

# philippine studies

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## **The Moral Obligation of Voting by Titus Cranny, S. A.**

Review Author: Gerald W. Healy

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people in China thought, a betrayal of his cultural heritage. By entering the Church he found that he lost nothing of what he had, but that he had gained new treasures; that by being a Catholic he could be totally Catholic, totally Chinese, totally himself. One is reminded of St. Justin, the Philosopher and Martyr, in his apology to the Roman Emperor: "Everything true that has ever been said is ours." For the Word is "the true light which enlightens every man who comes into this world," and whatever of truth there is in any philosophy or religion, whether of the ancient Greek, or Chinese or Indian philosophers, must necessarily have come from the Source of All Truth.

This book traces the steps of this spiritual journey, to the depths of unhappiness and dissatisfaction in the early 1930's, when he was at the most successful (from a material point of view) period of his life, through the beginning of the war, his readings, his chance encounter in the home of a Catholic friend with a pamphlet on the Little Flower, St. Therese of Lisieux, through the trials and dangers of the war, his arrest by the Japanese, his escape to China, the conversion of many members of his family and of friends, to his ambassadorship to the Vicar of Christ. It is an intimate story, sometimes as poignant in his pouring out of his heart in love and gratitude to God as some passages of the Confessions of St. Augustine. For in the Church he has found himself in the one truly universal synthesis of man's cultural heritage. He was looking for a universal culture. He found that Catholic means universal. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His justice and all these things will be added to you."

DANIEL CLIFFORD

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THE MORAL OBLIGATION OF VOTING. By Titus Cranny, S. A. Catholic University, Washington, D.C. 1952. Pp. xxvii-155. \$2.00.

In an age when the Kremlin and the White House, the Wall Street Banker and the common Tao, the Holy Father and the lowly Cleric, wait anxiously for the votes to be counted in Italy or England, in Germany, Japan or the Philippines, it was fitting that the moral obligation of voting be given its meed of investigation by a student of Catholic Social Thought. The era of Democracy with its suffrage has also been, most unfortunately, the era of Communism and of atomic warfare. Against the urgency of this background the author has given us a very readable thesis which will be useful for the scholar or any student of political and social affairs, and of interest even for the ordinary reader because of its many "quotable quotes" culled from the writings of the Catholic Hierarchy through-

out the world. The thesis is a proof of the awareness of the Hierarchy and its contact with the crucial problems of the day.

The author's historical treatment of the nature and concept of voting will give courage to faint hearts that may see in the evils of the recent Philippine campaign a permanent obstacle to the growth of democracy. Rather than a permanent obstacle these phenomena will be seen as growing pains through which other countries have passed successfully and arrived at political maturity. Since the Philippines is the "Show-Case of Democracy" in the Orient with the whole world looking in "through the glass," these evils here take on a magnitude that they never enjoyed when perpetrated before the days of newsreels and television and press-conferences. The ever present threat of Communism makes the free world most anxious to have this youthful Democracy reach full political maturity over night. Reading the author's brief history of the franchise in the United States we can be more sympathetic with the evils still current in Philippine campaigns. We can not condone those evils but comparing them with those of the corresponding period in American history we can say that the Philippine experience does not suffer too badly by comparison. But we must admit that the problems of the day demand that the Nation mature quickly if it is to survive, somewhat as a youth suddenly put into uniform and plunged into war must sacrifice the luxury of adolescence and "grow up over night" or run the risk of losing his life. The current awareness of the moral problem in voting, the healthy dissatisfaction with economic conditions manifested in campaign speeches, the growing interest in social justice, the voice of the Hierarchy above the din of partisan politics, all augur well for the future of the Philippines.

The author of *The Moral Obligation of Voting* holds the view that the elective franchise is not among the natural rights of the individual, but is a right created by the State for a civil purpose. But that even if considered as a privilege, as in the opinion of some, then it is a privilege which, when accepted, becomes obligatory, so that a person is not free to use it or not. "Voting is a political right which men possess in a republican form of government; it is also a political duty for which they are morally responsible."

The common objections of the man in the street are that "one vote doesn't matter" and, "this election is not important." They are well answered by the author. Archbishop McNicholas, the late prelate of Cincinnati, is aptly quoted to show that "those who habitually vote and those who habitually refrain from voting cannot but exercise an influence for good or evil on the community." And again: "Whether or not elections seem important, the principle of voting habitually is important. Only a conscientious judgment, seriously formed, can justify the voter in remaining away from the

polls." Cardinal Leinart, Bishop of Lille, in the elections of 1951 was very outspoken on this point: "To vote is a serious obligation, abstention from which would be a sin. Each person has one vote. If he does not express his wishes by casting his ballot, it is equivalent to giving an extra vote to the opposition. One does not escape his responsibilities as a citizen by not voting, he increases them." Cardinal Salotti, in the Italian elections of 1946, stressed the importance of even one vote: "Majorities can be won or lost by a few votes only. Enemies of God and the Church will go to the polls in a compact mass—why should Catholics do otherwise? One does not favor the humble or the poor by staying at home on election day." Cardinal Verdier of Paris declared that it was every citizen's duty to vote and his vote was his "normal means of contributing to good government. If a citizen votes wisely, he will usually be able to check evil, and will, at times, effect real good. In any event, he will always add prestige to a good cause by increasing the number of votes in its favor." Cardinal Griffin of England warned that the number of those who think that only one vote doesn't matter is usually so great that the results of the election could have been altered by their votes.

These are only a few of the many quotes the author has chosen to illustrate the moral doctrine of the Church in this matter. The Philippine Hierarchy is also quoted to show the lofty character demanded in those who present themselves for public office. And, of course, the Holy See, and especially Pope Pius XII, is amply quoted as the fountainhead of the Church's doctrine on this crucial problem.

Tradition and the leading moralists are investigated to show the foundations on which this obligation rests. The Pope and the Cardinals and Bishops, as cited above, were usually speaking in times of great national stress; the theologians look at the obligation in itself apart from special circumstances. The author concludes from his study of the theologians that the obligation to vote is a serious one but admits of parvity of matter so that in certain circumstances it would be a venial sin to abstain from voting without a sufficient reason, in other circumstances a mortal sin. However, the author holds for the "accumulation of the matter" so that not to vote at all for a long time would be a serious sin.

The virtue which commands us to vote is the virtue of patriotism. And, since one virtue may command another as St. Thomas declares, legal justice commands us to exercise the virtue of patriotism for the common good and to vote. This seems to be the best position to hold, rejecting the opinions that the obligation comes from commutative justice or merely from charity.

Excusing causes are handled adequately. The clergy are shown to have an obligation to speak out, in certain circumstances, on the

moral issues at stake, and also to vote themselves because of their special influence by good example. The problem of woman suffrage is treated and Pope Pius XII emerges as the modern champion of the right and obligation of women to vote. The consequences of the obligation to vote, knowledge of the issues at stake and of the candidates are demonstrated from many statements of the hierarchy, from secular writers, and from reason itself.

As indicated, the author has drawn liberally from writings of the Hierarchy and Catholic Theologians. But, as the bibliography clearly shows, he has not omitted the writings of leading laymen in the field of politics and ethics. From such sources emerges a well balanced study.

GERALD W. HEALY

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN KNOWING. A Text for College Students. By Joseph D. Hassett, S.J., Robert A. Mitchell, S.J., J. Donald Monan, S.J. The Newman Press, Westminster, Maryland. 1953. Pp. viii-173. \$3.00.

*Human* is the key word in this text's title. Examining the historically attempted approaches to Epistemology, the Authors show how skepticism, idealism and materialistic sensism wholly or partially deny the facts of human experience and the nature of man himself, thereby posing false problems of human knowledge and placing their defenders in positions impossible to maintain. The Authors hold that the fact of error poses an epistemological problem which admits of solution; the basic fact of sense and intellectual knowledge, however, can only be admitted, and indeed *must* be admitted under penalty of mediate or immediate preclusion of all problems. The correct approach to human knowing is realistic. It begins with the admission of knowing as a fact, and proceeds, not to demonstrate it, but to analyze it in conscious reflection. Such analysis reveals the content of the act of judgment to be reality present to the intellect and determining the intellect's assent, when given, by its own objective evidence. Reality, however, is manifold, and many too are the processes by which it is known. Certain analytic or self-evident judgments, particularly that of non-contradiction, are basic principles in the acquisition of further organized knowledge. The metaphysical certitude man has of these principles is not always attainable in other judgments: man "can be certain, more or less." Proximate and particular criteria are needed to evaluate testimony, history, statistics, the convergence of probabilities and practical judgments. "Sometimes you have to reason," i.e. to use deductive or inductive thought-processes, but these processes are valid, being based upon the principles of non-contradiction and