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The Social Encyclicals: Their Message

By Rev. CORNELIUS LUCEY, M.A., D.D., D.Ph.

An Encyclical is an open letter from the Pope to the Catholics of the whole world, or of a particular country or class, on some topic of grave importance. As the Pope is qualified by his office to speak authoritatively only on matters of faith and morals, it follows that the subject-matter of an Encyclical will be one in which religious or moral issues of one kind or another are involved. Though Encyclicals are not usually made the vehicle for infallible pronouncements, still their teaching has to be accepted as the official teaching of the Church. All Catholics, therefore, are bound to abide by it loyally.

A social Encyclical is one which deals with some aspect of our social life, that is, of our life as members of a group or community. Now the chief groups to which we all naturally and necessarily belong are the Family, Economic Society and the State, or Civil Society. Accordingly a Social Encyclical will deal with matters affecting us as members of a family, that is, as husband or wife, parent or child; affecting us as members of an economic society, that is, as producers or consumers, buyers or sellers, employers or workers; or finally, affecting us as members of civil society or the State, that is, as citizens. It will examine some modern development or aberration in these spheres and outline what the Catholic attitude towards it should be. The Encyclical on The Christian Education of Youth, written in 1929 to discuss such questions as the State Monopoly of schools, co-education, etc., in the light of Catholic moral principles, is a Social Encyclical, for instance. So too is that on Christian Marriage, which appeared in 1939, dealing with Divorce, Birth Control, Eugenics, etc.

But when we speak of the Social Encyclicals without further qualification, it is not these Encyclicals we have in mind. We are referring rather to the Encyclicals that deal with economic society and, in particular, with the condition of the working-classes. In these days the grievances of the working-classes affect more people, involving greater social

evils and excite, if only because of the radical nature of the remedies proposed for them, keener concern than do any other social problems, or set of social problems. They are the main objection to accepting the status quo in the world to-day. And all agree that something must be done, and done quickly, about them. The problem of righting them, therefore, has very properly and naturally come to be looked upon as the social problem of our age, the social question par excellence; and the Encyclicals dealing with them have come to be looked upon as the Social Encyclicals. The first of these great Social Encyclicals is the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, issued by Leo XIII in 1891. The second is the Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, issued in 1931 by Pius XI. These are not the only Encyclicals, of course, that treat of defects in the present economic system from the Catholic standpoint. We had, for instance, an Encyclical on Atheistic Communism in 1937, and one on The Causes of the Depression in 1932. But these other Encyclicals do no more than develop and particularize the message of *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno*.

The problem of the working-classes is a comparatively modern one. It is a product of the Industrial Revolution which began in England towards the end of the eighteenth century. All down the Middle Ages the bulk of the population everywhere was quartered on the land or gathered in small towns. Industry was almost altogether carried on by hand. It was carried on in the home itself, or in small workshops adjoining the home. And it was carried on by a master or owner, assisted by journeymen, and apprentices. These journeymen corresponded to our modern wage-earner in the sense that they drew regular wages for their work. However, they differed from the modern worker in another important respect. The journeyman usually lived with the master, and might expect to become master himself one day. As little or no outlay in capital was necessary, it was easy for him to set up for himself whenever he wished. Hence, there was no permanent wage-earning class in those days, as far as trade and industry were concerned. And in those days, too, wages, prices, profits, the quality of products, etc., were all regulated by the Guilds and by the Municipality or the State.

A series of mechanical inventions, beginning with the

spinning jenny of Hargreaves in 1770, changed all this. The factor came into being, wherein large numbers worked together in conjunction with the machine. This development was not of itself a bad thing. To it we owe the great material conveniences of our present civilization. But it brought disastrous consequences, too, in its train.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in England, a new class of owners, rich in ready money, had grown up. It was ill-gotten money, most of it—looted from the monasteries, looted from the New World, coined in the sweat of slave labour abroad—though that is beside the point at the moment. What does matter, however, was that in the late eighteenth century there was ready money in greater quantities and in fewer hands than in the earlier centuries. And so, when factories had to be built and equipped at considerable cost, these men were at hand to step in and secure complete ownership of them. Had the discovery of machinery and steam-power come earlier, it is probable that the Guilds of masters and journeymen would have built, equipped and worked the factories on a co-operative basis. But coming as it did with the Guilds in decay and the moneyed classes on the spot to forestall any co-operative effort on the part of the poorer classes, it resulted in the creation of a working-class that had no share, and could never hope to have any share, in the ownership either of the goods they produced or the capital with which they worked. And this propertyless class, dependent altogether on wages for a livelihood, was ever on the increase. One after another, the village craftsmen found themselves crushed out by the competition of the machine, unable to buy machinery of their own, and so driven to join in the quest for a livelihood by wages. For every one craftsman that made good, hundreds were thus submerged.

This cleavage of ownership and labour, dangerous at any time, was disastrous just then. The economists of the day taught that the less the State, the municipality, or any corporate body whatsoever interfered with the factories the better. Free, unfettered competition of man and man was the key to all progress in their eyes. And in that competition they taught that the value of human labour to an employer is decided altogether by the scarcity or plentifulness of labourers looking for work. This meant in practice

that employers could pay their workers and treat their workers as they liked, because the worker had perforce to have employment in order to earn his daily bread, and he had neither the State nor the Trade Union to secure for him a fair deal. 'Isolated and defenceless,' as Leo XIII put it in his Encyclical, 'he was given over to the callousness of employers and the greed of unrestrained competition.'

And the employers took advantage of the workers' helplessness with a vengeance. Wealth and power were their gods, profit the sole motive for their interest in the factories. To them, the men and women in their factories were simply so many 'hands,' for whose welfare they felt even less responsibility than they felt for the welfare of their beasts of burden—when a worker broke down it cost them nothing to replace him, whereas when a beast of burden broke down they had to buy a new one in its place. And if ever the divine spark of pity touched their hearts at the sight of the poverty and wretchedness about them, they gave relief, not because they felt they ought to do so, but under the insulting guise of unctious 'charity.' And if ever a bishop or church leader ventured to remonstrate with them, he was told to keep out of economics, just as he is so often told in analogous circumstances in our day to keep out of politics—the business of the Church is simply to hold services in churches, and to run charitable organizations for the down-and-out.

Of course, all employers were not so inhuman. But the best among them could do little. They operated under the system of free competition. And where free competition obtains, the worst employer in each branch of industry sets the standard to which the rest must approximate. If they do not, they will quickly find themselves out of business. Their costs of production will be high, and so they will be undersold by the producer who pays low wages and, therefore, has low costs of production.

What was the worker to do? Some told him he should do nothing but bear patiently with his lot. However, the workers hungered and thirsted too much, not only for justice, but for the very necessities of life, to suffer on in patience. 'The Communists openly declared,' wrote Marx, 'that their aims (i.e., a classless society and the expropriation of the existing capitalist class) can be obtained only by the forcible overthrow of the present system. Here, then, was another

policy for the workers—class-war without surcease, until a new social order would come into being in which private ownership would have no place. And many, very many, in France and Germany especially, adopted it, looking upon private ownership as the source of all their evils. Others, however, wished, if possible, to retain the framework of the existing system, but to reform it drastically in one way or another.

A. RERUM NOVARUM.

The Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* was published in 1891 to give the Catholic answer. Pope Leo XIII was then a very old man—he was past his eightieth year. And the new industrial methods and values and groupings, since last the Church surveyed it, made the field of economic society a wide and complicated one. But the spirit that burned within his worn body was still vigorous and daring. A keen sense of the responsibility and duties of the Apostolic Office lent it wings. And so, having prayed much over it, having called in expert advice from every source and land, having weighed long and carefully the reports, proposals, arguments, and drafts before him, he issued the much-wished-for momentous Encyclical on the Condition of the Working-Classes, called *Rerum Novarum*.

Briefly, the Encyclical laid down that the condition of the working-classes was to be improved by diffusing ownership more widely rather than by the Socialist policy of abolishing ownership altogether. The Church, the Trade Union and the State are the agencies that must help in this struggle for economic justice on behalf of the propertyless workers. The first and most pressing objective of these agencies should be to secure for all workers a decent living wage.

'No practical solution of the Social Question will be found without the assistance of religion and the Church.' Here was the answer of *Rerum Novarum* to those who said bishops and priests should keep to the Gospels instead of discussing industrial problems. Industrial problems are the Church's concern. This is because—and in so far as—they are the outcome of free human activities. Every economic transaction—that is, every act of ours in buying and selling,

borrowing and lending, hiring or giving or doing work, producing or saving or consuming—is a free act. Like every other free act, it will be right or wrong, morally good or morally bad, from the point of view of saving our souls. Accordingly, the Church, whose special mission is to help us in saving our souls, has to concern herself with these economic activities of ours.

In other words, low wages, long hours, bad housing and all the other ills we label together as the Social Question are not the outcome of inexorable economic law. They exist primarily because the leaders of industry are in a position to exploit the workers and have not scrupled to avail of their position. They are, therefore, morally unjustifiable. And so the plea that these ills should be alleviated does not rest fundamentally on mere feelings of humanitarianism or even on grounds of social and economic expediency—though humanitarianism and expediency both alike do demand that the condition of the working-classes be bettered. It is before all else a plea based on moral urgency. The moral order is disturbed as long as these evils continue unchecked. And that of itself is sufficient reason why it is imperative to check them. Besides, no matter how the economic system is organised, it will always leave scope for the exercise of free-will by the men working it. These men, being human, may misuse their freedom to the detriment of those with whom they have to deal. Our only safeguard against that is to make them conscious of the moral law and disposed to observe it. Hence, no merely structural reform of the present economic order will endure—or, for that matter, can be successfully initiated even—unless it embraces also a reform in manners. A return to social prosperity without a return to morality is impossible. And it is to religion and the Church we are to look for bringing men back to this respect for the moral values. She must kill in them that selfishness and that materialistic philosophy of life which are the root causes—the one in the will, the other in the intellect,—of so much anti-social conduct.

Some people, as we said already, consider the Church has no part to play in solving social problems. Others go to the opposite extreme and expect too much from her. To that category belong, for instance, all those who believe that one economic system is as good as another provided it

is worked conscientiously. In their eyes, a change of heart on the part of employers and employees is what is required to cure unemployment, bad housing, etc. And some of them go even so far as to speak of the Church failing in her mission because there is still a social question in the world, despite the nineteen hundred years of her existence. She has not made us men of goodwill, as she ought to have.

Many who recognise that a reform in organisation may be just as vital as a reform in manners commit the error of thinking that the Church is competent to plan both kinds of reform. They imagine her Encyclicals have, or ought to have, a concrete, detailed and adequate proposal for dealing with unemployment, poverty, etc. But this is to forget that her purpose is to lead men to spiritual well-being in the next life, not to material comforts in this. After all, we might as well regard her as an institution for cancer research or any other humanitarian work, as regard her as an institution for social and industrial reform.

The true function of the Church, therefore, in solving the Social Question is a limited, though nevertheless indispensable, one. It may be summed up in the following four propositions: First, she must declare the principles which obtain in social and economic life in view of the fact that men are free beings destined for another world as well as for this one, and she must interpret them in terms of the concrete circumstances of the age, e.g., to show that man's abstract right to live from the fruits of the earth means under the capitalist system a right to a living wage. Secondly, she must try to form men's characters so that they will act up to these principles conscientiously in their dealings with each other as employer and employee, buyer and seller, and so on. Thirdly, she must decide authoritatively whether a particular practice, e.g., interest-taking, or a particular programme of reform, e.g., the Socialist programme, is, or is not, beyond reproach from the moral and religious standpoint. (She may even go further and actively sponsor some particular measure or programme of reform, as when the Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* recommends that the wage-contract should be modified so as to include a profit-sharing clause of one sort or another. But when she does this, she is no longer in a province exclusively her own). Finally, she must act the Good Samaritan to the helpless or hapless in the economic

struggle. Relief of the poor is, and ever has been, one of her ordinary activities.

The second fundamental assertion of *Rerum Novarum* was that there can be no solution of the Social Question without State intervention. The accepted political theory and practice of the nineteenth century had held it as axiomatic that the less governments interfered with businessmen and their employees, the better. Socialists had rushed to the opposite extreme and insisted that the more governments interfered with industry, the better. Now came the teaching of *Rerum Novarum* that the State ought to respect private property and private initiative, but not so far as to subordinate the propertyless masses to them. In fact, the State must especially care for and protect these propertyless masses—that will be its main contribution towards solving the Social Question. The forms this assistance may take are the enactment of laws regulating hours, working conditions, wages, etc., and the provision of free social services. Such measures, therefore, as the Conditions of Employment Act, Unemployment Assistance, Old Age Pensions or Widows' and Orphans' Allowances are implicitly demanded by the Encyclical.

When these principles were insisted on in 1891, they seemed to conservative politicians little short of Socialism. Now the swing of the pendulum is in the other direction. The danger is that the modern government will take too much on itself and leave too little to the initiative of the individual citizen. Even where State totalitarianism is not popular in theory, certain leanings towards it are discernible in practice. For instance, there is the tendency to accept social services, such as the Dole, Old Age Pensions and the like, as part of the State's permanent duties towards its citizens. Yet of their nature these services are, in reality, emergency measures. The worker has a right to them at the moment simply because the property system, under which he lives, does not provide him with due employment nor (when he has work) with a wage sufficient to support him in his old age. But the duty of providing workers with employment and a sufficiency for the future does not fall directly on the State. It falls rather on the leaders of industry, and the propertied classes generally.

The permanent duty of a government, therefore, is to see that property owners pay such wages, and put their property to such use, that all workers have an opportunity to live a

decent, human life. And it is only while it is taking the necessary measures to regulate ownership to this end that the State should act the fairy godmother. Indeed, the Encyclical definitely asserts that accident, sickness, old age, and such like benefits, should normally be provided by the workers themselves through mutual benefit and insurance societies of their own. Hence, the more free benefits of this kind a government gives away over long periods, the surer sign it is that such government is not contributing its quota towards solving the Social Question. It is merely redressing the effects of social injustice instead of ensuring the reign of social justice. And it is sapping the native independence of its citizens in the process. Catholic social teaching may insist on State intervention against the laissez-faire school. But it is no less insistent that intervention does not spell regimentation. And it repudiates the idea of a nation of State pensioners. Yet we are coming perilously near to this in many countries that count themselves to be neither Fascist nor Socialist.

And if governments everywhere are inclined to be over-interfering in some directions, there are other directions in which they have hardly gone any distance at all. One is in the matter of slum clearances. Good housing is as much part and parcel of a decent human existence as good eating or good clothing. Yet the majority of our workers still live perforce in quarters such that the very farmers supplying them with milk would be fined for keeping their cattle in—and they pay dearly for the privilege. For instance, almost twenty-five per cent. of the population of Dublin live in tenements, a family to the room. Surely, it is the bounden duty of the State or the municipality to see that citizens are enabled to have homes that are worthy of the dignity of men.

Yet another sphere in which State interference is much overdue is that of industrial disputes. Dealing with strikes, the Encyclical says:—

The grave inconvenience of this not uncommon occurrence should be obviated by public remedial measures, for such paralysing of labour not only affects the masters and their work-people alike, but is extremely injurious to trade and to the general interests of the public; moreover, on such occasions, violence and disorder are generally not far distant. The laws should forestall and prevent such troubles from arising.

This is not a condemnation of strikes. But it is most emphatically a statement that governments should minimize the need for strike action. This can be done by the creation of Industrial Arbitration Courts. Compulsory Arbitration, that is, arbitration the findings of which are binding on employers and employees alike, existing in such democratic countries as Australia and New Zealand. To ask for that in this country is, perhaps, asking for too much just yet. But surely, in view of the fact that we in Ireland are so apt to find ourselves involved in lightning strikes, the Government might insist at least on Compulsory Adjudication. Compulsory adjudication entails the legal banning of a strike or lock-out until the dispute has been arbitrated upon by a Court of Referees and the award of the Court made public. The great merits of this procedure are that it eliminates the lightning strike and provides the public with facts on which to decide the distribution of sympathy as between the contending parties. And we would not be taking a leap into the dark by adopting such a scheme. Canada has worked it since 1907 with excellent results. Nor could Labour or Capital honestly object. It leaves them with their ultimate right to strike or lock-out still intact.

The State, therefore, like the Church, cannot improve the condition of the working-class by its own efforts alone. The third agency that must co-operate in the task is the organisation of workers and business people among themselves. The Encyclical mentions the trade union specially. And it proves at length the right of the workers to form these unions and avail of the lever of collective bargainings. To-day, except in America and the totalitarian countries, this right of free combination, as it is called, is no longer questioned. Yet how many among us are even still inclined to suspect a man of Leftist tendencies simply because we see him active in organising the trade union movement or in directing strikes! We should remember that unionism as such has the blessing of the Popes themselves. It is official Catholic teaching that workers have the right to organize. And some Catholic sociologists even go as far as to say that they have a duty to do so.

But there are trade unions and trade unions. *Rerum Novarum* does not give its benediction to every trade union so called. It recommends only the organization which attends

not alone to the economic well-being of its members, but also to the spiritual well-being. 'Let religious instruction have therein a formal place,' we read, 'and let all be warned and fortified against wrong opinions and false teaching.' Do trade unions in this Catholic Country of ours approximate to the ideal envisaged by *Rerum Novarum*? What provision do they make for giving members and officials a thorough grounding in the Christian social principles? No one wishes to see our Irish trade unions clerically managed bodies, or assuming the status of mere social study clubs. But would it not be well if each trade union had a spiritual director or chaplain who would address the members occasionally and with whom they could discuss their problems of policy or action? And would it not be well if each trade union had a Summer School wherein its leaders might learn more of the Christian teaching on the Social Question? Finally, would it not be well also if the local parish priest or curate were given to understand that he would be welcome at the meetings of the local union branches now and again? The working-class in Ireland are as Catholic as any other section of the community. The priest is not, and ought not be, hostile to their just aspirations and interests.

Against Socialism the Encyclical stated the case for private ownership in general; and against the Agrarian Socialism of Henry George, then so popular in America, it insisted on the right of private ownership of land in particular. There is no large body of opinion in this country that openly challenges the right of private ownership. But how close to Agrarian Socialism is the formula we sometimes hear: 'The soil of Ireland and its resources are the property of the people.' To hold that is to deny equivalently that our farmers own their holdings by natural right. Yet the title by which the average Irish farmer possesses his farm is absolutely as sacrosanct as any right to private property is. Again we find people professing loyalty to the Christian social tradition and at the same time working 'to win for the people of Ireland, collectively, the ownership and control of the whole produce of their labour,' or to establish 'public ownership by the people of all essential sources of wealth.' It takes some explaining away to reconcile this objective with the principles of *Rerum Novarum*.

The Encyclical did not condemn the divorce of Capital and Labour, nor its consequences, the Wage-System. But neither did it commend the system. In fact, it would prefer to see it giving place to a new system in which the worker would be also an owner. More and more owners, until every family will be its own landlord and possess its own invested capital in industry, is the ideal put before us. That should be the aim of our whole social policy, therefore. That alone, if achieved, can assure to us the stability, the greater equality in the distribution of wealth, the contentment, and the popular prosperity which social reform is so anxious to bring about.

The worker has no other means of achieving ownership except his wages. *Rerum Novarum* laid down that every worker has a right in strict justice to a living wage. By a living wage it understood a wage that will not only keep the worker alive, but afford him a decent and frugal comfort as well. It should be remembered, however, that the Encyclical simply said that such a wage was the medium below which it is unjustifiable to go in any circumstances whatsoever. It did not say, and it did not imply, that justice is satisfied once every worker has a living wage. In fact, it implies the contrary, since it presumes that the worker should be able to put a little by every week and so one day become well off enough to buy property for himself.

Such in brief was the message of *Rerum Novarum*. It was a startling message to a generation steeped in the materialistic philosophy of life, to a generation that believed business is business and has nothing to do with morality, that believed the State should not interfere in industry or enact class legislation, that believed trade unionism was the advance guard of Socialism, that believed a fair wage was whatever wage the worker could be got to agree to. What a crushing refutation of the calumny that the Papacy is the last stronghold of Conservatism and Reaction! Indeed, there were not wanting some, even among Catholics, who whispered that the Pope had gone too far and that his Letter was in no way binding; while the less respectful did not hesitate to refer to the Holy Father as the Socialist Bishop! But the Pope had not gone too far. His successors ever since have affirmed his teaching. And many not of his flock at all have made it their own.

B. QUADRAGESIMO ANNO.

But the world does not stand still. We have progressed far since 1891. And so, as the fortieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum* approached and another Pope looked out over the nations from the Vatican, he found that 'the new needs of our age and the changed conditions of society have rendered necessary a more precise application and amplification of Leo's doctrine.' Accordingly, in 1931, a second momentous Social Encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno*, was issued.

The scope of the new Encyclical is obvious from the introductory passage to it which we have quoted in the previous paragraph. It proposes to bring the Christian social teaching up-to-date—not by changing its principles, of course, but by rationalizing new social and economic developments in the light of them.

The first important pronouncement of *Quadragesimo Anno* is on ownership. It is that the right of ownership is distinct from the use to which the things owned are put. Accordingly, neither the misuse nor the non-use of property involves of itself forfeiture of the right of ownership. However, owners are morally bound to take into account not only their own private good, but also the good of their employees and neighbours in the use they make of their possessions. If they fail to do so, the State is entitled, not indeed to confiscate their property, but to compel them either to use it better themselves or else to dispose of it altogether. Along with this limitation on the use of ownership is another limitation on the extent of ownership. 'Certain forms of property must be reserved to the State, since they carried with them a power too great to be left to private individuals without injury to the community at large.' What these forms of property are the Encyclical itself does not go on to specify. However, the semi-official *Osservatore Romano* (November 22nd, 1934), commenting on this passage, mentioned hydro-electric power stations, public utilities, armament factories and munitions as examples. But it should be noted that the Encyclical nowhere insists upon outright public ownership of these forms of property. What it has in mind is that they ought to be publicly controlled as to their use, and that they may, if necessary, be publicly owned. The ideal plan, however, is to have the profits of such

concerns limited to the Debenture rate of interest usually obtainable in good joint stock companies—in other words, to have private ownership but with public control.

Turning from property rights to the relations of Capital and Labour, the Encyclical condemns, on the one hand, the excessive profits that capitalists have so long been making, and on the other the excessive claims that some advance on behalf of labour. It lays down, first of all, that capitalists are entitled to a return on their money and machinery, even though they do not work actively themselves in the industry. This means the rejection of the excessive claim of Socialists that capital is not productive and that, accordingly, all the fruits of the productive process should go to the workers. But having vindicated the right of capitalists to take profits, it goes on to insist that they are not entitled to the rates they have hitherto succeeded in taking. There is a just rate of profit in business, not a take-all rate. This is important. It blows sky high the belief common among many of our moralists that the prevailing rate of interest may be always accepted as the just rate. The implication of *Quadragesimo Anno*, in fact, is that it is to be presumed as an unjustly high rate.

Since profits depend as much on the prices charged by capitalists for their products as on the wages paid by them to their employees, it follows that a careful watch should be kept on the justice of the prices at which goods are marketed. In default of better at the moment, this watch might be undertaken by the trade unions and by a State prices' commission. Indeed, it is surprising that our trade unions have not tumbled to the idea already. How often have they not found increases in wages offset immediately by increases in the cost of living? What is the use of getting 70s. a week instead of 35s. if the 70s. will buy no more than the 35s. did? Prices are glaringly unjust in many instances at the moment. Our quota—and tariff-protected industrialists have not all played the game. Some of them give us articles of either inferior quality or of exorbitant price—or both. The proof is the large dividends they have been able to pay. One monopoly company earns 46 per cent. on its capital—others succeed in keeping the figure less remarkable only by the ingenious devices of issuing bonus shares, dividends free of tax and the like.

Rerum Novarum insisted on a living wage for workers. But it did not make clear whether a family living wage or personal living wage was meant. *Quadragesimo Anno* declared in favour of the family living wage. And it directed attention to the fact that a higher wage than even the family living wage is due in social justice to workers, when the state of the business will bear it, and the common good benefit by it. Hence, in boom periods, and whenever increased wages lead to increased purchasing power and so to increased employment in factories engaged in turning out articles to meet this purchasing demand, the wage for unskilled workers should be more than the bare family wage. The Encyclical would like to see profit-sharing schemes of one sort or another introduced throughout the length and breadth of industry. Does it not seem strange that all our new industries without exception ignore this advice?

The central theme of the Encyclical is the elimination of class-conflict and the introduction of social control, other than State control, over the economic life of each community. To secure these ends it proposes the vocationalization of industry, commerce, the professions and agriculture. Each occupation is to constitute itself, under the State, a self-governing unit. Employees as well as employers are to count in each occupation and have a say in the government of it. Unlike the Fascist corporations, therefore, the genuinely Christian vocational guide will be essentially self-government.

Many had expected the Encyclical to condemn Capitalism. It did not do so. As a system, that is, as a definite mode of owning and using productive property, Capitalism contains no elements that are in themselves ethically objectionable. However, the Encyclical does condemn, and in the sharpest terms, the leaders of business and finance working the system. Deaf to the voice of conscience and consumed with an unquenchable thirst for riches, they have made 'the whole economic regime hard, cruel and relentless in a ghastly measure.' On their shoulders, and not on the system, rests all the blame for the evils of the age. True, there are honest capitalists. True, too, the system itself is at fault in that it places in the hands of individuals so big an opportunity to exploit their fellow-men. And because the system thus lends itself to misuse, a good case can be made for

superseding it by a system in which there is less concentration of property ownership and control in the hands of an irresponsible few. Accordingly, though the Encyclical does not condemn Capitalism, neither does it commend it. We Catholics are committed to the principle of private property. We are not committed to that particular form of private property called Capitalism, however.

Socialism, on the other hand, is condemned explicitly. No matter how it dilutes its teaching on private ownership and class-war, it cannot be baptized. The reason is because it still enshrines two fundamental errors. These are that the individual citizen has no rights except those the State grants him, and secondly, that man's main purpose in living is to have abundance of material comforts.

Society (we are told) as the Socialist conceives it, is on the one hand impossible and unthinkable without the use of compulsion of the most excessive kind; on the other, in such a scheme no place is found for true social authority which is not based on temporal and material advantages. No man can be at the same time a sincere Catholic and a true Socialist.

In fact, no one may make common cause with Communists and Socialists in a so-called United Front and still remain a loyal Catholic.

The Encyclical denounces Socialism. But it is insistent that mere denunciation will not kill the movement. Only by removing the very real evils in the present system on which it is thriving may we hope to immunise the workers against the Socialist virus. We in this country might ponder on that thought a little more than we are doing.

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