

CATHOLIC PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL REFORM ¹

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THOSE who attempt to put a quart into a pint pot are apt to find the operation unsatisfactory and unsuccessful ; and any one who endeavours, in the limited space of a short pamphlet, to cover the wide area which a consideration of the question of Social Reform brings into view is in very great danger of attempting this operation. No one is more sensible of this than the writer. But the difficulty may, perhaps, be met, not by spilling half the materials, but by endeavouring to boil them down to the proper dimensions. This needs to be said here, because many questions that deserve lengthy treatment will be found to be quite compressed ; many arguments that deserve to be amplified will be given in the shortest form in which they can be stated. This method has its advantages, for by it the reader will get a bird's-eye view, so to speak, of the field ; he will see, generally, what there is there, and be tempted, perhaps, to make a descent of his own on the spots which interest him most, and carry out for himself more adequately the study and investigation which are here merely suggested.

¹ This pamphlet is the substance of a lecture delivered at the Catholic Men's Club, Preston.

What Social Reform Means.

When we talk about Social Reform we assume that society is not as it should be and that it wants improving. That is what Social Reform means; the improvement of society, the improvement of social conditions, so that those large associations of mankind that constitute societies and states shall when reformed be better off in every way than they are now. It does not need much reflection to see that Social Reform has two sides—the one moral, the other economic. In the first place, society can be made better by making every individual in it better. It is quite obvious that if that were done the whole would be better. It was M. Clémenceau who said that if all men were Christians there would be no social problem. This is quite true. It is so obvious that even a freethinker sees it, and says it. The moral defects of individuals play, indeed, a very large part in causing the present evils of society. The denial of God, the indifference to religion and its teaching, the setting up of wealth, power, personal success, and personal ambitions as the aim of life; self-indulgence, luxury, idleness, denial or forgetfulness of the eternal purpose of human existence, these are the most active agents in producing the deplorable conditions which exist in modern society. It is true, also, that many of these evil conditions may be directly traced to economic causes; but if these causes are examined there is often to be found underlying them some false principle of action, some departure from Christian teaching, that vitiates our economic relations and exaggerates their evil tendencies. So whatever remedies for these conditions may be necessary, there will need to be, not only an economic revolution as many claim, but a moral revolution also.

Need of Economic Remedies.

At the same time economic remedies are needed. There are economic conditions producing evil results which a moral revolution by itself would not cause to disappear entirely, however much it would soften or diminish them. There is a social problem that arises from the industrial system under which we live that can only be remedied by a change in the system. This change in the industrial organization is the purpose of all proposals for social reform. Such proposals are numerous, as you can understand. Just as you will find varying remedies for the same sickness, so you will find varying proposals for the betterment of social conditions. But it is not too much to say that of these only two rest on definite and easily comprehended principles, namely, the proposals of Socialism and the proposals of Catholic Social Reform.

The grounds upon which Catholics reject Socialism are already set out in other pamphlets published by the Catholic Truth Society, and it is not intended to discuss these grounds here.^{*} This pamphlet confines itself to the social remedies offered by Catholic teaching, by the Catholic Church, and by Catholic economists and Catholic statesmen.

The Church and Social Problems.

It is pretty obvious that we speak with good reason of the *Catholic* principles of Social Reform. Since there are moral questions involved in the social problem, it is clear that the Catholic Church, the historic teacher of Christian truth, the fountain of Christian morality, must be interested in them. As a fact all political and social questions have a moral side. But, as another fact, a historical fact, the Church has associated itself, and has occupied itself, with social problems from its earliest beginnings.

^{*} See p. 32.

The Christian community at Jerusalem sought to solve the problem of its members' poverty by the adoption of a system of voluntary communism. "They possessed all things in common." And when this communistic arrangement came to an end, the Churches in Asia Minor, moved by the charity of Christ, entrusted St. Paul with alms to relieve the necessities of the brethren at Jerusalem. The Church's teaching, slowly permeating the Roman Empire, led first to the better treatment of the slaves, by whom practically all labour was then performed, and eventually to their emancipation. Later the condition of the serf, the successor of the slave in the labour world, was the object of the Church's care, and the decrees of Councils and Synods bear ample testimony to the fact that the Church was the only protection against tyranny that the poor of those days could depend on.¹

The Trade Guilds.

In the Middle Ages the history of the trade guilds shows the practical application of Catholic principles to commercial life. The success and equity of these organizations is testified to by writers of all beliefs and of no belief. Hyndman, for instance, and Thorold Rogers² have both paid a tribute to their beneficent activities. The decay of the trade guilds was contemporaneous with the break-up of Catholic Christendom by the Protestant "Reformation." It was contemporary with a very general denial of the Church's authority. The destruction of these guilds was completed by the French Revolution. The old trade organizations in France were abolished by the Convention (1791), and trade organizations of all kinds were made illegal.

¹ See *The Church and Labour*, Abbot Snow, O.S.B. C.T.S., 2d.

² See T. Rogers's *Economic Interpretation of History*, chap. xiv.

This may seem strange. That the preachers of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity should prohibit the association of workers seems at first sight incomprehensible. But the idea underlying this prohibition is the idea, the false idea, of liberty which dominated political thought from the end of the eighteenth to past the middle of the nineteenth century. A school of political philosophers arose who demanded absolute freedom—what they called a return to the “order of Nature”—not merely in political relations, but in economic ones. Everything that restricted industry was regarded as harmful. Adam Smith in his *Wealth of Nations* not only laid the foundations of the science of political economy, but he laid them on this basis of unrestricted freedom for industrial operations. “All systems, either of preference or restraint,” he wrote, “being thus completely taken away, the obvious and simple system of natural liberty establishes itself of its own accord.”¹ This idea being once adopted was developed; it entered into political thought and was embodied in legislation, and led logically to the condemnation of all associations which had for their object any interference with trade, or put any restrictions upon the operations of industry or industrial management. It is on account of these teachings that we find that the early history of English trade unions, which were a revolt against the individualist teaching, is a story of embittered struggles, and it was only after many years, and after prolonged conflict, that the old right of association which was the characteristic of Catholic times was regained for the working men of England and other countries. The principle of unrestrained liberty in industry led in practice to a system of unrestrained competition in business and business relations. In fact, the economists of the first half of the nineteenth century advocated this competition

¹ *Wealth of Nations*, bk. iv. ch. ix.

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as the best means of securing industrial progress and economic prosperity. "Most of them," says Professor Ryan (*Living Wage*, p. 14),¹ "had no hesitation in advocating as the correct principles of industrial action abstention from combination and regulation, unlimited competition, and the fullest individual liberty." "Unrestricted freedom of action and contract," observes Mr. Cliffe Leslie in a commentary on Adam Smith, "would tend to reduce the actually inevitable inequality of economic opportunities to the lowest attainable minimum."² A vicious assumption underlies these arguments, as will be seen later. At present it is sufficient to call attention to the fact that, under an industrial system based upon these principles, we have landed ourselves into the mess in which we find the industrial organization at this present moment, and that despite the fact that for thirty or forty years we have been tinkering at the problem of repair and reform. As Pope Leo XIII says in his Encyclical on the *Condition of the Working Classes*, "The ancient working men's guilds were abolished in the last (eighteenth) century, and no other organization took their place. Public institutions and the laws even, have set aside the ancient religion. Hence by degrees it has come to pass that working men have been surrendered, all isolated and helpless, to the hard-heartedness of employers and the greed of unchecked competition."³

Greed of Unchecked Competition.

It is this "greed of unchecked competition," which has its root in the unrestrained individualism preached by the political economists, that lies at the root of our social sick-

¹ *The Living Wage*. Rev. J. A. Ryan, S.T.L. Macmillan & Co.

² Quoted by Professor Ryan, *ibid.*

³ *The Condition of the Working Classes*, p. 2. C.T.S., *id.*

ness. The causes of this social sickness have been clearly set forth by Pope Leo XIII. Here is a summary of his statement of these causes :—

1. The remarkable expansion of industry in modern times, due to scientific discoveries multiplying the means of production and enlarging the supply of raw materials.

2. The changed relations of employers and workpeople that accompanied this development of industrial operations and organization.

3. The exclusion of religion and morality from the considerations of political economy, and from the ethics of trade, so that working men were deprived of the powerful defence which these forces afford.

4. The destruction of the working men's organizations, increasing their defencelessness.

5. Unrestrained competition.

6. The system of working by contract (wage system) operating against the working man, whose poverty compelled him to make an unfair bargain.¹

We shall see as we go on that these causes explain adequately the present unsatisfactory state of things. That the state of things is unsatisfactory does not require much demonstration. We are in the condition in which, to quote Pope Leo XIII, "a small number of very rich men have been able to lay upon the teeming masses of the labouring poor a yoke little better than slavery itself." Here are two facts that speak most eloquently of the condition of things in England, one of the richest countries in the world.

Poverty and Wretched Surroundings.

1. Mr. Booth's statistics for London showed that 30·7 per cent. of the vast population of that city were living in poverty, and that 8 per cent. were in extreme poverty.

¹ *The Condition of the Working Classes*, pp. 1-3.

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The Abbé Naudet, one of the brilliant leaders of the Christian democrats in France, has said that in a prosperous country there should be no disinherited. Yet in England's capital we find that every third person is in poverty and that every twelfth person is in dire want. These statistics are not exceptional: similar investigations disclose the same conditions extending over large areas.

2. The statistics of pauperism tell us that twenty permanent paupers for every thousand of the population, and that in 1906-7, which were not unprosperous years, forty-seven people in every thousand were in receipt of poor-law relief.

These figures are eloquent enough, but they only tell a part of the tale. There is another aspect of poverty which is under our eyes. It stares at us in all our cities and towns. The one feature that thrusts itself upon the notice of even the least observant person is the abominable condition under which such vast numbers of the inhabitants of these islands live. In all these cities there are large areas in which people herd together rather than live together, so that Christian men and women are doomed to pass their lives under conditions that exclude all possibility of decent living, of healthy upbringing, conditions that degrade humanity, and are one of the most potent agents in producing the army of idle, helpless, and criminal beings who recruit our workhouses and fill our gaols.

We have among us those who are never tired of declaiming against the inborn depravity of these unfortunates; who are never weary of explaining that many of them, if not most of them, are what they are through their own fault. Now, there is a simple and sufficient answer to their theories, theories that not seldom are due to a desire to shift responsibility from the shoulders of those who

advance them. If these unfortunates, instead of being brought up under degrading conditions, in grinding poverty, surrounded by all the evils that grow like weeds in the soil of our slums, were, on the contrary, brought up in decent surroundings, with a sufficient living and a training in some useful occupation, would they furnish the same number of loafers, paupers, and criminals? Would they differ in any way from any equal number of people brought up under decent conditions? The history of the children trained in the Catholic poor-law schools answers the question. These children show an after-life history that compares quite favourably with the after history of children brought up in decent working class homes.

The Pinch of Unemployment. Undeserved Poverty.

Lastly, there is a great deal of poverty and suffering that never finds its way into statistics. Unemployment is always with us, sometimes severe, sometimes less in degree, but always present. It pinches in many homes that keep a decent and brave outward show. Sickness and death, too, contribute their share in creating unmerited poverty, in causing undeserved suffering.

This, then, is the problem we have to face, the problem of undeserved poverty. It is the Social Question, taking rank before every other question, calling upon the Governments and powers for a solution, calling now with a happy insistence that will not be satisfied until some answer is found, and the sum of unnecessary and unmerited human suffering is diminished to its lowest possible point. This is the problem of Social Reform, and this is the problem to which the Catholic Church, and the Catholic heart and intellect, is unceasingly devoting itself.

If we wish to approach the question of Social Reform in a scientific way—and no other way will lead to satis-

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factory results—we must begin by understanding properly the principles of social organization. We must know something of the nature of that society we propose to reform, of what it is, and of what parts it is composed. Let us commence, then, by considering what society is and what we understand by a State.

A society is the name given to a group of individuals united together for the purpose of pursuing some common end. A State is a political society comprising the people united in common action by and under a supreme authority, which is called the Government. A Trade Union is an example of a society, the British Empire is an example of a State. A Trade Union is a group of workers united together for the purpose of promoting the professional interests of its members. The British Empire is a State comprising all the subjects of the Empire united by the Imperial Government, and pursuing the welfare of the Empire by means of, and under the direction of, the Imperial Government. Now there are certain rights and obligations belonging to each element of society or of the State. These elements of all societies are the individual and the family, separately considered, or combined in various ways. Each individual, each family, possesses certain rights and is under certain obligations. Some of these rights which spring from Nature are called natural rights; others, arising from legal sanction, are called legal rights. The individual has certain rights and obligations which belong to him as an individual. The family has certain rights and obligations of its own. Individuals have certain rights and duties in regard to the State, the State has certain rights and duties in regard to the individual. Let us pursue this matter further, for Catholic sociology is based upon its views with regard to these various rights and obligations.

The Rights of the Individual.

Catholic sociology begins with the individual. On the Church's teaching with regard to the individual depends the whole of its scheme of social relations. Man derives all his rights, just as he incurs all his obligations, from the fact that he is created by Almighty God for a definite end, that end being, in the words of the Catechism, "to know, love, and serve God in this world, and to be happy with Him for ever in the next." It is this fact of creation by God, it is this noble destiny which God has assigned to man, that gives to him his dignity, and that establishes his rights upon an unassailable basis.

Natural rights have God for their Author. Now, what are these natural rights? What are these rights of which we say that they have God for their Author, because they are inherent in the human nature that God has created? They are: (1) The right to live. (2) The right to marry. (3) The right to liberty. (4) The right to freedom to fulfil those obligations to his Creator which man's destiny imposes on him. These are primary rights, and from them other rights are derived. Thus, the right to live implies other rights. It implies the right to hold property, a right that is strengthened by the right to marry; it implies the right of access to the means of life, that is, to a livelihood. Under our present industrial system, it implies a living wage. It implies opportunities for the exercise of man's rational and moral nature, that is, a suitable opportunity for intellectual and moral education. The right to liberty includes freedom to pursue the proper ends of life in accordance with God's law, without let or hindrance from any outside authority. "These rights," to quote from Professor Ryan, "are necessary means of reasonable living. They are essential to the welfare of a human being, a personality."¹

¹ *The Living Wage*, p. 48. Professor Ryan.

Catholic sociology stands for these natural rights of the individual. It seeks for a solution of the social problem which shall recover for men the enjoyment of these natural rights, which in many instances are denied them under the present system.

The Family and its Rights.

The next element in society—the family—is now to be considered. The family takes a most important place in Catholic sociology. It is the primary society which is the foundation of society at large. Out of the family is formed the community and the State. From the moral point of view the family fulfils the function of a depositary and channel of the moral law. It educates children and youths and gives morality to adults. The foundation of social peace is a community respecting and practising the domestic virtues—obedience, self-sacrifice, the spirit of work, and so on.¹

The family is a natural society, having its origin in the innate tendencies of human nature. This natural society has been raised by Christianity to its highest level. It has been given stability and sanctity. Marriage, the bond which creates the family, has been raised to the dignity of a Sacrament and made indissoluble. A stable society is impossible where marriage and the family are held in low esteem. The rights of the family are natural rights, existing to secure parental authority and the proper upbringing of children.

The Authority of the State.

Hence it follows that the authority of the State does not extend to the family except in so far as it may be required

¹ See Ch. Antoine, S.J., *Cours d'Économie Sociale*, p. 95.

to repair the evils arising to injure family life, either by the misconduct of those who bear the responsibilities of the family, or from economic or physical causes, such as want and sickness. In these cases the community should come to the assistance of the family. But the authority of the State ends there. It cannot replace or assume parental authority. Parental duties are of such a character that they cannot be divorced from the parent, and under no pretext can the State claim or exercise a parent's responsibilities. The most it can do is to enforce upon parents the right observance of those responsibilities, or to assist the parents when necessary in carrying them out. We have spoken about the limitation of the State's power. What is the Catholic teaching in regard to the State? What is the nature of the State, and what is its authority? What are its powers and functions?

The State and its Rights.

The individual and the family are institutions prior in time to the State. But individuals and families need to associate for human happiness and welfare. This association leads in time to the State. Thus, society being natural to man, has divine sanction; but the rights of the State, which is society organized, are secondary in point of time and importance, and do not, and cannot, override the rights of the individual and the family. The authority of the State, without which social order would be impossible, has divine sanction also, in so far as it represents a necessary element of a natural institution, and this no matter what form the State authority takes. Because of this we are under an obligation to respect the authority and obey the laws of the State. But because State authority has divine sanction, it is limited by the law of God; it is limited by the natural rights of the

individual and of the family. When it oversteps these limits, its authority ceases, for the law of God is incapable of being contradictory, and there cannot be a valid conflict between State authority, which is indirectly derived from God, and those natural rights which spring out of man's nature and the nature of the family, and so are directly derived from God. This is a very important point to remember, for it forms a very large element in determining and limiting the powers exercised by Governments over the communities they govern.

Society and the State sprang, as has been said, from that natural need of association and mutual help which is inherent in man. This fact determines the functions of the State. The State exists for two purposes: first, to safeguard the rights of its members; secondly, to promote their well-being. Liberal economists limited its functions to the protection of rights. The State was, in their view, a kind of policeman to keep order in that free play of human activity which they regarded as the most efficient means of procuring prosperity. In effect, such a State afforded no protection for the weak. The unchecked competition which was the practical result of their theory, left the weak at the mercy of the strong. It is this fact that has broken down the individualist regime.

Unlimited individualism offended the conscience by the tyrannies and oppressions it occasioned. State intervention in commerce had again to be resorted to, as witness the Factory Acts, and the long succession of laws destined to mitigate the evils which had arisen. The Catholic sociologist is a State interventionist. Regarding the end for which civil society exists, he sees that it is to promote the temporal well-being of its members. This implies the protection of the weak against the strong. The State, according to the Catholic view, has for a prime function the duty of regulating the activities of the community so that justice

shall prevail, so that oppression shall be prevented, so that each individual shall be allowed to fulfil his divinely appointed end, and shall be allowed access to all the means that are necessary to secure that end. In the words of a celebrated Catholic economist,¹ the State has the duty not so much of doing, or of letting be done, as of helping things to be done. It has the duty of doing those things that private enterprise cannot do efficiently, of carrying out those public services that it can do better than private individuals. It has the duty of non-interference in those things that can be done, and are being justly done, by private enterprise, and of helping those things to be done which require the co-operation of the authority in order that private enterprise may be carried to success, or in supplying the defects which properly conducted private enterprise still exhibits as the result of economic causes.

The Catholic is very jealous of undue State interference. Especially does he view with dislike the interference with the exercise of those natural rights which are associated with man's spiritual nature. Human liberty exercised in harmony with God's law is the Catholic's supreme care. This is why Socialism is so abhorrent to the Catholic mind. Just as the Catholic is a State interventionist in those things that are necessary to protect the natural rights of man, so he is an anti-Socialist because, under Socialism, the State assumes a supremacy that is not in accordance with those natural rights, and would prevent their free exercise. Liberatore says (*Pol. Economy*, p. 132): "The State has authority over the rights that come from itself. It has no authority over the rights that come from Nature, rights that precede the State in history and in reason."

The authority of the State exists for the benefit of the citizens, just as the authority of the parent exists for the

¹ Baudrillart, quoted by Antoine, p. 76.

benefit of the children. This Catholic view of the State and its functions has been admirably set forth in the Encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII. The Pope declares plainly for the exercise of State authority for the protection and assistance of the largest body in the State—the workers. This fact is recognized. M. Leroy Beaulieu, a distinguished French political economist of the Liberal school, writing about Pope Leo's teaching, said: "It would be a misrepresentation to deny that Pope Leo is in theory and principle an interventionist at the same time that he is a democrat. And in that," he adds, "Pope Leo follows the tradition of the doctors of the Church and the theologians, who almost all have assigned to the State the right of watching over the well-being of the different classes of the nation."¹

Private Property.

One of the greatest factors in the stability of the State is the institution of private property. The Catholic teaching about it, therefore, may be briefly set forth because, although the Church has always recognized the right of property, it sees just as clearly as any Socialist that the abuse of private property has contributed very largely to the distress and disorder of modern society, and has led by a process of reaction to that negation of the right of private property which is the essence of Socialism.

The Catholic holds that the power to hold private property is a natural right of man. It springs from the necessities of his nature, it is required for the stability of the family, it is the result of that foresight and judgement which distinguishes man from the brutes, and leads him to provide not only for present needs, but for future ones. It is a right that has the recognition of Scripture, the support

¹ Quoted in Antoine, *Cours d'Économie Sociale*, p. 61.

of universal history, and the sanction of all law. But while the Church maintains man's natural right to hold property, it also insists upon the obligations which accompany the possession of property. The evils of the system of private property arise from a false idea of its nature. Men have come to look upon property as something absolute, something without limitations or restrictions. This is wrong. All property is held in trust from God to be applied to its rightful end—the maintenance of human life. The old Roman law, which made property absolute, which gave the right of enjoyment, of use, and of absolute disposal in accordance with the owner's will, is not accepted by the Church. St. Thomas teaches that ownership is private, but that its use is common. The land, for instance, may be privately owned, but its products must not be *exclusively* enjoyed. Property is limited by the law of justice, which imposes on the owner the duty of rendering to each one what is his due, and by the law of charity, which ordains that the necessitous shall have the use of all that is altogether superfluous, all that is not required for the lawful needs, present and prospective, of the owner. Now, human law partly, but not altogether, enforces the duty of justice. The moral law alone enforces the duty of charity. The moral law is often disobeyed. The world has become so accustomed to the false idea of property that it resents what it calls interference with the "sacred rights of property." But the rights of property are only sacred when they conform to the law of God which makes them sacred—that is, to that moral law which imposes the obligations of justice and charity upon those who possess.

Charity.

One word about that much abused term, "charity." It is usually most wrongheadedly confounded with almsgiving.

Almsgiving is a very small part of charity. Charity means love, it is a virtue that expresses itself on the one hand by the love of God, and on the other by the love of our neighbour as ourself. True charity shows itself in personal service, service to God, service to our neighbour. This service is not, we must remember, a counsel, an advice, it is a command. Our Saviour said, "Thou *shalt* love the Lord thy God"; "thou *shalt* love thy neighbour as thyself." So that we are all under an obligation to practise it. This obligation increases in extent as our means of practising it are more abundant.

It is not degrading to be the object of loving service. Yet from a mistaken notion of the nature of charity we often hear it spoken of as if it were an outrage on the honour of a man either to exercise it or to be the object of its exercise. It is the impulsion of divine charity that has brightened the history of the Church, and redeemed the often sordid history of mankind with the lives of thousands of heroic men and women who have at all periods of the Church's history sacrificed everything for the love of God and the service of their neighbour. This, then, is the virtue whose practice limits the power and privileges of property and makes it tolerable as a human institution. If the Catholic view of property does not prevail, property is doomed. It is only by practising the obligations of property whilst enjoying its rights that it can be justified as an institution.

The Question of Labour.

We come now to the question of labour, with certain aspects of which Christian teaching is concerned. In the first place Christianity changed the esteem in which manual labour was regarded. At the time of our Saviour's birth the Roman Empire, which was the great world power, was

based upon slavery. Practically all manual labour was performed by slaves, and it was considered unworthy of any freeman to engage in manual occupations of any kind. But Jesus Christ, a carpenter and the "Son of a carpenter," God become Man, chose the lot of a workman and a condition of poverty as the circumstances of His Incarnation. He chose fishermen as His apostles. The redemption of man, the Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood in Christ, were preached as a gospel to the poor. Thus manual labour was dignified and exalted, and what had come to be regarded as a curse, was put in its proper place as an honourable means, chosen by God, whereby man should fulfil the obligations of human existence; as a means of reaching his final end. Just as the rich were the objects of warnings and threats, threats most unusual in the mouth of our Saviour, so the poor were the object of His constant solicitude. The honourableness of poverty, the dignity, rightfulness, and necessity of labour were taught by Christianity from its very beginning. These teachings, as they spread abroad, began to produce their effect upon the social organization. Slavery began to decay and finally to disappear from the whole Roman dominion. From being a dishonourable estate, labour was by Christianity raised to an honourable one. This lesson was taught by example as well as by precept. In the early centuries the monks set an example by engaging in labour, and in some of the monastic communities not only agricultural labour but trades of all descriptions were followed. Labour, then, in the Christian idea is honourable and necessary, and no man is exempt from it. No amount of wealth excuses from occupation of some kind; every man is bound to work out his salvation in doing some service to the community.

It is important to make a distinction in the use of the word "labour." Labour includes all human effort pro-

ductive of values; it means not only muscular labour (in which sense it is often carelessly used), but also intellectual labour, inventive labour, directive labour. So long as effort results in production of value, whether such value takes the shape of material goods, or immaterial values—whether, for instance, it results in cotton goods, or the services of a nurse—it answers the definition. Now, just as property has its rights and obligations, so also has labour.

Duties of the Rich and the Workers.

This part of the subject cannot be better concluded than by summarizing from the Encyclical on *The Condition of the Working Classes* what the Pope says as to the duties of the rich and the workers. The labouring man is told:—

1. He must carry out honestly and well all agreements freely made.

2. He must not injure capital, nor the person of an employer.

3. He must avoid riot or disorder in promoting his cause.

4. He should shun those evil leaders who work upon the people with artful promises that usually end in disaster and repentance when it is too late.

The rich and employers of labour are told:—

1. To remember that workpeople are not slaves.

2. That in every man they must respect his dignity as a man and a Christian.

3. That labour is not undignified, but to the Christian mind an honourable thing enabling man to sustain life uprightly and creditably.

4. That it is shameful and inhuman to treat men like chattels or machines; as something to make money by, or as so much muscular or physical power.

5. That workmen, being creatures of God, must have leisure to fulfil the obligations of piety, and must not be exposed to corrupting influences. They must not be led to neglect their homes or squander their wages.

6. Workpeople must not be so employed (a) as to over-tax their strength, or (b) to engage in work unsuitable to their age or sex.

7. The employer's great and principal obligation is to pay to each what is just.

"Rich men and masters must remember," says the Pope, "that to exercise pressure for the sake of gain upon the needy and destitute, and to make one's profit out of the needs of another, is condemned by all laws human and divine," and "To defraud any one of wages that are due to him is a crime which cries to Heaven for vengeance."

8. The employer must religiously refrain from cutting down the workpeople's earnings either by force, fraud, or usurious dealings.¹

Wages and Wage-Contracts.

The last two paragraphs of this summary bring out very strongly one of the great causes of social evil, viz., the frequent insufficiency of wages and the unfairness of many wage-contracts: that is, the agreement as to wages made or supposed to be made between workpeople and employers. This brings up a very important principle which demands a few words, viz., the principle of working by contract, the wage system.

When employers and workpeople make an agreement which takes the form of wages paid for service rendered, Catholic writers hold that it is not the bodily service of the

¹ *The Condition of the Working Classes*, pp. 14-15. C.T.S., 1d.

worker or the muscular power that he uses in his work which is the matter of the agreement, but the share in the utility which the workman helps to create. Thus, in a mill, the weaver is not paid for hiring his bodily powers or his power of working to the employer; he is paid for the value he produces in the cloth manufactured. This is an important distinction, which, however, cannot be further pursued here. But this much may be said: many masters seem to think that payment of wages gives them an almost absolute dominion over those they employ. This is not so. As the statement of the nature of a wage contract shows, the employer and worker stand upon a basis of equality, not in positions of superiority and inferiority.

Further, in order that a wage contract shall be morally lawful, that is, a just contract, it must fulfil these three conditions: (1) It must be entered into without any compulsion, either physical or moral. (2) With a full knowledge of the meaning of the contract. (3) And under circumstances that leave the parties free to engage in the obligations that the contract imposes. Now, certain important conclusions follow from these principles. First, an employer cannot take advantage of a worker's necessities to offer him an insufficient wage. Such an action would be, in the words of the Abbé Garriguet (*Régime du Travail*, pp. 57-8), "a shameful exploitation of the needs of the poor and a crying iniquity." Second, the employer is not allowed to profit by the ignorance of the worker to engage him at a wage falling below the normal standard. Third, even if the worker is free physically and morally to enter into a wage-contract, that is to say, if there is no force or fraud, he has no right to contract for a wage less than the standard rate of remuneration for his services. And even should it happen that he is able to support himself and his family on less than the standard wage—even in this case he is not always justified in accepting less than the standard

wage. For such action on his part tends to lower the standard of wages, and thus do harm to others who cannot live on the wages that he finds sufficient.

The Standard of Wages.

To conclude our consideration of the principles that underlie the practical recommendations of Catholic sociologists, something must be said about the standard of wages. A just standard of wages is determined by two of those natural rights mentioned earlier: (1) the right to live, (2) the right to marry and found a family. Upon these two rights Catholics lay down that a man's wages must be sufficient to satisfy his claims in nature; they say that the standard of wages should be a living wage—that is, sufficient to support in frugal comfort and decency a normal family. This question is discussed by many Catholic writers; they are in practical agreement on this principle. It has been most adequately expounded in English by the Rev. J. A. Ryan in his interesting book, *The Living Wage*.¹ I will cite one quotation in illustration of this view, the opinion of the late Cardinal Manning. After quoting from the Encyclical these words of the Pope, "Let it be granted, then, that as a rule workmen and employer should make free agreements, and in particular agree freely as to wages: nevertheless there is a dictate of nature more imperious and more ancient than any bargain between man and man, that the remuneration must be enough to support the wage-earner in reasonable and frugal comfort," the Cardinal adds: "This is immediately further explained as 'sufficient to enable him to maintain himself, his wife, and his children.' We have here," said the Cardinal, "the measure of the minimum wage. It must be sufficient to maintain a man

¹ Macmillan, 4s. 6d. net.

and his home. This does not mean a variable measure, or a sliding scale according to the number of children, but a fixed average sum."¹

Speaking generally, we may say that in practice Catholic economists and statesmen claim this minimum. It is known as the "*salaire familial*," that is, wages sufficient to maintain a family.

We have not, of course, in the preceding sketch by any means exhausted the questions of principle which lie at the root of Catholic Social Reform. But we have touched on the principal points, and with this we must here be content, for the practical side of Catholic Sociology awaits our attention. We have now to consider in what way the Catholic economist and the Catholic statesman propose to remedy the social disorder.

Briefly, the whole social question being one of unmerited poverty, we must seek in its solution some method of preventing that poverty. Prevention is the first necessity; if that fails we can then relieve it. Prevention is the work of justice, relief is the work of charity. Both will always be necessary, no matter what form of social organization is adopted (I include Socialism); but charity should not be called into action till justice has had its rightful activity. Poverty that is preventible may be classed under four heads:—

1. Poverty from unemployment or ill-paid work.
2. Poverty from sickness and infirmity.
3. Poverty from old age.
4. Poverty that follows the loss of a bread-winner.

If we go back to our principles we shall find that at the root of our troubles there lie—

1. A neglect of the moral bases of social relations.
2. Individualism, for a long time unchecked, expressing

¹ Cardinal Manning, *Leo XIII on Labour*, p. 14. C.T.S., 1d.

itself in (a) competition, (b) in an unnatural supremacy of capital over labour.

3. The failure of the community acting as a State to protect the interests of the weak, and, as consequence, an improper advantage given to the strong.

The Aims of Catholic Social Reform.

Catholic Social Reform aims at counteracting these three factors for evil in the State. Accordingly Catholic sociologists seek to secure :—

1. A proper acknowledgement of the moral law and submission to its teachings as expressed by the Catholic Church, which alone teaches with authority.

2. That restraint shall be put upon individualism by promoting co-operation in production and corporative action.

3. A just and well regulated State intervention to suppress evils and to promote the well-being of the workers, who form the great majority in the State.

These are the three principles of action. Their first aim is to secure a return to the Christian moral order in social relations. The divorce between morality and business must be ended; the observance of the dictates of justice must be restored. To secure this moral revolution is a heavy task, which falls primarily on the Church as a teaching authority. But the task falls also upon every Catholic, nay, on every Christian, for without the co-operation of individuals and of statesmen in promoting social peace and restraining social injustice it will be impossible to secure the desired end.

The second remedy is a return to co-operative effort by means of corporations. Two dangerous extremes in social organization are to be avoided—the individualism out of which our present system has grown, and a stifling central-

ized authority whose supremacy would strangle all initiative. We must seek to set up in the State a power that will maintain a position midway between these two. We do not want to be starved by individualism, nor throttled by bureaucracy. The re-establishment of professional organizations is the best way to secure this.

This idea of professional organization includes several aims. The first of these is immediate, the others are in the nature of future developments. The immediate object of professional association is the formation of trade and professional unions which shall include all the workers. The Catholic Social Reformers all advocate obligatory association. That is to say, it is not to be left to individuals to be inside or outside a professional or trade union. All must be members of it, and not only the workers, but the employers and the managers. It is only thus that these unions can be made effective. For their ultimate purpose is to unite all those engaged in the production of any particular goods. Thus all workers, managers, and employers in cotton manufacture would be members of one association. Such an association, governed by delegates from all departments, would regulate all the details of production of cotton; the wages to be paid, the hours to be worked, the conditions of apprenticeship. Their decisions would in the schemes proposed have the force of law. Every worker, in every branch of industry, would have to be a member of his own Trade Union. Now several results would follow from this. Wages, hours of labour, the conditions of work would be uniform; better provision could be made for regular employment. It is laid down as a general principle that each industry should bear the cost of maintenance of its workers, whether employed or not.

If this principle of organization were adopted the way would be cleared for abolishing many of the evils of the present system, while retaining most of its advantages.

It is too much to be hoped that such associations can immediately be formed. But they represent the end to be aimed at. The first step to be taken is the obligatory organization of workers in Trade Unions and the obligatory association of masters in Employers' Unions. Delegates from both these bodies should meet in conference for the settlement of trade questions. One of the great aims of Catholic Social Reformers is the more equal distribution of wealth. Thus it is hoped that from the association of employers and workers would ultimately arise a system of division of profits that would represent a more equitable payment than the present wage system. Under this system, too, the workers would gradually acquire a capital interest in the concerns they worked for. Most of us are familiar with Mr. Belloc's plea for the ownership of land and capital, not centralized in a governing body, but distributed over the whole body of workers.¹ Such a proposal implies a system of co-operative production apart from any State ownership.

Furthermore, with the development of such a system of professional and trade corporations the Catholic school advocates a system of professional representation on the governing bodies of the State, so that commerce will have a supreme voice in all economic legislation. Under such a system we might hope to see a second chamber in this country in which the representation would be drawn from all the professional corporations, and in which the workers' representatives might occupy a seat in a reformed House of Peers—composed not so much of hereditary Peers as of industrial Peers.

Along with the establishment of these powerful professional corporations Catholics argue for a great restoration of self-government to localities. This we have in England to a large extent. The evils of officialdom are very obvious

¹ See his *Examination of Socialism*, p. 14. C.T.S., 1d.

and very oppressive in many Continental countries, and it is to remedy these that the extension of local powers to the community is sought. Next to this development of organization of industry in corporations, resembling in principle but not in detail the old Trade Guilds of Catholic times, the school of Catholic Social Reform has a programme for the amelioration of the present lot of the worker. At present reforms must come through Parliament. These reforms have been set forth in programmes, some of which are being embodied in laws where Catholics are powerful enough to accomplish it: I instance Germany, Belgium, and Austria. Here are the principal ones.

Limited Liability Companies.

1. The regulation of limited liability companies. Many evils have arisen from the existence of these companies, where the owners of the capital are completely dissociated from the productive work of the company, where there is not that intimate and human relation that ought to exist between an employer and his workers. Such companies are run with one view only, the extraction of profit; the only interest the shareholders have is the dividend they get out of their shares. That responsibility which rests on property—in shares just as much as in land—is lost sight of in a limited liability company, and the interests of labour, the human element in production, is entirely subordinated to the interests of capital, the non-human element—a reversal of nature that Christianity cries out against.

The organization and working of such companies needs regulating so as to ensure that shareholders shall not be considered to the exclusion of the workers who make those shares profitable.

Normal Minimum Wage.

2. Catholic Social Reformers all advocate the minimum wage. They consider that the State should determine the normal minimum wage below which no industry shall be carried on, but they would leave to the professional organizations the task of determining the minimum wage for each trade.

Maximum Working Day.

3. They demand a maximum working day, to be determined in the same way as the minimum wage: that is, a normal maximum, with a special maximum for each trade. It is obvious that some occupations need a shorter working day than others, keeping in mind the principle laid down by Pope Leo that workers shall not be taxed above their strength. All night work for women and children should be abolished, and night work for men should be reduced to the absolutely necessary minimum. They would forbid as far as possible all Sunday labour.

Universal and Obligatory Insurance.

4. Insurance against accidents, sickness, unemployment, and old age should be made universal and obligatory. Insurance against the accidents of work they consider should be, as in England, at the charge of the employer. The cost of insurance against unemployment, sickness, and old age they would distribute between the employer, the worker, and the State, but the management of the insurance funds they would leave in the hands of the trade organizations, with State supervision if necessary.

Proper Housing of Workers.

5. They demand the proper housing of workers, this to be as far as possible a charge against the industry in which they are employed.

Land and Credit Banks.

6. They propose the establishment of land banks and credit banks, whereby the people could obtain capital to engage in production, as a safeguard against the concentration of capital with its consequent industrial power in the hands of too few people.

Now, these are the main lines upon which the leaders of the Catholic parties in Germany, Austria, Belgium, Holland, and France are proceeding. What has been said gives you a pretty fair idea of their aims, many of which they have advanced some degrees towards realization.

Catholic Social Reform presents itself in two ways—first as a series of principles, secondly as practical proposals. The aim of this pamphlet has been to give some notion of what these principles and proposals are. They supply a solid and safe basis upon which to proceed, providing on the one hand for that security for the worker that is absent from our present system, while on the other hand safeguarding the rights of individuals—increasing, in fact, the liberty and power of individuals. The proposals which have been set forth afford a solution which is a happy medium between the oppression from which the community has suffered under an individualist regime, while avoiding the oppression it would have to endure under a Socialist organization.

For Catholics in this country who wish to assist in the spread of these Catholic principles there is only one danger ahead. That is the secular spirit that at this moment dominates the party of reform. Liberal and Labour parties are poisoned with the false principles that social reform has nothing to do with religion; that the State can be reformed on a secular basis; that the State has the right to educate the children, and that a secular education is the only education it can provide. We say that these are false and

poisonous principles, and we are bound to have them cleared from our course before we can give effective assistance to those who advocate reform. Reform without religion is doomed to failure ; it is only the principles that religion teaches, the spirit that religion creates, that can make any social organization tolerable, and it is the first duty of all, but especially of Catholics, to keep this fact before the public mind, to impress it upon the public conscience.

Sowing the Good Seed.

Let me conclude with the eloquent words of one of the most ardent of Catholic social reformers, the leader of the French Christian Democrats, the Abbé Naudet: "May the blessing of God be on the work of those who labour for the re-establishment of Christian principles in the economic and social order. Shall we see the results of their efforts? No one can say ; but this is certain, that these efforts will not be vain. The seed cast in the furrows is a small thing, but it is this seed which produces the harvest. We must expect the task to be hard and prolonged. Even with the invincible strength of truth for its support the good we seek will not be soon attained, for it has against it the evil tendencies of human nature. But God helping us, we shall attain it. Perhaps it will be our lot to face many storms ; at this moment the horizon seems shut in by dark, dense masses of threatening clouds, but we know that behind these clouds there shines the glorious sun, and that sun is the Church of God. Even across the profound darkness, the kind and beneficent influence of our Mother already makes itself felt. There is in the world a new movement of life, like that mysterious movement of the wheat which in springtime disturbs the soil as the tiny blade and ears force their way to the light.

At this very moment, when the bankruptcy of so many ideas that were once regarded as certainties is proclaimed, the eyes of many are turned to that holy mountain from whence the venerable figure of an aged Pontiff holds up to the world in his outstretched hands the pale mystical image of the Crucified One. They wait; they listen; they begin to feel that there, and there only, is the secret of the future to be found. May Jesus Christ be praised."¹

¹ Abbé Naudet, *Premiers Principes de Sociologie Catholique*, p. 61.

PENNY PAMPHLETS ON SOCIALISM.

Leo XIII on Labour. By Cardinal Manning.

Christian Aspects of the Labour Question. By Abbot Snow, O.S.B.

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