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The Church and The Depression

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Editor of the Catholic World.

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(On Sundays from November 4 to December 16, 1934)

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IMPRIMATUR:

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Bishop of Fort Wayne.

Dedicated
With Infinite Reverence
to
The Poor Man of Galilee
Whose Life and Whose Gospel
Are the Only Solution
of
The Social Problem.

FOREWORD

It will be observed immediately that these brief essays on Social Justice make no pretense to being rigidly scientific. The author doubts that the Social Question can be answered by scientific means alone. Economics is really a branch of Ethics, and Ethics, the Science of Morals, needs the support of Divine Revelation. The helplessness of science to anticipate, not to say, solve, economic and sociological problems is sufficiently indicated by its failure to foresee the depression and its floundering efforts to discover how the depression is to be overcome. But science or no science, we have in the Gospels—if we would but follow them—a way out of our present difficulties and a preventive of ever being caught again in so grave a predicament.

NOTHING HUMAN IS ALIEN TO THE CHURCH

Address delivered on November 4, 1934.

In the correspondence columns of the *New York Times* there appeared not long ago a moderately-worded letter commenting upon a message of the Federal Council of Churches in regard to the economic problems which are now and have been for the past three or four years so desperately acute. It seems that the Federal Council, sitting like a grand jury, had returned an indictment against three parties. First, it said, "American business and industry stand at the judgment seat." Second, "Labor is also on trial". Third, "The general public is at the bar of judgment". "Excellent!" says the gentleman who writes the letter, but he demands to know why the Federal Council did not "call the Church itself before the judgment seat along with the others". He asks "Is the Church entirely above reproach as a factor making for the better social and industrial order? Have its interests always been identical with the best interests of society? Is it conspicuously noted for the pointed and fearless manner in which it has denounced those things in our social and economic life not making for the social good?"

Now, after a swift passing recognition of the fallacy of applying the name "church" to a multitudinous heterogeneous aggregation of denominations with endlessly varying doctrines, traditions, and practices, I am willing none the less to confess the justice and the honesty of that challenge to the



Church. It reminds me of an historical episode (perhaps it is only legendary) that happened in our Church in Germany in the fourteenth century. The saintly Dominican Friar John Tauler, one of the greatest preachers of all time, had delivered in Strasbourg a series of sermons on the sins of the nobles, the magistrates, the merchants, the lawyers, and the people; and promised that he would next consider the sins of the clergy. Thereupon an attempt was made by his prior to interrupt the series, but the populace assembled, stormed the doors of the priory and clamored for the sermon, arguing with the prior that they had taken their dose uncomplaining, and that it would be only good sportsmanship if the monks and friars and priests should do likewise. The sermon was delivered and it makes rather spicy reading even after 600 years.

Sauce for the people is sauce for the clergy. And if, as the writer in the newspaper declares, Business and Labor and the General Public are summoned before the bar, there is no reason why the Church should not also stand trial on the charge of not having done all that she might to prevent or to relieve the present economic and social distress.

It would, however, be rash of me to take upon myself the defense of all churches and of all churchmen. The Federal Council has pulpits, platforms, and radios of its own. Even for the Catholic Church I am not the authoritatively appointed attorney. And if I were, I would certainly not follow the impossible procedure of trying to prove that all Catholics in all times, laymen and churchmen, have been above reproach on the ground of zeal for a better social and industrial order. But one thing

I should be glad to attempt—a demonstration that the Catholic Church has for ages consistently promulgated an economic and social philosophy which, if it had been permitted to prevail, would have prevented these ever-recurring panics and depressions, as well as the social revolutions that have occurred in such abundance since the commencement of the industrial era; and would now forestall the threatening catastrophe of world-wide Communism.

Indeed I do hope in this course of seven talks to make good that claim for my Church (even though I do so unofficially and less expertly than any recognized Catholic economist), but by way of introduction to that larger work I beg leave to set forth tonight the mind and the spirit of the Church in the face of the bewildering and bedeviling problems of the day.

But first I must protest that the Church has never been given a free hand to impose her ethics and economics upon any civilization. We are familiar with the epigram that Christianity has not been tried and found wanting, but that it has been found difficult and left untried. That applies not only to the Gospel but to the Christian ethics of business and finance. Just as there are many self-appointed monitors, watchmen as it were on the towers of Israel, who cry all the day and every day, "Keep the Church out of Politics!", so there are those who cry, "Keep the Church out of Economics!" Now no doubt it is wisdom to prevent a coalition of ecclesiastics with the baser sort of politicians. But politics is not all cheap politics. In its noble primary sense it is the science and art of government, and I can see no harm but rather great good in permit-

ting the Church to inject a dose of Christianity into government. Machiavelli has had too much sway in politics, and Aquinas, Suarez, and Bellarmine not enough. If Catholic theologians and other churchmen, let us say the Pope, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Patriarch of Constantinople, and some internationally acknowledged representative of Judaism, had been invited to sit in at Versailles in 1918 the treaty might not have turned out such a Pandora's box of woe, but an instrument of social and political regeneration.

And by the same token, if at the beginning of the depression the Church as a moral force and an exponent of ethics had been called upon to contribute her wisdom to the project of the rehabilitation of society, the depression would not have dug so deep, spread so wide, and lasted so long. True, there was in some of the early utterances of President Roosevelt a recognition with praise of the doctrine of the papal encyclicals, but I would not say that all the champions of the New Deal and still less all its army of agents were animated by the spirit that breathes through the writings of Leo XIII and Pius XI. Similarly, Woodrow Wilson, on the way to Paris, virtually confessed that his 14 points had been borrowed from Pope Benedict XV. But the Big Four and the minor diplomats who met in the Hall of Mirrors (I suspect the purpose of the mirrors was to prevent the passing of secret messages under the table, but as there are magicians who "do it with mirrors" there turned out to be artists in magic who could do it in spite of mirrors): the Big Four and the little forty-four gave short shrift to Benedict XV once they got down to the

real job of partitioning off the continents in such wise as to make future wars inevitable.

No! In world affairs, governmental, industrial, and financial, the Church doesn't really get a look-in. In fact she is warned away: "Keep out! This means you! Back to the sacristy! Say your prayers, rattle your beads, dress up in your ecclesiastical vestments, and perform your religious rites, but keep away from the *Quai d'Orsay* and 10 Downing Street, and don't let us see the Roman collar too often around the White House!"

So the Church keeps out. Presently the governmental and financial fabric tumbles down and then some dear good kindly critic writes to the newspapers to ask why the Church hasn't done its bit to save the world from economic and political catastrophe!

And now let me tell you what I think to be the function of the Church in the promotion of economic and social welfare.

The Church is no mere philosophical society. She does not seclude herself in an ivory tower; nor does she pace up and down, back and forth, with the peripatetics in some academic grove, or sit about like the logic-choppers and intellectual curiosity-seekers on the Areopagus, who told St. Paul that he was a madman. She is not, like the Stoics, "serene indifferent to fate." When the world is tumbling to pieces, she is not discovered drawing geometric figures in the sand and telling the Alexanders merely to stand out of the light and not cast a shadow upon her diagrams. She does not draw her toga haughtily about her like that exquisite aesthete, the pagan poet Horace with his

contemptuous *odi profanum vulgus*. "I hate the vulgar horde!" To her there is no hoipolloi, no canaille, no *sans culottes*, no proletariat (ugly word!). You shall not hear from her lips the aristocratic exclamation, "The people? The people is a great beast!" Rather, like the humane Haroun al Raschid, she loves the people and studies how she may help them. She doffs her gorgeous ceremonial vesture and with it her regal dignity and goes out into the lanes and byways, mingling intimately with humanity. Better still, like her Master, she makes it her delight to be with the children of men. Her God is not the god of Voltaire or of Aristotle, a god who concerns himself no more with the people than a king enthroned in his mansion of marble and gold concerns himself with the fowl in the royal barnyard.

No, the Church is of the people and for the people. She is governed by rulers from the people who can never forget their origin amongst the people. When, therefore, the people, her own flesh and blood, are persecuted, she goes in boldly to the tyrant, as Moses went in to Pharaoh—the modern Pharaoh may be king, premier, dictator, or financial grand mogul—and she cries, "Let My people go!"

Those who talk glibly of the "ages of faith," imagining that in that fabled era the Church held full sway over monarchs and subjects alike, forget the conflicts of the Church with Frederick, Barbarossa, Francis I, Henry VII of Germany, Henry VIII of England, and a hundred other powerful tyrants. Those who read too narrowly or not at all and who understand but superficially, complain because the Church hurled interdicts and excom-

munications at recalcitrant sovereigns, forgetting that she used these spiritual weapons in place of knives and swords and guns and bombs and that her interdicts were to serve the purpose of the plagues that Jehovah loosed upon Pharaoh when he refused to "Let my people go!"

The Church, furthermore, makes no pretense of philosophic calm. She is aflame with enthusiasm for humanity. *Mutatis mutandis*, she might very well make her own the apologia of a modern playwright defending himself against the charge of not being a "temperate writer." "What interests me most in the theatre as in life," he says, "is the struggle of humanity to liberate itself from fear, superstition, crushing oppression and social injustice. I do not intend to be calm or pleasant. . . . I believe that there is place in the theatre for passion, for high words and vivid emotions that stir the blood and quicken the pulse. I cannot discuss tyranny with a polite smile or a tolerant laugh. I cannot depict oppression with a twinkle in my eye."

The man is right. Where there is no passion there is no great drama, no great literature, no high art, and I dare add, no true religion. And so you will find in the Epistle of St. James and in the writings of the early Church Fathers of the third, fourth, and fifth centuries and in all later Catholic documents on social justice, such burning searing sentences as we have come to associate with socialism or Communism.

But of course passion is not enough; honest eloquence is not enough. As Francis E. Peabody says in his classic *Jesus Christ and the Social Question*: "Many a Christian preacher, stirred by the

recognition of social wrong, is called to be a prophetic voice, crying in the wilderness of the social question; but many a prophet mistakes his office for that of the economist, and gives a passionate devotion to industrial programmes which are sure to fail. Neither ethical passion nor rhetorical genius equip a preacher for economic judgments. It is for the prophet of righteousness to exhort and warn, rather than to administer and organize. A different temper and training are required for wisdom in industrial affairs."

But if you would have a perfect example of passion controlled by wisdom, of apostolic zeal wedded to philosophic learning, I commend you to the encyclicals of the popes on Economic and Social questions. Those documents are deceptively academic in expression and in tone. But they are packed with dynamite. If you look closely into the text of them, you will find explosives enough to blow all economic tyranny and social injustice into fragments small enough to be wafted away in the invisible air. In the letter quoted at the beginning of this address, the complainant against the Church speaks with well-bred contempt of what he calls "pious and high sounding pronouncements, vague and sonorous generalizations." He alleges that that is what he finds in the message of the Federal Council. I pass no judgment upon that opinion, but I do assure all who feel as he does that they will find no empty rhetoric, no pious platitudes, no bombast or bathos, in the official pronouncements of the Catholic Church in regard to the present economic debacle. The full import of those papal and hierarchical utterances has not yet been realized, especially by overly timid conservatives and

others who imagine that the Church, because of her opposition to the fundamental faults and the incidental blunders of socialism and communism, makes herself responsible for all the sins and crimes committed in the name of capitalism.

Be it understood: the Catholic Church is nobody's scape-goat. Capitalists have no right to transfer the sins of their own souls—or of their own system—to her, and then drive her into the wilderness to be destroyed. Nor on the other hand will she permit revolutionaries and radicals to lay upon her their lunacies, their madness, and their crimes. Some of them have attempted to do so, preaching a hybrid doctrine which they call Christian Socialism or Catholic Socialism.

The Church is neither Capitalistic nor Communistic. She has creative genius enough to devise her own system of economics and ethics, and initiative enough to propose it to the world in her own idiom.

And this, if you care to listen, will be my task for the next six Sundays—to communicate to you unofficially, but I trust accurately, the mind of the Church upon the problems created or resurrected by the Depression.

HARD SAYINGS IN THE GOSPEL OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

Address delivered on November 11, 1934.

If in these trying times a Christian clergyman makes bold to speak of the protracted and apparently interminable economic depression, and if he announces as his more specific subject "Social Justice" and "Hard Sayings," he will inevitably be warned by conservatives to speak with moderation, to avoid inflammatory utterance, to beware the pitfalls of the demagogue, over-emphasis, hysteria, bombast, and buncombe. He will be reminded that the Church is a stabilizing influence in society, a bulwark against Communism and half a dozen other forms of economic and social radicalism; he will be entreated not to say one word that could possibly be construed as a concession to Communism; he will be commanded to "sit down and not rock the boat" because we are trying to navigate through some very wicked rapids. Less metaphorically, but not less vehemently, he will be told to "mind his own business," to stick to the Gospel, not to profane the pulpit, and indeed to stay close within the sanctuary; in effect, to be a "sacristy priest." Certain "horrible examples" will be held up to his gaze, of priests who are alleged to have violated justice and charity and sanity in speaking of the evils that have befallen us and attempting to allocate the blame for our tragic predicament. His memory will be refreshed in regard to pre-prohibition evangelists, who "preached temperance intemperately"; and he will be expected to draw the inference that one may advocate justice unjustly;

and he will hear the old familiar jocose invocation added to the litany, "From the violent ecclesiastic, good Lord deliver us!"

With all these admonitions—kindly and unkindly—ringing in my ears, it may seem brazen of me if I decline to be silenced. Perhaps I should call off the sermon and say "Brethren, let us pray!" But the truth is that I have heard these warnings so often that I have become hardened to them. At first the effect of so much bludgeoning was rather benumbing, but when I have "come to" and caught my breath and been able to think clearly once again, I have recognized that almost all of those admonitions have come from the mouths of overly-timid Christians and that they by no means represent the mind of the popes, the theologians, the fathers of the Church, the Apostles and Jesus Christ Himself. I refuse to see in the Church only a stabilizing influence: to me she is a blaze, a fire, a driving power, careering through this world like a meteor—or, if not a meteor that burns itself out, like the sun in the heavens that scorches and withers as well as enlivens and blesses. I remember the command of God to Isaias, "Get thee up upon a high mountain", "Lift up thy voice like a trumpet," and to Jeremias, "Behold I have given my words in thy mouth: Lo, I have set thee. . . to root up, and to pull down, and to waste, and to destroy, and to build, and to plant"; and the declaration of St. Paul that "the word of God is. . . more piercing than any two-edged sword"; and even the utterance of the gentle Jesus—enigmatic perhaps but not to be suppressed—"Do not think that I came to send peace upon earth: I came not to send peace, but the sword." Particularly I object to the as-

sumption that my beautiful and majestic Church, of directly divine origin, with her superb record of achievement in the face of all opposition, her god-like autonomy, her independence of all Caesars, Napoleons, Bismarcks, Mussolinis, potentates great and small, bogus and bona fide—I say I think it insufferable that she should be called, in the sense in which politicians and financiers ordinarily use the term, “the bulwark” of the existing order. The Catholic Church is indeed the prop and mainstay of order but not necessarily of the existing order. If and when the existing order becomes hopelessly disordered, she may say with her Divine Master, “Cut it down therefore: why cumbereth it the ground?” What I mean (if you fear a metaphor and prefer crude prose) is that the Catholic Church does not consider the present economic system all-perfect and sacrosanct, and that she is not concerned with maintaining in its present form with all its imperfections and multiple injustices, the commercial-industrial-financial system called, roughly, Capitalism. The Church was here before Capitalism, and she will be here when Capitalism has been either modified or abrogated. You shall not hear the Church exclaim, “Sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish, I am allied with Capitalism.” Capitalism is not her child: not even her step-child. To use the Catholic Church as a support to Capitalism would be like asking a mother whose own child had been stolen and a changeling substituted, to accept it and protect it as her own. To change the metaphor rapidly again—Those who are interested in the survival of Capitalism like the cultivator of the unfruitful fig tree, may beseech the master of the vineyard “Lord, let it alone this year

also, until I dig about it, and dung it. And if happily it bear fruit: but if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." I think the Church will say, "Very well, make it bear fruit—good fruit—if you can, but if not, and it must be cut down, it matters not to me. I have another and higher vocation in this world than to be a 'bulwark' for any man-made economic system, especially one that has been built with studied neglect of fundamental Christian ethics."

And now to the "Hard Sayings in the Gospel of Social Justice." I refer not so much to the canonical scriptures, or the writings of the Fathers of the early centuries—we shall see somewhat of those in the succeeding talks of this series—but pressed for time, we shall omit the documents of antiquity and of the middle ages and concern ourselves with statements of unimpeachable Catholic authorities of the present moment.

And first I beg leave to quote a few passages from Pope Pius XI's encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, not—I beg you to notice—not attempting to present the entire program of social reform sponsored by the Holy Father, but with the intention of showing the position of Catholics in regard to the permanence of the present economic system in its entirety, and the hostility of the Church to many features of Capitalism as we see it in operation.

The Pope says: "It is the capitalist economic regime that, with the world-wide diffusion of industry, has penetrated everywhere. . . It has invaded and pervaded the economic and social sphere even of those who live outside its ambit, influencing

them, and, as it were, intimately affecting them by its advantages, inconveniences and vices. . . . "in our days not alone is wealth accumulated, but immense power and despotic economic domination are concentrated in the hands of a few. . . . "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 to 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. "This accumulation of power, the characteristic note of the modern economic order, is a natural result of limitless free competition which permits the survival of those only who are the strongest, which often means those who fight most relentlessly, who pay least heed to the dictates of conscience. . . . "Free competition is dead; economic dictatorship has taken its place. "Unbridled ambition for domination has succeeded the desire for gain; the whole economic life has become hard, cruel and relentless in a ghastly measure."

It would be a pleasure to me, and I am confident it would produce a thrill, if not a surprise, to my hearers, if I were to continue quoting from the Pope's encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*. Even some Catholics perhaps will find the Pope's language too strong for their taste, but he does not on that account cease to obey the Divine command, "Cry, cease not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet."

So too, the Bishops of the Administrative Committee of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, in "A Statement on the Present Crisis," re-

peat many of the paragraphs from the papal encyclical and by way of making local application of its principles, they add:

“Industry in our country, through the concentration of wealth, has acquired such complete control that independent operation, even on the part of so-called owners and employers, is practically impossible. . .

“Capitalists and industrialists, driven by greed, monopolized the sources of wealth and gained control of the products and profits made possible by the progress of technological science, to their own enrichment and to the impoverishment and enslavement of the masses. These few, in order to increase their riches and power, have made the machine a curse rather than the blessing that it should be, to lighten the toil and shorten the hours of the worker.”

Unafraid of the possible accusation that they are playing into the hands of the enemies of society, the bishops say with commendable honesty: “This extreme of individualism has led to the extreme of Communism. We rightly fear its spread in our country and see an especial menace in its insidious presentation of fundamental truths for its own destructive ends. The brotherhood of man is loudly proclaimed; energetic protest is made against injustice done the working classes; the abuses of the capitalistic system are vigorously condemned; it is insisted that man shall not exploit his fellow man, nor class dominate class, but that all shall be dedicated to a life of service.

“A program of social reform couched in such language and with such aims and purposes is unassailable because it is distinctively Christian in

origin and purport, but in the hands of the communists it is merely a snare to allure those who are oppressed by the prevailing economic maladjustment into accepting the iniquitous social and religious tenets of Lenin and Stalin."

"Unassailable because distinctively Christian in origin!" In other words, the Communists are stealing our thunder. Barring their atheism, their vicious method of arraying class against class, their denial of the right of private ownership and their other incidental lunacies, the Communists have got hold of a big idea and a great enthusiasm, the idea of social justice and the enthusiasm for suffering mankind.

The editor of *Blackfriars*, a Catholic magazine published by the Dominicans at Oxford for the particular if not exclusive purpose of promoting economic and social reform, says: "In some quarters the Catholic argument against Communism still largely consists in evoking pictures of mongoloid Muscovites, with blood-imbrued hands. We are not fighting a bogey, but an idea, and an idea that is so strong because part of it is so true."

In the same number of the magazine, another of the Dominican Fathers in a stirring article on "The Christian Revolution" says, "The Christian's case against Communism is not that it is revolutionary but that it is counter-revolutionary," and he explains that whereas we Christians have in times past revolutionized society and, if need be, will revolutionize it again, the Communists are working on a Revolution against our Revolution. He speaks of "The immensity of the transformation which Christianity effected in civil society: a transformation so profoundly revolutionary

that the ephemeral upheavals which we dignify nowadays with the name of revolutions pale by comparison," and he adds that the revolution already achieved by the Christian religion is as nothing compared to the revolution that it is to produce. The achievements of our religion, he says, in the field of social reform are "infinitesimal when compared with its dynamic potentialities," and in passing he puts the blame for Communism where it belongs. "Before we speak too harshly of the Communists," he says, "it is well to remember that it is the apathy and infidelity of Christians to their social mission which has made Communism possible and plausible."

I believe there is, or there was, on the stage in New York a play called "A Sleeping Clergyman." What it is about I confess I don't know, and I am not sufficiently interested to inquire. But the title strikes me, irritates me, stimulates me. Too many of us are sleeping clergymen, and too many of the laity are likewise in a trance. Who was it that said lately that there is a church militant but there should be no church dormant? It does seem to me that what we need is not warnings to "pipe down" but commands to "cry out"; not taps but reveille—*Surge Qui Dormis*, "Arise thou that sleepest"—not soothing syrup, laudanum, the hashish of contentment with a system that has again and again eventuated in vast and even universal economic demoralization, not a sense of satisfaction with the sins and crimes of the existing social and industrial order, but a prod, a goad, a stick of moral dynamite, an ounce or two of mental nitro-glycerine out of the Gospels, the Fathers, and the papal encyclicals.

Agree or disagree with that opinion, I hope we shall all agree upon this, that at least Catholicism is no Siamese twin of Capitalism, for the day may come when Capitalism will perish, but the Church has the promise of God that she shall endure until the consummation of the world.

THE SANITY OF THE CHURCH ON THE SOCIAL QUESTION

Address delivered on November 18, 1934.

When passion is aroused it is notoriously difficult to be judicious. Even if the awakened passion be a noble one, like righteous indignation or holy wrath, good judgment may go by the board. When emotion bursts in at the door, reason often leaps out the window. Reformers are usually fanatics and the justice of their cause is no safeguard of their sanity. Ablaze with honest anger at the sight of some inhumanity, their blood boils, the fever reaches the brain, and delirium ensues. So it comes to pass that men who feel acutely the injustices and inequalities of the prevalent social system lose their mental balance and give vent to wild irrational utterance. Even the Gospel becomes a battle axe in their hands and Christ, the meek and humble Nazarene, is made over in their image and likeness into an agitator, a fanatic, an irresponsible demagogue. Communists have called Him a Communist, and anarchists, quoting Scripture like Satan to their purpose, have labored to prove Jesus an anarchist. One writer in a very dignified English magazine, thinking no doubt to temper the harshness of the epithet with kindly moderation, added that our Savior was a "*pious* anarchist." Years ago, before Communism had arrived and when Socialism was the extreme of radicalism, another scholar declared that the Gospel of St. Luke was a socialistic tract and that the Divine Master of Whom St. Luke wrote was the "great forerunner of the modern protests against the industrial sys-

tem which is based on private capital"; and a quite illustrious author, professor in an ancient, honorable, and ostensibly conservative university, agreed with him, adding only the qualification that our Lord's "concept of the world" was "socialistic with a Galilean coloring." In fact it is a curious phenomenon, gratifying perhaps from one point of view, but none the less disconcerting, that extremists—even revolutionists—have claimed the gentle Nazarene as their champion and that in their rebellion against injustice they have thought themselves fighting under His aegis.

On the other hand, the Gospel and its Great Hero have been appropriated by capitalists, conservatives, defenders of the *status quo*, optimists like those upon whom Voltaire emptied the vials of his wrath—and his scurrility—who maintain that this is the best of all possible worlds, that it is perfect as it is, that nothing needs be done to the present system except to arrange for its perpetuation unto the end of time.

Now, between these two extremes, one quite as false and as mad as the other, the Church maintains the equilibrium of truth and justice and sanity. Mr. G. K. Chesterton in *Orthodoxy*, first published in 1908, concludes a particularly brilliant chapter with what amounts to an apostrophe to the Church for maintaining her balance between forces which would have led her off on one tangent or another to a fate like that of Phaeton, who made bold to drive the chariot of the sun across the skies, but who came to grief because he couldn't control his fiery horses. It is in my judgment one of the most eloquent passages ever penned by G. K. C. "People," he says, "have fallen

into the habit of speaking of orthodoxy as something heavy, humdrum, and safe. There never was anything so perilous or so exciting as orthodoxy. It was sanity: and to be sane is more dramatic than to be mad. It was the equilibrium of a man behind madly rushing horses, seeming to stoop this way and to sway that, yet in every attitude having the grace of statuary and the accuracy of arithmetic. The Church in its early days went fierce and fast with any warhorse; yet it is utterly unhistoric to say that she merely went mad along one idea, like a vulgar fanaticism. She swerved to left and right, so exactly as to avoid enormous obstacles. . . It is easy to be a madman; it is easy to be a heretic. It is always easy to let the age have its head; the difficult thing is to keep one's own. . . To have fallen into any of those open traps of error and exaggeration which fashion after fashion and sect after sect set along the historic path of Christendom—that would indeed have been simple. . . . But to have avoided them all has been one whirling adventure: and in my vision the heavenly chariot flies thundering through the ages, the dull heresies sprawling and prostrate, the wild truth reeling but erect."

It is indeed a thrilling adventure and a splendid achievement to keep one's balance in the midst of the mad rush of conflicting and chaotic theological and philosophical systems and it is because she has done just that, that we Catholics believe our Church to be directed by a Power that is more than human. It would have been human, only human, to follow the vagaries and eccentricities of this or that scheme for social regeneration, for these schemes are often presented with great plausibil-

ity, and the authors of them are at least occasionally, as for example in the case of Henry George, genuine lovers of mankind, zealous for the good of the poor and the afflicted. And on the other hand it would have been *so* easy to share the philosophy of the ultra-conservatives recommended as the only safeguard of law and order in the midst of forces that ran amuck and deluged the world with blood. "Come along with us," cry the revolutionaries. "Let us reconstruct society upon a new bed-rock foundation: give over the absurd effort to bolster up the dilapidated structure of capitalism. It is tottering, it may crash at any moment; it will carry down with it and crush under it whoever is caught trying to patch it and prop it up. Come away from that antiquated building. It is doomed and you will share its doom unless you abandon it."

"Stand with us," cry the conservatives. "See what the rebels have done to the world. In the name of justice they do the wildest injustice. They cry 'Humanity, Humanity, hosannah to Humanity!' and then they proceed to crucify Humanity. They cry 'Peace, Peace!' but they imbrue their hands in innocent blood. They proclaim the regeneration of the human race and the renewal of the face of the earth, but they proscribe religion, banish the Church, and blaspheme God. Remember the Scriptures. Recall the parable of the man who gets rid of one unclean spirit which presently 'goeth and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and entering in they dwell there. And the last state of that man becomes worse than the first'. Behold Russia, behold Mexico, and beware! Stand with us, Holy Church, if you seek to survive. We are the party of Law and Order and

Religion. Stand with us and we will stand by you!"

But the Church is not to be beguiled. She does her own thinking. She interprets her own Scriptures. She knows what is Wisdom and she needeth not that any man shall tell her. She remembers the warning of the Master, "If any man shall say to you: Lo here is Christ, or there; do not believe him." When they cry, "Lo! here is the economic system that will save the world; Lo! here is the cure for the ills that afflict the race!", she refuses to be stampeded—to be pulled this way or that: she has a doctrine of her own in regard to the salvation of the world.

In consequence she pleases neither of the extremists. When, on one end of the social scale, some wild-eyed enthusiast explains, "I have a plan to end poverty in six months," or "I have the solution of the riddle of recurring panics," or "I have a scheme for maintaining permanent industrial and financial equilibrium," or "I have a fool-proof plan—fool-proof and villain-proof—for the equal distribution of wealth amongst all men," or "I have a revolutionary discovery in the science of economics," the Church says with the kind of indulgence that one gives to a child or a visionary, "Yes? Well now, won't that be wonderful if it works!" Whereupon the reformers, sociological experimenters, discoverers of nostrums, inventors of cure-alls, Marxists, Leninists, Single Taxers, Robin Hooders ("take from the rich and give to the poor"); Communists in one camp, Fascists in another, but, in whatever camp, extremists all, grow impatient with the Church, denounce her as chief of the oppressors of the people, load her down with the sins and crimes and blunders of the existing system, warn

their adherents that first and foremost among the enemies of the proletariat is the Church; that of the two monsters, Catholicism and Capitalism, Catholicism is the more to be dreaded, that the world is not big enough for two International Organizations, that the Communist *Internationale* must ultimately encounter and utterly destroy the Catholic *Internationale*, and so on and so forth. You, my listeners, will recognize the wild and whirling phrases: they come from the frothing mouths of agitators on the street corners, they are bandied about in nooks and corners, cellars and garrets where rebels against society "most do congregate," and after undergoing a change to make them more polite but not less vicious, they are heard on the campus and in the seminars at pro-Bolshevik universities, and they may be read in the liberal weekly papers which incessantly and indeed cleverly promote Communism but which will perish instantly if Communism arrives. Yes, in radical circles it is axiomatic: the Church is the obstacle to the millennium. *L'Eglise Voila l'ennemi!*

And at the other end of the scale, the dyed-in-the-wool-Capitalists, the financial Bourbons who forget nothing and learn nothing, the stand-pat industrialists who grew up and grew rich with the machine-age and who see no imperfection in it, the old-guard that would rather die than surrender, and that would welcome the end of the world and the ultimate dissolution of all things rather than yield one jot or tittle of the laws, the customs, and traditions that have produced four panics and one prolonged profound depression in the last half century, those Medes and Persians in the world of industry and commerce who in the face of all pro-

tests in the name of justice and charity answer, "It is the Law! and the Law cannot be changed," those champions of the *ancien regime*, the logical offspring of the believers in the Divine Right of Kings, themselves believers in the Divine Right of Big Business—these are if possible more determined in their opposition to the economic doctrine of the Church than the radicals, the rebels, and the revolutionaries.

In capitalist circles generally you will hear no whole-hearted commendation of Pope Leo's encyclical on *The Condition of Labor*, and still less on Pope Pius' follow-up encyclical on *The Reconstruction of the Social Order*. Capitalists—even Catholic Capitalists—have been known to stamp out of the church when those encyclicals were being read or expounded, crying "the Pope is a Socialist!", and others have expressed the fervent wish that the Holy Father would "stop writing those inflammatory documents." In fact a good many within and without the Church are found demonstrating the thesis—demonstrating to their own satisfaction, that the Church has gone over body and bones, hide, hoof, and hair, to Communism. They point to such and such a radio lecturer, or to such and such a professor in a Catholic university, or to such and such a weekly journal edited by a venerable and *quondam* conservative religious order, which, as they declare, are constantly undermining the confidence of Catholics in the established order and which in all ignorance and simplicity are preparing the way for world-wide Communistic chaos.

Not alone here in the United States, but even in old-fashioned England the Catholic press, weekly

and monthly, has (so say the frightened capitalists) gone even deeper into economic and social radicalism. When they see, for example, a statement like this in a book on Private Property written by a professor in the Catholic College of Maynooth in Ireland (and the Irish Catholics, as you must know, are traditionally more conservative than the English Catholics); when they read, I say, such a sentiment as this: "Our present social conditions are not only utterly unsatisfactory but so completely discredited that they cannot possibly continue. . . the only question is, how are they to go? Does their abolition involve the destruction or merely the reformation of the social organization?"*—timid Catholics cry out in alarm, "How can such a book get an imprimatur? What can the bishops be thinking of who tolerate such dangerous utterance?"

So it would seem that the Church is between the devil and the deep. But marvelously—shall we say miraculously?—she goes on her way steadfastly, frightened by neither the Devil of Communism nor the deep blue sea of Capitalism. The cause of her survival in the midst of enemies to the right and to the left is, apart from divine grace, her refusal to grow hysterical. When things go wrong with her (as just now in Mexico and a little while ago in Spain, and during the last 1900 years here, there, everywhere) she does not wring her hands in despair, her voice does not become strident, she never becomes melodramatic, you do not find Holy Mother Church tearing her hair and crying "Woe is me!" And so too when Communism seems to

* Rev. J. Keleher, *Private Ownership*, p. IX. M. H. Gill & Son, Dublin.

be threatening like a tidal wave, and timid persons inside and outside the Church are getting panicky, she doesn't so much as lose her poise. Like her Master, she seems to be asleep in the midst of the storm, but when the time comes she will speak the words, "Peace, be still." Serenity is essential to her character, not the serenity of indifference, not stoic cold-bloodedness, but the quiet confidence that comes from a sense of power—inherent, inexhaustible, divine Power.

THE CHURCH AND THE RICH

Address delivered on November 25, 1934.

By a peculiar paradox in the history of literature, masterpieces have sometimes been created by those who had little or no concern with the art of writing. Of all examples of that strange fact, the Sacred Scriptures are the most notable. Speaking of one book in the Bible, the Psalms of David, a competent critic, not himself a believer, has said they are "the most pathetic and poignant, as well as the most noble and dignified of all poetic literature." And he adds, "the rarest spirits of our race will always return to them at every epoch in their lives for consolation, for support and for repose."

"Consolation," "support," "repose," I dare say, are what we usually seek in the Scriptures. But sometimes our mood is different. Perhaps we have been considering the world as it is in its stark reality, and in consequence, we are aflame with indignation over the injustices, inequalities, and cruelties inflicted by the powerful upon the helpless. A just wrath burns in the soul and we feel it would be sinful to quench the holy fire. We are in the mood for revolt rather than for repose. At such times too we may turn to the Scriptures and find our feelings expressed with incomparable eloquence, power, passion, dramatic force.

And so, when we come, as we do today, to consider that particularly insufferable phase of man's nation over the injustices, inequalities, and cruelties ages by the rich upon the poor, we find the most terrifying, devastating utterances ever spoken in—of all places—the Gospel of the sweet and

gentle Jesus, and in the writings of a handful of His meek and humble disciples. Not in the *Oedipus Rex* of Sophocles, not in the *Philippics* of Demosthenes, not in Cicero's diatribes against Catiline, not in *King Lear* or in the *Inferno* of Dante shall we read more fierce and fiery invective than in the Gospels and the Epistles. The writers of the New Testament never dreamed that the vehement condemnation of ill-gotten wealth would be seized upon 1800 and 1900 years later by agitators, rebels against society, advocates of the destruction of civilization. None the less, so it has come to pass, and if it were possible for us to take up the Scriptures anew, read them with a mind unblunted by over-familiarity, we could not profess to be surprised or scandalized at the fact that they have been considered the pristine source of all modern indignation and wrath against social injustice.

The first phrase in the first sermon of Jesus Christ is a paradox, a challenge, a warning, "Blessed are ye poor. . .woe to you that are rich"! We are so accustomed to that paradoxical declaration that it fails to sound in our ears as it might, like a detonation of dynamite, but if our sensitivity had not been dulled by endless droning reiteration of the Scripture, the explosion of that sociological bombshell, "Blessed are ye poor. . .woe to you that are rich", would terrify us. If it had come from any other lips than those of the gentle Jesus it would be considered radical, revolutionary, even mad. All modern economists look upon poverty as something to be lessened or abolished: one popular modern religion calls it a sort of *crime* to be poor, and all Christians, except the saints, consider poverty at

least a misfortune. Yet, says Jesus, Poverty is blessed, Riches are accursed.

After that first startling ejaculation, our Savior utilizes the most effective rhetorical device at His command, the parable, to enforce the lesson of the danger of riches. It seems almost a sin to truncate the beautiful story, but in these short talks haste is imperative.

“There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen; and feasted sumptuously every day.” At his gate was a beggar, Lazarus “desiring to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man’s table, and *no one did give him!*. . . the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom. And the rich man also died: and he was buried in hell.” The rich man cries in agony, “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool my tongue: for I am tormented in this flame. And Abraham said to him: Son, remember that thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime, and. . .Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted: and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you, there is fixed a great chaos: so that they who would pass from hence to you, cannot, nor from thence come hither.” “A great chaos,” a gulf, says Jesus, lies between the rich and the poor in the next life; no mere social separation, as in this world, but an impassable fiery abyss. Mark you, there is in all the parable no word to the effect that the rich man’s goods were ill-gotten. He simply ignored, forgot, neglected the poor man, and that was crime enough to merit everlasting torment.

As for injustice in the accumulation of wealth,

that is dealt with by St. James the Apostle as a sort of fratricide which, like the sin of Cain, crieth to heaven for vengeance: "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl in your miseries, which shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted: and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered: and the rust of them shall be for a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh like fire. You have stored up to yourselves wrath against the last days. Behold the hire of the labourers, who have reaped down your fields, which by fraud has been kept back by you, crieth: and the cry of them hath entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."

The only commentary I dare make upon that blood-curdling burst of righteous wrath is that the modern idiom for "defrauding the laborer of his hire" might be "unjust division of profits between labor and capital." Pope Leo XIII in his ever-memorable encyclical *Rerum Novarum* utters the point-blank economic dogma, "it is only by the labor of workingmen that states grow rich." Pope Pius XI quotes and amplifies the statement: "the huge possessions which constitute human wealth are begotten by and flow from the hands of the workingman." He declares that capital needs labor as labor needs capital, and that in consequence the relationship between capital and labor should be an alliance, not dominance on the one side and subservience on the other, but an *alliance*. And yet, he says, "Capital. . . was long able to appropriate to itself excessive advantages; it claimed all the products and profits and left to the laborer the barest minimum necessary to repair his strength and to ensure the continuation of his class. For by an inexorable eco-

conomic law, it was held, all accumulations of riches must fall to the share of the wealthy, while the workingman must remain perpetually in indigence or reduced to the minimum needed for existence."

To return to our source book, the Gospels. After the parable of Dives and Lazarus comes the episode of the rich man who, seeking a more perfect life, asked Jesus what he should do. "Sell whatsoever thou hast. . .give to the poor. . .come, follow me," was the laconic reply. .But the young man "being struck sad at that saying, went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions." Whereupon the gentle Nazarene, suddenly assuming His awful character as judge of human souls, exclaimed, "How hardly shall they that have riches, enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God". Christ the Lord, amongst many pleasanter appellations, is called a "stumbling block," and men have been stumbling over that hard saying ever since. Infinite ingenuity has been expended in the attempt to explain away the terrible text. I have not time to go into the twistings and turnings of biblical exegesis and I confess that I have even less interest than time to summarize and analyze the intellectual squirmings of bible readers who find the story of the rich young man, like the parable of Dives and Lazarus, embarrassing. I think the best thing we can do with the sayings of Christ is to let them stand. As Pontius Pilate said, *Quod scripsi scripsi*. What I have written, I have written. So Jesus might say, *Quod dixi dixi*, What I have spoken, I have spoken. "How hardly shall they that have riches, enter into the kingdom of God! . . .

It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." There is danger of sacrilege as well as of intellectual dishonesty in the attempt to whittle away the meaning of the Scriptures. Jesus Himself never used weasel words that suck out the meat of the egg and leave only the shell.

Besides, the text does not stand solitary like a pyramid in a desert. The Gospels and Epistles contain abundant similar startling declarations. For one example out of many: St. Paul warns his disciple Timothy, who was Bishop of Ephesus, "They that will become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men into destruction and perdition. For the desire of money is the root of all evils."

Pope Pius XI in the encyclical *Caritate Christi Compulsi*, that is, "Compelled by the Charity of Christ," quotes St. Paul, "The desire of money is the root of all evils," and adds, "is it not that lust of earthly goods that the pagan poet called with righteous scorn 'the accursed hunger of gold,' is it not that sordid egoism which too often regulates the mutual relations of individuals and society, is it not, in fine, greed, whatever be its species and form, that has brought the world to a pass we all see and deplore? From greed arises mutual distrust that casts a blight on all human beings: from greed arises envy, which makes a man consider the advantages of another as losses to himself; from greed arises narrow individualism, which orders and subordinates everything to its own advantage without taking account of others, on the contrary, cruelly trampling

under foot all rights of others. Hence the disorder and inequality from which arises the accumulation of the wealth of nations in the hands of a small group of individuals who manipulate the market of the world at their own caprice to the immense harm of the masses."

Now since in the first talk in this series I admitted that not only the laity but the clergy need to have the Gospel preached to them, it may be proper at this point to quote from St. James a warning to those of the clergy who succumb to the temptation to pay too much deference to the rich and too little reverence to the poor. "My brethren," says he, "If there shall come into your assembly a man having a golden ring, in fine apparel, and there shall come in also a poor man in mean attire, and you have respect to him that is clothed with the fine apparel, and shall say to him: Sit thou here well; but say to the poor man: Stand thou there, or sit under my footstool: Do you not judge within yourselves, and are become judges of unjust thoughts? . . .hath not God chosen the poor in this world...[and] you have dishonored the poor man?"

God is no respecter of persons: the priest of God must be no respecter of persons; or if he must choose, he will choose those whom God hath chosen, the poor.

The Holy Father in private conference with a bishop has said that the greatest catastrophe in Christendom is the alienation of the poor man from the Church. It may also be said that it is the supreme tragedy of our times that many millions of workers are looking not to the Church but to Socialism and Communism for salvation. These are

our people, and it is ironical to a painful degree that we have lost them because they think we are in league with the rich against them. They are the little ones of whom our Savior speaks and if we have scandalized them it behooves us to remember the threat of the mill stone around the neck.

And here, if I must explain, is my chief solicitude in this talk and in all such addresses: we must win back the multitudes of the poor in every country, save them from false Christs and false prophets, and this we cannot do if we leave any doubt in their mind that the Christian religion is by divine warrant, by inheritance, by tradition, and by predilection, the religion of the poor.

Now, my friends, I cannot pretend to be blissfully unaware that a good many timid souls will consider a talk of this kind indiscreet and even incendiary. But I flatly decline to accept responsibility for whatever incendiarism there may be in these utterances. The doctrine is not mine but His that sent me. I can only say, "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel." If any of my hearers is irritated and feels like uttering a denunciation, I beg of him to place the denunciation where it belongs, not upon my slender shoulders, but upon those of the Pope, or of St. Paul, or of St. James. I refrain from quoting the early Fathers of the Church on the curse of riches, but if I were to do so, my own brief passing observations on the words of Jesus would seem pallid and feeble in comparison. But in self defence they would allege that they do but repeat the Gospel. Ultimately the responsibility, if we may say so, rests upon God, for we hold as a dogma that the Scriptures have *God* for their

author. And will any one blame God, or call Jesus Christ the Incarnate Son of God an incendiary?

Some men have indeed done so. Perhaps you recall that in a preceding talk I gave the names of certain scholars who called Jesus a "pious anarchist," declared His pronouncements on the social question "slightly distinguishable from the curbstone rhetoric of the modern agitators"; and that these utterances "have been quoted as . . . establishing Christ's place in history as the great forerunner of modern protestants against the industrial system which is based on private capital," that His "conception of the world was socialism with a Galilean coloring"; and that Christianity was a "vast economic revolution and nothing else."

I repeat these accusations now because this is the time and the place to declare them false. Jesus Christ was not concerned with economic systems. It is beside the point, therefore, to claim Him as a prophet or a sponsor of Socialism, or Capitalism, or Communism. He is concerned with man, the individual man, and only indirectly with society—political or economic. He is the very antithesis of the Socialist and Communist. They, blunderers that they are, concentrate upon the body of man, his food and drink, his house, his clothes, his wages, his physical status "right here on this earth," as they are fond of saying. To Christ religion is the first thing and the last, and all-important; to the Socialist religion is the "opiate of the people." It is Christ's philosophy that reform commences from within: it is the Socialist's philosophy that reform is imposed from without, and the Communist's that reform is wrought at the sword's point or with bombs and as-

sassinations. Christ's doctrine and the Socialist's are therefore poles apart, or if you prefer, socialism is at the periphery, Christianity at the centre. Socialism scratches a man's skin, Christianity enters into and purifies his heart. Socialism is therefore doomed to failure.

And here too is the danger of riches. They corrupt the heart and suffocate the soul, and they generally involve injustice between man and man. If any rich man can look square into the eyes of the Judge of the living and the dead and call Christ to witness that his heart remains tender and that his wealth has been accumulated and is now administered with justice and charity, such a one need have no fear of the terrifying denunciations that we have quoted from the Scriptures. There are such persons. It has been my privilege to meet some of them. They are friends of Christ, like Zacheus the rich man who said, "The half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wronged any man of anything, I restore him fourfold." (Luke 19:8) Christ promised him salvation, and doubtless the promise holds for all such as Zacheus, but for the rich who are unjust or pitiless, the scriptural condemnations stand. This is obviously the mind of Christ and the mind of Christ is the mind of the Church.

THE CHURCH AND THE POOR

Address delivered on December 2, 1934.

The Catholic Church is the Church of the poor. Friends and enemies agree upon that. Her enemies say it with scorn, and they particularize: to them she is the Church of housemaids and day-laborers, peasants and immigrants, the Church of slum-dwellers and of those that live on the wrong side of the railroad tracks; the Church of the riff-raff, the rag-tag, and bobtail, and by way of good measure they add, the Church of criminals, the Church that has its adherents in the death cell and the execution chamber.

Under this bitter scorn we are supposed to wither. But with what may seem an insane perversity, we don't deny the allegation; we plead guilty to every count in the indictment. We *are* the Church of the poor, the ignorant, the unfortunate. We *are* the Church of sinners, the Church to which the criminal instinctively turns when in durance vile he reflects, repents, and seeks absolution.

Stranger still, we claim to see in the fact that we are the Church of the poor ("poor" in any one of a dozen senses) a proof that we are the Church of Jesus Christ. In our catechisms you may read the question: "By what marks shall we know the true Church?" And the answer, "By four marks—the Church is one, holy, catholic, apostolic." But there is a fifth mark; the Church is *poor* and *of the poor*. We feel that we could drop all theological argument, make short shrift of controversy and say, "If you seek the Church of Jesus Christ, by

this sign you shall know her: she is the Church of the common people, the Church of the poor". If in search of the true religion you make bold to enter a house of worship wherein the intellectual and social elite most do congregate, where every man looks prosperous and every woman is richly gowned, where nice manners prevail and soft distinguished speech; where the atmosphere is redolent only of carefully chosen, harmoniously blended perfumes, where the poor, the rough, and the ragged, if they ever dared enter, would swiftly be made to feel out of place; if in a word you venture into a congregation entirely composed of "nice" people, well-to-do, respectable people, well-clothed, well-groomed, all, without exception, well-washed, sweet-smelling people, you have no more chance of finding the true religion there than of finding John the Baptist alive in Herod's dining hall, or Jesus Christ sitting down to a Lucullan banquet in the pretorium with Pontius Pilate. The shepherds in the stable of Bethlehem did not, I fear, smell so sweet; the fishermen on the shores of the sea of Tiberias, the peasants, truck-gardeners, workingmen, small tradesmen, who heard the Sermon on the Mount, were not faultlessly dressed and immaculately groomed.

Be it never forgotten that the Divine Founder of our religion, Jesus Christ, was a poor man, not poor in fancy or fiction, not picturesquely poor, but poor in truth, poor with the poverty of an Oriental peasant in a provincial village. The keynote of His life was the startling sentence from His first sermon, "Blessed are the poor"! And for fear that the unbelieving, skeptical, critical world would

say that He was only playing with a paradox, that His parables were prose poems, or experiments in rhetoric, beautiful indeed but hopelessly unrealistic; for fear that in later days a race of weak-kneed, milk-and-water, God-and-Mammon-serving Christians would interpret away His plainest utterances, He chose to be born in a stable, live in a wretched cottage, work at a humble trade, live a hand-to-mouth existence, to be hungry, to sleep often on the bare ground, to die all but naked, to depend upon charity for a winding sheet and a grave: "Born in another man's stable, buried in another man's tomb."

Not He alone but His mother Mary and His foster father Joseph were poor—too poor to offer the usual gift at the Child's presentation in the temple, poor enough to be compelled to substitute a couple of pigeons in place of a lamb for sacrifice. His apostles were poor, so poor as sometimes to be hungry. The people who flocked after Him were not only poor but largely outcasts, publicans and sinners, the lame, the halt, and the blind. So obviously indeed were He and His followers of the non-"respectable" classes that the Pharisees asked the scornful question, repeated as we have seen until this very day with slightly variant phrasing, "Hath any one of the rulers believed in him, or of the Pharisees, but this [accursed] multitude?"

To sum it up briefly in the words of St. Paul, "not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble: But the foolish things... hath God chosen, that he may confound the wise; and the weak things. . .hath God chosen, that he may confound the strong. And the base things

of the world, and the things that are contemptible, hath God chosen, and things that are not, that he might bring to naught things that are." And unafraid, as always, of a powerful expression, St. Paul says, "We are made as the refuse of this world, the offscouring of all." In the Latin the words are *purgamenta* and *peripsema*, the meaning of which may almost be surmised from the sound. We are like filth or dung under the feet of the haughty. Whatever vile epithet the scornful may hurl at us, we accept—indeed we accentuate. We glory in our shame, if it be shame for the Church to be the assemblage of the weak, the unfortunate, the disillusioned, the world-weary, the sin-stricken, the heart broken, of all who are poor in the broader meaning of the word, not merely without financial resources, but without social standing or political influence or place or power, without learning, without wisdom, "Poor People" in the sense of Dostoevsky, "little ones" as Jesus called them. In the Litany of Loreto, we salute the Mother of Christ as *Refugium Peccatorum* and *Consolatrix Afflictorum*, "Refuge of Sinners," "Comforter of the Afflicted," and we apply those titles to the Church, the Mother of us all, as well as to Mary, the mother of our Lord.

Obviously, then, our standards of value in religion differ widely from those of "the world," for in the world wealth is held the touchstone of value, the criterion of success; wealth is the measure of men and of nations; wealth, not charity, is the mantle that covereth a multitude of sins; wealth is the corner-stone of the social fabric; wealth is the open sesame, the magic word that opens the gate

to honors and distinctions, not brains or virtue, not even noble blood nowadays, but wealth. Individuals, institutions, governments, even churches and religions—all are measured by the one simple convenient infallible formula "How much are they worth?" To avoid the charge of exaggeration and extremism, let me concede that the money-mania is not absolutely coextensive with the human race, that not every man or even every rich man is afflicted with it. Now and again even amongst pagans you may find a wise man who despises wealth. Diogenes was content with his tub, Crates, they say, melted down his gold and dropped it into the sea, saying, "I drown you lest you drown me." Epictetus was happy to be poor and a slave. So too among modern pagans, here and there you find a moneyed man who is not money-mad, a business or professional man more concerned with probity than with profit. And perhaps if you travel far you may even happen upon a poor man who is satisfied to be poor.

But human society as society, business, governments, men and women by and large, are dominated by the money-standard.

Now over against this belief in the power and prestige of riches stands the Gospel of Jesus Christ and with it the Catholic Church. Nor has she ever suffered, in things that really matter, because of her predilection for the poor. She has survived the ages, the shocks, upheavals, and revolutions in the political and social order, because she has been loyal to the poor. Occasionally when certain ecclesiastics have been or have seemed to be too closely allied with what are called "the moneyed interests,"

the effect has been disedifying and sometimes locally disastrous. Clergymen cannot afford to be found on the side of the rich, and indifferent or hostile to the poor. The people—the common people whom, as Lincoln said, “God must love since He made so many of them”—the people are easily alienated by the wealth or the suspicion of the wealth of churchmen. Even the reputed wealth, falsely reported wealth, of priests and ministers sends the people scurrying away from the Church. Anti-clericals in so-called Catholic countries invariably allege the wealth of the Church as the basis of their complaint against her: Socialistic and Communist agitators play up the riches of the Church (real or imaginary, it matters not to them) as the first and strongest of arguments for her repression or even extermination. Call them demagogues, unscrupulous and untruthful, as you often justly may, the fact remains that their stock-in-trade is the accusation that the Church is rich and that churchmen lead luxurious lives.

That accusation is frequently libelous. Some ten or twelve years ago, I had the opportunity of witnessing anti-clerical demonstrations in four South American countries. On the way down, the purser of the ship, a Peruvian who gave me lessons in Spanish, instructed me also in the causes of anti-clericalism. “In my country,” he explained, “the clergy have been rotten with riches since the days of Pizzaro.” He was not lying, but the statement, even with allowances for exaggeration, was untrue. The Clergy of Peru are poor. On the street corners in Buenos Aires I heard frenzied harangues by socialists demanding that the Church be taxed—in-

deed taxed out of existence—instead of being, as they maintained, heavily subsidized by the State. Later I found that the State allowance was ridiculously small. Crossing the Andes into Chile, half a dozen men informed me that the bishop of Valparaiso was fabulously wealthy. Meeting the bishop the next day, and seeing him often, I found that he was poor as a church mouse and that many of his priests were badly clothed and even under-nourished. But there may have been a time in the distant past when there was some ground for the suspicion. The legend remains for generations and for centuries. The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the teeth of the children are on edge.

It would doubtless be easy to discount these attacks on the Church. Prejudiced critics are not in a position to know and still less in the disposition to believe that high ecclesiastical dignitaries may handle large sums of money and yet not possess it or use it, any more than the teller in a bank may own and spend what he counts. Bishops and cardinals in general live simply and even austerely, like Cardinal Merry del Val, Papal Secretary of State, who lived in cheaply furnished rooms and died on an old iron bed that might have come from a second-hand shop. St. Charles, Cardinal Borromeo, had palatial accommodation for guests, but a wretched little cell for himself; and he wore a hair shirt under his cardinalatial robes.

The lives of saints and of churchmen are replete with instances like these, but the point I would make is that, right or wrong, true or false, the argument against the Church and the ministers is the argument that they are rich. Every socialistic

philosopher whom I have read from Karl Marx to Upton Sinclair harps on the riches of the Church and asserts that Christianity is the religion of the "respectable" moneyed classes. The self-evident fact that priests and prelates for the most part, the Pope at Rome and his court, live simple humble lives does not concern the agitators or deter them. What they see is what are called "fashionable congregations," and certain multimillionaire patrons of religion who build churches that are popularly called by the patron's name, or others considered "malefactors of great wealth" who, though laymen, dominate synods and general conventions of churches that specialize in respectability; or church corporations which own great tracts of land in the heart of busy cities: these things scandalize the poor and make them easy victims of street corner demagogues who vociferate against churches and churchmen without discrimination.

Of course, the poor ought not to be so easily deluded. They should know that where there is frenzied oratory there is seldom truth. But the fact remains that any argument with the accusation of a wealthy church seems unanswerable and irresistible to the disheartened or the disgruntled poor.

And who shall say that the argument is entirely false or fallacious? Who can deny that somewhere deeply lodged in a remote crevice of the brain of the poor, even the unchurched poor, is a remembrance of certain texts of Scripture, as for example that "the disciple is not above the Master", and that in consequence those who call themselves Christians, be they laymen or churchmen, should practice if not the poverty, at least the charity of Christ.

When all is said and done, the conflict that rends the world asunder today is identical with the age-old clash of the rich and the poor. It is not an academic contest of economic systems. It would be absurd to imagine, for example, that 300 millions of Russian peasants had deliberately compared the philosophy of Karl Marx with that of Adam Smith, or the economic teaching of Lenin with that of Pope Pius XI, accepted the one and rejected the other. Nonsense! The peasants were easy victims of Communist agitators because they knew that the Czar, and with him the ruling class, was rich—rich, tyrannical, cruel—and that the Orthodox Church stood, or seemed to stand, with the rulers rather than with the people. Therefore when the time came, they dealt out fierce and fanatical punishment to the one and to the other.

Now one fact is evident in our own country and in all the world today: a change in the economic system, perhaps even a radical, essential change is imminent; and indeed already in progress. That change has become necessary, not because philosophical ideas have changed, but because there has been developing a strong conviction that "the forgotten man", as our President calls him, must be remembered. When that change comes, it will be fatal if churchmen and church members are found in the wrong company. We must be where we belong—among our own, the common people. We belong to the poor and they to us. One way to hold them or to win them to Christ, to God, to salvation, is to make it evident beyond the possibility of suspicion, that we are now what we were 1900 years ago, the Church of the Poor Man of Galilee.

THE ATTITUDE OF THE CHURCH TOWARD ECONOMIC EXPERIMENTS

Address delivered on December 9, 1934.

It is a plausible proposition that the Church has no right to enter the field of economics, and that if she does enter, she is an intruder. Industrialists and financiers of the old order, convinced that the exclusive sphere of the Church is the invisible world, attempt to frighten her away from what they think they preserve, with the familiar inhospitable warning, "No Trespassing"; and acting on the theory that clergymen must be congenitally dull of comprehension, they specify: "Priests, Prelates, Popes, this means you! Keep out!"

Oddly enough, they might seem to find warrant for this interdict against clerical interference in economics in a sentence from Pope Leo XIII's encyclical, *On the Christian Constitution of States*. The Pope says: "The Almighty has appointed the charge of the human race between two powers, the ecclesiastical and the civil, the one being set over divine and the other over human things. Each in its kind is supreme; each has fixed limits within which it is contained." "Good!" answers the *laissez-faire* capitalist. The ecclesiastical sphere is the Church, the altar, the pulpit, and the pews. That is territory enough for the cleric to cover. If he demands more, let him take heaven, purgatory, and hell. But the world, *this* world, the *real* world belongs to us.

Unfortunately for these touch-me-not, disturb-me-not monopolists, Pope Leo in that epoch-making encyclical went on to explain that the civil power

and the ecclesiastical power sometimes overlap, since every human being has two allegiances which may coincide or conflict, but in either case are as intimately associated as body and soul. An essential constituent of human nature is conscience, and short of making himself a mental and moral monstrosity, a man cannot separate himself from his conscience. Where he goes, conscience goes. When he sets out for the office on Monday morning he cannot leave his conscience behind with his Sunday-go-to-meeting silk hat, frock coat, and walking stick. There is a fable, I believe, about a man without a shadow. But of course there is no such man, at least this side of the river Styx. Neither is there a man without a conscience, this side of the infernal pit. Conscience clings closer than a man's shadow. Welcome or unwelcome, seen or unseen, articulate or silent it goes to business, to the factory, yes, even to the bank with him. It has been recognized even in the dubious precincts of the stock exchange, in brokers' offices, and there is a rumor that conscience has been occasionally present and vocal at the table in a directors' meeting in Wall Street. Stranger still, believe it or not, conscience tags along when a citizen goes to the polls to vote. The voter marks a cross with a pencil on a ballot, and the mark, often a very black mark, is written on his conscience too: or he pulls down the lever of a voting machine and it clicks in conscience.

That is to say, dropping all parables, man is a moral being and whatever he does, he does as a responsible moral agent. He needs guidance for conscience in business, in politics, in the exercise of a profession; and therefore to shut out the Church,

the divinely appointed mentor of the moral life from the field of business, or politics, or finance, or industry, or commerce, would be tantamount to saying that all human affairs except religion are to be conducted without regard to the moral law.

And so the present pontiff, the courageous and enlightened Pius XI, explains: "She [the Church] never can relinquish her God-given task of interposing her authority, not indeed in technical matters, for which she has neither the equipment nor the mission, but in all those that have a bearing on moral conduct."

"*A bearing on moral conduct!*" There in one phrase is the justification of the Church's entrance—call it not intrusion—into economics, and there you have at the same time the solution of every economic and social problem. Economics is no independent, isolated, self-created, self-sufficient science. It is associated with *ethics* as intimately as the light of the sun is associated with the heat of the sun. The analogy, if I may say so, is excellent. If, because of some inconceivably terrific cataclysm, the light waves were separated from the heat waves at their source in the sun, the ensuing catastrophe would be comparable in the physical world to the calamity that has befallen us in the business world because of the separation of ethics from economics, and the elimination of the moral law from business, finance, politics, and all other human affairs.

It is a favorite fancy of mine that the cause of all the woe that afflicts the human race is divorce; not merely the divorce of husband from wife, but the divorce of morals from politics, from diplomacy, from government, the divorce of thought and action

from conscience, the divorce of man from his soul, the divorce of man from his God.

Ethics and economics have been called twin sciences. They are not twins. One twin may live and the other die. Ethics and economics are more like the right and left lobes of the brain, or the right and left ventricles of the heart. If you stab and paralyze one, if you remove one with the surgeon's knife, the other will not survive. All the financial and commercial catastrophe that has befallen us has been caused by forgetfulness of that fact.

So, Enters the Church! The most powerful moral organism in existence, the only God-sent custodian and exponent of immutable right and justice, the only indefatigable champion of the moral law and of conscience.

But the Church—be it immediately confessed—though she enter the field of economics, has no magic formula for putting an end to the depression. She sponsors no particular economic system. She is, as we have said previously in this series, committed neither to Capitalism nor to Communism. The Pope, speaking the mind of the Church, has indeed boldly criticized Capitalism, but he has not condemned Capitalism. On the contrary, he says, in so many words, "The system itself is not to be condemned . . . it is not vicious of its very nature." Nor, on the other hand, does he condemn Communism of every sort, in any and all circumstances. A form of Communism is in vogue in the religious orders. It is the excesses of Capitalism that the Church condemns. And apart from one essential heresy inherent in Marxist communism, it is the excesses and aber-

rations, the inhuman cruelties of the Communism we see operating, for example, in Russia, that the Church abhors.

Perhaps it is disappointing to some militant crusaders for social justice that the Church does not definitely align herself with one party or another, or barring that, come forth with an entirely new and independent economic program. Most men seem lost if they cannot join a party, and it must be confessed that human nature is instinctively partisan. Demagogues are only too well aware of that fact. They all have a party cry. In mediaeval Italy it was "Guelphs," or "Ghibellines". In England during the Wars of the Roses it was "The Whites," or "The Reds". At Constantinople in Justinian's day, citizens separated into parties and fought under the different colors of charioteers in the hippodrome. So, in our day the cry used to be "Vote Republican and prolong prosperity". Now it is, "Vote Democratic and bring back prosperity". But also, now, a new battle cry is heard: "A plague on both your houses, vote Communist and drive *all* the rascals out!" And—I say it with respect—not the least element in the creation of the vast popularity of President Roosevelt was his happy choice of a phrase, "The New Deal".

But the Pope, on his part, though obviously lacking in the art of political strategy, is too wise and too conscientious to promise economic salvation with a word or a phrase or with a program or a party. A sympathetic but dispassionate observer, the Pope looks from his watch tower and sees all the nations of the world, and the glory of them—sees furthermore what Satan thought to hide from

Jesus, the misery of them. To his gaze Australia is as near as Italy, China no further away than Vatican City; to his vision Constantine and Charlemagne are as vividly present as Hitler and Mussolini. In the long, long memory of the Church, and therefore vicariously in the memory of the Pope, ancient empires and kingdoms, mediaeval republics, oligarchies and city-states, are as near and as clear as the heterogeneous jumble of modern governmental experiments. The Pope has inherited the experience of the ages; he knows all the economic and social, as well as political, expedients that have been devised from time immemorial—immemorial to all but to the Church. And, like wise old Solomon, he knows that there is nothing new under the sun. He knows furthermore that man is not saved by magic, that economic, like moral reconstruction, cannot come in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Being no quack doctor, he promises no return to health with the slapping on of a poultice or a plaster. He knows and he tells the patient that there is no health save in slow constitutional rehabilitation. So, he pins his faith to no party, places hope in no particular system, writes no testimonials for any economic panacea.

He knows, what any of us could know if we were not blinded by partisan prejudice, that no system, political, social, financial, is proof against human depravity. Any system—almost any system—will work if men play fair: no system, even though it were divinely revealed, let down from heaven with charts, graphs, explicit directions, and full explanations will work if men do *not* play fair.

I have said that the Pope has no magic formula,

but perhaps after all he has—if you can call an obvious fact a magic formula. I know of a sick person whose malady baffled half a dozen physicians. So the family brought in a very famous diagnostician who scarcely looked at the patient before saying brusquely, “Typhoid!” It seemed too simple. Absurdly simple. But it turned out to be correct. So, the Pope, without any “fuss or feathers”, with no mystery in his manner and no professional buncombe, has looked at the sick world and said “Greed”. Neither the learned economists nor the unlearned man in the street take any stock in that swift diagnosis, but it is none the less as sure as it was swift. Professionals and amateurs alike keep repeating the silly phrase, “Nobody knows, nobody knows, what happened to us all in 1929”. Most of them, experts and inexperts, like to explain that the machinery of production and distribution which had become exceedingly intricate and delicate somehow slipped a cog and now goes limping. Optimists say, “If only we could find that cog and slip it back into place, the machine would run again as well as ever”. Pessimists say, “No, it is not a single cog that got out of place, it’s the whole complicated apparatus. It’s all gone ‘bust’ at once, like ‘the deacon’s one-hoss shay’.”

But some one having authority (we Catholics naturally suggest the Pope), should be given three minutes of absolute control of every radio network in the world, all jazz and jokes should be ruled off, all crooning, yodelling, and coloraturing, all ballyhoo and propaganda, while some one to whom the world would listen says with a voice that will be stepped up and carried to the corners of the earth:

"It is not the machine but *Man* in control of the machine that has broken down. It is futile to fix the machine unless you fix man. It is likewise foolish to change the machine unless you change man. Man can ruin any machine, new or old. Select any machine you may, Capitalism, Communism, Fascism, Nazism. They may all have their points, but look about you, see Russia, see Italy, see Germany, see Mexico, see France, see Britian and the United States, four, five, or a half dozen different economic systems and not any one of them is a going concern. Can you not see—it is not the system, it is man!"

That will do. The channels of the air were clear for a moment, let them now be congested with their usual bewildering traffic. The message went forth: "Never mind the machinery! Mind man!" Or if we must be precise, mind the machinery less and man more. It wasn't the war, though God knows the war was a vast and enduring calamity; it wasn't the peace at Versailles, though the peace contributed to the confusion amongst nations; nor was it Wall Street that did the damage. Wall Street couldn't fleece the lambs if the lambs didn't wander into Wall Street. Those who went to Wall Street and whined when Wall Street "took them" are like those who expect to break the bank at Monte Carlo and commit suicide when the bank at Monte Carlo breaks them. Not the bank, not "the street," not the war, not Versailles, not the economic-financial-industrial system, but *Man* is responsible for the universal catastrophe.

Our President—God direct and assist him—is

making a valiant effort to repair our own machine by introducing important if not essential changes in the Capitalistic system, while Communists and their allies (witting and unwitting allies) sit on the fence by the side of the road and jeer at him for tinkering with the old broken-down bus. And while he works, political jobbers and chisellers are also at work. Worse than jobbers, worse than chisellers—wasters, if we can believe the evidence submitted to a United States senator, are doing their damnable worst to neutralize and nullify the President's efforts. He is a powerful man in himself and the people have committed to him in addition more power than any man ever had in our country before. Even more than Woodrow Wilson in war times. But with all *his* power, he cannot defeat human nature. If men will not be good, he cannot make them good. You cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. And the President cannot make patriots out of spoils politicians.

So once again, what we need is *moral regeneration*, more than economic reconstruction. Economic reconstruction will never come—never come to stay—without moral regeneration. That truistic but infinitely valuable fact, it seems to me, is the warp and woof of the papal encyclicals. The popes do indeed expound certain economic and social doctrines, but they are all deducible from the eternal principle of social justice, "Render to every man his due," and that other principle both of justice and of charity, "Do unto others as you would that others do unto you."

If we don't adopt and follow those principles, no brain trust can save us, no New Deal, no fine-spun

economic theory, no system, however skillfully devised, will be able to lift us out of the slough of despond and set our feet upon the solid earth of economic and social welfare.

BISHOP VON KETTELER: PIONEER OF SOCIAL REFORM

Address delivered on December 16, 1934.

In the course of a debate in the German Reichstag in 1881, the Socialist members Bebel and Liebknecht flung at the Chamber the taunt, "When did *you* begin to take notice of the workingman? When did you begin to study the Social Question? Not until we Socialists reminded you of your duty." The accusation may have been just when applied to the Reichstag, but a full generation before 1881 there had arisen in Germany a pioneer in the field of social justice, not a Socialist but a Catholic bishop, whose doctrine was destined to be embodied in the epoch-making encyclical *Rerum Novarum* of Pope Leo XIII and thereby to influence sociological thought in all the modern world.

Born at Munster in Westphalia, Wilhelm Emanuel von Ketteler, scion of an ancient Catholic family, heir to the title "Baron," related to royalty, at first a bright and shining light in the profession of the law, later ordained priest and consecrated bishop, he became, notwithstanding his aristocratic lineage and high social standing, famous as champion of the poor, advocate of the natural rights of man, opponent in that capacity of the high and mighty Bismarck, "the man of blood and iron": recognized by Pope Leo XIII as his teacher and "great predecessor", in social science, and—last and best—he was something of a saint.

We have heard much in recent years of the papal encyclicals on Social Reform, *Rerum Novarum* of 1891, and *Quadragesimo Anno* of 1931, but perhaps

we are not all familiar with the fact that those two priceless papal documents virtually and indeed actually quote von Ketteler and reproduce his teaching. Von Ketteler in turn resumes and applies to modern conditions the doctrines of St. Thomas Aquinas, of 700 years ago, and St. Thomas does but present with Scholastic accuracy the social doctrine of St. Augustine, St. Basil, St. Jerome, St. John Chrysostom, who lived and taught and fought the poor man's battles 1500 years ago. So, the Catholic Church welcomes the Socialist challenge, "When did *you* begin to take notice of the workingman? When did *you* begin to study the Social Question?"

We began before Capitalism came into being: before Socialism was heard of and when the word "Communism", if spoken at all, was a synonym for conventualism, the community life of the Catholic religious orders. Sometimes here in the United States, when we Catholics are referred to as "aliens" and "intruders", we find it necessary to refresh the memory of Americans who have forgotten the rudiments of the history of this continent. We were here first. America was discovered, explored, and evangelized by Catholics a hundred years before any others came. Similarly it may be necessary to explain that in the field of social justice we are the discoverers, explorers, pioneers—1500 years before Lenin and Stalin and at least 1400 years before Karl Marx, Liebknecht, and Lasalle. What is more, we stand prepared to prove, or shall we say admit, that the doctrine of the Fathers of the Church in the fourth and fifth centuries was every bit as "radical" (in the good sense) and quite as hostile to exaggerated and perverted Capitalism as contemporary

Communism, but with none of the insane excesses now on exhibition in Moscow and in Mexico, and with none of the childish Utopianism of demagogic politicians.

I say the fathers of 1500 and even 1600 years ago were quite as "radical" as any modern revolutionary. Three or four times in this course of talks I have promised—I might almost say, have threatened—to quote Jerome, Chrysostom, Ambrose, Augustine, Gregory the Great, and others. But I have refrained from doing so because their doctrine is so startling that it requires a lengthy exposition and explanation which I have not time to give. But I shall venture to present just one point of the patristic doctrine of social justice which will show what I mean by "radicalism" in the early fathers and will at the same time show us some of the antecedents of von Ketteler. In place of biographical data concerning that great pioneer, I shall give one or two of his leading ideas, thinking that you would like to know something of the mind of the man rather than the bare facts of his exterior life.

Without doubt the most sweeping statement ever made in the name of Communism is the axiom usually attributed to Proudhon, "Property is theft". But Proudhon, who lived in the nineteenth century, borrowed the maxim from Jean Pierre Brissot, who died at the end of the eighteenth. Brissot had said, "*Exclusive* property is theft".* Now, strange though it seem, believe it or not, that most extreme dogma of Communism stems from St. Basil who had

* See *Bishop Ketteler* by George Metlake, p. 38. Preface by his Eminence Cardinal O'Connell; the Dolphin Press, Philadelphia, 1912.

said in the fourth century, "Personal property is theft". Now I beg you to mark well this all-important circumstance, the saint was speaking of private property in a monastery, where all members of the community take a vow to have no private possessions but to hold all things in common. However, St. Basil, speaking again and repeatedly not to monks in a monastery but to rich men in the world, told them too that under certain conditions the very possession of private property is tantamount to theft. "Who is a robber?" he asks. "He who takes the goods of another. Are you not avaricious? Are you not a robber? . . . That bread which you keep, belongs to the hungry; that coat which you preserve in your wardrobe, belongs to the naked; those shoes which are rotting in your possession, belong to those who have no shoes; that gold which you have hidden in the ground, belongs to the needy." Today of course we don't bury gold in the ground (not if we keep the law), but to bring the expression up to date, the saint is saying that if we have money in the bank (more than we need) and some one else has none, our money in the bank belongs to him and we are robbers if we keep it from him. I warned you that the Fathers are "radical".

St. Augustine at about the same date, 400 A. D., says epigrammatically, "The superfluities of the rich are the necessities of the poor. They who possess superfluities possess *the goods of others.*" And St. Ambrose, friend and teacher of St. Augustine: "God created. . . the earth and all things to be the common possession of all. Nature created the common right: usurpation made the private right.

[If you give to the poor man] you do not give what is your own, but what is his. The earth belongs to all, not to the rich."

I cannot delay to pile up more of these startling sentences. The writings of the Fathers are full of them. Again and again they explain that the rich man is a usurper and a robber.

Now, in view of the suspicion that these statements and a hundred others that might be quoted are a bit rhetorical and oratorical, let us come to a statement of von Ketteler, inspirer of popes, who with considerable warmth of feeling but none the less with theological accuracy makes his observation upon the axiom that "property is theft." "The false doctrine of the rigid right of ownership is a continual sin against nature, because it sees no injustice in using for the gratification of the most insatiable avarice and the most extravagant sensuality what God intended to be food and clothing for all men; because it kills the noblest sentiments in the human heart and engenders a callous disregard for the misery of others such as is hardly to be found even in the brute creation. The notorious dictum, 'property is robbery', is something more than a mere lie; besides a great lie, it contains a terrible truth. Scorn and derision will not dispose of it . . . As long as it contains even a particle of truth, it has power to overturn the whole order of the world. As deep calleth unto deep, so one sin against nature calls forth another. Out of the distorted right of ownership the false doctrine of Communism was begotten."

One might have imagined that an orthodox Catholic economist would have repudiated without qual-

ification or reservation the maxim of Proudhon, "Property is theft". He does indeed call it a "notorious dictum" and a "great lie", but with rare intellectual courage and equally rare penetration into the source of all social injustice, he states the paradoxical fact—paradoxical but not impossible—that a great lie can contain a terrible truth. And he adds, a full generation before the rest of the world discovered it, that the occasion if not the cause of Communism is Capitalism.

Courage I claim for von Ketteler: intellectual penetration: the gift of prophecy; and we must now add, moderation, balanced judgment. He writes: "In radiant letters above both these false doctrines [the doctrine of the rigid right of ownership on the one hand, and on the other the doctrine that property is theft] stands the true teaching of the Catholic Church. She recognizes and makes her own what is true in each; she rejects what is false in both. She does not recognize in man an unconditional right to ownership over the goods of earth, but only the right to use them in the manner ordained by God. She safeguards the right of ownership by insisting that, in the interests of peace, order, and industry, the division of goods as it has developed among men must be acknowledged; she sanctifies Communism by making the fruits of property the common property of all."

"Catholicism sanctifies Communism!" A strange phrase to those who know Communism as exemplified in the French Revolution of 1798, or the Commune of 1848, or the present hideous Russian experiment. But Communism is capable of being sanctified, perhaps with less difficulty than Capital-

ism. Indeed, sanctified Communism is in operation in the Catholic Church. All religious orders are communistic and have been since the first of them were founded nearly 1780 years ago. Communism—religious Communism—has lasted a long time. Capitalism seems to be dying after a short life of only one hundred years.

We Catholics are not afraid of Communism. We have tamed wilder beasts than that. The French Republic began, for example, quite as mad and quite as bloody an enemy of the Catholic Church as Communism. But the time came when a pope entreated the French people to forget the Monarchy and accept the Republic; and today in France you may hear the Marseillaise, the fiercest and wildest of revolutionary songs, played and sung by devout Catholics: indeed I have heard it before the altar in Catholic churches. A purified, civilized Communism is not unthinkable. But a reformed and sanctified Capitalism is, in the judgment of a great many enlightened observers, unimaginable.

But there is another fundamental principle of Catholic ethics which must be explained, and which when explained will throw a clearer light on the startling pronouncements we have quoted from St. Basil and other early churchmen concerning private ownership.

I shall hand this knotty problem also over to von Ketteler, but first let me explain a word that will occur in his explanation. It is a rather unusual word, a difficult word to define with precision, the word "usufruct". It comes from Roman law. With the Romans a man was said to have "usufruct" when he had the right to use and to enjoy something that

belonged not to him but to another. I speak of the Romans, but it would seem that the idea and the custom prevailed further back amongst the Greeks. For, says Aristotle, "the Spartans use one another's slaves and horses and dogs as if they were their own, and if they happen to be out in another man's fields, they appropriate whatever provisions they want." The property was private but the use of it was public. One man owned the field, or the orchard, or the domestic animal; other men were allowed to make use of it. This right or privilege was called "usufruct."

Now the Roman and Greek idea of "usufruct" was carried over into the Catholic doctrine with the additional note that no man is entitled to absolute ownership. At best he has the right of usufruct. Von Ketteler says: "St. Thomas lays down the principle that all creatures, and consequently all earthly goods, can, of their very nature, belong only to God God possesses all rights, man none. Besides this essential and complete right of ownership, which can belong to God alone, St. Thomas recognizes a right of usufruct and only in regard to this right of using and enjoying them does he concede to men a right to the goods of earth. Hence, when men speak of a natural right to ownership, there can be no question of true and complete proprietorship, but only of a right of use and enjoyment The Catholic doctrine of private property has nothing in common with the conception current in the world according to which man looks on himself as the unrestricted master of his possessions. The Church can never concede to man the right of using at his pleasure the goods of this world, and when

she speaks of private property and protects it, she never loses sight of the fact that the true and complete right of property pertains to God alone and that man's right is restricted to the usufruct."

There, my friends, is a revolutionary principle if ever there was one: No man owns anything. Whatever he has, he has as steward of God; he is not an owner but an administrator.

It may be that in some remote epoch, human ingenuity will succeed in ordering the world so that all men may have the use and enjoyment of a sufficient amount of the goods of earth. Let the crusade for social justice aim at that ideal. But until that ideal becomes real, as long as inequality remains on this earth, as long as human society is divided into the "haves" and the "have-nots", so long will there be wars and rumors of wars, revolutions and counter-revolutions, social upheavals and economic catastrophies, unless the human race once more gets hold of the Catholic principle that no man owns anything but that all men are entitled to use and enjoy the goods that God has provided on earth, goods to which God alone holds the title of ownership. One is our Father, God; and all we who have God for our Father are children together in His house. In God's house no one child must be surfeited while another starves, no one child must go ragged or naked while another is clad in purple and fine linen, as the Gospel says, or as we say in the more modern idiom, in silks and furs and jewels. Do I hear some one say that this is high-flown poetry and religious mysticism? Very well then, let us have the Catholic doctrine of social justice in hard cold prose; if any man has more than enough of the goods of earth

and another man has less than enough, he that has is bound in justice—mark the expression, *bound in justice* *—to share what he has with the one who has not. To a starving man he *must* give food. If a whole country be in dire distress, he is bound in justice to give as large a part of his possessions as is possible without endangering his own family.

And here you may readily detect another so-called “radical” economic measure, the “conscription of wealth”. The inventors of that phrase think of it as applicable in time of war, and they seem to think it needs apology even then. But the idea, if not the phrase, is a commonplace of Catholic ethics, as ancient as the Fathers, as ancient as the Gospels. With us who have inherited the Catholic tradition these so-called radical ideas are not new or revolutionary or dangerous. They are in the papal encyclicals, they are in von Ketteler, they are in every Catholic manual of ethics in every Catholic dissertation on Social Justice. We teach that wealth must be conscripted not only in war time, but in time of emergency, and indeed at all times, so long as some have too much and others not enough.

So, when Socialists and Communists ask us when we became interested in the poor man and his problems, we reply that we were the poor man’s friend and his champion long centuries before demagogues got hold of his ear, stirred up his passion with incentives to violence, and beguiled his poor fond heart with promises that never can be fulfilled.

But be it observed, the idea that all human beings are one family implies God! Do away with God and you destroy the only substantial basis of human

*See the *Science of Ethics*, by Cronin, vol. 11, p. 135.

equality. We can accept the principle of "usufruct", the principle that no man owns anything absolutely but that all men are entitled to use and enjoy the fruits of the earth, only on one condition: the condition that there is a God. Either to God or to man must be conceded absolute, ultimate ownership. If to men—any man or group of men—you shall never solve the social problem, for man will always fight man for possession. If to God is attributed the ownership of all things under God, man may have peace and justice and happiness.

CARDINAL HAYES STATES AIM OF THE CATHOLIC HOUR

(Extract from his address at the inaugural program in the studio of the National Broadcasting Company, New York City, March 2, 1930.)

Our congratulations and our gratitude are extended to the National Council of Catholic Men and its officials, and to all who, by their financial support, have made it possible to use this offer of the National Broadcasting Company. The heavy expense of managing and financing a weekly program, its musical numbers, its speakers, the subsequent answering of inquiries, must be met. . . .

This radio hour is for all the people of the United States. To our fellow-citizens, in this word of dedication, we wish to express a cordial greeting and, indeed, congratulations. For this radio hour is one of service to America, which certainly will listen in interestedly, and even sympathetically, I am sure, to the voice of the ancient Church with its historic background of all the centuries of the Christian era, and with its own notable contribution to the discovery, exploration, foundation and growth of our glorious country. . . .

Thus to voice before a vast public the Catholic Church is no light task. Our prayers will be with those who have that task in hand. We feel certain that it will have both the good will and the good wishes of the great majority of our countrymen. Surely, there is no true lover of our Country who does not eagerly hope for a less worldly, a less material, and a more spiritual standard among our people.

With good will, with kindness and with Christ-like sympathy for all, this work is inaugurated. So may it continue. So may it be fulfilled. This word of dedication voices, therefore, the hope that this radio hour may serve to make known, to explain with the charity of Christ, our faith, which we love even as we love Christ Himself. May it serve to make better understood that faith as it really is—a light revealing the pathway to heaven: a strength, and a power divine through Christ: pardoning our sins, elevating, consecrating our common every-day duties and joys, bringing not only justice but gladness and peace to our searching and questioning hearts.

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