programme of action, are both different. We know that the objective of Catholic Action is universal—to restore all things in Christ; to assist the Hierarchy in every apostolic need. Social-economic works have but a partial objective, a programme limited to what concerns the welfare of their proper associates and the safeguard of their legitimate interests.

3. Different, too, is their subject. That of Catholic Action is universal: all Catholics are called upon to fight under its banner; all, whatsoever be their profession or social condition. But into the social-economic organisations those alone enter who belong to some definite category or profession, and who consequently need to promote or safeguard their own economic interests.

4. Finally, we discern differences also in their organisational forms. Even should social-economic works be united in national federations, they do not possess that unitary and hierarchic form which belongs to Catholic Action, and proceeds from the fact that Catholic Action is subordinated to and co-ordinated with the Hierarchy (cf. Chapter IV). As a matter of fact, and we emphasise this, social-economic works have a quite peculiar relationship of dependence in regard to the Hierarchy. Let us then see how they do stand in regard to the Hierarchy before seeing what their relations are with Catholic Action, for the latter are subordinate to the former.

Their Relationship with the Hierarchy

I. These have been clearly defined by the Holy See. Leo XIII (*Graves de Communi*) recalls to the mind of the directors of such works that they “owe obedience to the authority of the Bishops.” We have already reported the mind of Pius X, as seen in his *Ferma Proposito*: such works “cannot in any way conceive themselves to be independent of the advice and high direction of ecclesiastical authority,” even though “a reasonable liberty” must be left to them, so that “the responsibility of their actions remains their own, especially in temporal and economic affairs.” Benedict XV (Letter to the Bishops of Venetia, June 14, 1920) wrote that the Unions of Labour—local organisations of the Catholic social-economic movement—* can be of the highest utility, provided they always draw their inspiration from Catholic principles, and, in what regards religion, doctrine and morals, they exhibit obedience towards ecclesiastical authorities.” Finally, Pius XI (to Cardinal Segura) asserted that

“ecclesiastical authority cannot disinterest itself from social-economic organisations, but it must cause these too to experience its beneficent influence, and lead them to draw their inspiration from Christian principles and the teaching of the Church. Meanwhile these organisations, in what regards purely economic interests, have sole responsibility for their actions and enterprises.”

2. From these pontifical instructions and others already referred to, we can deduce the following principles :

(a) Catholic social-economic works do not depend directly on the Church, and therefore act under their own responsibility in matters purely economic, technical, and administrative ; but

(b) they do depend indirectly from the Church, *i.e.* in religious and moral matters, which are inevitably and widely connected with matters economic ; and therefore

(r) Ecclesiastical Authority can and must protest should the responsible directors offend in thought or act against the principles of religion and the rules of Christian morals ; and, in case of disobedience, they can prohibit Catholics from taking part in such works.

Relations with Catholic Action

i. We can now easily understand the ‘hierarchic’ relations, so to call them, that Catholic Action has with social-economic works. And, indeed, these too are clearly defined in pontifical documents. Benedict XV, conceding autonomy in the sense we have described to the new economic or *syndical* organisation that Italian Catholics created immediately after the war, declared that “the directors of Catholic Action must none the less recognise as obligatory the high duty of continuing their study and elaboration of their programme, by means of which they most constantly inspire any future activity of those organisations.” And on the same

occasion the Pope arranged that within Catholic Action a social-economic secretariate should be created, "which, assisted by an authoritative and competent Commission, should devote itself with special care to the study and solution of social problems,* and that all * economic groups ' should adhere to this secretariate, without, however, depending from it " (Letter of the Cardinal Secretary of State to the President of the Directive Committee of Italian Catholic Action, September 25, 1919).

2. The reigning Pontiff has again confirmed this decision of his predecessor, and not only in regard to Italian Catholic Action. In his often-quoted letter to Cardinal Segura he wrote :

" Associations that inspire their activity from the religious and moral programme of Catholic Action, but deploy their works directly in the economic and professional fields, alone possess responsibility for their enterprises and acts for what concerns purely economic interests, while for the religious and moral part they depend on Catholic Action, to whom they must sene as means of Christian apostolate." And in the same letter he wrote : " Catholic Action, while it profits from the fruits that the economic associations can provide, must not fail to place its own fostering aid at their disposal, maintaining a mutual goodwill, and cordial understanding, and promoting mutual co-operation, with that great advantage to the Church and human society that can easily be imagined." (See also the Letter to Cardinal Bertram, quoted by us in the preceding chapter. When Italian Catholic Action was rearranged in 1923, the Catholic Institute of Social Activities succeeded the Secretariate above mentioned ; the social-economic undertakings continued to adhere to it.) Finally, in his Letter to the Bishops of the Argentine, he wrote : " All the associations which, conforming their states and aims to *the precepts of religion and* the rules peculiar to Catholic Action, must tend to help their associates in the vinous economic

problems and the practice of their respective professions. They must in what refers to Catholic Action subordinate themselves thereto, by collaborating in the Christian apostolate. But for what refers uniquely to economic problems, the associations follow their own lines of action, and for these they alone must be responsible."

3. From these papal instructions we can conclude:

(a) Social-economic works, having an immediately material end, do not form part of official Catholic Action.

(b) Since these works aim indirectly at moral objectives and Christian apostolate, they can be considered as belonging to Catholic Action in the wide sense.

(c) *Though distinct from, they are not separate* from official Catholic Action ; they are in reality means—sometimes necessary and most efficacious—of which Catholic Action must make use for its universal aims of social Christianisation.

(d) Such works have a relationship of dependence in regard of Catholic Action only in their religious and moral side ; for the rest, they are autonomous.

(e) Between them and Catholic Action there must be mutual goodwill and cordial understanding.

(f) Such relationships of dependence and mutual co-operation can be much facilitated by the adhesion of the above-mentioned works to Catholic Action.

4. Ecclesiastical authority is judge of the suitability and utility of such adhesion. Naturally, the conditions demanded are that such works be, both as to programme and method of action, truly inspired by Christian principles, and apt accordingly to fulfil the end we have mentioned. Even when they do adhere to Catholic Action they retain their autonomy in the technical field. This is why they cannot be considered as works *belonging* to Catholic Action, since they do not enter into its official framework.

Mutual Co-operation

A word on the special relationship created by mutual co-operation. It is most important.

1. First let us see what helps Catholic Action can, and as a matter of fact should, provide for social-economic works. The principal ones are as follows :

(a) The promotion of such works where they do not exist but would be useful for the aims of Catholic Action ; to favour their constitution and development. Even in this case, they must be allowed that just autonomy of which we spoke.

(b) Assistance, lest in the formation of their programme or in the fervour of their work they deviate from the principles of the faith or the rules of morality. With this object, Catholic Action can

(c) study, formulate and defend the principles of Christian doctrine which regulate Catholic activity on the social terrain, and from which social-economic works must constantly draw their inspiration.

(d) have care for the religious, moral, and cultural preparation of their directors, on whom as a rule the upshot of the whole movement depends ;

(e) collaborate in the religious and moral assistance of the members, so that their material improvement be never dissociated from their spiritual advancement.

2. Social-economic works must on their side collaborate in the mission of Catholic Action, and, with this in view, they should, specially—

(a) Accept the assistance and direction that Catholic Action, as representative of the Hierarchy, offers them in religious and moral matters.

(b) Have care for the religious and moral uplifting of their own members, accepting here, too, the co-operation of Catholic Action, and remembering what Leo XIII wrote in *Rerum Novarum*—“the true and radical remedy can come nowhence but from religion ” ; and, that without the practice of the

Christian virtues, "the wise 'regulations' reputed to be so efficacious, will prove broken reeds in the hour of need."

(c) Contribute to the good issue of the general initiatives of Catholic Action, which are set forward for the good of all Catholics and with the co-operation of all. And in every case to co-ordinate their own activities with those of Catholic Action itself, which, by the disposition of the Holy See, is charged with "making the best of and directing towards the apostolate any and every work and association" (to Cardinal Bertram).

(d) To bring it about that their best-formed associates should give in their names to the Catholic Action associations; and that Catholic Action itself be in every way known and appreciated by all, as the *alma mater* of all the associations or collective activities of Catholics (cf. Chapter VIII, on Catholic Action and Parties).

AN EXHORTATION OF PIUS XI

As seal not only on this chapter, but on this entire treatise, we feel it fitting to transcribe the cordial exhortation that Pius XI addressed to the Catholic clergy and laity towards the end of his *Quadragesimo Anno*, an Encyclical devoted, as is well known, to the restoration of the social order according to the rules of the law of the Gospel. Having joined in congratulating the Episcopate of the whole world upon the work of apostolate which everywhere is developing so fervently, the august Pontiff writes :

"To you, then, let the merited praises be given, and together with you, to all whom, whether clergy or laity, we daily see with joy to be your companions and strong co-operators in that magnificent work. We speak of our dear sons, members of Catholic Action, who with special zeal are devoting themselves along with Us to the social question, in so far as it regards the Church and, by the selfsame divine institution, enters into her competency. We exhort them all, most warmly, in the Lord, to spare themselves no labour nor

to allow themselves to be conquered by any difficulty, but to increase day by day in zeal and vigour. Hard indeed is the task that we set before them, and well we know that from this side and that, whether among the higher social classes or the lower, very many difficulties and obstacles present themselves for you to overcome ; but do not, for that, lose heart, nor allow yourselves in any way to be distracted from your resolution. To face up to a hard fight is the proper work of Christians ; to sustain grave labours belongs properly to those who, like good soldiers of Jesus Christ, follow Him the more closely."

In this exhortation of the Pope's we hear the very echo of the resolute words of Paul : " Work like a good soldier of Jesus Christ " (II Tim. ii. 3). And those words might be the very motto of Catholic Action.