

ROME HAS SPOKEN

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INTRODUCTION

In the troubled times in which we live there is much muddled thinking and it is to guide Catholics along the way of truth and justice that Rome speaks from time to time by way of encyclical letters to the clergy and laity. These letters of the Popes lay down in clear and precise terms the ruling of the Church in matters of opinion as well as action, on questions of public importance, not only on moral issues but also on social and economic questions, for the Church has at heart not only the spiritual welfare of Her children but their material good also.

This booklet is an attempt to give in a handy form the official ruling of the Church on a few selected social and economic problems, by quoting from the actual words of the Popes.

The extracts are taken from the encyclicals of Leo XIII and Pius XI, and the references given should further study of the complete letters be desired.

THE CHURCH DOES NOT DISAPPROVE OF ANY LAWFUL FORM OF GOVERNMENT

[From the Encyclical Letter of Leo XIII
"Sapientiae Christianae," 10th January, 1890]

THE CHURCH, the guardian always of her own right and most observant of that of others, holds that it is not her province to decide which is the best amongst many diverse forms of government and the civil institutions of Christian States, and amid the various kinds of State rule, she does not disapprove of any, provided the respect due to religion and the observance of good moral be upheld. By such standard of conduct should the thoughts and mode of acting of every Catholic be directed. There is no doubt but that in the sphere of politics ample matter may exist for legitimate difference of opinion, and that the single reserve being made of the rights of justice and truth, all may strive to bring into actual working the ideas believed likely to be more conducive than others to the general welfare. But to attempt to involve the Church in party strife, and seek to bring her support to bear against those who take opposite views, is only worthy of partisans. Religion should, on the contrary, be accounted by everyone as holy and inviolate—nay, in the public order itself of States—which cannot be severed from the laws influencing morals and from religious duties—it is always urgent, and indeed the main pre-occupation, to take thought how best to consult the interests of Catholicism. Wherever these appear by reason of the efforts of adversaries to be in danger, all difference of opinion among Catholics should forthwith cease, so that like thoughts and counsels prevailing, they may hasten to the aid of religion, the general and supreme good, to which all else should be referred.

A GODLESS GOVERNMENT SELF-CONDEMNED

[From the Encyclical Letter of Leo XIII
"Sapientiae Christianae," 10th January, 1890]

NATURE DID NOT fashion society with intent that man should seek in it his last end, but that in it and through it he should find suitable aids whereby to attain to his own perfection. If, then a civil government strives after external advantages merely, and the attainment of such objects as adorn life; if in administering public affairs it is wont to put God aside, and show no solicitude for the upholding of moral law; it deflects woefully from its right course and from the injunctions of nature: nor should a gathering together and association of men be accounted as a commonwealth, but only as a deceitful imitation and make-believe of civil organization.

THE CHURCH'S OPPOSITION TO COMMUNISM

[Owing to widespread muddled thinking which confuses the Labour Party with the Socialist and uses both terms as synonymous, Pius XI in his Encyclical "Quadragesimo Anno," published in commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of the Encyclical of Leo XIII "Rerum Novarum," defines true Socialism and states the reasons for the Church's opposition to it.]

SINCE THE DAYS of Leo XIII, Socialism too, the great enemy with which his battles were waged, has undergone profound changes, no less than economics. At that time Socialism could fairly be termed a single system, which defended certain definite and mutually coherent doctrines. Nowadays it has in the main become divided into two opposing, and often bitterly hostile camps, neither of which, however, has abandoned the principle peculiar to Socialism, namely, opposition to the Christian Faith.

Communism

One section of Socialism has undergone approximately the same change through which, as We have described, the capitalistic regime has passed; it has degenerated into Communism. Communism teaches and pursues a twofold aim : merciless class warfare, and complete abolition of private ownership; and this it does, not in secret and by hidden methods, but openly, frankly, and by every means, even the most violent. To obtain these ends, Communists shrink from nothing and fear nothing; and when they have attained to power, it is unbelievable, indeed it seems portentous, how cruel and inhuman they show themselves to be. Evidence for this is the ghastly destruction and ruin with which they have laid waste immense tracts of Eastern Europe and Asia ; while their antagonism and open hostility to Holy Church and to God Himself are, alas, ; but too well known and proved by their deeds. We do not think it necessary to warn upright and faithful children of the Church against the impious and nefarious character of Communism. But We cannot contemplate without sorrow the heedlessness of those who seem to make light of these imminent dangers, and with stolid indifference allow the propagation far and wide of those doctrines which seek by violence and blood-shed the destruction of all society. Even more severely must be condemned the foolhardiness of those who neglect to remove or modify such conditions as exasperate the minds of the people and so prepare the way for the overthrow and ruin of the social order.

Socialism

The other section, which has retained the name of Socialism, is much less radical in its views. Not only does it condemn recourse to physical force; it even mitigates and moderates to some extent class warfare and the abolition of private property, if it does not reject them entirely. It would seem as if Socialism were afraid of its own principles and of the conclusion drawn therefrom by the Communists, and in consequence were drifting towards the truth which Christian tradition has always held in respect ; for it cannot be denied that its programmes often strikingly approach the just demands of Christian social reformers.

Class Warfare

Class warfare, provided it abstains from enmities and mutual hatred, is changing gradually to an honest discussion of differences, based upon the desire of social justice. If this is by no means the blessed social peace which we all long for, it can be and must be an approach towards the mutual co-operation of vocational groups. The war declared against private ownership has also abated more and more in such a way that nowadays it is not really the possession of the means of production which is attacked, but that type of social rulership, which, in violation of all justice has been seized and usurped by the owners of wealth. This rulership in fact belongs, not to the individual owners, but to the State. If these changes continue, it may well come about that gradually the tenets of mitigated Socialism will no longer be different from the programme of those who seek to reform human society according to Christian principles. For it is rightly contended that certain forms of property must be reserved to the State, since they carry with them an opportunity of domination too

great to be left to private individuals without injury to the community at large.

Just demands and desires of this kind contain nothing opposed to Christian truth, nor are they in any sense peculiar to Socialism. Those therefore who look for nothing else, have no reason for becoming Socialists.

Christian Truth Whole and Entire

It must not be imagined, however, that all the Socialist sects or factions which are not Communist have, in fact or in theory, uniformly returned to this reasonable position. For the most part they do not reject class warfare and the Christian abolition of property, but merely are more moderate in regard to them. Now, when false principles are thus mitigated and in some sense waived, the question arises, or is unwarrantably proposed in certain quarters, whether the principles of Christian truth also could not be somewhat moderated and attenuated, so as to meet Socialism, as it were, halfway upon common ground. Some are enticed by the empty hope of gaining in this way the Socialists to our cause. But such hopes are vain. Those who wish to be apostles amongst the Socialists should preach the Christian truth whole and entire, openly and sincerely, without any connivance with error. If they wish in truth to be heralds of the Gospel, let their endeavour be to convince Socialists that their demands, in so far as they are just, are defended much more cogently by the principles of Christian faith, and are promoted much more efficaciously by the power of Christian charity.

But what if, in questions of class war and private ownership, Socialism were to become so mitigated and amended, that nothing reprehensible could any longer be found in it? Would it by that very fact have laid aside its character of hostility to the Christian religion? This is a question which holds many minds in suspense; and many are the Catholics who, realizing clearly that Christian principles can never be either sacrificed or minimized, seem to be raising their eyes towards the Holy See, and earnestly beseeching Us to decide whether or not this form of Socialism has retracted so far its false doctrines that it can now be accepted without the loss of any Christian principle, and be baptized into the Church. In Our fatherly solicitude We desire to satisfy these petitions, and We pronounce as follows: Whether Socialism be considered as a doctrine, or as an historical fact, or as a movement, if it really remain Socialism, it cannot be brought into harmony with the dogmas of the Catholic Church, even after it has yielded to truth and justice in the points We have mentioned; the reason being that it conceives human society in a way utterly alien to Christian truth.

Christianity and Socialism Compared

For according to Christian doctrine, man, endowed with a social nature, is placed here on earth in order that he may spend his life in society, and under an authority ordained by God; that he may develop and evolve to the full all his faculties to the praise and glory of his Creator; and that, by fulfilling faithfully the duties of his station, he may attain to temporal and eternal happiness. Socialism, on the contrary, entirely ignorant of or unconcerned about this sublime end both of individuals and of society, affirms that living in community was instituted merely for the sake of the advantages which it brings to mankind.

Goods are produced more efficiently by a suitable distribution of labour than by the scattered efforts of individuals. Hence the Socialists argue that economic production, of which they see only the material side, must necessarily be carried on collectively, and that because of this necessity men must surrender and submit themselves wholly to society with a view to the production of wealth. Indeed, the possession of the greatest possible amount of temporal goods is esteemed so highly, that man's higher goods, not excepting liberty, must, they claim, be subordinated and ever sacrificed to the exigencies of efficient production. They affirm that the loss of human dignity, which results from these socialized methods of production, will be easily compensated for by the abundance of goods produced in common and accruing to the individual, who can turn them at his will to the comforts and culture of life. Society, therefore, as the Socialist conceives it, is on the one hand impossible and unthinkable without the use of compulsion of the most excessive kind; on the other it fosters a false liberty, since in such a scheme no place is found for true social authority, which is not based on temporal and material advantages, but descends from God alone, the Creator and last end of all things.

If, like all errors, Socialism contains a certain element of truth (and this the Sovereign Pontiffs have never denied), it

is, nevertheless, founded upon a doctrine of human society peculiarly its own, which is opposed to true Christianity. "Religious Socialism," "Christian Socialism," are expressions implying a contradiction in terms. No one can be at the same time a sincere Catholic and a true Socialist.

THE SOCIALIST ERROR THAT ALL MEN ARE EQUAL

[From the Encyclical Letter of Leo XIII
"Quod Apostolici Muneris" 28th December, 1878]

The Real Equality of Men

FOR ALTHOUGH the Socialists, turning to evil use the Gospel itself so as to deceive more readily the unwary, have been wont to twist it to their meaning, still so striking is the disagreement between their criminal teachings and the pure doctrine of Christ, that no greater can exist: "For what participation hath justice with injustice, or what fellowship hath light with darkness?" (2 Cor. Vi. 14). They in good sooth cease not from asserting—as We have already mentioned—that all men are by nature equal, and hence they contend that neither honour nor respect is owed to public authority, nor any obedience to the laws, saving perhaps to those which have been sanctioned according to their good pleasure. Contrariwise, from the Gospel records equality among men consists in this, that one and all, possessing the same nature, are called to the sublime dignity of being sons of God; and, moreover, that one and the same end being set before all, each and every one has to be judged according to the same laws and to have punishments or rewards meted out according to individual deserts. There is, however, an inequality of right and authority which emanates from the Author of nature Himself, "of whom all paternity in heaven and earth is named." (Eph. iii. 15). As regards rulers and subjects, all without exception, according to Catholic teaching and precept, are mutually bound by duties and rights, in such manner that, on the one hand, moderation is enjoined on the appetite for power, and on the other, obedience is shown to be easy, stable and wholly honourable.

The Teaching of The Church

Therefore does the Church constantly urge upon each and all who are subject to her the apostolic precept: "There is no power but from God; and those that are, are ordained of God. Therefore he that resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God. And they that resist, purchase to themselves damnation." And again, "Be subject of necessity, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. And render to all men their dues. Tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour." (Rom. xiii, 1, 2, 5, 7). For He who has created and governs all things has in His provident wisdom so disposed them that the lowest attain to their end by the middle-most, and the middlemost by the highest. Just then, as the Almighty willed that, in the heavenly kingdom itself, the choirs of angels should be of different ranks, subordinated the one to the other; again, just as in the Church God has established different grades of orders with diversity of functions, so that all should not be "Apostles, all not Prophets, all not Doctors;" (1 Cor. xii. 29); so also has He established in Civil Society many orders of varying dignity, right and power. And this to the end that the State, like the Church, should form one body comprising many members, some excelling others in rank and importance, but all alike necessary to one another and solicitous for the common welfare.

[On the same subject, from the Encyclical of Leo XIII "Rerum Novarum" 15th May, 1891]

Men Different by Nature

IT MUST BE first of all recognised that the condition of things inherent in human affairs must be borne with, for it is impossible to reduce civil society to one dead level. Socialists may in that event do their utmost, but all striving against nature is in vain. There naturally exist among mankind manifold differences of the most important kind; people differ in capacity, skill, health, strength; and unequal fortune is a necessary result of unequal condition. Such inequality is far from

being disadvantageous either to individuals or to the community. Social and public life can only be maintained by means of various kinds of capacity for business and the playing of many parts; and each man, as a rule, chooses the part which suits his own peculiar domestic condition. As regards bodily labour, even had man never fallen from the state of innocence, he could not have remained wholly unoccupied; but that which would then have been his free choice and his delight, became afterwards compulsory, and the painful expiation for his disobedience. "Cursed be the earth in thy work; in thy labour thou shalt eat of it all the days of thy life." (Gen. iii. 17).

In like manner, the other pains and hardships of life will have no end or cessation on earth; for the consequences of sin are bitter and hard to bear, and they must accompany man so long as life lasts. To suffer and to endure, therefore, is the lot of humanity; let them strive as they may, no strength and no artifice will ever succeed in banishing from human life the ills and troubles which beset it. If any there are who pretend differently—who hold out to a hard-pressed people the boon of freedom from pain and trouble, an undisturbed repose, and constant enjoyment—they delude the people and impose upon them, and their lying promises will only one day bring forth evils worse than the present. Nothing is more useful than to look upon the world as it really is—and at the same time to seek elsewhere, as we have said, for the solace to its troubles.

THE CHURCH UPHOLDS THE RIGHT TO OWN PROPERTY

[From the Encyclical Letter of Leo XIII "Rerum Novarum," 15th May, 1891]

Man and Animal Creation

EVERY MAN has by nature the right to possess property as his own. This is one of the chief points of distinction between man and the animal creation, for the brute has no power of self-direction, but is governed by two main instincts, which keep his powers on the alert, impel him to develop them in a fitting manner, and stimulate and determine him to action without any power of choice. One of these instincts is self-preservation, the other the propagation of the species. Both can attain their purpose by means of things which lie within range; beyond their verge the brute creation cannot go, for they are moved to action by their senses only, and in the special direction which these suggest. But with man it is wholly different. He possesses, on the one hand, the full perfection of the animal being, and hence enjoys, at least as much as the rest of the animal kind, the fruition of things material. But animal nature, however perfect, is far from representing the human being in its completeness, and is in truth but humanity's humble handmaid, made to serve and to obey. It is the mind, or reason, which is the predominant element in us who are human creatures; it is this which renders a human being human, and distinguishes him essentially from the brute. And on this very account—that man alone among the animal creation is endowed with reason—it must be within his right to possess things not merely for temporary and momentary use, as other living things do, but to have and to hold them in stable and permanent possession; he must have not only things that perish in the use, but those also which, though they have been reduced into use, continue for further use in after time.

Man must Think of the Future

This becomes still more clearly evident if man's nature be considered a little more deeply. For man, fathoming by his faculty of reason matters without number, linking the future with the present, and being master of his own acts, guides his ways under the eternal law and the power of God, whose Providence governs all things. Wherefore it is in power to exercise his choice not only as to matters that regard his present welfare, but also about those which he deems may be for his advantage in time yet to come. Hence man not only should possess the fruits of the earth, but also the very soil, inasmuch as from the produce of the earth he has to lay by provision for the future. Man's needs do not die out, but for ever recur; although satisfied to-day, they demand fresh supplies to-morrow. Nature accordingly must have given to man a source that is stable and remaining always with him from which he might look to draw continual supplies. And this stable condition of things he finds solely in the earth and its fruits.

Man Precedes the State

There is no need to bring in the State. Man precedes the State, and possesses, prior to the formation of any State, the right of providing for the sustenance of his body. The fact that God has given the earth for the use and enjoyment of the whole human race can in no way be a bar to the owning of private property. For God has granted the earth to mankind in general, not in the sense that all without distinction can deal with it as they like, but rather that no part of it was assigned to any one in particular, and that the limits of private possession have been left to be fixed by man's own industry, and by the laws of individual races. Moreover, the earth, even though apportioned among private owners, ceases not thereby to minister to the needs of all, inasmuch as there is no one who does not sustain life from what the land produces. Those who do not possess the soil, contribute their labour; hence it may truly be said that all human subsistence is derived either from labour on one's own land, or from some toil, some calling which is paid for either in the produce of the land itself, or in that which is exchanged for what the land brings forth.

Here again, we have further proof that private ownership is in accordance with the law of nature. Truly, that which is required for the preservation of life, and for life's well-being, is produced in great abundance from the soil, but not until man has brought it into cultivation and expended upon it his solicitude and skill. Now, when man turns the activity of his mind and the strength of his body towards procuring the fruits of nature, by such act he makes his own that portion of nature's field which he cultivates—that portion on which he leaves as it were, the impress of his individuality; and it cannot but be just that he should possess that portion as his very own, and have a right to hold it without anyone being justified in violating that right.

The Results of Labour

So strong and convincing are these arguments, that it seems amazing that some should now be setting up anew certain obsolete opinions in opposition to what is here laid down.

They assert that it is right for private persons to have the use of the soil and its various fruits, but that it is unjust for any one to possess outright either the land on which he has built, or the estate which he has brought under cultivation. But those who deny these rights do not perceive that they are defrauding man of what his own labour has produced. For the soil which is tilled and cultivated with toil and skill utterly changes its condition; it was wild before, now it is fruitful; was barren, but now brings forth in abundance. That which has thus altered and improved the land becomes so truly part of itself as to be in great measure indistinguishable and inseparable from it. Is it just that the fruit of a man's own sweat and labour should be possessed and enjoyed by any one else? As effects follow their cause, so is it just and right that the results of labour should belong to those who have bestowed their labour.

Ownership in Conformity with Human Nature

With reason then, the common opinion of mankind, little affected by the few dissentients who have contended for the opposite view, has found in the careful study of nature, and in the laws of nature, the foundations of the division of property, and the practice of all ages has consecrated the principles of private ownership, as being pre-eminently in conformity with human nature, and as conducing in the most unmistakable manner to the peace and tranquillity of human existence. The same principle is confirmed and enforced by the civil laws—laws which, so long as they are just, derive from the law of nature their binding force. The authority of the Divine Law adds its sanction, forbidding us in severest terms even to covet that which is another's: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife; nor his house, nor his field, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is his." (Deut. v. 21).

That right to property, therefore, which has been proved to belong naturally to individual persons, must in like wise belong to a man in his capacity of head of a family; nay, that right is all the more valid in proportion as human personality in the life of the family takes various forms. For it is a most sacred law of nature that a father should provide food and all necessaries for those whom he has begotten; and similarly it is natural that he should wish that his children, who carry on, so to speak, and continue his personality, should be by him provided with all that is needful to enable them

to keep themselves decently from want and misery amid the uncertainties of this mortal life. Now, in no other way can a father effect this except by the ownership of productive property, which he can transmit to his children by inheritance. A family, no less than a State, is, as We have said, a true society, governed by an authority peculiar to itself, that is to say, by the authority of the father. Provided, therefore, the limits which are prescribed by the very purposes for which it exists be not transgressed, the family has at least equal rights with the State in the choice and pursuit of the things needful to its preservation and its just liberty.

THE CHURCH TEACHES THAT CLASS WAR IS WRONG

[From the Encyclical of Leo XIII " Rerum Novarum," 15th May, 1891]

A False Notion

THE GREAT MISTAKE made in regard to the matter now under consideration, is to take up with the notion that class is naturally hostile to class, and that the wealthy and the working men are intended by nature to live in mutual conflict. So irrational and so false is this view, that the direct contrary is the truth. Just as the symmetry of the human frame is the result of the suitable arrangement of the different parts of the body, so in a State is it ordained by nature that these two classes should dwell in harmony and agreement, so as to maintain the balance of the body politic. Each needs the other; Capital cannot do without Labour, nor Labour without Capital. Mutual agreement results in the beauty of good order; while perpetual conflict necessarily produces confusion and savage barbarity. Now in preventing such strife as this, and in uprooting it, the efficacy of Christian institutions is marvellous and manifold. First of all, there is no intermediary more powerful than Religion (whereof the Church is the interpreter and guardian) in drawing the rich and the working class together, by reminding each of its duties to the other, and especially of the obligations of justice. Thus Religion teaches the labourer and the artisan to carry out honestly and fairly all equitable agreements freely entered into; never to injure the property, nor to outrage the person of an employer; never to resort to violence in defending their own cause, nor to engage in riot or disorder; and to have nothing to do with men of evil principles, who work upon the people with artful promises of great results, and excite foolish hopes which usually end in useless regrets and grievous loss.

The Dignity of the Workman

Religion teaches the wealthy owner and the employer that their work-people are not to be accounted their bondsmen; that in every man they must respect his dignity and worth as a man and as a Christian; that labour for wages is not a thing to be ashamed of, if we lend ear to right reason and to Christian philosophy, but is to a man's credit, enabling him to earn his living in an honourable way ; and that it is shameful and inhuman to treat men like chattels to make money by, or to look upon them merely as so much muscle or physical strength. Again the Church teaches that, in dealing with the workingman religion and the good of his soul must be kept in mind. Hence the employer is bound to see that the worker has time for his religious duties; that he be not exposed to corrupting influences and dangerous occasions; and that he be not led away to neglect his home and family, or to squander his earnings. Furthermore, the employer must never tax his work-people beyond their strength, or employ them in work unsuited to their sex or age.

Duties of the Employer

His great and principal duty is to give every one what is just. Doubtless before deciding whether wages are fair, many things have to be considered; but wealthy owners and all masters of labour should be mindful of this that to exercise pressure upon the indigent and the destitute for the sake of gain, and to gather one's profit out of the need of another, is condemned by all laws, human and divine. To defraud any one of wages that are his due is a crime which cries to the avenging anger of Heaven. "Behold the hire of the labourers . . . which by fraud has been kept back by you, crieth, and the cry of them hath entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." (James v. 4). Lastly, the rich must religiously refrain from cutting down the workmen's earnings, whether by force, by fraud, or by usurious dealing; and with all the greater reason

because the labouring man is, as a rule, weak and unprotected, and because his slender means should in proportion to their scantiness be accounted sacred.

Were these precepts carefully obeyed and followed out, would they not be sufficient of themselves to keep under all strife and all its causes?

THE RIGHT USE OF MONEY

[From the Encyclical of Leo XIII "Rerum Novarum" 15th May, 1891]

THE CHIEF and most excellent rule for the right use of money rests on the principle that it is one thing to have a right to the possession of money, and another to have a right to use money as one wills. Private ownership, as we have seen, is the natural right of man; and to exercise that right, especially as members of society, is not only lawful, but absolutely necessary. "It is lawful," says St. Thomas of Aquinas, "for a man to hold private property, and it is also necessary for the carrying on of human existence." But if the question be asked, "how must one's possessions be used?", the Church replies without hesitation in the words of the same holy Doctor: "Man should not consider his material possessions as his own, but as common to all, so as to share them without hesitation when others are in need. Whence the Apostle saith, Command the rich of this world . . . to offer with no stint, to apportion largely." True, no one is commanded to distribute to others that which is required for his own needs and those of his household; nor even to give away what is reasonably required to keep up becomingly his condition in life; "for no one ought to live other than becomingly." But when what necessity demands has been supplied, and one's standing fairly taken thought for, it becomes a duty to give to the indigent out of what remains over. "Of that which remaineth give alms." (Luke xi. 41).

Christian Charity

It is a duty, not of justice (save in extreme cases), but of Christian charity—a duty not enforced by human law. But the laws and judgments of men must yield place to the laws and judgments of Christ the true God, who in many ways urges on His followers the practice of almsgiving—"It is more blessed to give than to receive;" (Acts xx. 35) ; and who will count a kindness done or refused to the poor as done or refused to Himself—"As long as you did it to one of My least brethren you did it to Me." (Matt. xxv. 40). To sum up then what has been said: Whoever has received from the Divine bounty a large share of temporal blessings, whether they be external and material, or gifts of the mind, has received them for the purpose of using them for the perfecting of his own nature, and, at the same time, that he may employ them, as the steward of God's Providence, for the benefit of others. "He that hath a talent," says St. Gregory the Great, "let him see that he hide it not ; he that hath abundance let him quicken himself to mercy and generosity ; he that hath art and skill, let him do his best to share the use and the utility thereof with his neighbour " (St. Greg. the Great, Hom. ix in Evangel. n.7).

THE CHURCH CHAMPIONS THE POOR

[From the Encyclical Letter "Rerum Novarum" 15th May, 1891]

Christian Morality

NEITHER MUST IT be supposed that the solicitude of the Church is so preoccupied with the spiritual concerns of her children as to neglect their temporal and earthly interests. Her desire is that the poor, for example, should rise above poverty and wretchedness, and better, their condition in life; and for this she makes a strong endeavour. By the very fact that she calls men to virtue and forms them to its practice, she pro-motes this in no slight degree. Christian morality, when adequately and completely practised, leads of itself to temporal prosperity, for it merits the blessing of that God who is the source of all blessings; it powerfully restrains the greed of possession and the thirst for pleasure—twin plagues, which too often make a man who is void of self-restraint miserable in the midst of abundance ; it makes men supply for the lack of means through economy, teaching them to be content with frugal living, and further, keeping them out of the reach of

those vices which devour not small incomes merely, but large fortunes, and dissipate many a goodly inheritance.

The Early Christians

The Church, moreover, intervenes directly in behalf of the poor, by setting on foot and maintaining many associations which she knows to be efficient for the relief of poverty. Herein again she has always succeeded so well as to have even extorted the praise of her enemies. Such was the ardour of brotherly love among the earliest Christians that numbers of those who were in better circumstances despoiled themselves of their possessions in order to relieve their brethren; whence "neither was there any one needy among them." (Acts iv. 34). To the order of deacons, instituted in that very intent, was committed by the Apostles the charge of the daily doles; and the Apostle Paul, though burdened with the solicitude of all the churches, hesitated not to undertake laborious journeys in order to carry the alms of the faithful to the poorer Christians. Tertullian calls these contributions, given voluntarily by Christians in their assemblies, deposits of piety; because, to cite his own words, they were employed "in feeding the needy, in burying them, in the support of youths and maidens destitute of means and deprived of their parents, in the care of the aged, and the relief of the shipwrecked." (Apologia Secunda, xxxix.)

The Charity of the Church

Thus by degrees came into existence the patrimony which the Church has guarded with religious care as the inheritance of the poor. Nay, to spare them the shame of begging, the common Mother of rich and poor has exerted herself to gather together funds for the support of the needy. The Church has aroused everywhere the heroism of charity, and has established congregations of religious and many other useful institutions for help and mercy, so that hardly any kind of suffering could exist which was not afforded relief. At the present day many there are who, like the heathen of old, seek to blame and condemn the Church for such eminent charity. They would substitute in its stead a system of relief organized by the State. But no human expedients will ever make up for the devotedness and self-sacrifice of Christian charity. Charity, as a virtue, pertains to the Church; for virtue it is not unless it be drawn from the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ; and whosoever turns his back on the Church cannot be near to Christ.

It cannot, however, be doubted that to attain the purpose we are treating of, not only the Church, but all human agencies must concur. All who are concerned in the matter should be of one mind and according to their ability act together.

ON STRIKES

[From the Encyclical of Leo XIII "Rerum Novarum," 15th May, 1891]

WHEN WORKPEOPLE have recourse to a strike, it is frequently because the hours of labour are too long, or the work too hard, or because they consider their wages insufficient. The grave inconvenience of this not uncommon occurrence should' be, obviated by public remedial measures; for such paralyzing of labour not only affects the masters and their workpeople alike, but is extremely injurious to trade and to the general interests of the public ; moreover, on such occasions, violence and disorder are generally not far distant, and thus it frequently happens that the public peace is imperilled. The laws should forestall and prevent such troubles from arising; they should lend their influence and authority to the removal in good time of the causes which lead to conflicts between employers and employed.

THE LIVING WAGE

From the Encyclical of Leo XIII "Rerum Novarum," 15th May, 1891]

WE NOW APPROACH a subject of great importance, and one in respect of which, if extremes are to be avoided, right notions are absolutely necessary. Wages as we are told, are regulated by free consent and therefore the employer, when he

pays what was agreed upon, has done his part and seemingly is not called upon to do anything beyond. The only way, it is said, in which injustice might occur would be if the master refused to pay the whole of the wages, or if the workman should not complete the work undertaken ; in such cases the State should intervene to see that each obtains his due ; but not under any other circumstances.

Two Characters of Labour

To this kind of argument a fair-minded man will not easily or entirely assent: it is not complete, for there are important considerations which it leaves out of account altogether. To labour is to exert oneself for the sake of procuring what is necessary for the various purposes of life, and chief of all for self-preservation. "In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread." (Gen. iii. Iq). Hence a man's labour necessarily bears two notes or characters. First of all, it is personal, inasmuch as the force which acts is bound up with the personality and is the exclusive property of him who acts, and further, was given to him for his advantage. Secondly, man's labour is necessary, for without the result of labour a man cannot live; and self-preservation is a law of nature which it is wrong to disobey. Now, were we to consider labour merely in so far as it is personal, doubtless it would be within the work-man's right to accept any rate of wages whatsoever; for in the same way as he is free to work or not, so is he free to accept a small wage or even none at all. But our conclusion must be very different if together with the personal element in a man's work we consider the fact that work is also necessary for him to live : these two aspects of his work are separable in thought, but not in reality. The preservation of life is the bounden duty of one and all and to be wanting therein is a crime. It necessarily follows that each one has a natural right to procure what is required in order to live ; and the poor can procure that in no other way than by what they earn through their work.

A Dictate of Natural Justice

Let the working man and the employer make free agreements and in particular let them agree freely as to the wages; nevertheless, there underlies a dictate of natural justice more imperious and ancient than any bargain between man and man, namely, that wages ought not to be insufficient to support a frugal and well-behaved wage-earner. If through necessity or fear of a worse evil the workman accept harder conditions because an employer or contractor will afford him no better, he is made the victim of force and injustice. In these and similar questions, however—such as for example, the hours of labour in different trades, the sanitary precautions to be observed in factories and workshops, etc.—in order to supersede undue interference on the part of the State, especially as circumstances, times and localities differ so widely, it is advisable that recourse be had to Societies or Boards such as We shall mention presently, or to some other mode of safeguarding the interests of the wage-earners ; the State being appealed to, should circumstances require, for its sanction and protection.

Thrift

If a workman's wages be sufficient to enable him comfortably to support himself, his wife and his children, he will find it easy, if he be a sensible man, to practise thrift ; and he will not fail, by cutting down expenses, to put by some little savings and thus secure a modest source of income. Nature itself would urge him to this. We have seen that this great labour question cannot be solved; save by assuming as a principle that private ownership must be held sacred and inviolable. The law, therefore, should favour ownership, and its policy should be to induce as many as possible of the people to become owners.

Excellent Results

Many excellent results will follow from this and first of all, property will certainly become more equitably divided. For the result of civil change and revolution has been to divide society into two widely differing castes. On the one side there is the party which holds power because it holds wealth ; which has in its grasp the whole of labour and trade; which manipulates for its own benefit and its own purpose all the sources of supply, and which is even represented in the

councils of the State itself. On the other side there is the needy and powerless multitude, sick and sore in spirit and ever ready for disturbance. If working people can be encouraged to look forward to obtaining a share in the land, the consequence will be that the gulf between vast wealth and sheer poverty will be bridged over, and the respective classes will be brought nearer to one another.

A further consequence will result in the greater abundance of the fruits of the earth. Men will always work harder and more readily when they work on that which belongs to them; nay, they learn to love the very soil that yields in response to the labour of their hands, not only food to eat, but an abundance of good things for themselves and those that are dear to them. That such a spirit of willing labour would add to the produce of the earth and to the wealth of the community is self-evident. And a third advantage would spring from this : men would cling to the country in which they were born ; for no one would exchange his country for a foreign land if his own afforded him the means of living a decent and happy life. These three important benefits, however, can be reckoned on only provided that a man's means be not drained and exhausted by excessive taxation. The right to possess private property is derived from nature, not from man; and the State has the right to control its use in the interests of the public good alone, but by no means to absorb it altogether. The State would therefore be unjust and cruel if under the name of taxation it were to deprive the private owner of more than is fair.

[On the same subject taken from the Encyclical " Quadragesimo Anno" by Pius XI, 15th May, 1931]

A Social and Personal Aspect

THE OBVIOUS TRUTH is that in labour, especially hired labour, as in ownership, there is a social as well as a personal or individual aspect to be considered. For unless human society forms a truly social and organic body; unless labour be protected in the social and judicial order; unless the various forms of human endeavour, dependent one upon the other, are united in mutual harmony and mutual support; unless above all, brains, capital and labour combine together for common effort, man's toil cannot produce due fruit. Hence if the social and individual character of labour be overlooked, it can be neither equitably appraised nor properly recompensed according to strict justice.

From this double aspect, growing out of the very notion of human labour, follow important conclusions for the regulation and fixing of wages.

The First Consideration

In the first place, the wage paid to the working man must be sufficient for the support of himself and of his family. It is right indeed that the rest of the family contribute according to their power towards the common maintenance, as in the rural home or in the families of many artisans and small shopkeepers. But it is wrong to abuse the tender years of children or the weakness of woman. Mothers will above all devote their work to the home and the things connected with it. Intolerable and to be opposed with all our strength, is the abuse whereby mothers of families, because of the insufficiency of the father's salary are forced to engage in gainful occupations outside the domestic walls, to the neglect of their own proper cares and duties, particularly the education of their children.

Every effort must therefore be made that fathers of families receive a wage sufficient to meet adequately ordinary domestic needs. If in the present state of society this is not always feasible, social justice demands that reforms be introduced without delay which will guarantee every adult workingman just such a wage. In this connection We might utter a word of praise for various systems devised and attempted in practice, by which an increased wage is paid in view of increased family burdens, and a special provision is made for special needs.

The Condition of the Business

The condition of any particular business and of its owner must also come into question in settling the scale of wages; for it is unjust to demand wages so high that an employer cannot pay them without ruin, and without consequent distress amongst the working people themselves. If the business make smaller profit on account of bad management, want of

enterprise, or out-of-date methods, this is not a just reason for reducing the workingmen's wages. If, however, the business does not make enough money to pay the workman a just wage, either because it is overwhelmed with unjust burdens, or because it is compelled to sell its products at an unjustly low price, those who thus injure it are guilty of grievous wrong; for it is they who deprive the workingmen of the just wage, and force them to accept lower terms.

Let employers, therefore, and employed join in their plans and efforts to overcome all difficulties and obstacles, and let them be aided in this wholesome endeavour by the wise measures of the public authority. In the last extreme, counsel must be taken whether the business can continue, or whether some other provision should be made for the workers. The guiding spirit in this crucial decision should be one of mutual understanding and Christian harmony between employers and workers.

The Wage-Scale

Finally, the wage-scale must be regulated with a view to the economic welfare of the whole people. We have already shown how conducive it is to the common good that wage-earners of all kinds be enabled by economizing that portion of their wage which remains after necessary expenses have been met, to attain to the possession of a certain modest fortune. Another point, however, of no less importance must not be overlooked, in these our days especially, namely that opportunities for work be provided for those willing and able to work. This depends in large measure upon the scale of wages, which multiplies opportunities for work as long as it remains within proper limits and reduces them if allowed to pass these limits. All are aware that a scale of wages too low, no, less than a scale excessively high, causes unemployment. Now, unemployment, particularly if widespread and of long duration, as we have been forced to experience it during our Pontificate is a dreadful scourge; it causes misery and temptation to the labourer, ruins the prosperity of nations, and endangers public order, peace and tranquillity the world over. To lower or raise wages unduly, with a view to private profit, and with no consideration for the common good, is contrary to social justice which demands that by union of effort and good will such a scale of wages be set up, if possible, as to offer to the greatest number opportunities of employment and of securing for themselves suitable means of livelihood.

An Harmonious Proportion

A reasonable relationship between different wages here enters into consideration. Intimately connected with this is a reasonable relationship between the prices obtained for the products of the various economic groups: agrarian, industrial, etc. Where this harmonious proportion is kept, man's various economic activities combine and unite into one single organism and become members of a common body, lending each other mutual help and service. For then only will the economic and social organism be soundly established and attain its end, when it secures for all and each those goods which the wealth and resources of nature, technical achievement, and the social organization of economic affairs can give. These goods should be sufficient to supply all needs and an honest livelihood, and to uplift men to that higher level of prosperity and culture which, provided it be used with prudence, is not only no hindrance but is of singular help to virtue.

ON THE UNJUST CLAIMS OF CAPITAL AND OF LABOUR AND THE PRINCIPLE OF JUST DISTRIBUTION

[From the Encyclical "Quadragesimo Anno" of Pius XI, 15th May, 1931]

Right Order

Now THE NATURAL LAW, or rather, God's will manifested by it, demands that right order be observed in the application of natural resources to human needs; and this order consists in everything having its proper owner. Hence it follows that unless a man apply his labour to his own property, an alliance must be formed between his toil and his neighbour's property for each is helpless without the other. This was what Leo XIII had in mind when he wrote: "Capital cannot do without Labour, nor Labour without Capital." It is therefore entirely false to ascribe the results of their

combined efforts to either party alone and it is flagrantly unjust that either should deny the efficacy of the other and seize all the profits.

Excessive Advantages

Capital, however, was long able to appropriate to itself excessive advantages; it claimed all the products and profits, and left to the labourer the barest minimum necessary to repair his strength and to ensure the continuation of his class. For by an inexorable economic law it was held, all accumulation of riches must fall to the share of the wealthy, while the workingman must remain perpetually in indigence or reduced to the minimum needed for existence. It is true that the actual state of things was not always and everywhere as deplorable as the liberalistic tenets of the so-called Manchester school might lead us to conclude; but it cannot be denied that a steady drift of economic and social tendencies was in this direction. These false opinions and specious axioms were vehemently attacked, as was to be expected, and by others also than merely those whom such principles deprived of their innate right to better their condition.

The False Moral Principle

The cause of the harrassed workingman was espoused by the "intellectuals," as they are called, who set up in opposition to this fictitious law another equally false moral principle: that all products and profits, excepting those required to repair and replace invested capital, belong by every right to the workingman. This error, more subtle than that of the Socialists, who hold that all means of production should be transferred to the State (or as they term it, socialized), is for that reason more dangerous and apt to deceive the unwary. It is an alluring poison consumed with avidity by many not deceived by open Socialism.

To prevent erroneous doctrines of this kind from blocking the path of justice and peace, the advocates of these opinions should have harkened to the wise words of Our Predecessor: "The earth, even though apportioned amongst private owners, ceases not thereby to minister to the needs of all." This teaching We Ourselves have re-affirmed above, when We wrote that the division of goods, which is effected by private owner-ship, is ordained by nature itself, and has for its purpose that created things may minister to man's needs in an orderly and stable fashion. These principles must be constantly borne in mind, if we would not wander from the path of truth.

The Common Good of All

Now, not every kind of distribution of wealth and property amongst men is such that it can at all, and still less can adequately, attain the end intended by God. Wealth, therefore, which is constantly being augmented by social and economic progress must be so distributed amongst the various individuals and classes of society, that the common good of all, of which Leo XIII spoke, be thereby promoted. In other words, the good of the whole community must be safeguarded. By these principles of social justice, one class is forbidden to exclude the other from a share in the profits. This sacred law is violated by an irresponsible wealthy class who, in the excess of their good fortune, deem it a just state of things that they should receive everything and the labourer nothing; it is violated also by a propertyless wage-earning class who demand for themselves all the fruits of production. as being the work of their hands. Such men, vehemently incensed against the violation of justice by capitalists, go too far in vindicating the one right of which they are conscious; they attack and seek to abolish all forms of ownership and all profits not obtained by labour, whatever be their nature or significance in human society, for the sole reason that they are not acquired by toil. In this connection it must be noted that the appeal made by some to the words of the Apostle: "If any man will not work, neither let him eat," (2 Thess. iii. to) is as inept as it is unfounded. The Apostle is here passing judgment on those who refuse to work though they could and ought to do so; he admonishes us to use diligently our time and our powers of body and mind, and not to become burdensome to others as long as we are able to provide for ourselves. In no sense does he teach that labour is the sole title which gives a right to a living or to profits.

Each class then must receive its due share, and the distribution of created goods must be brought into conformity with

the demands of the common good and social justice. For every sincere observer is conscious that the vast differences between the few who hold excessive wealth and the many who live in destitution constitute a grave evil in modern society.

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