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The Fiftieth Anniversary of the *Rerum Novarum*

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ON 1 June 1941 the Sovereign Pontiff Pope Pius XII broadcast a Message to the Catholic world on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the publication by Pope Leo XIII of the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*.¹

While in the present circumstances any celebration must necessarily be reduced to a minimum, it was nevertheless felt that the event should be marked in a positive manner. The Encyclical of 15 May 1891 has, in fact, always been regarded as the Charter of the Catholic social movement. Not that it actually gave rise to the movement, nor was it the unprepared outcome of some kind of spontaneous generation. As a clear-sighted observer, Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu, has so rightly said, precisely in speaking of the *Rerum Novarum*:

The Church today, as in the Middle Ages, is a living body, composed of living members and organs, which from one extremity to the other of that gigantic body retain the great quality of spontaneity of life. Rome is not the centre from which everything springs; it is the centre to which everything converges and which co-ordinates every movement.²

Before the Encyclical appeared members of the clergy and the laity alike had been moved in most European countries by the sad state to which the working classes had been reduced. Faced with the grave new problems created by the Industrial Revolution, they had tried to find a solution in conformity with the doctrine of the Gospel. Mgr. Ketteler in Germany, Descurtins in Switzerland,

¹ Excerpts from the principal passages of the Message are given in *International Labour Review*, Vol. XLIII, No. 6, June 1941, pp. 701-704.

² Anatole LEROY-BEAULIEU: *La papauté, le socialisme et la démocratie*, p. 42.

Albert de Mun in France, Cardinal Manning in England, Vogelsang in Austria, to mention only a few names, had preached against the crying abuses of the times and had championed a social order founded on justice.

In the United States an even more forceful voice had been raised, that of Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore, in the resounding case of the Knights of Labour. Faint-hearts thought it deplorable that Catholic workers should join this body in large numbers, and in particular they feared the secrecy that was imposed. Cardinal Gibbons without hesitation took up the defence of the accused, demanded for them the free right to combine, and had no difficulty in showing that the required secrecy was merely an elementary precaution against the hostility of certain employers. With rare perspicacity, he expected but a short life for this association which brought together all kinds of workers indiscriminately, irrespective of trade or occupation. He saw in the issue at stake not a particular case, but a question of principle. The reply of Rome, which gave full satisfaction to the American Cardinal's wishes, thus constituted a definite commitment. A general doctrine had been outlined. It was quite natural that it should be set forth in full detail in a document intended for the Universal Church.

But even though the Catholic social movement had shown its vitality already before the *Rerum Novarum* was published, the fact remains that the Encyclical gave it a new impulse. The Encyclical may rightly be regarded as the wellspring of that uninterrupted flow of social studies and measures which has marked the life of the Church during the last fifty years. It has given rise to an abundant literature, devoted solely to commenting on and spreading its doctrine. Special chairs have been dedicated to it at Catholic universities and seminaries; numerous congresses, social weeks, and study circles have been held to delve more deeply into its teaching; Christian trade unions, the specialised Jocist and Jacist youth movements (*Jeunesse ouvrière chrétienne*—Christian Workers' Youth Movement; *Jeunesse agricole chrétienne*—Christian Rural Youth Movement), mutual aid societies, employers', engineers', and handicraftsmen's associations of all kinds have no other aspiration than to put into practice the principles laid down in Leo XIII's document. Pope Pius XI himself, when he published the Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*¹ in 1931, linked it up directly with that document. Far from wishing to make innovations, and still less, corrections, he pointed out that the new Encyclical aimed merely at advancing on the road

¹ Cf. *Industrial and Labour Information*, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 13, 29 June 1931, pp. 483-487.

already mapped out, at explaining and settling points under discussion, and above all at interpreting the immutable doctrine of the Church in the light of new needs.

From the *Rerum Novarum* to the Message of 1 June, passing through the *Quadragesimo Anno* and the Encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* on atheistic Communism, the line is unbroken.¹ The ever-recurring problems springing from the evolution of economic and social conditions will always be examined and judged in the light of the same principles, those which Leo XIII laid down once for all, or—to speak more accurately—those which he thought it advisable to bring to mind again, since they are as old as the Gospel itself. It is the facts that have changed; but the doctrine in its integrity was established twenty centuries ago. It is complete, and it suffices as a rule for man's every activity; what remains is to apply it in the manner called for by the needs of the times.

It would therefore be mistaken to look on the Encyclicals as a source of ready-made formulae giving an answer to every question, and to believe that they only need to be copied word-for-word to bring about an economic and social order infused at once with the breath of life. Their aim is at once more modest and more elevated. They lay no claim to form a complete system and to give an answer in technical matters, since these lie outside the competence of religious authority. Even though the Church claims the right to survey all human actions, and even though she can very truly say that nought that is human is alien to her, this does not mean that she proposes to exceed her own proper domain. Economic and social affairs concern her only because they are closely bound up with the moral and spiritual side of things. She can never agree that any man—and a Christian even less than others—may divide his life into two halves: his private life, subject to the prescriptions of moral law; and his public or business life, where so-called economic laws reign ineluctable and supreme. The Church recognises only one morality, and this, she affirms, should govern man's every activity. When she pronounces judgment on the various conflicting schools of thought, she is in fact guided ultimately by spiritual considerations alone. If she finds that the measures they propose are unacceptable, she is not thereby asserting that such measures would fail to secure the production of a sufficiency, or even of the greatest possible amount, of wealth, but only that they are opposed to certain spiritual values which the Church cannot renounce. Man does not live by bread

¹For the sake of convenience the following abbreviations will be used throughout the rest of this article: *R.N.* for *Rerum Novarum* (1891); *Q.A.* for *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931); *D.R.* for *Divini Redemptoris* (1937); *P.M.* for the Papal Message of 1 June 1941.

alone. The economic and social order must be such as to secure his bread for every man, but at the same time it must respect those other values which are the inalienable prerogatives of human nature. "Economic science is guided by its own principles. The laws of economics determine what aims are unattainable or attainable and what means are therefore necessary" (*Q.A.*). But these particular aims are "subordinate to the supreme aims of man" (*Q.A.*), and must be in complete harmony with them. This is the angle from which the Church regards the social question. Hence it is the object of the Encyclicals to determine those essential principles neglect of which lies at the root of the evils afflicting the modern world and which must be re-established in full if a remedy for these evils is to be found. The object is only to prevent any "mistake as to the principles which truth and justice dictate" (*R.N.*) for the settlement of the social question. Practical measures are left to the free initiative of Governments, groups, and individuals, and may vary widely in character. Indeed, even within the Catholic social movement there are a number of tendencies and schools, all of which can legitimately claim to derive from the doctrine of the Encyclicals.

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One great principle dominates the whole teaching of the Church in social questions, and is the clue to the position that she has adopted towards such matters as property rights, wages and conditions of employment, occupational organisation, and State intervention. In each case the position taken up is the logical and direct consequence of the principle of the eminent dignity of human personality, and therefore of the dignity of the worker as a person. That principle will serve as a guide for the following brief review of these various questions: they are the most important of those dealt with in the Encyclicals, and it is to the reply given to them that Christian social doctrine owes its essential features.

HUMAN DIGNITY

No point could be more urgently stressed in the Encyclicals than the respect for human dignity:

Religion teaches the rich man and the employer that their workpeople are not their slaves; that they must respect in every man his dignity as a man and as a Christian; that labour is nothing to be ashamed of, if we listen to right reason and to Christian philosophy, but is an honourable employment, enabling a man to sustain his life in an upright and creditable 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 power (*R.N.*).

The wage earner is not to receive as alms what is his due in justice. The very dignity of the working man makes him justly and acutely sensitive to the duties of others in his regard (*D.R.*).

Leo XIII went even further and did not hesitate to call on God Himself for an example: "No man may outrage with impunity that human dignity which God Himself treats with reverence" (*R.N.*).

The point is that this is no mere question of sentiment in Catholic doctrine. However perfect the practical rule that we should do as we would be done by, we could not build up a sound social order on it if it were not founded on reason. We must go further back: the dignity of man is inherent in his very nature. What is man? That is the question that we must answer if we propose to define exactly the meaning of that dignity which is to be respected in him, the rights and prerogatives that no one may deprive him of or even diminish.

There is no need to explain at length that the Catholic reply is the reply dictated by spiritual philosophy. Man is no mere resultant of physical and chemical forces; he has more than a body—he has a soul. Because his nature has a spiritual side, he is intelligent and free, and therefore responsible. He is the master of his temporal and his eternal destiny.

Essentially, too, he is a social being. He cannot realise himself fully if he lives alone—he must live in a society. But, whatever the society to which he belongs, whether the civil community or that of his trade, its sole duty is to help him to exercise the rights and carry out the duties which spring from his nature as a rational being. Man is not made for society, but society for man. "Society is not an end in itself" (*P.M.*). It must serve man and not usurp his place. Its function is to help him to assume his due responsibilities and not to assume them itself in his stead. Else, it prevents him forever from attaining his majority; it infringes upon his dignity.

In building up the social order, the Church must always show her preference for measures that respect in man his essential right to be master of his actions. Rather than act on his behalf, she claims that the conditions in which he is placed should be such that he can act for himself. Paternalism in all its forms, whether of employers or of the State, is at the opposite extreme to Christian social doctrine.

One of man's natural rights is to found a home. When he exercises that right, he contracts new obligations; and to be able to fulfil those obligations himself, he must be given new rights. It is for him to provide for his family's needs. Both parents have their part, their rightful part, to play in the education of their children. Respect

for the family is one of the fundamental principles of Catholic morality, and it is therefore not surprising that it should be a cornerstone in the edifice of the Church. Never can the Church regard the worker as an isolated individual; to her, he is always the member of a family. The social unit, it has been said, is not the individual but the family. This conception is also that of the Church, who maintains that social reforms must be based on the family, and that in this field it is more than ever inadmissible for anyone to take the place of the parents or for them to be hampered in performing their task. The eminent dignity of human nature is definitely incompatible with disrespect in family relationships. One of the fundamental features of Catholic social doctrine is that it is always based on the family. It can admit of no infringement, direct or indirect, of the sacred rights of the family.

It is therefore clear that respect for human dignity is no empty oratorical phrase but is pregnant with meaning. It gives practical expression to a metaphysical conception of man which treats him as a free and responsible being and holds that these inestimable prerogatives must be his also in the exercise of his activities. It would not be logical to accept these premises without at the same time accepting their consequences. In the name of this principle, the Church will defend private ownership because she regards this as the normal means of securing man's independence; she will demand for the worker conditions of life and work such that he can lead a life worthy of a man both in the factory and in the home; she will advocate occupational organisation based on freedom of association because it is just that the worker himself should have his say in the fixing of his working conditions and even that he should share in the economic direction of the country, since he plays an important economic part; she will justify State intervention because, as between the weak and the strong, it is liberty that is the oppressor and law the deliverer.

THE RIGHT OF OWNERSHIP

The most obvious defect of our social and economic system lies in the existence of an enormous proletarian army whose only source of livelihood is manual labour. Wealth has been accumulated in the hands of the privileged few, leaving the multitude in a state of want:

This state of things was quite satisfactory to the wealthy, who looked upon it as the consequence of inevitable and natural economic laws, and who,

therefore, were content to abandon to charity alone the full care of relieving the unfortunate, as though it were the task of charity to make amends for the open violation of justice, a violation not only tolerated but sanctioned at times by legislators (*Q.A.*).

But such a state could not be a matter of indifference to those whose very mission it was to take up the defence of the oppressed. Hence Leo XIII could not too vigorously condemn the "misery and wretchedness pressing unjustly" on the working classes, finding no apter comparison than with the slavery of old:

Hence, by degrees, it has come to pass that working men have been given over, isolated and defenceless, to the callousness of employers and the greed of unrestrained competition. And to this must be added the concentration of so many branches of trade in the hands of a few individuals, so that a small number of very rich men have been able to lay on the masses of the poor a yoke little better than slavery itself (*R.N.*).

Forty years later, Pius XI was to observe that the evil had only become worse. The flagrant contrast between a handful of rich men and the teeming multitude of the proletariat forms part of "the heavy heritage of an unjust economic régime (*D.R.*), and "is an unanswerable argument that the earthly goods so abundantly produced in this age of industrialism are far from rightly distributed and equitably shared among the various classes of men" (*Q.A.*). But this is not all. The growth of capitalism and large-scale industry has brought with it new forms of disorder. The unbridled competition which Leo XIII deplored has been succeeded by the monopoly system which was its logical consequence and which imperils not only peace at home but international peace. And the result:

Immense power and despotic economic domination is concentrated in the hands of a few, and these few are frequently not the owners, but only the trustees and directors of invested funds, who administer them at their good pleasure. This power becomes particularly irresistible when exercised by those who, because they hold and control money, are able also to govern credit and determine its allotment, for that reason supplying, so to speak, the life-blood of the entire economic body and grasping, as it were, in their hands the very soul of production, so that no one dare breathe against their will (*Q.A.*).

All means are considered fair in the economic war, in "the fierce battle to acquire control of the State, so that its resources and authority may be used in the economic struggle. The whole economic life has become hard, cruel, and relentless in a ghastly measure" (*Q.A.*). The situation calls urgently for remedy, and unless remedied "let nobody persuade himself that the peace and tranquillity of human society can be effectively defended against the forces of

revolution" (*Q.A.*). Since disorder seems to be bound up with the use that is made of property rights, surely, it is argued, the simplest would be to abolish the rights, at least with respect to the instruments of production. The Encyclicals very definitely refuse to see salvation in so radical a reform. Ownership is an essential right of man, inherent in his very nature. "Every man has by nature the right to possess property as his own (*R.N.*). No one can deprive him of that right. Endowed with reason, he is the only created being that thinks not only of his day-to-day needs, but of the morrow; not only of his own needs, but of his family. It is for him, and for him alone, to provide for them:

Man governs himself by the foresight of his counsel under the eternal light and the power of God, Whose Providence governs all things. Wherefore it is in his power to exercise his choice not only on things which regard his present welfare, but also on those which will be for his advantage in time to come (*R.N.*).

Ownership is the most satisfactory means of preserving his economic independence and therefore his total independence. It enables him to perform a function for which he himself should assume the responsibility:

The safe guardianship of this right will ensure the personal dignity of man and will facilitate for him the attention to, and fulfilment of, that sum of stable duties and decisions for which he is directly responsible to his Creator (*P.M.*).

It also provides the normal means of improving his condition; if by cutting down his expenses he can save some money, it is open to him to convert it into durable goods and so win greater security and welfare in the future.

The present economic disorders, therefore, are not to be attributed to the right of ownership itself but to the abuses which have slipped in. For a natural right which is properly exercised cannot have evil consequences. Thus the remedy is not to abolish the right, but to correct the bad use to which it is put. A twofold reform is needed; we must first get back to the true conception of ownership, and then ensure that it is more equitably distributed.

Ownership in the sense always defended by the Church has a twofold aspect. It is "individual or social according as it regards individuals or concerns the common good. The right to own property has been given to man not only in order that individuals may be able to provide for their own needs and those of their families, but also that by means of it the goods which the Creator has destined for the human race may truly serve this purpose" (*Q.A.*). Thus,

although the rights of the owner are indisputable, he does not possess every right. Moreover, he possesses duties as well as rights; ownership cannot be a privilege without a corresponding obligation. It is not even enough to say that the right shall not be exercised against the common good; it must be used to serve the common good.

Who, then, should be given the task of defining the rights of the owner of property, and of fixing the obligations he must assume to ensure respect for the common good, if not the State, the guardian and promoter of the common good?

The public authority, in view of the common good, may specify what is licit and what is illicit for property owners in the use of their possessions. Leo XIII had wisely taught that "the defining of private possession has been left by God to man's own industry and to the laws of individual peoples" (*Q.A.*).

It is not superfluous to repeat this truth at a time when capital finds it only too easy to evade its obligations and, on the contrary, to take to itself indefensible prerogatives. By calling on the State to make up for their deficiencies, capitalists have reduced the State to subservience. Hence the decline of public authority. "The State, which should be the supreme arbiter, ruling in kingly fashion far above all party contention, intent only upon justice and the common good, has become instead a slave, bound over to the service of human passion and greed" (*Q.A.*).

It is time for this anomaly, in which the State takes over the responsibilities of capital and capital unduly usurps the powers of the State, to come to an end. For what is stirring up indignation is "not really the possession of the means of production but that type of 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 owner, but to the State" (*Q.A.*).

Ownership must therefore be put in its proper place, must recover its social function and be subject to the order imposed by a sovereign State for the benefit of all. For above the right of ownership, there is the right to life; above the rights of owners, there is the essential right and duty of all men to provide for their living. Ownership must be organised in such a way that each may have his share of the "goods which were created by God for all men" (*P.M.*). But if so, it is incontestable that distribution must be fairer and that an end must be put to the present crying scandal of the wealthy few side by side with the many poor in one and the same society. When the Church champions the right of ownership, it is not because she is upholding the régime from which the present

owners of wealth are benefiting against the just claims of the disinherited. Pius XI protested vigorously against any such allegation. To the Church, property is a means of deliverance and not of domination. She will not admit of the abolition of ownership, but she advocates an increase in the number of owners. Every one of the Papal pronouncements without exception demands that a new order in which access to ownership is free to all shall be set up in justice and without violence. This is but logical. Ownership being a natural complement of human personality, it is just that all should benefit by it.

"Working people must be encouraged to look forward to obtaining their share in the land" (*R.N.*). "Every effort must be made that at least in the future a just share only of the fruits of production be permitted to accumulate in the hands of the wealthy and that an ample sufficiency be supplied to the working men" (*Q.A.*) And the Papal Message points out that the prosperous nations are not those where total wealth is greatest but those where it is most fairly distributed:

If such a just distribution were not secured or were effected imperfectly, the real scope of national economy would not be attained; for although there were at hand a lucky abundance of goods to dispose of, the people, in not being called upon to share them, would not be economically rich but poor. Suppose, on the other hand, that such distribution is effected genuinely and permanently and you will see a people, even if it disposes of less goods, making itself economically sound (*P.M.*).

But how are the workers to find the means of acquiring property? The first and, of course, most obvious method is to pay them wages out of which they can save. There will be occasion later to return to the idea of a fair wage and the method of fixing it. Here there is only one point to emphasise: the fair wage, according to the Encyclicals, is that which, being in excess of the worker's present needs, allows him to set aside a part for the future. "How can he ever save money except from his wage and by living sparingly, who has nothing but his labour by which to obtain food and the necessities of life?" (*Q.A.*). "Social justice cannot be said to have been satisfied as long as working men are denied the opportunity of acquiring a modest fortune" (*D.R.*). If they are unable to do so, the reason is that profits are badly distributed. Therefore, the share in goods which accumulates in the hands of the capitalists must be reduced. It is necessary "that an ample sufficiency be supplied to the workmen in order that by thrift they may increase their possessions and by the prudent management of the same may be enabled to bear the family burden with greater ease and security" (*Q.A.*).

There is another way of enabling the worker to share in the benefits of ownership and at the same time of improving his situation. While not condemning the wage system as inherently unjust, Pius XI considered that the time had come for a transformation of the contract of employment:

In the present state of human society, We deem it advisable that the wage contract should, when possible, be modified somewhat by a contract of partnership, as is already being tried in various ways to the no small gain both of the wage earners and of the employers. In this way wage earners are made sharers in some sort in the ownership, or the management, or the profits (*Q.A.*).

Progress in this direction is all the more in line with the trend of Catholic social thought, since it changes the worker's situation not only outside his work but in the actual performance of his work. He ceases to be merely a wage earner, whose only responsibility is that of punctually carrying out his orders. Profit-sharing, labour co-partnership, and the sharing of labour in management are reforms which had long been advocated by members of the Catholic social movement. Although Leo XIII did not expressly mention them in the *Rerum Novarum*, he held that they were in full agreement with his views. Only three years after the publication of his Encyclical, he formally approved the reforms proposed by the Catholic Social Congress held at Rome, in which these measures were set forth in full.

But more than this. In the modern industrial world there are important sectors which it would be unwise to leave in the hands of private owners, since this would *ipso facto* confer upon them that unjustified economic and political power which it is the very object to avoid doing.

True to her doctrine that ownership is a means of deliverance and not of domination, the Church in this case fully approves direct intervention by the State in order to prevent the private appropriation of these means of production:

It is rightly contended that certain forms of property must be reserved for the State, since they carry with them an opportunity for domination too great to be left to private individuals without injury to the community at large (*Q.A.*).

It is not necessary for the administration of such property to be entrusted to the State; but it is for the State to determine what forms of property belong to this group and in what way they should be used. Here lies the reason why the French Confederation of Christian Workers, which fully concurred in these views, stated in the plan it published in 1936 that the importance of the interests

represented by certain undertakings was such as to have made of them if not public undertakings at least services of public utility. Examples are undertakings in the field of credit, insurance, motive power, transport, markets, ports, shipping, public health, and tourist traffic. It therefore demanded "a new type of exploitation, which would entrust management to the representatives of the undertakings concerned, consumers, and workers, with the participation or control of the State or other interested community, and subject to fair compensation to the owner".¹

Lastly, the Papal Message seeks to reawaken interest in a method of spreading ownership which was formerly much favoured but which circumstances have relegated to the background. The "living space" of many families could be secured if serious efforts were made to organise emigration. Many would still be tempted to try to better themselves by journeying to unexploited lands if they could do so in satisfactory conditions:

If the two parties, those who agree to leave their native land and those who agree to admit the newcomers, remain anxious to eliminate as far as possible all obstacles to the birth and growth of real confidence between the country of emigration and that of immigration, all those affected by such a transference of people and places will profit by the transaction: the families will receive a plot of ground which will be native land for them in the true sense of the word; the thickly inhabited countries will be relieved and their people will acquire new friends in foreign countries; and the State which receives the emigrants will acquire industrious citizens. In this way the nations which give and those which receive will both contribute to the increased welfare of man and the progress of human culture (*P.M.*).

CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

At the time when the *Rerum Novarum* appeared, the situation of the workers was indeed lamentable, and fifty years of efforts and of progress cannot make us forget it. Millions of human beings had no horizon beyond the factory gates, which closed about them pitilessly every day, even on Sundays, leaving them face to face for ten to twelve hours with machinery working at an ever increasing speed. The right of association and freedom to combine in trade unions had only just been recognised in the most advanced countries. There was no labour legislation, there were no ministries of labour. There was no security for the morrow in the event of accident or sickness, and the worker had to toil until the end for fear of dying of starvation or becoming a burden on members of his family who were themselves barely able to earn their own living.

¹ *Le plan de la C.F.T.C.*, Paris, 1936, p. 17.

The Church could not but denounce this inhuman disorder and join with those who demanded that these abominable abuses must be brought to an end. But her action took on a special character owing to her preoccupation with the family. For the Church maintains that in the establishment of conditions of employment and in the fixing of a fair wage, both the worker and his family must be protected.

When the Encyclicals claim that hours of work must be reasonable, their first consideration is the worker's health and personality. "It is neither justice nor humanity so to grind men down with excessive labour as to stupefy their minds and wear out their bodies" (*R.N.*). But the worker must also be in a position to enjoy the benefits of family life, to which he has the same right as other men. Apart from any considerations of health and hygiene, his timetable must be such as to allow him to spend sufficient time with his family.

Labour legislation has generally begun by regulating the employment of women and children. Nothing can be more normal since, being the weakest, they have most need of protection:

In regard to children, great care should be taken not to place them in workshops and factories until their bodies and minds are sufficiently mature. For just as rough weather destroys the buds of spring, so too early an experience of life's hard work blights the young promise of a child's powers, and makes any real education impossible (*R.N.*).

In the case of women, that is to say, of the mothers of families, the Church has never concealed its preference for keeping them at home. In a society based on the family the distribution of tasks is a natural one, and the mother will find plenty to do in domestic work, "which is best adapted to promote the good bringing up of children and the well-being of the family" (*R.N.*). It is true that not only the father but the rest of the family should "contribute according to their power towards the common maintenance, as in the rural home or in the families of many artisans or small shopkeepers" (*Q.A.*). No harm is done here, since the mother stays where she belongs, beside her children. But "intolerable and to be opposed with all our strength is the abuse whereby mothers of families, because of the insufficiency of the fathers' salary, are forced to engage in gainful occupations outside the domestic walls, to the neglect of their own proper cares or duties, particularly the education of their children" (*Q.A.*). What the Encyclical demands is that mothers should be able to stay at home. To comply with the teachings of the Church, therefore, there is no need to go so far as to prohibit the employment of married women by law, as is the more extremist demand of some.

But a social order must be established in which the mother will no longer be compelled to supplement the father's wage by working outside the home; she must be able to remain at home if she so wishes, and experience shows that she nearly always does so wish. In other words, the normal wage is the family wage.

Leo XIII had already protested against the Liberal theory, current in his day, which maintained that the fixing of wages was only a special case of the operation of the law of supply and demand. Justice, it held, was not violated unless the employer refused to pay the agreed sum, however low that might be. This is an iniquitous contention. Labour is not a commodity or article of commerce; other considerations come into play when its remuneration has to be fixed:

Let it be granted, then, that as a rule workman and employer should make free agreements, and in particular should freely agree 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. If, through necessity or fear of a worse evil, the workman accepts harder conditions because an employer or contractor will give him no better, he is the victim of force and injustice (*R.N.*).

When Pius XI in turn came to deal with this question, he duly showed that he was fully aware of the economic difficulties involved, and that he had no intention of launching any Utopias. There are complex problems to consider. Account must be taken, for example, of the situation and burdens of industry; if wages are fixed too high or too low, the same disastrous consequences may ensue, and unemployment may increase and not disappear. But these practical difficulties, which can be discussed by the parties concerned when drawing up a collective agreement, do not affect the rule: a fair wage is that which enables the worker to cover all his needs, those of himself and of his family alike; and, as already indicated, it must also allow him to save. "The wage paid to the working man must be sufficient for the support of himself and of his family" (*Q.A.*). "It is a most sacred law of nature that a father must provide food and all necessities for those whom he has begotten" (*R.N.*). It is therefore only just that his wage, being his sole source of livelihood, must be such as to enable him to meet his obligations. "If the business makes a smaller profit on account of bad management, want of enterprise or out-of-date methods, this is not a just reason for reducing the working men's wages" (*Q.A.*).

But the wise realist must also provide for the case in which the state of industry is such that this ideal is unattainable. In that case,

"social justice demands that reforms be introduced without delay which will guarantee every adult working man just such a wage" (Q.A.).

One method of solving this problem was initiated in private industry by a Christian social employer, who introduced the system of family allowances payable not directly by the employer himself but by equalisation funds. This system has developed so rapidly that it has become embodied in the law of several countries. It would be superfluous here to discuss whether or not these allowances are wages in the proper sense. The essential point is that they enable the worker to receive the remuneration to which he is strictly entitled, not in the shape of a charitable grant but because it is his just due. The system was explicitly approved by Pius XI:

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 (Q.A.).

OCCUPATIONAL ORGANISATION

At a time when the trade unions were having to face violent opposition, Leo XIII claimed freedom of association as a sacred right of the workers, and enshrined it in one of the principal doctrines of the *Rerum Novarum*. He and his successors were always uncompromising in this matter. The right of association is inherent in man's very nature; no one is entitled to infringe upon it. It was all the more necessary to speak firmly as:

... at that period rulers of not a few nations were deeply infected with Liberalism and regarded such unions of working men with disfavour, if not with open hostility. While readily recognising and patronising similar corporations amongst other classes, with criminal injustice they denied the innate right of forming associations to those who needed them most for self-protection against the more powerful (Q.A.).

While Leo XIII discerned the possibility of creating mixed unions, composed of both employers and workers, he expressed no preference for them and fully recognised the justification for unions composed of workers alone. It was on these lines that the movement developed, contact with employers being made in another sphere. As the Congregation of the Council wrote in 1929 to Mgr. Liénart, Bishop of Lille:

Christian workers cannot be refused the right to form their own unions, separate from but not necessarily opposed to the employers' unions . . . Moreover, it is clear that the formation of such unions, separate from the employers' unions, is not incompatible with social peace, since, on the one hand, they in

principle repudiate the class war and collectivism in all its forms, and, on the other, they accept the idea of collective agreements as a means of establishing peaceful relations between capital and labour.

These lessons were only too timely, since in 1937 Pius XI could still complain of "those Catholic industrialists who even to this day have shown themselves hostile to a labour movement that We Ourselves recommended" (*D.R.*).

In the Christian view the trade union is thus a genuinely free association of workers. Every person is free to join or not to join a union, and free to join the union of his choice; but obviously the Church will expect Catholic workers to give their name to unions inspired by Christian principles. Similarly, these associations will be free "to adopt such rules and organisation as may best conduce to the attainment of their objects" (*R.N.*). The powers of the State are thus clearly defined. Not only can it neither prohibit nor suppress trade associations; it must protect them. Except in the case of associations in which "men join together for purposes which are evidently bad" (*R.N.*), "particular societies cannot be prohibited by the State absolutely and as such, for to enter into a 'society' of this kind is the natural right of man; and the State must protect natural rights, not destroy them" (*R.N.*).

It is therefore just, and even necessary, to recognise the workers' right to associate with others in the defence of their interests, and it is equally just to recognise that the employers have the same right. But is society destined to remain divided into two hostile camps, to present its modern spectacle of "a strained and therefore unstable and uncertain state, being founded on classes with contradictory interests and hence opposed to each other, and consequently prone to enmity and strife" (*Q.A.*)? The reply is obvious.

The great mistake that is made is to possess oneself of the idea that class is naturally hostile to class. Just as the symmetry of the human body is the result of the disposition of the members of the body, so in a State it is ordained by nature that these two classes should exist in harmony and agreement, and should, as it were, fit into one another, so as to maintain the equilibrium of the body politic (*R.N.*).

The Church refuses to admit the necessity of the class war. It calls on the classes to collaborate. Over and above their divergent interests, they have a common interest, that determined by the occupation in which they engage. It is this which will make it possible:

... to bind men together not according to the position they occupy in the labour market, but according to the diverse functions which they exercise in society. For as nature induces those who dwell in close proximity to unite

into municipalities, so those who practise the same trade or profession, economic or otherwise, combine into vocational groups. These groups, in a true sense autonomous, are considered by many to be, if not essential to civil society, at least its natural and spontaneous development (*Q.A.*).

This brings us to the crux of the question of occupational organisation. Here, as elsewhere, the teaching of the Encyclicals does not enter into details of organisation, but merely fixes guiding principles. "Men may choose whatever form they please, provided that both justice and the common good be taken into account" (*Q.A.*). In practice, members of the Catholic social movement have often put forward plans, which each is free to judge as he thinks fit. But the general principles, deriving from the Encyclicals, are accepted by all. They may be grouped under four heads.

(1) Occupational organisation is based on freedom of association. If workers' and employers' unions join together in an association to discuss the common interests of the occupation or trade, such associations are freely constituted unions which freely choose their leaders and representatives, and not unions placed under the control of the central authority and given the leaders designated by the latter. Not only does occupational organisation mean no interference with freedom of association; it is inconceivable without such freedom. The watchword, free trade unions in organised occupations, has for long been classic in the Christian social school.

(2) Occupational organisation must link up not only the members of the same occupation or trade, but all the members of the social community, with each other. The principle of union for a particular occupation lies in the activity of that occupation, and for all occupations together in "the common good which all groups should unite to promote, each in its own sphere, with friendly harmony" (*Q.A.*). Over and above the bodies regulating the economic and social activity of the various occupations, there should therefore be central bodies, ordering the relations of all for the benefit of the country as a whole. The same principles of freedom which are at the foundation of occupational organisations must also govern those bodies which aim at promoting the general welfare. We must go even further and apply them to the international organisations which have become a necessity of modern times.

(3) But while employers and workers have common interests within the occupation or trade, yet it remains true that they also have divergent interests, which give rise to "an honest discussion of differences, based upon the desire for social justice" (*Q.A.*). For all of them it is necessary that the occupation should prosper; but within the prosperous occupation, the interests of each group should

be protected. If conditions of employment and wage fixing are to be made the subject of collective agreements, the assumption is that each of the parties can be sure of getting a hearing, and therefore that "separate deliberation will take place in their respective assemblies and separate votes will be taken as the matter may require" (*Q.A.*). The principle of occupational organisation admits of joint bodies, bringing together the various factors of production, but it does not interfere with the existence and working of separate organisations of employers and workers.

(4) The aim of occupational organisation is to protect the independence and initiative of the human person. This is but another application of the principle which governs the whole Christian social structure. The function of society is to protect and not to destroy or absorb. It is true that:

Owing to the change in social conditions, much that was formerly done by small bodies can nowadays be accomplished only by large corporations. None the less, just as it is wrong to withdraw from the individual and commit to the community at large what private enterprise and industry can accomplish, so, too, it is an injustice, a grave evil, and a disturbance of right order for a larger and higher organisation to arrogate to itself functions which can be performed efficiently by smaller and lower bodies (*Q.A.*).

The duty and the corresponding right to work is imposed on and conceded to the individual in the first instance by nature and not by society. From that it follows that the duty and the right to organise the labour of the people belong above all to the people immediately interested: the employers and the workers (*P.M.*).

STATE INTERVENTION

The ground has now been cleared for a definition of the part to be given to the State in economic and social life. Practically all that remains is to co-ordinate and supplement the elements of such a definition which have been met with in the course of this study.

In 1891 Liberalism was in full swing. Economic laws were believed to act with the strictness and precision of physical laws. The State had to take good care not to intervene except in order to secure the normal working of the system, since any other action might upset the whole machinery. That human beings consequently had to suffer and become innocent victims of the system by no means disturbed the calm assurance of the advocates of *laissez faire*. The suffering was in the nature of things; any temporary disturbance would cure itself, and everything would come right of its own accord.

The Church could not accept these inhuman theories, which made of economics an end in themselves and of man a mere tool. Eco-

nomics are made for man and not man for economics. The social aspect is more important than the economic. The State cannot be an unmoved and impotent onlooker of human suffering and crying abuses. Its only reason for existence is to become the defender and promoter of the common good, that is, of all classes of which society is composed and above all of the weak:

The first duty of the rulers of the State should be to make sure that the laws and institutions, the general character and administration of the commonwealth, shall be such as to produce of themselves public well-being and private prosperity (*R.N.*).

Among the many and grave duties of rulers who would do their best for their people, the first and chief is to act with strict justice—with that justice which is called in the Schools "distributive"—towards each and every class . . . Justice, therefore, demands that the interests of the poorer population be carefully watched over by the Administration, so that they who contribute so largely to the advantage of the community may themselves share in the benefits they create—that, being housed, clothed, and enabled to support life, they may find their existence less hard and more endurable (*R.N.*).

The richer population have many ways of protecting themselves, and stand less in need of help from the State; those who are badly off have no resources of their own to fall back upon, and must chiefly rely upon the assistance of the State. And it is for this reason that wage earners, who are, undoubtedly, among the weak and necessitous, should be specially cared for and protected by the commonwealth (*R.N.*).

At the time when Leo XIII was prescribing the duty of the State to intervene on the workers' behalf, the trade unions had only just obtained their footing in some of the more advanced countries, and their membership was still far from imposing. Set up for purposes of defence, they were regarded above all as an instrument in the workers' hands for protection against the employers. A few scholars might see in them the germ of the future system of occupational organisation, but they were only a few, and the end in view seemed very far. For the individual the central authority seemed to provide the only resort. It was therefore natural that Leo XIII should stress the obligations of the State and should demand of it special protection for the workers.

Since then, however, times have changed. The trade unions have grown, leaders have sprung up, the working class as a whole has reached its majority. It has taken a more active part in economic and social life and no one can deny that it is capable of playing an active part in the promotion and enactment of labour legislation. Hence, while Pius XI, too, upheld the importance of intervention by the central authority, he urged that part of the tasks it now undertakes should be transferred. There is no change of direction here, but only an application of the same principles to a new situ-

ation. Since the workers, through their formally established trade unions, are now capable of looking after their own interests, it is only just that they should have a say in the preparation of the laws which concern them. The State remains the sovereign arbiter, but social legislation and the economic direction of the country must no longer be carried on without the participation of the persons concerned.

The employers' and workers' associations are no emanation of the central authority, but are distinct from it; nor are they merely its executive agencies, since this would mean that any independent existence would be denied them. It is because they are freely and directly formed by the persons concerned that they can join with the State and together with it create a harmonious whole in which each will have his proper place. What remains is but to decide, as circumstances of time and place dictate, the exact part that employers, workers, and central authority are to play in this new organisation. Leo XIII himself had foreseen this desirable evolution.

* * *

The Catholic social movement, which is based on the natural philosophy and the teaching of the Gospel, is but the extension and the complement of a religious doctrine. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Encyclicals do more than lay down principles, and that for the realisation of their programme they make a wide appeal to moral and religious forces. It is not only a reform of institutions that they consider necessary, but also a reform of morals, without which the first reform would fail of its purpose and remain fruitless:

Justice alone, even though most faithfully observed, can remove indeed the cause of social strife, but can never bring about a union of hearts and minds. There can be no other remedy than a frank and sincere return to the teaching of the Gospel (*Q.A.*).

In any community, functions differ and inequalities are inevitable. But more important than these inequalities of function is the essential equality which binds all men together and is the ultimate reason for their dignity:

Then only will it be possible to unite all in harmonious striving for the common good when all sections of society have the intimate conviction that they are members of a single family and children of the same heavenly Father (*Q.A.*).
