

The Papal Church a Political Machine



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The late William Arthur, in his book, "The Pope, the Kings and the People," tells us that when he was in Rome he happened to say in company: "I began the study of this subject as a religious question, but . . ." He got no further, for a resident diplomatist broke in: "Yes, but—you find it is all politics, and the further you get into it the more purely political will you find it." The diplomatist spoke the truth. So political is the Church that its religious aspect is a negligible quantity. In the Vatican the religious aspect of any question is little thought of. The officials of the Church there are not interested in true religion. No question, no problem is ever considered there on its religious side, but only on its political. **The only concern of the Church officials is to increase the power of the Church, so as to bring gain to itself.** It wants to get men into its grasp so as to advance its own selfish ends.

In Italy, previous to the overthrow of the Pope's temporal power, people everywhere during long centuries were terrorized by the priest when they were dying, into leaving money to the Church for the poor and for masses to be said for the purpose of getting their souls out of Purgatory. This money accumulated, and accumulated until it amounted to a tremendous sum. After the Union of Italy, when the power of the Church was broken, the Church began to use this money for political purposes. That is to say, it would give tens of thousands of people in cities and towns a small sum monthly in order to have a hold upon them, enabling the Church to use them against the Italian Government in the interests of its own political ends.

To put an end to this the "Legge delle Opere Pie" was passed in 1890, which took all this money from the Church. Fortunately the Church had invested it in real property, so that the transfer of the money left in trust for the poor was easily effected. But in spite of this and of other laws, passed by the Italian Legislature, the political work of the Church goes on. That is the be-all and the end-all of its existence. And, of course, the saddest feature of it is that all the political intriguing of the Church is done under the cloak of religion.

The Vatican Professes Not to Acknowledge the Kingdom of Italy.

Pope Pius IX issued his *non-expedit*, forbidding "the faithful" to recognize the King of the Kingdom of Italy, forbidding them to go to the poll, or to take any part in political affairs. In harmony with this, neither he nor his successors ever call the Sovereign "King of Italy," but "King of Sardinia." The popes refuse the subsidy allowed them by the Italian Exchequer, and decline to be recognized in any way as Italian subjects.

But the Church in this matter, as in so many others, says one thing and does another. Before elections **"the faithful" are instructed by the priests to vote, are urged to vote, are directed how to vote, are menaced if they did not vote as directed.** All this is done in private; not publicly, or they would be liable to fine and imprisonment were they shown to influence a voter unduly. Not only Catholics but priests go to the roll. The Church brings all its influence to bear on the Clerical party to vote for its own candidates, men unpatriotic enough to pledge themselves to advance **the interests of the Church, which, of course, are diametrically opposed to those of the country.** When the election is over, the usual denials take place. The Pope says: "I sanction the recognition of the Kingdom of Italy! I forsake the glorious traditions of the Church! Impossible." And the Vatican organs publish similar denials and official instructions to "the faithful" not to vote.

Anything is Lawful if it Advances the Interests of Holy Mother Church

I shall quote a few sentences from Signor Ferdinando Martini, a late Governor of Eritrea. He says: "Is it exercising legitimate priestly influence to deceive the simple-minded peasant by attributing opinions to a candidate which are not his? In other words, is it legitimate to lie? **Is it legitimate for priests to threaten the poor people with eternal punishment if they do not vote for this or for that candidate?** Is it exercising legitimate priestly influence to secure votes by distributing freely bank notes? Christianity, morality and the law say NO. Yet these, and none other, were the means used in the exercise of priestly influence in the provinces." 'And yet," Signor Martini adds, "The Clerical said, we are the instruments of Providence! With those who thus speak I will not attempt to contend, for it repels me to mix up Providence with illicit dealings of Clerical elections. It seems to me that to give to the people the spectacle of priests who are liars, corrupt, and corrupters of the soul, and who make merchandise of the conscience, is sufficient to kill faith and religion."