

JOAN OF ARC IN THE FRAMEWORK OF HISTORY

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Orleans and the victory of Joan of Arc, Reims and the only coronation that the stone kings over the doorway of the Cathedral of the Angels have ever witnessed, Rouen and the stake: these are the three verses of a single poem which proclaim the undeniably universal character of her political mission. But it is at Reims, under the spell of those Gothic porches crowned with gables which Rodin saw as flames rising towards the great Rose Window of the Resurrection, that the mystery of Joan, silencing the vain noises of our century, makes us hear the message of national revival and peace among the nations, thereby proclaiming a wisdom which still remains today master of our destinies.

This is the thought which comes to mind when with the saint in Reims we penetrate that facade to the language of eternity and enter that noble building where in 1429 a whole generation of Frenchmen shouted 'Noel' at the sight of the head of their nation clothed by the Church in the vestments of divine royalty. But they were also celebrating by their acclamations without all realising the importance of it, an event of international significance, the consequences of which a few contemporaries already perceived. As we look back through time, reckoning the more long-term effects of Joan of Arc's work on the fate of Europe and, as a result, beyond the limits of the West, shall we not be forced, we of the twentieth century, to give her true dimensions and her place, her very great place, in the course of history?

And that is not all. When in fact the event was neither foreseen, nor even thinkable, before the deliverance of Orleans, we have not the right to insert it in an historical understanding conceived today in the perspective of human evolutionism. The event was so sudden, its consequence so miraculous and its results so extensive that, not being able to find their *raison d'être* in any chain of human causes, or in any natural predisposition of society whatever, we can only recognise in it the intervention of God, who, says Bossuet, '*deals these great blows, the counter-effects of which are so far-reaching.*'

Thus appears in its full reality the Christian conception of history, on which the epic of the Maid places the seal of her victories, of her martyrdom and the light of her inspired genius, which defies the intricacies of rational criticism and the ponderous deductions of historical method. Her epic is situated on the line of the divine plan for the world; she takes her place in the succession of key events which since the coming of Christ stand out as landmarks along the road of the nations and of the history of the church, more especially in our own country where already had been produced two essential elements of the Christian world which we cannot pass over in silence.

At the moment when Clovis received baptism, all the princes sitting on the thrones of the East and of the West, whether Romans, Greeks or Barbarians were Arians or pagans. Everyone of them! A fact which made Bossuet remark, '*Alone amongst all the princes of the world he upheld the Catholic faith, and deserved the title of "Most Christian" given also to his successors.*' The baptising of the Frankish monarchy had the immense effect of making of it, so contemporary witnesses affirm, the one hope of the Church crippled by heresy and conversely, of establishing the authority of the Church within the Catholic states that would become the regime of medieval Europe. Henceforward the Church

would find for further progress the support of kings and princes. This is the first event which provided Christendom with a spring-board.

The second was the foundation of the Papal State by Pepin the Short, of which Admiral Auphan spoke earlier, which led to the flowering of Christendom with St. Henry II of Germany, St. Edward the Confessor, St. Stephen of Hungary, St. Ferdinand of Castille, and the angelic figure of St. Louis the Crusader King.

It was two hundred years later that Joan of Arc appeared. What was the reason for her eruption into the world on this soil of France, in the very heart of this same kingdom which had been the instrument of the two greatest events in the history of the west?

Orleans

If one could ask those who hold evolutionist theories for an objective explanation of the general trend which orientates nations towards ends which are opposed to Christian society, they would have to explain, not in terms of preconceived progressivist notions, but in terms of its real movement, the drift which above all from 1350 to 1453 engendered the disappearance of Christendom. What matters here is not the collapse of the temporal structures of the Middle Ages but the spiritual decadence and the results which this produced. The chief link binding together Christendom was baptism, but Christendom was not the Church in the sense the Hierarchy was; Christendom was constituted in its being by the Church. Its sense of human unity which it held in common with the times of antiquity had over the latter, the advantage of a clearer idea of the natural law. But over and above the races and kingdoms, it formed the community of spiritual and temporal interests of Christian peoples. It anticipated the collectivists and the supra-nationalists of today, and with more noble intentions, and it thought of itself as the Christian nation spread out over the lands of the baptised where reigned the princes in the same spirit of the cross and of eternal salvation. Now, as Christendom disappeared, a political and social regression, pregnant with catastrophes, began to operate under the influence of various factors, but above all spiritual ones. Let us summarise them as did a monk who had prophetic intelligence: Engelbert of Adgemont. In the first place spirit became detached from faith. Not that the latter was already attacked but for the moment a cleft appeared which would in due course become enlarged, which was the rebellion of intelligence against revelation. The most representative protagonist of this separation was William of Ockham, the Irish monk, and a professor at Oxford, whose fame at that time rang throughout the four corners of Christendom. With *nominalism* he created a gulf between the data of reason and the certainties of revelation, which would no longer, according to him, have any justification except in faith alone. Two centuries later Luther would proclaim himself a follower of Ockham. But already there were many amongst the clergy, at the very heart of the universities, professing these agnostic and rationalist doctrines and spreading them, despite condemnation which struck also at the doctrines of Marsile of Padua who like Ockham had taken refuge at the court of Louis of Bavaria, at that time at war with the Pope.

The second factor springs straight from the first: the states broke away from the Holy See to which they were linked, some chiefly by fidelity like France, others by legal conventions. For example, in 1356 the Golden Bull secularised the notion of the Holy Roman Empire; at about the same time England betrayed the link of Vassalage which united her to Rome; in France the doctors and the lawyers secularised the notion of domestic politics. Going still further, for Marsile of Padua, much followed in intellectual circles, for this '*nascent genius of the Revolution*' as he has been called, popular authority imposes itself not only on the state but on the Church itself, which it finally absorbs into the public power. It foreshadows not only the schism of Henry VIII of England but also the civil constitution of the clergy and finally a synarchic integration of national churches.

From then on the third factor of dissolution intervenes. The kingdoms become detached from the single order which till then had grouped them within Christendom. The common ideal of the faith and of salvation makes way for goals which are strictly profane. A world begins to organise itself legally without God. Imperceptibly, the aims become economic; the kingdoms which become more and more conscious of their national peculiarities which exclude Christian unity, pursue political ends which are antagonistic to one another, being no longer dominated by the moderating power of Revelation. Revolutions and national wars begin which finally put Europe into the dramatic situation which Joan of Arc is going to unravel.

The crisis was in fact general, for the doctrines were made evident in the facts. No doubt factors of another order intervened in the changes which were going to be produced. After the period of well-being of the twelfth and thirteen centuries, the countryside was ravaged by war, and production failed to keep up with needs; with the monetary crisis the cost of living reached an inaccessible level; in the new business centres the fortunes of the *nouveaux riches* piled up alongside the newly impoverished who swelled the flood of poverty's victims. On all sides, in Flanders in England, in France, insurrections broke out, clamouring for wages which, in many cases, were little more than illusory. The Black Death had ravaged Europe, depopulating the towns and the villages by from 50 to 60 per cent, claiming 80,000 victims in Paris alone. In this disturbed society a terrible moral crisis arose; with a flourishing of illuminisms previously contained by the Church. Italy became torn by internal strife, with its republics in revolt against the Pope, whilst at the same time the assaults of Islam multiplied. The Hussites brought much bloodshed to central Europe and caused the first open rupture with Rome. And all this time the Hundred Years War was going on between France and England. Neither politicians, nor men of learning, neither artists, nor merchants, had any longer a serene vision of Christendom. Where formerly there had been a concept of community, there was now mere cosmopolitanism. The former unity made way for a trend towards unification, which already revealed cracks in the edifice.

Superimposed on the still surviving concepts of Empire and Crusade, there was already emerging the conception of another Christendom minus the Church. The haunting memory of a world-wide empire continued to inspire both sides and actions, but the ideal was no longer the primacy of God.

Another Europe was being prepared in which England was the most influential agent. Beneath dynastic motives the war which she waged against France, concealed great ambitions. She not only coveted the greater part of the French kingdom; her king had also designs on Bohemia and, right at the heart of the Mediterranean, on the kingdom of Naples. Her politics, more commercial than Christian, led her to spread her power as far as the Middle East where she concluded agreements with the Sultan. The English monarch dreamt of three capitals: London, Paris and Jerusalem.

The commercial links which the English monarch had forged with the German Hanseatic towns, the network of which stretched to the very limits of Europe, and also with Flanders explain to a large extent the attitude of the Dukes of Burgundy. A lust for royal power had seized them; the already current idea of nationalism threw them into alliance with the English against their own country, They had no aim other than the success of a political scheme to unite Burgundy with part of Champagne and Luxembourg, together with Flanders. Europe was crawling with covetous ambitions.

The Emperor Sigismund who secretly had his eye on the Kingdom of Arles, the Hanseatic Republics, Aragon and Genoa, made an agreement against France with the man whose victories, our defeats and our internal chaos had already designated as the future master of the New Europe under the title 'King of France and England'.

It was necessary, therefore, that France, the stronghold of Christendom should disappear. Already the Treaty of Troyes had erased it from the list of nations. This treaty recognised by the French, by both Parliament and the University, required for its final implementation only a final blow that would break all further resistance. Orleans would fall and everything would be over. And this point was actually reached on Saturday, May 7th, 1429:

Then suddenly the situation is reversed. The impressive political edifice collapses! In one moment the angelic saint has toppled it to the ground.

This was the miracle which saved France, and with her Europe, from a unification through violence which would have changed everything: the State, the structure and the very existence of many nations. If France had disappeared, what would have been the lot of the other countries to the north, of Italy, or Spain? What would have remained of that assortment of countries which eleven centuries of Christian influence had brought forth on our continent? And if we are here this evening, from whatever country we have come, with our own characteristics, our cultures and our legitimate national aspirations, all united in the traditions of the Faith, do we not owe all this to Joan of Arc?

For the miracle of Orleans has also saved us from a unification, which the future would later show would have meant raising up a new Europe against the Church of Rome. Contemporaries had already perceived the consequences. Gelu, Archbishop of Embrun, affirmed that Providence had prevented the overthrow of Christendom which would have been the consequence of an Anglo-Burgundian victory. Others who seem to have shared this appreciation of the significance of Orleans included the Secretary of Martin V in Rome, Robert Cybole at the process of Joan's rehabilitation, and Martin Berrayer who was a most perspicacious admirer of the posthumous mission of Joan. In 1857 an English bishop delivering the panegyric of the saint at Orleans exclaimed, *'Heroine of Orleans by freeing France from the domination of the king of England who was going to submit to heresy and to impose it upon his people, you have saved the faith of Clovis for France and for the peoples that France in defection would have dragged down with her.'*

'I have been sent by God' Joan said. The miracle of Orleans, the first verse of her poem, is the affirmation of the Christian sense of history in God's designs for humanity.

Reims

But if the miracle of Orleans has extended its temporal effects down through, the centuries to our own times, Reims stands outside time, and has therefore still greater significance. Reims is the divine thought illustrating victory. It has been said of Joan that she was the last and the most important representative of the Middle Ages. What a mistake! Or rather, what a fallacy, when on the contrary one should see her in the light of the future, at the end and also at the beginning of an historical cycle our own, telling us that if we still live by what she saved, we are perishing for what we have repelled of her message.

It is from Reims that the saint first comes to ask us the reason for a long revolution begun in her time, developed within the Church by means of the Reformation, and subsequently within the state in 1789, that same Revolution which has thrown society into confusion since 1917. Had she not in 1429 rebuked the outbursts of revolution and denounced its doctrines? Revolution at that time was oligarchic and involved princes and nobles; it became legal when state institutions recognised a foreign king; it was also intellectual. It involved the idolatry of falsehood on the part of the University men of the time who, professing to be legitimate representatives of the nation, were deterred neither by the most abject poverty nor by massacres from serving the demagogy of a cause which, they hoped would allow them to become its regents. Finally it was popular, in the uprisings whose dates

resounded from then on like anniversaries in advance. The 14th of July 1418 was the hobnail revolution entering Paris in triumph with John the Fearless, the demagogue duke, Ysabeau of Bavaria, the dissolute queen, and Cauchon the future bishop. What symbols! The 14th of July 1429 prefigured the feast of the Federation of the 14th of July 1790, and was a mockery of national union aroused against Charles VII and his 'witch' from which even the revolutionary sermon in Notre Dame Cathedral was not missing. On the 14th of July, 1430 it was to be Cauchon who, with a mandate from the university, would deliver into the hands of the English the saint of the fatherland - thus personifying the delivery of France to her enemies, both internal and external, by the Revolution.

But she conquered and had the king consecrated at Reims! Thus today she rises in judgement against our state atheism which has shaken nearly all the nations. To our world, undermined by its false civic values which have become dogmas, to our world shaken by violence, she bears witness to the Christian conception of politics extolled by Pius XI as grand politics. We recall the scene at Chinon when they tried to mislead her over the identity of the monarch, that is to say over the legitimate representative of sovereignty: *'It is you and no other,'* she said to Charles VII. Let us re-read her letter in which she said: *'If my lord of Burgundy and the others will not return to obedience, the king will make them do so'.* Thus was peaceful authority, unifying authority restored to its place! But human sovereignty is neither unconditional, nor unlimited. So on that morning of the 17th of July 1429 in the great body of the cathedral lit up by mourning torches, the supernatural authority of the Voices heard by Joan imposed on the nation the social kingship of our Lord Jesus Christ. The subordination of the whole of politics to the will of God is the one aspect of feudalism which the Church has retained. She has retained it because it represents the Christian tradition and is universally true.

It was at Chinon, that she asked the king to hand over his kingdom to God in the form of a contract of vassaldom, to God Who would return it to him as a faithful Suzerain, by means of the victory which she prophesied. By making Charles the lieutenant of Christ, she was following St. Paul in the Epistle to the Corinthians: *'The prince is the minister of God for good.'* Was she not recalling this to him by recommending him to treat with equal benevolence the requests of the rich and of the poor and to forget the subjects who stirred up divisions? No class war, nor partisan anarchy, but justice and liberty! How far this was from what the Popes have called the new law which we have made our gospel! Under the mask of popular sovereignty, the secularisation of sovereignty has engendered Caesarean formulas of government, the substitution of totalitarian legalism for legitimate freedom, and the absorption of private law into public law which made Lacordaire exclaim: *'It is freedom which is old and despotism which is new!'*

Joan of Arc, mistress of grand politics, and doctor of order and unity, realised this memorable prodigy in 1429. In our own day she stands as a prophetess of our destinies and she warns us that salvation is not to be found in a confused combination of contrary appetites, but in the affirmation of our religious and national faith which she awakened under the vaults of Reims. Had it not been for her we should have seen even as early as the fifteenth century the institution by force of an international order founded upon power and the primacy of the economy, in a political and religious framework from which Catholicism would soon - have been excluded, an international order comparable to the godless universalism towards which we are being dragged today.

A unification of the world, federating governments or else suppressing individual countries, is now being prepared under the concerted action of international money powers and the machinations of unknown sovereigns of secret societies. Forces which have neither faith nor fatherland abuse the aspirations of men, making a travesty of their desires for peace in a crusade which has neither cross nor eternal salvation. They indoctrinate men with a Credo which is simultaneously pacifist and aggressive, and provokes revolutions, wars and genocide in its ceaseless quest for a totalitarian paradise which, if it could be realised, would have all the characteristics of Christendom prostrate and

at the mercy of an Anti-Church presiding magisterially over the citizens of planned societies. The question is to know what side men will take. In the nations of the world it is possible to see a mixture of good and evil without inferring therefrom a universal hostility to God. But in the international sphere, neither hypocrisy, nor weakness can entirely conceal top level schemes for the establishment of an inverted theocracy. And the essential choice - to be for or against God - cannot be avoided. For as long as the ray of light falls on the golden stone in the hall of meditation in the United Nations building, symbolising the solar cult of a cosmic deity, one is forced to infer that international institutions are orientated against Jesus Christ.

At this point do we not again see Joan coming forth from her astonishing mystery bringing the answer to our problems, so similar to those which she had to tackle?

In her village she learned of medieval Christendom only what the ordinary people knew from common traditions. 'Religion' said Pius XII, '*formed with life an indissoluble whole and orientated the whole of human existence and the life of the nations towards God.*' It was this inherited ideal that her supernatural genius enlarged, reinforced and projected beyond the limits of time into international relationships. An inspired realist, she pointed to this great law of the divine order: the diversity, the complementarity, and the solidarity of peoples, which is presupposed in the first place by the existence of nations.

When she saved her country, it was first of all from a certain imperialism which violated this order willed by God, and made use of injustice and violence to subject a people. But in saving us she also saved Europe. She also reprovved, as her letter to the Hussites shows, this levelling of national values which Pius XII and, after him, Paul VI hold in such high esteem, those values whose disappearance in a so-called universal culture - or what is euphemistically described as 'cultural collaboration' - would lead only to a humanist religion. Joan would never have admitted that a nation, or nations, should perish to make way for this kind of subversion, that the nations should commit hari-kari on the altars of the humanist cosmic deity.

Joan of Arc is a model of Patriotism for all peoples, but she is no less for unity, and much more unequivocally for unity than is our generation.

No one in a civilised Christian country would deny the reality of the human community of men who realise that they have their beginning and end in God of whom, through Christ, they have become the adopted sons. But Joan projects this conception in the perspective of history and gives it political expression in terms of the universal Kingship of Jesus Christ. At least six times she implicitly or explicitly proclaimed it, saying that she was sent by '*Son droiturier Seigneur*' that is to say from Him from whom all laws proceed. But it was at Reims that the '*daughter of God*' bore her standard stamped with the effigy of Christ the King, and there, summing up her whole past and bearing witness to the future she signed with her right hand in her letter to the Duke of Burgundy the eternal truth: '*The King of Heaven is the King of all the World.*' That day the saint of the fatherland had made of the capital of the kings of France a throne associated with that of Rome for the proclamation of Christ's kingship.

What she brings to us therefore, are not just the institutions of a former age. They are essentially the principles of government and of peace, a *Doctrina Sacra* for the city, a wisdom of which Reims is the mirror. Will the West crumble today under the assault of forces aligned against it, the most frightening of which is its infidelity to God? Shall we not see Joan beaming from Reims the light of a message which, by another design of Providence, she was to seal with a Passion which makes her still more meaningful for our epoch?

Rouen

'You will have to be captured,' her voices repeated to her under the walls of Melun.

These are strange words, full of commanding significance! Her Passion at Rouen is not only the witness by martyrdom to the truth of her mission - it is also the necessary achievement of her political work. At Orleans and at Reims, by the God-given victory and divine teaching, the supernatural erupted into the courts of history. But how could she show with perfect proof the presence of the Church in these temporal affairs? If, as Bossuet says, *'There is no human power which in spite of itself does not serve designs other than its own,'* how can it be shown that there is no prince, nor state, nor art of government, nor legal science, nor economic value, nor indeed any power on earth which can equal the transcendent role of the Church for whom God makes history and who herself makes history for God? Such is the meaning of the Passion of Joan.

'You will have to be captured.' The trial at Rouen is the manifestation of the Church at the summit of the political drama which was shaking the West. One had witnessed the spectacle of the common people in anguish for the fate of France, throwing themselves to their knees before the shrine of Our Lady. Later one could see these people under the influence of grace, with a living faith on whose orthodoxy no shadow fell. But in spite of the end of the Great Schism, when as many as three popes reigned at the same time, there were still rumbles in one section of the clergy of a genuine revolution joined with political upheavals which placed the church in peril.

The heterodox doctrines which the end of the Middle Ages had seen proliferate, springing from conciliar theories, had sharpened discords, and excited passions. Secure in its privileges, and supporting the royal authority with little better grace than that of the Holy See, the University of Paris - like certain others in Germany - attempted to impose its own views on everyone. Having, as they thought, a monopoly of science, its theologians and its canonists determined to lead the church, broadcast the ideas of Marsile of Padua and Ockham. In 1407 there was a wave of anti-Roman feeling there. Anticipating in this respect certain theologians of our own time, the university claimed that Rome was in fact but one diocese among many. Hitching their wagon to the star of the Anglo-Burgundian party, the University sought, at the expense of innumerable contradictions, to unite what remained of a Christendom that had lost its spiritual superstructure with the cement of its own democracy, its internationalism and, under conciliar supremacy, to get together a bloc that would not question its intellectual dictatorship. In effect, this represented the dethroning and the rape of the Christian world. At the Council of Constance which opened in 1413, votes were taken by nation, as though in anticipation of the existence and the rights of national churches. Two theses were debated there: first the episcopal thesis which credited authority in the church to the assembly of bishops and prelates, and secondly the democratic thesis, which found authority residing in the assembly of the laity and clergy. Finally two canons were passed which decreed the subordination of the Pope to the Council.

But the stake at Rouen was still smoking when the Council of Basle opened in 1431. In the course of this Council which was to last sixteen years, one is able to measure the progress made in the art of revolutionising the Church of Jesus Christ by a handful of conspirators, who seemed fated always to be drawn from the banks of the Seine or those of the Rhine. The future Pope Pius II would remember the environment in which he found himself caught at the time of the Sixth Session: *'For us who were young,'* he said, *'who had only recently left our native countries, who had seen nothing, we accepted as truths all that was being said and we could not love Pope Eugenius when we saw that so many illustrious people judged him unworthy of the Pontificate. Deputies were there from the celebrated school of Paris, together with doctors from Cologne and other universities of Germany and all with one accord exalted the authority of the general Council.'*

From then on the sedition mongers were no longer embarrassed in carrying out their designs. They adopted afresh the inadmissible canons rejected by the Council of Constance on the ministerial authority of the Pope, making matters worse by spectacular acts of rebellion which succeeded one another right up to the end. They restored the procedure, having fully appreciated its revolutionary effectiveness of voting by nation. On the 14th of February 1432, fourteen bishops prelates and abbots followed by, or rather preceded by their doctors priests and girovagues, declared themselves ecumenical inviting the Hussites already condemned by their predecessors and by the Pope, to enter into dialogue, at the same time multiplying the difficulties for the Greek churches whose reunion with the Roman church was envisaged. Everything had to pass through Basle and not through Rome, all must swim with the revolutionary torrent: worship, indulgences, ecclesiastical administration, the powers of pontifical legates. A special Council seal, authenticating their acts, was fabricated to replace that of the Fishermen. And let the Pope not be emboldened in his resistance or else the thunderbolts of the Church of Basle, with the lightning of its theologians from Paris, Cologne and other places would fall on him. Eugenius IV, weakened by illness, blocked in Rome by hostile princes, seeking to avoid the worst, tried to come to terms with the rebels but not with the revolution. Charles VII and the Emperor invited them to calm down. But they reacted all the more violently: *they were the Church: The Holy Spirit who had brought them together, they dared to affirm, could not be a spirit of Schism.*¹ They and they alone, must drive out Schism, which was not at Basle but at Rome! And they make their point plain for all to see. At the 38th Session they decreed the Pope deposed and in his place they elected, in a ballroom transformed for the conclave, a layman, Amadeus VI of Savoy, drawn from his castle of Ripaille, whose name was to become more common than that of Felix V with which he inaugurated his carnival reign.

Thus ended the Council of Basle. If it is true that Joan preserved the greater part of Europe from heresy, this long term effect must not hide from us the more immediate consequence of her mission. The king which she had made, Charles VII, challenged the false Pope and obtained his resignation, he broke the pride of the University by submitting it to the common jurisdiction of Parliament and, at the true Council of Florence, he had proclaimed the fidelity of the King of France to the true '*Pope of Rome*'. If France had succumbed, what would have then become of the church? Leo XIII therefore had serious reasons for affirming that God had chosen Joan '*to assert the liberty and the glory of the religion whose interests were threatened.*'

Joan had thus won her last victory and this time, over the men of Basle. God went so far as to confront her with these men who dared to set themselves up as her judges. And yet it is she who judged them. At Rouen there had been the Beauperes, the Midys, the Courcelles, and the Erads, all experts in revolution and members of the famous council called by Eugenius IV the '*brigandage of Basle*', under the leadership of a bishop who for a long time had had a hand in risings and treasons: Pierre Cauchon, Bishop of Beauvais. Was not this trial conducted by these judges necessary to ring from the heart of the saint the ardent retorts which later won the admiration of the theologians concerned with her rehabilitation, retorts which still ring down the centuries like a great lesson in ecclesiology determining all Christian politics?

The centre and the corner stone of her vision of the Church in the world was Christ's humanity. But not an ethereal Christ setting back to back, as did modernism, the Christ of History and the Christ of Faith, and as humanitarian messianism does today! But, as she herself said the actual person of God made Man. Her life in union with God, of which we cannot measure the intensity, impels her to make this response full of charm and truth: '*I shall rely on no man in the world, save our Lord*'. She feels this invisible human presence near her, at the centre of everything in this life, joining together all the social implications of the Incarnation in a society which is none other than the Mystical Body deriving

¹ That claim has a faintly familiar ring to it - does it not? (Editor *Apropos*)

its unity, its monarchic government, and its indivisibility from the Person of Jesus Christ. *'It is my opinion,'* she said to them: *'that our Lord and the Church are one. Why the difficulty?'*

And that is where she had them. Their distinction between the Church Triumphant and the Church Militant was not simply a trap laid to take her faith by surprise: these ecclesiastics who wallowed in a vision of a new Europe raised on our ruination with a new Church in which the Pope would be no more than the Prime Minister, were at Rouen obsessed by the central notion of their politico-religious system. As the judges of the rehabilitation remarked, their Church Militant consisted of themselves. When by an equivocal piece of fraud they enjoined her to obey the Church Militant, Joan convicted them at one fell swoop by hurling in their face: *'Yes, having first served our Lord!'*

This saying, which time and again has been quoted as a sugary piece of piety, was addressed to clerics, and repeated three times to clerics alone. To these people, gluttons for heresy, purveyors of democratic pap, cloaking their self-righteous rebellion under a veil of perverted zeal, pretending to see schism in her fidelity, Joan resolutely presented the supernatural order which they found so embarrassing. And when in their pride, they reached the point of summoning her to renounce her Voices, Joan, who had never recanted, sends them smartly back to their rationalism with an answer of an astonishing theological exactness, which confounding her foes, threw light on their own rebellion but safeguarded the legitimate freedom of the Christian behind the sole authority of the Church. She said to them: *'They do not command me to disobey the Church. Our Lord is first served.'*

To serve first our Lord through His Vicar on earth is precisely what they refused to do. It was this which separated them from the Church. The Grand Inquisitor Brehal underlined in his summing up their scorn for the Apostolic See, a scorn, he said, which went as far as to attack the Roman Church and did not stop short of heresy. They required and commanded obedience to the Church, but to an hierarchic Church minus the Pope, and that under pain of death. Let us take a look at these despots at the cemetery of Saint-Ouen perched on their platform. Alongside the cart wagon with its load of faggots and the executioner with a torch in his hand, they deliver to Joan what they call a charitable exaltation - a nice word for torturers! But when she appeals to the Holy See, they dismiss the Pope with a gesture: he is too far away. A happy violation of right, we might say, which allowed us to hear that proud retort: *'I hold that we must obey the Pope who is in Rome. I believe in the Lord Pope of Rome to whom, and to God first served, I entrust myself.'*

This is the third and last time. At such a turning point of history this political trial could not but implicate the Church. Her entire epic struggle has the nobility of a crusade for the Church, giving those in revolt against Peter an immortal lesson in fidelity, and all the glory both to the Saint and to France for having thus associated the honour of the fatherland with that of the Apostolic See. She has shown us the way forward for the nations illuminated by the Church under the universal rule of Christ. At the end her work is completed in the supreme sacrifice. In vain did she appeal to the supreme Pontiff: *'Lead me before the Pope.'* Her cry was stifled by men; from now on her only conversation will be with Christ whose name was the last word she spoke on earth.

A great political saint for our time

The Pope rehabilitated her; the Pope beatified her; the Pope raised her to the altars. Without the Holy See, neither her sanctity nor her civic heroism would have received the universal tribute of veneration of which she is the object. And history was slow enough in doing her justice, for nearly five hundred years elapsed before her canonisation.

To Saint Pius X came the privilege of bringing to its conclusion the beatification asked of Leo XIII by more than 800 letters from cardinals, archbishops, bishops, abbots and superiors of religious orders throughout the whole world. Canonised by Benedict XV, Joan no longer belonged only to France.

Struck by the dimensions of her drama, the world took possession of her as a being superior to common humanity, leaving behind her a trail of light and still living in our midst in her work which seizes the imagination in our time as she herself had taken possession of her century,

At the beginning of modern times, it was she who repaired the disasters of the 100 years war and the disorders within the Church, it was she who saved the Catholic thought of the Latin world, it was she who brought help to Rome, erected a rampart against Luther and incarnated forever our highest and most representative values, it was she who preserved Europe and the genius of its several nations, a Europe that has not been consistently faithful to her message. Does not this mean that she is present in our time? Does not this persuade us that without her we should not be what we are and that history emptied of her divine story would be meaningless?

But there is even more to it than this. Can it be that, after her victory, after so long a trial as was hers, and after her constancy, the number and pertinency of her replies shall not be seen by grace from on high as witness to the fact that she was a prophet sent by God?

The mystery of the Maid that certain people have tried to discover, as well as being the mystery of France, is no less a mystery of the Church which is constantly revealed with ever greater clarity. Why then should five centuries of waiting have been needed for her light to shine once more on our times and on our countries?

After the permanence of the act, we now see unfolding still more impressively the continuity of grace and the design of God. At the very moment when all was lost, He sent her to us. Once again, now that we are confronted with the influence of a subversion which has been developing its effects for about seventy years, and imperils the very existence of civilised life, Joan reappears; but this time on the altars. Let us recall the final years of the last century: militant laicism more bellicose than ever, the rise of class wars and communism, an international order that deliberately ignored Rome, and was pregnant with hellish wars, and a totalitarian perspective of universalism without God; while under the influence of secret societies we witnessed the revival of ancient errors more malignant than ever under the names of modernism and progressivism. Then, in the face of this danger, fulfilling the words of Cardinal Parrochi: *'A day will come when she will enter the porch of St. Peters at Rome wearing helmet and breastplate,'* we see her rising once more, the mystical flower and warrior Maid to say to us: *'I love the Church and I want with all my power to sustain her for the Christian faith.'*

An American bishop, Monsignor Wright, said last year at Orleans: *'If it is true that the Church has justified Joan of Arc, it is no less true that Joan of Arc in some sense has justified the Church.'* In fact she shows us its holy majesty and its role among the nations, and its indispensable influence in the life of the city. But above all she reminds us with the greatest firmness that there can be no Christian civic activity that does not respect the authentic Catholic doctrine of this Church which she proclaimed to be in such intimate union with Jesus Christ. She testifies also to the efficacious recourse to the sacraments, to which, in her wake, she drew so many others, above all to the Eucharist which day after day gave splendour and strength to her vocation, and to the social transcendence of the gospel message when not adulterated by the philosophies of the moment or by revolutionary principles. She confessed not only the Church's divinely established constitution, but also its human structure which inspired in her the veneration and an understanding of the meaning of the priesthood. When confronted by those clerics leagued together for the construction of their New Church she declared: *'I believe that our Lord the Pope of Rome the bishops and the other people of the Church are there to guard the Christian faith and to punish those who fall away from it.'*²

² A sentiment which does appear to be shared by many churchmen today. (Editor *Apropos*)

Under the popes of Avignon, confronted with the Italian Republics in revolt against Rome and at war amongst themselves, Saint Catherine of Sienna wished to see the politics of the several nations subordinated to and harmonised by a Christian conception of politics. Joan of Arc herself, perhaps closer in this respect to our own problems, integrated all national politics within Christian unity. The meeting of these two supernatural yet so human heroines at such a cross-roads of history as was their epoch, cannot leave us in doubt concerning divine intervention in history, or concerning the order which God intends to impose upon the nations.

This is the peculiar mission of the Maid. Herald of Christ the King, whose banner she carried and whose reign she proclaimed before peoples and factions, she professed the principles concerning the temporal order that the Church has always taught. She innovated nothing; she spoke little, but in her direct way she acted; and her action is clear and positive. There is nothing extraordinary, in the truth of her theology of Power. But what characterises her, what forces us to recognise the relevancy of her mission to our times is the striking similarity of our present situation to what occurred during her life on earth, when she realised the prodigy of a national political restoration followed by a Passion: with the Church as the cause and the end of this restoration. In order to convince us she gives us her entire life, her saintly epic, as a heritage and as a precept. They form a whole which we would be unable to impugn without perishing. The same heroism, the same sanctity, and the same movement unite Orleans, Reims and the stake at Rouen. When we consider in its unity the whole course of this exceptional destiny whose glories and earthly pains unite to proclaim a political message of truth, justice and love, don't we seem to see passing before our eyes, in the geographical setting we live in, above the chaos of our present day, a vision of the Church universally present in our time as in hers, a veritable voice of the Church set against the sonorous background of the allocution of Pius XII, *'You purify and consecrate the codes of legal wisdom of Praetors and Caesars, You are the mother of a justice higher and more humane, which honours you, and which honours the place where you sit and those who listen to you. You are a beacon of civilisation, and both civilised Europe and the world owe to you all that is most sacred and most sane, all that is most wise and most honest among all peoples, that which exalts them and ennobles their history. You are the mother of charity in that peace which makes people brothers and unites all men, whatever sky may shelter them, whatever language or customs may distinguish them, into one family and makes the world the fatherland of all.'*

She cannot have foreseen with her earthly eyes all the eventual implications of her mission. But, chained to the stake in the old market place, devoured by the flames, she knew and she said that her Voices had not deceived her. And now spanning all that has since happened in time and space, her memory grips us with its immortal truth. If we were to imagine that at the last day, when God will assemble the peoples of the earth, he will also judge Christian nations in accordance with their sense of political responsibility, should we not see the saint near the throne, as the model the nations should have imitated, as the guide they ought to have followed, with the words of the prophet ringing out: *'I have given her as a witness to the people?'*

God has made of her the great political saint for *'the time of the nations'*, and therefore for our time. As the angel of new times, she comes to bring us the certainty of the Christian conception of history, and to tell us that the decisive instrument for the sanctification of men and of peoples, can only be that one Church glorified by her victories and her passion, that Roman Church which is mother and tutor to a Christian ethnarchy in a renewed world yearning and calling for the reign of that *'King Jesus'*, of whom she said that He and the Church are one.

Can we doubt her presence if we consent to believe in the supernatural in order, with her, to change, as she did in her time, the unfortunate course of history which so burdens us? Two great popes and a great soldier felt her to be and saw her to be the messenger of hope, inclining towards our needs.

St. Pius X, having beatified her, after affirming his certainty of a renewal, laid down the conditions for one: *'Tell the French people that they must guard as a treasure the testaments of St Remy, Charlemagne and St. Louis, which are summed up in the words which the heroine of Orleans repeated: "Long live Christ who is king of the Franks. "'*

Then there is that great soldier who so many times in the course of his long life was involved, on the battlefield, in the disastrous conflicts of the Western world, and who saved Europe by repulsing Bolshevism behind its frontiers. I refer to Weygand, Weygand whose humility was but an indication of the nobility of his soul and his profound piety, Weygand who always profoundly devoted to the saint of our fatherland. And I can still hear him saying to me: *'I believe in the necessary presence of Joan of Arc. She travelled eleven days noiselessly as far as Chinon to bring salvation. She is still travelling now, unknown to all, but a day will come when circumstance will compel us to invoke her presence amongst us.'*

Finally there is Pius XII always so certain of Christian renewal. He invited us to place our hope, our efforts for a sure reawakening under the protection of the saint: *'If at times it may seem,' he said, 'that iniquity, falsehood and corruption may triumph, it will be enough for you to keep silence for a few moments, to raise your eyes to heaven, and to visualise the legions of Joan of Arc, returning, banners unfurled, to save the fatherland and to save the Faith.'*

Pierre Virion.