

The Church And The Working Man

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The Present World Chaos.

IN AN ARTICLE entitled, "Government, Anarchy or Regimentation," which appeared in the Nineteenth Century Magazine, in May 1890, by Professor T. Huxley, the following appears: "Even the best of modern civilizations appear to me to exhibit a condition of mankind which neither embodies any worthy ideal nor even possesses the merit of stability. I do not hesitate to express the opinion that if there is no hope of a large improvement of the condition of the greater part of the human family; if it is true that the increase of knowledge, the winning of a greater dominion over nature, which is its consequence, and the wealth which follows upon that dominion, are to make no difference in the extent and the intensity of want, with its concomitant physical and moral degradation amongst the masses of the people, I should hail the advent of some kindly comet which would sweep the whole affair away as a desirable consummation."

Nearly half a century has elapsed since these words were written. During that period knowledge has increased, dominion over the forces of nature has been won, the power to produce wealth has grown to an extent which Professor Huxley, in his wildest dreams, could not have imagined; and side by side with this has grown an intensity of want, and of physical and moral degradation such as the world in its previous history had never experienced. According to figures compiled by the League of Nations, world production of foodstuffs and raw materials rose by about 17 per cent between 1913 and 1925, whereas world population rose only by 6 per cent. Between 1925 and 1929, there was a further rise of 11 per cent in production and only 4 per cent in population. In January, 1932, the figures published by the League of Nations showed well over thirteen million of unemployed in the countries covered by the available records. Though most of those millions were on the brink of starvation, vast stores of foodstuffs were destroyed because no market could be found for them. Before the problem created by this appalling state of affairs, statesmen stand aghast, and driven to the gospel of despair feverishly prepare for another world war as the only solution of their difficulties.

The spoken word can, by a mechanical contrivance, be heard at the farthest ends of the earth. By a further mechanical contrivance, that same spoken word can be heard by those who will inhabit this planet a thousand years hence. Our marvellous age has annihilated time and space, but the growing poverty and destitution seem to present it with an insoluble problem. By many this condition of affairs is looked upon as an "Act of God" — "the poor you have always with you" a predestined consequence which works out with the inevitability of fate. If this point of view be correct, the future appears almost hopeless to those most intimately concerned — the workers. Let us, therefore, turn the floodlight of history on how God's Church — the medium which He has chosen to reveal His Will and His Teaching to men — has helped or hindered through all the ages the solution of those problems which have produced the present economic chaos.

The Pagan Concept of Labour.

During practically all recorded history, there have been a leisured class in the community and a working class. The former have been able to obtain all the necessities of life and most of its luxuries without being compelled to give any service in return. Most of the latter class have been forced to perform the most strenuous types of labour to obtain even life's barest necessities. The proportion between the numbers in each of these classes has not always remained constant and the opportunities for obtaining the necessities and luxuries of life have varied, but it is noteworthy that the numbers of the leisured, and the return for the service given by the workers increased or diminished according as there was a greater or lesser acceptance of the spiritual values of the human being. In all the great nations of antiquity, labour was the badge of disgrace. Under Paganism the labourers were considered as nothing more than "proletarii" — child-bearers. They were intended to toil and slave so that their superiors might live in ease and opulence. This was the mentality expressed in their writings by Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Xenophon, and all the greatest pre-Christian moralists and thinkers. In Egyptian civilization, slavery was a most important factor. The Egyptians respected mental labour, but they had no respect for any other. From their Asiatic conquests, Egyptian armies brought back hordes of captives who were forced under the lash to build those gigantic monuments, which still adorn the valley of the Nile.

More than 100,000 of these wretches toiled to erect the Great Pyramid, and, when Pharaoh Necho endeavoured to connect with a canal the Mediterranean and the Red Seas, 120,000 slaves died at the task. Plato, the greatest of the Greek philosophers, in planning his perfect government, thought it necessary to include a slave class as an essential element in his scheme of things. Ancient Greece believed that it was divinely ordered that a great proportion of mankind should work forever without reward, and that freedom was the privilege of a few, not the right of all. Though ancient Rome did not despise the masses to the same extent as did ancient Egypt, though it was possible for a man of humble birth to rise to a position of high authority in the Roman Empire, vast millions of its subjects were either slaves or starving, and "bread and the circus" became the Roman precursor of the "dole." In the atrium of a Roman villa one might rub shoulders with a red-haired Celt from Hibernia, a blue-eyed giant of the Cimbri, or a thick-lipped Ethiopian, any of whom might have their back bared for the lash at the mere whim of their patrician master, while in the three-tiered benches of the galleys, by which were kept safe the Imperial lines of communications, sons of every nation known to the Roman world dragged out their weary existence from their benches to their pallets, never seeing God's light except where it filtered through the ventilator over their heads, with no knowledge of what part of the world they were in or to where they were going.

The Coming of the Redeemer.

Into such a world, and to a group of what we would now call farm labourers, there came such a light "as never was on sea or land" before, having in its core a message: "I bring you tidings of great joy, that is for you and for all the people, for this night is born to you a Child, Who is Christ the Lord." The Divine Child, whose coming was to mean so much to the toiling masses, did not grow to man's estate studying the cynical philosophy of the age from the sophists who crowded around the Capitolian Hill; nor was His education confided to the proud Pharisees who interpreted the Law and the Prophets under the shadow of Mount Moriah in Jerusalem. His school was a carpenter's shop, His teacher a village tradesman, and He, Who had called the universe into being out of nothing, Who governed the rolling spheres, knew what it was to have hands calloused from dragging heavy timbers, and a back aching from sawing wood. Thus did the Divine Master create the first revolution of thought, which His coming was to bring about. Labour in a Pagan world might be the

badge of disgrace. Under Christianity, it was to be a token of the highest dignity. And, when having started on His public career, a deputation waited on Him to inquire: "Are You He, Who is to come, or expect we another?" His reply was: "Go, and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are made clean, the dead rise again, to the poor the Gospel is preached." Thus the final evidence of His Divine Mission was that He was bringing good news, and refreshment to all those who laboured and were burdened. And, as did its Divine Founder, so did His Church, the Catholic Church, all through the ages even down to our own time.

The Church and The Slaves.

Our Divine Master drew His Apostles and Disciples from the fishermen and artisans of Judea and Galilee, and as His infant Church grew, it found the greatest number of its adherents amongst the working and slave classes of the time. With a courage and endurance that has been characteristic of the workers in all ages, these early Christians braved the terrors of the arena rather than surrender the wonderful gift that had been granted to them.

As the poet Browning makes one of them say:

"I was born sickly, poor and mean,
A slave; no misery could screen
The holders of the pearl of price
From Caesar's envy; therefore, twice,
I fought with beasts, and three times saw
My children suffer by his law."

Finally, the Galilean conquered and His Church was able to leave the Catacombs. One of the first tasks it then set to itself was the amelioration of the hard lot of the slaves. It declared with no uncertain voice that slave and master were equal in the sight of God. It opened the doors of its Holy Orders to slaves as well as non-slaves.

Slaves were ordained priests, were elevated to the episcopacy, and finally, in the person of Callixtus, a slave became Pope in 221 A.D., even before the ending of persecution. It would be well to remember in considering the attitude of the Church to the working and depressed classes that its primary object is to save souls. All its efforts, which are carried out in the face of every resistance, aim to provide conditions under which ample leisure and opportunity might be afforded to serve God becomingly, and even perfectly. This is the end it had in view in dealing with the slave problem. "Equally with lord and king," says Father Husselein, S.J., "the slave was declared to be in all truth the Church's own spiritual child, sanctified in Holy Baptism, strengthened by the reception of her sacraments, made partaker of the same Eucharistic Christ in the sacrifice of the Mass, destined to an eternal fellowship with angels and saints, and already emancipated by the grace of God from the one slavery which alone is supremely terrible, the bondage of sin and Satan."

In the fourth century we find the Fathers of the Church, like Saint Gregory Nazianzen and Saint John Chrysostom, protesting against the unnatural conditions of the slave system, and, as a result of this and other protests by the Church, the harsh Roman laws by which marriage between slaves was not acknowledged were abolished. Abbot Snow, O.S.B., thus describes what the Church achieved on behalf of the slaves: "At her suggestion the Christian Emperors mitigated the harsh dominion, took away from the masters the power of life and death, gave the slave redress at law, and legalized his marriage. The Church dignified the process of manumission by obtaining that it should take place in the Church before the altar. This gave facility and sacredness to the act, and the Church

assumed the protection of the men thus freed, to shield them against further molestation. Council after council in different countries made provision in favour of the slaves. The churches were declared to be places of refuge for all ill-treated slaves, securing thereby a fair investigation of their grievances." In the Church's attitude to the slave we see the potent seed of Christian liberty striking root, and from that seed developed the world's most ideal democracy in a soil prepared by ages of Catholic culture, a democracy, which alone in the world's history, produced that true brotherhood in commerce and industry, a brotherhood which was made perfect in the unity of that one faith which Christ had founded.

A Christian Social Order.

The student delving through the muniments of Flemish monasteries will find records of donations made by the Guild of Cloth-workers of Bruges for Masses for the repose of the souls of their deceased members who fell in a battle in which they and their fellow-guildsmen from Ghent and Courtrai and Ypres defeated the flower of French chivalry, the Battle of the Golden Spurs. The tourist wandering through the aisles of the beautiful cathedral of Chartres will admire stained glass windows presented by the Guild of Carpenters and Coopers, which have for their neighbour a window presented by the King of France. What were these organizations of artisans and workers that could decide the fate of nations by their skill in arms, whose place of honour in the estimation of the Church was equal to that of royalty itself?

They were the expression in the social order of the philosophy of living, which had its beginnings on Mount Sinai, which reached perfection in the Sermon of the Mount, and which had gradually permeated the whole life of Europe. In the age in which the Guilds flourished, it was generally and unequivocally accepted that the primary purpose of man's activities here on this earth was the knowledge and the service of God in this life and the enjoyment of the Beatific Vision in the next. The fundamental aim of the Guild was to provide machinery, which would help and facilitate its members in striving towards that primary end.

Preserved in the library of Trinity College is a volume bound in oak and leather, which contains the records of the Dublin Guild of Barber-Surgeons. These records open with the oath, which every member of the Guild should take. The first promise made in that oath was: "To honour God and Saint Mary Magdalen on the days and at the times appointed according to the statutes and customs of the guild." In the Charlemont Mall, Municipal Library of Dublin there is housed a collection of manuscripts called the Gilbert MSS (Manuscripts). Among these Manuscripts is a transcript of a charter granted to the citizens of Dublin in 1451 by King Henry VI. In the charter, permission was granted to found and establish anew to the praise and honour of the Holy Trinity a certain fraternity or guild of the art of merchants of the city of Dublin, already established in the Chapel of the Holy Trinity in the Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity in Dublin. In the year 1427, the same Henry established by charter a guild of shoemakers in Dublin under the title of: "The Fraternity or Guild of the Blessed Mary." This guild was empowered to establish to the praise of God and in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary a chantry consisting of one or more chaplains who should celebrate divine service every day perpetually in the chapel of the Blessed Mary in the Church of Saint Michael in the High Street for the welfare and souls of the king, the justiciars or governors, the brethren and sisters of the guild and their successors and benefactors. I am indebted to "THE GUILDS OF DUBLIN," by Mr. John J. Webb, M.A., LL.D., for this information with regard to these three Dublin guilds, and I have referred to it to show that the Guilds were essentially religious in their

inspiration and character, and drew their greatest strength from their activities being founded on the moral law.

I think I may say that a natural corollary to these references is that the first and most important object of the guild was the sanctification of the souls of its members. It is therefore only to be expected that the guild meetings were hallowed by the rites and ritual of the Church, and that the objects of the guilds testified to a charitable and benevolent interest in the welfare of the members in this world and the next.

Many of us are inclined to imagine that the big volume of social legislation enacted during the past half century (since 1880) is something unique in the world's history, a product of the growth of a more humane system of civilization. But what we may not know is that everything that such legislation has done to better the lot of the worker and more was done for the mediaeval worker by his guild. Many of the statutes in our present code of social legislation were forced through an unwilling parliament often only after long, bitter and acrimonious agitation. The guild regulations were the result of a general acceptance of a Christian and Catholic outlook on social relations.

They set out the age at which young people might be admitted to industry, the wages to be paid, the conditions under which work might be carried on, the price to be charged for the completed work, and the standard of the work to be done. They prevented unfair competition, monopolies, the making of shoddy articles. In addition, the guilds provided hospitals for the sick, made sanitary regulations, prevented unemployment, and forbade usury. In the ancient Tholsell, or Assembly Hall, of the City of Dublin there used to be a book called the "Chain Book," because it was chained there for the use of the citizens. In it were to be found the various regulations made from time to time governing wages, prices, and the other social problems with which the guilds dealt. As I have shown already, in spiritual matters the guilds had their chaplains, their special chapels.

Arrangements were made for the decent burial of dead guild-men and for Masses for their eternal repose.

Here are some of the purposes to which the incomes of a trade guild in King's Lynn in Norfolk were devoted: "Towards the support of the poor brethren of the guild, to the blind, lame, and other distressed persons, to poor clerks keeping school and poor religious houses, to the lepers, in repairs to the parish church and chapels." "If any brother," reads one of the ordinances of this guild, "shall become poor and needy, he shall be supported in food and clothing according to his exigencies." In the case of death, he was to be "honourably buried," and it was the sacred duty of the guild officials "to visit, four times a year, all the infirm, all that are in want, need, poverty, and to relieve all such out of the alms of the said guild." Unemployment, poverty, and beggary were thus scientifically averted in the spirit of Christ. In several guilds we find such ordinances as the following: "If any good girl of the guild, of marriageable age, cannot have the means found by her father, either to go into a religious house or to marry, whichever she wishes to do, friendly and right help shall be given her towards enabling her to do whichever of the two she wishes."

Non-Catholic Opinions on the Mediaeval Social System.

In their efforts to justify the so-called "Reformation," non-Catholic historians have painted a picture of Mediaeval Europe, which has been proved by modern research to be a veritable caricature.

According to these historians, the mediaeval workers lived in a state of almost constant destitution, they were illiterate, lacking in education of even the most elementary type, preyed upon by an idle and sensual clergy, whose exactions were even more grievous than those of the robber barons. I do

not propose to go to any great lengths to prove the contrary to be the case, but the following quotations, mainly from non-Catholic sources, show the exact conditions under which the workers lived in the Ages of Faith.

First, an excerpt from a Catholic source. Father Husselein, S.J.: "The life of the Middle Ages in its perfection, was a life of labour, of charity, and of religion. But everywhere and throughout it was a life of joy. In the beauty of so much of the most common workmanship in those days, we behold the delight of the workman in his craft. But above all it is plain in the sacred monuments that he has left us of his skill and faith." There was published in 1936, by Duckworths of London, a book by W. R. Hayward and G. W. Johnson, entitled, "The Evolution of Labour". The chapters on the mediaeval period are most interesting. Here are some extracts:

"The guilds quickly rose to a condition of affluence and to a position of power in church and state never before attained by any organization of the workers.

"Indeed, sometimes they rose to princely rank, as at Venice, where the ruler of this city, the Doge, was elected by the merchants from their number; and everywhere their power and dignity were so great that it was not deemed inappropriate for the Guild of the Carpenters and Coopers to present to the Cathedral, as they did at Chartres, a window whose magnificence almost outshone that of one presented by the King of France."

"As they flourished, the workman's new attitude toward his labour strengthened. His work was lifting him out of the wretchedness in which his forefathers lived, and making of him a man who, through the representatives of his guild, could speak almost on terms of equality with princes. It was therefore no longer a thing to be regretted as a hard necessity, which he would certainly dispense with if he could; it was a thing to be respected, the thing that made him a man who could walk erect among his fellows."

According to these writers, the two great lessons that were taught by the guilds to the mediaeval worker were the dignity of labour and the power of co-operation. These lessons found their finest expression in the Great Cathedrals. Here is how the writers I have already quoted interpret the ideas and ideals underlying this work for the Church. The cathedrals "were not simply work: they were men's way of escape from the numberless evils that beset them into a future world where all should be ideal. They were men's dreams and faith and hope. They were the workman's way of giving thanks to a loving and merciful God who was to rescue him from a harsh and merciless world. They were praise. They were the workmen's petition to be admitted into Paradise. They were prayer. They offered to the penitent sinner the opportunity, by toiling day after day at their building, to appease outraged justice. They were atonement. They permitted the lover of beauty to bring all rare and beautiful things to the service of infinite Beauty. They were Grace."

Let me interject here: Compare the attitude of these workers to their work with that of Necho's slaves toiling to connect the Red Sea with the Mediterranean, or their modern prototypes operating the steam shovels in distant Panama, and one will then realize what the Pagan World gained by the acceptance of Christianity and what the Modern World has lost by its rejection.

A word now with reference to the standard of living of the mediaeval worker. A member of the British parliament, James E. Thorold Rogers, published, in 1884, "Six Centuries of Work and Wages". This production went through five editions, the last edition appearing in 1901. It is characterised throughout by a decidedly anti-Church and anti-clerical bias. What is said in it, therefore, of the condition of the mediaeval worker cannot be attributed to any desire to praise

mediaevalism. Let me quote from the preface: "In the period which intervenes between the first record of wages and the death of Henry VIII (1547), during which the condition of the labourer was progressively good for more than a century and a half, and stationary at the highest level for nearly the whole of Henry's reign, more than thirty-seven years in duration, it is possible to follow the course of wages as exactly as that of any other article which is bought or sold, and to represent them by their power over all kinds of commodities. After this date, when they declined greatly in value, and the degradation of labour, owing to causes which I hope to make clear, began, I possess nearly the same continuous and minute knowledge for more than a century and a half, some being published, some being in notes. But, except for about fifty years in the earlier part of the eighteenth century, the wages of labour have been a bare subsistence, constantly supplemented by the poor rate, till, in modern times, a considerable amelioration in the condition of some kinds of labour has been effected."

If this quotation means anything, it is that it is only in modern times, and only for some kinds of labour, that the level of real wages of the working class reached the level which prevailed just before the so-called Reformation. Let me continue to quote Mr. Rogers: "I reckoned, when estimating the position of the mediaeval labourer by the side of his descendants in the eighteenth century, that the former received for the labour of threshing rather more than one-eighteenth of the wheat he threshed, rather more than a twenty-second part of barley, and rather less than a fourteenth part of oats, taking the rate of wages and the price of grain as the factors in the calculation. In the eighteenth century the peasant got one-twenty-fourth part of wheat and barley, and one-twentieth part of the oats he threshed." "I have stated more than once that the fifteenth century and the first quarter of the sixteenth were the golden age of the English labourer, if we are to interpret the wages which he earned by the cost of the necessities of life. At no time were wages, relatively speaking, so high, and at no time was food so cheap..." "Men were paid just as good wages in the fifteenth century, whether they were employed for a day or a year. Nor, as I have already observed, were the hours long. It is plain that the day was one of eight hours... Sometimes the labourer is paid for every day in the year, though it is certain that he did not work on Sundays and the principal holidays."

I could continue to quote Mr. Rogers to show, not alone that the worker was paid better in the Ages of Faith than in any succeeding age, that his working hours were almost as short as those of modern times, but also that the farm accounts which have survived from those times evidence a very high level of education in the ordinary farm hands. Mr. Rogers makes it perfectly clear that the mediaeval worker had a greater surplus to spend on the luxuries available in his age, after he had provided for all the necessities, than had his successor in any age since.

There was written during the period of the Wars of the Roses a book, entitled, *De Laudibus Legum Angliae*, "Praise of the Laws of England". The writer had been Lord Chief Justice of England for nearly twenty years, and had been appointed Lord High Chancellor by Henry VI. The following description appears in it of the condition of affairs, which existed in England at the time: "The king of England cannot alter the laws or make new ones without the express consent of the whole people in parliament assembled. Every inhabitant is at his liberty fully to use and enjoy whatever his farm produces, the fruits of the earth, the increase of his flocks, and the like; all the improvements he makes, whether by his own proper industry or of those he retains in his service, are his own to use and to enjoy without the let, interruption, or denial of any. If he be in any way injured or oppressed, he shall have his amends and satisfactions against the party offending. Hence it is, that the inhabitants are rich in gold, silver, and in all the necessities and conveniences of life. They drink no

water, unless at certain times upon a religious score, and by way of doing penance. They are fed in great abundance with all sorts of flesh and fish, of which they have plenty everywhere, they are clothed throughout in good woollens; their bedding and other furniture in their houses are of wool, and that in great store. They are also well provided with all sorts of household goods and necessary implements for husbandry. Every one, according to his rank, has all the things which conduce to make life easy and happy."

Here is a further quotation from Professor Thorold Rogers, this time an extract from a series of lectures delivered by him at Oxford in 1887-8, entitled, "The Economic Interpretation of History". "In the age which I have attempted to describe, and in describing which I have accumulated and condensed a vast mass of unquestionable facts, the rate of production was small, the conditions of health unsatisfactory, and the duration of life short. But, on the whole, there were none of those extremes of poverty and wealth which have excited the astonishment of philanthropists, and are now exciting the indignation of workmen. The age, it is true, had its discontents, and these discontents were expressed forcibly and in a startling manner. But of the poverty which perishes unheeded of a willingness to do honest work, and a lack of opportunity, there were little or none. The essence of life in England in the days of the Plantagnets and Tudors was that everyone knew his neighbour, and that everyone was his brother's keeper. My studies lead me to conclude that, though there was hardship in this life, the hardship was a common lot, and that there was hope, more hope than superficial historians have conceived possible, and perhaps more variety, than there is in the peasant's lot in our time."

These extracts go to justify the statement of the great Victorian statesman — the late W. E. Gladstone — "I do not think we are stronger, but weaker, than the men of the Middle Ages... The men of the sixteenth century were strong men, stronger in brain power than our men."

Factors which Produced the Conditions described in the Quotations.

I have treated the condition of the working people in the Middle Ages, and have quoted so freely, especially from non-Catholic sources, because of certain factors which entered into social relations in that period, and which have a very distinct bearing on the subject under review. The most important of these factors is that all the peoples of Western Europe at that period, gentle and simple, rich and poor, merchant and artisan and peasant, were united in one Faith, in their allegiance to the One True Church, and accepted as authoritative the guidance of that Church in every aspect of their lives, the social as well as the individual, the industrial as well as the religious. Naturally, then, the Ten Commandments, the Precepts of the Church, the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy made up their Rule of Life. The knowledge and service of God, the making of Labour a Prayer, the being one's brother's keeper, the doing to others as we would they would do unto us, were not simply pious platitudes to which lip service might be paid on the Sabbath, but the ends of living and doing which were to be kept in view from morning to night, from week's end to week's end.

Because of the general acceptance of these ideals laxity was shamed into adherence, the willing adherents were spurred to heights of enthusiasm. To achieve the ends in view needed no carefully prepared Five-Year Plan screamed out from countless microphones, painted on endless news reels, printed in myriad journals. What the praise and honour of God and the patronage of His Saints could produce I think the extracts I have quoted will show. I will leave it at that.

First Fruits of the "Great Perversion".

Then came what historians are wont to call the Reformation, but which I prefer to call the Great Perversion. The central idea in this new philosophy was that each individual was a law unto himself, a Church unto himself, a religion unto himself. Private judgment was its keynote, the rights of the individual was its watchword. Its effect on the outlook on social relations became at once apparent. The last great English Catholic statesman, Saint Thomas More, had declared in his "Utopia" that the poor were more profitable to the Commonwealth than the rich, and that the state ought not to be "a certain conspiracy of rich men procuring their own commodities under the name and title of the Commonwealth."

Sixty-seven years later, in his "De Republica Anglorum", Sir Thomas Smith could declare that "day labourers, poor husbandmen, merchants, retailers which have no free land and all artificers" should be made no account of, but "only to be ruled," while, in 1572, Thomas Wilson, in his "Discourse on Usury", asserted that "Merchants' doings must not thus be over-thwarted by preachers and others that cannot skill of their doings." But, even before this new philosophy had been given expression to in writing, its effects had been felt by the working men. When Henry VIII's greedy maw had not been sufficiently appeased by the confiscation of the monasteries, he turned to the property of the Guilds. He had a law passed in the second last year of his reign, which aimed at the destruction of the Guilds, and, although he died before the Act was put into force, it was implemented in the reign of his son Edward VI. In addition, Henry had debased the coinage.

Professor Rogers, from whom I have already quoted, thus describes the cumulative effect on the conditions of labour resulting from those two enactments: "The English labourer, then, in the sixteenth century was almost simultaneously assailed on both sides. The money which he received for his wages was debased, and the assistance which his benefit society gave him in times of difficulty, which allowed him loans without interest, apprenticed his son, or pensioned his widow, was confiscated. All the necessities of life, as I have already stated, rose in value in the proportion generally of 1 to 2½ while the wages of labour rose to little more than from 1 to 1½. His ordinary means of life were curtailed... But the deterioration of his condition was not confined to the loss of money wages. He lost his insurance also, the fund destined to support him and his during the period of youth and age, when work is not open to the imperfect powers of youth, and has become impossible to the enfeebled powers of age."

It is a peculiar commentary on the changed condition of affairs created by the change of state religion that the first enactment made by parliament in the reign of Edward VI was one to punish beggars by branding them with hot irons, and that 'Good Queen Bess' (Elizabeth I) should frequently exclaim, during the course of her tours through her kingdom, "pauper ubique jacet", the poor appear everywhere. It is necessary to dwell on the immediate effects of the Great Perversion on the condition of the working classes, because it is generally accepted that the social machinery which grew up under the tutelage and guidance of the Church in the Ages of Faith was not suited to meet the changed conditions of the Mercantile Period and the Era of Industrial Expansion which followed, and this is the reason given for the break-up of the Guilds. As I have shown, the break-up of this social machinery was a direct result of the Great Perversion, and was immediately followed by a distinct and terrible worsening of the conditions of the labouring classes.

"Laissez-faire" a Product of the 'Great Perversion'.

The economic doctrine, which held sway during the Industrial Revolution, is known as the policy of "Laissez-faire". Adam Smith was its greatest exponent. Put bluntly, it meant, in business, "Every

man for himself and the devil take the hindmost." This doctrine was a direct product of the teachings of the so-called Reformists. Even Protestant apologists agree on this. "The later Lutheran overstress on the rights of the individual," says the Rev. Frank Monroe, a Protestant Divine, "found at least an indirect result in the socio-political philosophy of laissez-faire which, in conjunction with the industrial revolution, brought about the economic conditions that have occasioned widespread revolt during the last century in Europe and America."

Our so-called humane age could hardly believe the conditions under which labour was performed in the eighteenth and far into the nineteenth centuries. In order that some opinion might be formed of what these conditions were like, here is an extract from a history reader now in use in English schools: In 1847 at Manchester a child of seven, Thomas Price, was forced to go for a second time into a hot flue in some chemical works. His screams and cries were at first disregarded, but presently his master dragged him out half choked, threw him down and thrashed him, in the vain hope of bringing him back to consciousness.

Cases of this kind were not uncommon. The climbing boys had scarcely a chance to wash the soot from their skins, and it found its way into their lungs also. In time, they usually developed the terrible disease called cancer. Their flesh was torn and scraped against the brickwork as they climbed the chimneys, and the masters, to harden their knees and elbows, used to rub the children's sores with strong brine near a hot fire. "The boys would come back streaming with blood from the chimneys, and then they must be rubbed with brine once more." This is a far cry from the fatherly conditions which the Guilds set out for the protection of apprentices. It is symptomatic of the awful treatment meted out by the "Reformed" employers to those condemned to work for them, the employers who were not to be over-thwarted by preachers. It was the Protestant method of interpreting: "Suffer the little children to come unto Me."

Is it any wonder that young, enthusiastic, educated men revolted against this horrible state of affairs, and, lacking the faith and knowledge of the Catholic Religion, sought by dangerous means to provide a remedy. A group of such, students at Paris University, approached a fellow-student in the early days of the last (the nineteenth) century. "You have good reasons," they said, "to talk of the past. There was a time when Christianity worked wonders; but now it is dead. In fact, what are you doing, you who boast of your Catholicity? Where are your works that prove your faith, that can make us respect and accept it?" The young Catholic to whom these words were addressed was none other than Frederick Ozanam [now Blessed], the morning star of modern Catholic social action. The taunt spurred him to prove that the living faith of a Catholic could do as much to cure social ills in his day as it had done in the Ages of Faith. His efforts to create the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, and the success, which crowned these efforts, are another story.

But, in addition to organizing this great work of charity, Ozanam contributed no small amount to Catholic social theory. He lived through the years of revolutions, the years 1830 and 1848. He sensed the social character of these revolutions, recognised the dangers inherent in the terrible conditions under which the poor existed, and assessed at their true value of the reforms then being enacted. "If men think they can satisfy the people by giving them primary assemblies, legislative councils, new magistrates, consuls or a president, they are sadly mistaken. Within a decade of years, and perhaps sooner, the old difficulties will return," he asserts in a letter to his brother dated March 6, 1848. On another occasion, he avers: "The questions which will occupy the minds of men are the questions of labour, of wages, of industry, of economics." He anticipated Marx by nearly a decade in recognising that the divisions between men had become not one of opinions, but of interests. He

differed from the Communist in regarding this as a temporary and subnormal state of affairs, not as the primary motive of all the struggles of all the ages.

His solution is characteristic. "One only means of salvation remain to us, it is that Christians, in the name of love, interpose between the two camps, passing like beneficent deserters from one to the other, collecting abundant alms from the rich, and resignation from the poor; carrying gifts to the poor and words of gratitude to the rich; teaching them on both sides to look upon each other as brothers; and communicating mutual charity to all, until this charity, paralysing and stifling the egotism of both parties, and every day losing their antipathies, shall bid the two camps to arise and break down the barriers of prejudice, and cast aside their weapons of anger, and march forward to meet each other — not to fight; but mingle together in one embrace so that they may henceforth form but one fold under one shepherd." Thus Ozanam outlined his solution of the social problems of his day; an approach to social justice through the development in all classes of the spirit of Christian charity. While he believed in and urged the social function of charity, he did not, like so many others, profess charity, while ignoring justice.

Though he felt charity was necessary to heal social sores he was insistent in stressing that justice ought to have prevented them. Before Marx was heard of, Ozanam, in a course of lectures which he gave in Lyons, when Professor of Law there, spoke of the great Capitalist fortunes of the day as being gained by conquest just as were the swollen estates of the robber lords of the feudal period, and pressing equally hard on the common people. "It is wrong," he asserted, "to the dignity of human nature when the master looks on the worker not as an associate or assistant, but as a tool, to be used for the most profit at the least cost." Ten years before the issue of the Communist Manifesto, he preached the worker's right to a living wage, and his right to organize in labour associations. Late in 1847, he made a speech in which occurs the following remarkable sentences: "We should occupy ourselves with the people, whose wants are too many and whose rights are too few; who are crying out; and fairly, for a share in public affairs, for guarantees for work, and against distress; who follow bad leaders because they have no good ones."

The Lion of Mainz.

When, in 1848, the first German parliament met at Frankfort to draft a federal constitution, and offer the Imperial crown of a reconstructed Germany to the then King of Prussia, Frederick William IV, among the deputies was a country parish priest, Father Kettler (Wilhelm Emmanuel Freiherr von Ketteler). When this priest had been only six years in Holy Orders, he was consecrated Bishop of Mainz, and thus was created the "Bishop of the Working Man," the founder of Catholic social action in Germany, and the great precursor of Leo XIII in the labour cause. 1848 is known as the year of revolutions. We have seen how Frederick Ozanam had reacted to the social ebullitions of that year. The cause, which produced the worldwide risings of the common people, were not lost on Father Ketteler, as he then was. At the first German Catholic Congress held in that year he makes a bold declaration; "Allow me to suggest a task for the immediate future — the task of religion in regard to Social conditions. The most difficult question which no legislation, no form of government has been able to solve, is the social question." He was not long in the enjoyment of his episcopal see when he took up this particular task as his life's work.

In his approach to it, he differed somewhat from Ozanam. Whereas the latter placed greater stress upon charity as the means of restoring justice, Ketteler more directly sought for social justice, with charity as a supreme motive. An analysis of his social teachings would provide sufficient material

for a complete pamphlet, as would a description of the labour projects, which he undertook and brought to fruition. I will simply confine myself to set out the heads of a social programme, which he submitted to a conference of the German Bishops held in Fulda in 1869. Here they are: Prohibition of child labour in factories. Separation of sexes in the workshop. Closing of unsanitary workshops. Legal regulation of working hours. Sunday rest. Obligation of caring for workmen who, through no fault of theirs, are temporarily or forever incapacitated for work in the business in which they are employed. A law protecting and favouring co-operatives of working men. Appointment by the State of Factory Inspectors.

This was his programme for the legal protection for working men. In addition, he urged the reform of taxation by the introduction of a stock exchange tax, of an income tax for joint stock companies, the state management of railways, the reduction of the war budget, and the exemption of the necessities of life from taxation.

It will be noted that this programme contains all the aspects of social legislation, which have been implemented in our Factory Acts (as first passed by the British Parliament). They were first suggested by a distinguished Catholic cleric, and in his efforts to have them given statutory effect he got no help from the socialists of his day, because they were dominated by the Marxian dogmas as to the futility of improving capitalism, and the inevitability of the early world revolution.

The Pope of the Working Man.

The social theories and the social programme put forward by Ozanam and Ketteler had the apparent contradiction of being at once old and new. They were old in the sense that they had their roots and foundation in the general moral principles, which the Catholic Church had taught from the very beginning. They were new in that they were applied for the first time to a system of industry and industrial relations, which had been in existence for little more than half a century. Ozanam and Ketteler were, however, individual Catholics. Their utterances were, to a certain extent, local and lacked that authoritative distinction which was necessary if the general body of Catholics were to take cognizance of them. The whole world, steeped in the Protestant and Pagan economic theories of Adam Smith, was therefore startled to hear a pronouncement from the Chair of Peter on May 15th, 1891, in the now famous Encyclical, "Rerum Novarum".

"Since the Divine words, 'I have compassion on the multitude,' were spoken in the Wilderness," wrote the late Cardinal Henry Edward Manning, "no voice has been heard throughout the world pleading for the people with such profound love and loving sympathy for those that toil and suffer as the voice of Leo XIII."

"Pope Leo's warm denunciation of oppression for greed may not make capitalists more philanthropic, his distinct declaration that labour has a right to a 'comfortable, though frugal,' life — what courage it must have required in an epoch of universal suffrage to put in that word — will give new heart to the millions," wrote the English Spectator. "Leo was saluted as the 'Workman's Pope'." This is hardly the place to deal with this encyclical at length. It will be sufficient to say that in its four parts it treats of the origin and constitution of human society, shows the unnatural, abnormal and subversive nature of what is called socialism, sets forth how the state ought to intervene in social questions, and distinctively defines the rights and duties of workers, both men and women. As Bishop Ketteler said on his death-bed, it made an immense breach in the last ramparts of the Liberal School of Economics, and showed a solution of the social question which

the world, chastened by the horrors and failure of the Russian experiment, is at last beginning to realize to be the only solution.

In the forty years which elapsed between Pope Leo's clarion call and that of our own beloved Holy Father, Pope Pius XI, both Pope Leo and his successors assailed again and again the prevailing unchristian principles of both the orthodox and revolutionary schools of economics, and urged repeatedly the Christian solution of the world's difficulties. In their efforts to win back the industrial world to Christ, they were ably seconded by the Cardinals and Hierarchy. The defence of the workers by their Eminences Cardinals James Gibbons, Manning, William Henry O'Connell and Francis Bourne, and their appeal for a Christian outlook on industrial relations, have become historic. The Bishops of the United States, of France, of Germany and of Ireland, have, from time to time, issued joint pastorals reiterating the rights and duties of labour, and appealing for the implementing of Catholic social principles in industry.

The pastoral of the Irish Bishops was issued in the Spring of 1914, when the Dublin working class were broken and bleeding after the terrible strike of 1913. It opens by an appeal for "strong Irish trade unions, conducted on sound principles" which would not be "likely to accept less than a living wage" for their members. It goes on to state that "it is the labourers who have the first claim" on the consideration of the Hierarchy, that the Hierarchy's desire "is not the enrichment of any class, but for such employment and remuneration of Irish labour at home as will afford our working people a worthy livelihood and stem the tide of depopulating emigration." It asserts that "the workman may well claim, in return for his honest day's work, what will at least procure worthy maintenance for himself and his little family, with such "outlet and outlook" as are implied in a reasonable opportunity to improve steadily the condition of his household." It points out that "no class has ever had from the Catholic Church the same warm, watchful, courageous care as those who literally earn their bread in the sweat of their brow." It summarises briefly the activities of the Church on behalf of the working man, from the days when its Divine Founder dignified labour by living as a carpenter, through the guild period, down to the days of the great Pope Leo. It condemns socialism, reiterates the right to private property, and welcomes the trend of land settlement.

In a paragraph, portraying a masterly vision, it sets out how industry should be developed under a Christian Social order. Let me quote it: "The difficulty of conducting successfully a commercial undertaking in the management of which the workers would have a voice in most cases, be too much for us at present. But it looks as if the industrial world were at a stage of transition when such things are likely to be; and, though machinery and invention have made a lasting change in the industrial system it is to be remembered that the Church, in the interests of mankind, has ever desired a wide distribution of property, and in her days of greatest social power sanctioned a large control of industry by the workers." The pastoral goes on to appeal for a crusade to end slumdom both in town and country, and for conciliation boards to settle and control industrial disputes. It urges the study of social questions by all, and ends on an appeal for Christian charity in industrial relations.

The exigencies of space prevents me from dealing at length with the subject matter of the various other encyclicals and pastorals to which I have already referred. In our present Holy Father, Pius XI, to whom God may grant length of days, the working classes have found a doughty champion. His warnings of the dangerous paths along which they were and are being led by Communist agitators, his re-statement of their rights, his appeals for a Christian solution of their difficulties, are very well known to all. Worthily is he continuing the great apostolate, which Our Divine Lord, of whom he is

such a distinguished Vicar, described as "preaching the 'Gospel' to the poor." Would that the world's people, Catholic as well as non-Catholic, obeyed his commands and adhered to his teaching. In what must of necessity be only a brief summary of one aspect of the Church's work, I think I have shown how great is the slander and how wicked is the lie which we hear so often repeated nowadays that the Church is, and has been always, the enemy of the worker, and that its religion is the opium of the people.

The study of any of the facets of history must add to our wisdom, and surely the study of the history of the attitude of the Church to the worker must show us that it is only by following the teaching of the Church on all matters that happiness and salvation are to be found, both in this world and in the next. A weary, war-racked and troubled world is today seeking for some outlet from the morass into which it has been led. Where is that outlet to be found? Let one of the greatest living English Catholic laymen reply: "There is a city full, as are all cities, of halt and maim, blind and evil and the rest; but it is the city of God. There are not two such Cities on earth. There is One. One thing in this world is different from all others. It has personality and a force. It is recognized, and (when recognized) most violently loved or hated. It is the Catholic Church. Within that household, the human spirit has roof and hearth. Outside it is the Night." (Hilaire Belloc.)

"In hac urbe lux sollemnis
Ver aeternum pax perennis,
Et aeterna gaudia." (Arnold Lunn.)

(In this city, there is solemn light,
The Spring eternal of perennial peace is born,
And everlasting joys.)
