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# **The Church the Enemy of the Workers**

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## Chapter I

### A PICTURE OF LIFE IN A CATHOLIC COUNTRY

A few weeks ago there came to me, by a subterranean route, a poignant letter from a man who has lived, in intimacy with the people, for many years in a Catholic country of Europe. The press always refers to this country as a happy little land of democratic sympathies and entirely Roman Catholic. Its virtual ruler is described as a particularly enlightened, upright, and humane statesman. You have probably seen films of groups of its workers singing, laughing, and dancing merrily in a sunny world; though if you had not been misled by press-references you would have detected signs of extreme poverty and would have seen that the gaiety is that of illiterate, densely ignorant men and women at, culturally, the lowest level of civilized life. In spite of disease, exploitation, and poverty they are "happy," in a sub-human way—until they begin to question the justice of the joint tyranny of Church and Dictator. But the bold bad man is quickly removed to a jail in which the vilest medieval torture is used today—one American writer who is not anti-Catholic has described these tortures—or to the purgatory of a penal colony.

The first letter I received told me that the land is entirely Fascist, which I knew; that all the priests belong to the Fascist party, which is also called Catholic Action and holds its meetings in the Churches, and that every boy or youth works in it. The local newspapers praise the Germans every day as well as the Italians. In the course of a recent editorial one said: "If God so wills it we must substitute the cross of the Swastika for the cross of Christ." The British and American papers which were then assuring us that "the brave little people" would resist the German pressure which was being exerted on them did not quote this. A priest, praising Hitler in a sermon said that he was "appointed by God to punish the world for its irreligion." But my informant added a concrete little picture which stimulated my appetite for further news.

On the outskirts of the city a man—not a poor working man but an educated and comfortable man—had a farm. His most valuable pig fell ill, and my friend suggested sending for a vet. Oh, no, what could a vet do against the Evil Eye? Next morning a solemn procession made its way from the church to the sty. The priest wore over his cassock and surplice a richly embroidered shawl that is used in dealing with the devil. Altar-boys, one swinging a censer, walked on either side of him, and the people, mumbling on their beads, walked behind. They fell on their knees round the sty while the priest waved the fumes of incense at the pig and recited his incantations. The pungent smoke got up the pig's nose, and it staggered to its feet; and the people cried "A miracle." The

priest received his 100 eggs and 2 hens, but the pig died next day. Seeing that it was going to die, the owner had sold it to the local butcher to be turned into food for the people. He then quietly substituted another pig for it, and this wallowed in the same poisonous filth as its predecessor; but there was now a bottle of holy water hanging from the roof of the sty to protect it.

I naturally wanted more of this for my readers, and I got it. Before I quote it let me explain. My informant would be ruined and punished if he were traced, so I make certain details not as convenient as they might be for the Catholic detective. He is not a working man but a well-educated middle-class man of high character. The place from which he writes is not a rural district but an old city of 30,000 people, well known to thousands of Americans and Britons, but they are either Catholics or they prefer to keep their mouths closed. The country will doubtless be identified by some of my readers, but I will say only that it is not at all considered the most backward in Europe, though the great majority of the workers are illiterate. It is solidly Catholic. The writer is absolutely reliable both in regard to first-hand knowledge and conscientiousness, and I omit from the long account only a few passages that are relevant to my purpose:

"A few years ago this country made a Pact with the Vatican, and one notices more and more the growing power of the Church. At government ceremonies, which are often held out of doors here, the bishop (who by the way has eight illegitimate children) leads the procession in full regalia and gives the Fascist salute. A new law has been passed by which all schools must be of one sex, with the subtle idea of putting the secular schools out of action. This law applies even to infants' schools.

"I know the wife of a chemist whose husband is being threatened by the priests with boycott as she refuses to attend mass. A man can have as many mistresses as he likes but it is a crime for a couple to set up home together unless they are married. It is forbidden to let them a house. Civil marriage is done away with, and one can only marry in the church. There is much emigration to South America, and if a person takes a letter from a priest saying that he is a good Catholic he can get a good job. Of course, an offering for masses will always secure a good letter though one never goes to mass. . . . A Spanish friend of mine described the national system in a nutshell. He said it was as if the head of a family had a large box of gold heavily guarded and refused to part with a penny of it though all the family were dying of hunger. A writer described this country as a huge prison kept down by force. There is a state of misery here that you never could imagine. I happened to know well a skilled workman who has two weeks off work and two weeks on, and he earns 85 cents a day when working. But when he has paid his dues to the Syndicate [the form of Trade Union imposed on Catholics by the Papal Encyclical] and counts his two weeks idle his pay works out at 35 cents a day, and on this seven people must live. . . . The cruel joke is that there is a law that no man must get less than 50 cents a day but the government themselves pay 20 cents. The usual wage of a workman is 25 cents. So, being unable to live on that as he invariably has a big family he must send his children on the streets to beg. The streets are

thronged with starving whining beggars, with little children with their stomachs swollen, and dropping blood in the streets in the last stages of starvation.

"Property rights are very severe, and a man may shoot on sight any who enters his property. Lately on the property of the richest Englishman here two men were found speared to death. One was a poor old man of 72 who was collecting a few sticks for his fire, and one a young fellow who had the audacity to use the property as a short cut. No one took any notice. I just happened to hear of the incident as I lived near. All relations between the people are vicious, and there is none of that kindly feeling or sympathy that one gets among the poor in England. The rich have their houses barred and bolted and scarcely ever help. Their surplus money goes to building private chapels or at least enriching them, as there is one in every rich or middle-class house, or else the money goes directly to the Church. . . . For every one who finds comfort there are 99 who only find terror and worry. My life as a R. C. was a horror. I lived in terror of sin, terror of confession, terror of sex, and the supreme terror was of death and hell. How often I lay shivering in bed thinking that this night I would surely die and be weighed in the scales of God, so graphically described to me by the Catholic teachers. Other nights I lay listening, listening for the devil's cart, driven by headless horsemen and horses and conveying the children who did not say their prayers, and I pictured with what glee the devil would throw them into hell. As a farmer's cart passed rattling over the cobble stones in my imagination I could hear the devil's chains rattling and thought it would stop at our door and collect me. When day came I was braver and followed all the funerals to the cemetery to make the sign of the Cross over the Catholic graves and spit on the Protestant ones. I waited, trembling, for the serpent to jump out of my mouth after making what I thought was a bad communion. . . .

"All hospitals are in the hands of religious [monks and nuns] with no qualifications whatever and more often than not illiterate. I had occasion to go to the Red Cross the other day. The doctor was absent, and not one of the three nuns in charge could write a note for him. A trained nurse offered her services free to the hospital but they refused as she was not a nun. A young girl whom I know, living with a man, was forced to have an operation without an anaesthetic in punishment for her sin. She has been a nervous wreck ever since. I saw a sweet little girl of four die the other day. The priest had advised them not to have a doctor as God had need of another little angel in heaven. A man was dying with T.B. and a foreign nurse begged to be allowed to give him a drug but the priest forbade it, as it would be against the will of God. Man must suffer.

"To me child labor is the most terrible crime here. They have little children from the age of seven onward as servants, and they sometimes pay them nothing. The parents are glad to get rid of them for their keep. They usually sleep on the floor in the coal-bin and are often beaten. Someone once recommended to me a woman to do washing, and a well-dressed woman, armed with a stick, came along with a little boy of about ten. She was going to superintend while he did the washing. One never sees a child playing on the

streets, nor are there any parks or playgrounds for them. The schools are free, but the parents must provide books, etc. and children without books are not allowed to enter: an order which excludes all the poor. The teachers are unqualified. The soldiers get about half a cent a day and two meals of meat, but one can get exemption by paying, so the army is composed of the poor and under-nourished.

"I expect you read in the papers how our government was un-animously elected. It was such a farce. A notice appeared in the papers saying: "Go and vote. Your vote won't count, but go and vote and show the world you are all with the government." They forgot to add: "If you don't vote you will lose your job." The government is putting up a lot of show buildings while there is a terrible dearth of houses for the people. Rents are high in comparison with wages. The houses at \$8 a month are one or two-roomed and usually without windows. I have seen a seven-roomed house without windows. The houses are close together and no sun enters. It is usual after a rainy day—and it often rains here—to see all the bedding out on the street drying."

The rest of the letter is too personal and might give more away than the writer supposes. I will note only that revolt against this brutal system flickers up here and there but the spread of the fire is truculently prevented. There is actually a small Freethought Society in the town, but it meets in such secrecy that my informant has never been able to get in touch with it. The eyes and ears of the priests are everywhere, and if the economic weapon does not intimidate the incipient rebel there is always the jail or the penal settlement. Ironically, some fled there from the triumph of clerical Fascism elsewhere, and now they writhe in the shadow of an equal tyranny.

But the above extracts, referring to many sides of life in a strictly Catholic city, will suffice for my purpose. I do not suppose that in America the apologist explains the defects of his church, as he does in Britain, as due entirely to its Protestant environment. You should see Catholic life in a Catholic country, he is fond of saying. It must be difficult to use that piece of pious deception in the United States. Folk down south are too near to Mexico and up north too near to Quebec; while engineers and others who have lived in Columbia, Bolivia, or Brazil tell funny stories. Most people, however, know these foreign lands only from films which conceal more than they show, and this little sketch of life in a really Catholic city—it is 90 percent Catholic and 70 percent illiterate—heavily rebukes the apologist.

I should like to follow it up with a sketch of life in Russia before the Beasts of Berlin broke into it. Sociologists generally agree that one of the best tests of a civilization is the way it treats its children; one ought to say, how it treats the children of workers. Whatever faults some find in Russia or the Soviet Union it is agreed by all experts on this side of its life that it gives a better time to the children than any other country in the world. Before the Revolution or the last war the children had as miserable a time as in this Catholic country. One of the toughest problems the Soviet authorities had to solve was the reduction of juvenile crime, and travelers in Tsarist Russia used to tell of child-



prostitutes of 13 soliciting openly near the baths. Now Russia, and especially Moscow, treat children as honored guests. They neither beg nor work and they are poles removed from the cruelly-treated starvelings, dripping blood on the streets, of this Catholic city. Instead of being excluded from schools because they have no shoes—which in Russia happens only in summer in the country—the poorest have the same teaching and the same holidays and entertainments as the children of the best paid.

But I am concerned here with the workers not with the children, though the fact that vast numbers of them cannot feed the large families which the priests compel them to have is a significant detail. A Catholic writer will tell you only, and proudly, that there is a minimum wage fixed by law. Here, from one who has moved intimately among them for years—I can vouch for that—is the truth. They are "the stinkers" as the Tsarist aristocrats used to call the workers, the "clods" as rich folk called them in medieval England. They may be killed for gathering a little fallen wood on or taking a short cut through your estate. It is a picture of comprehensive injustice and exploitation.

But how far is this representative of the condition of the workers in Catholic countries generally? Let us try to ascertain this on strict sociological lines. In which countries of the world have the great majority of the workers, by general agreement, the highest standard of living? I confine the comparison to the great majority, the regular workers, because the poorest are at much the same level of life in all countries. If there is any difference their condition is exceptionally bad in such Catholic countries as Poland (before the war), Spain, Portugal, and Brazil. In any case we reach a sound verdict only if we compare the great mass of the people in different countries.

It will surely be admitted that the highest standard of living for the largest majority of the workers is enjoyed in the United States, Soviet Russia, Great Britain, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, pre-war Germany, and pre-war France. I would put them in that order but there is no need to go into that question. The point is that these are all countries in which the Church of Rome has no influence on the status of the workers. The one-eighth Catholic minority in America and France and the one-twenty-fifth minority in Britain may help to sour certain aspects of public life by Sunday Laws, Blue Laws, Marriage Laws, etc., but we should smile if they claimed to have any responsibility for the economic basis of the standard of life of the workers. If this were the place to go more fully into the question we might make a stronger case. While for instance, the workers of the United States will be put by most students—some, who know the vast range of free services in Russia might prefer the Soviet workers—at the head of the list it is very doubtful if we should find as high a proportion of Catholic workers—Poles, Irish, Italians, Mexicans, etc.—in the higher as in the lower class of workers.

But we must take it here on broad lines. The countries in which the workers are best-off are those in which Catholicism is not among the factors which determine the standard of living. At the next level we should, still looking only to economic and social well-being, put Holland—many might put this at the higher level

—Belgium, Hungary, Austria, Italy, Jugo-Slavia, Rumania, and Bulgaria. The proportion of Catholic influence rises and the standard of living falls. And at the lowest of three levels few would hesitate to put Spain, Portugal, Poland, and the Latin-American Republics generally. I have omitted Czecho-Slovakia only because of its composite nature, but everybody knows that the status of the workers was highest in Bohemia, lower in more Catholic Moravia, and lowest in entirely Catholic Slovakia. Asia we naturally leave out of comparison.

We might go further and check our conclusion by asking in which countries and under what condition the status of the workers has risen most rapidly in recent times and in which it has advanced little or not at all. Russia takes first place, and the character of the uplifting factors is well known. The least Catholic part of Czecho-Slovakia and Denmark probably come next. If we distinguish periods of betterment and periods of reaction we have to assign a notable advance to the Spaniards and the Austrians under Socialism and a notable reaction to the Italian workers during the last twelve years and to those of Austria, Spain, Portugal, and Latin America generally since they passed under the Papal-Fascist flag. If the present Fascist-Catholic rulers (under Germany) of Belgium and France were to survive and carry out their declared plans the status of the workers there also would deteriorate.

In fact, we come in the end to a very interesting and significant contrast. The democracies—the United States, Britain, Czecho-Slovakia, Holland, Switzerland, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden (all non-Catholic)—will, when Nazism is destroyed, resume their character and progress. The Vatican, on the other hand, seeks, whatever the issue of the war is, to retain control of Belgium, France, Slovakia, Croatia, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and the Spanish-American Republics and combine them in a Catholic League, and it has prescribed their economic form in the solemn language of a Papal Encyclical. What will that mean for the workers? Well, the country of which I have given a description in this chapter declares that it has, in its loyalty to Rome, **adopted precisely this economic structure urged by the Popes.** This fact is so flagrantly opposed to what Catholic apologists in America say about the Popes and the workers that we must examine the matter carefully.

## Chapter II

## THOSE BEAUTIFUL PAPAL ENCYCLICALS

A learned professor of religious views scribbled a marginal note on a page of one of my books in which I had summed up the vile social condition of Europe in the last century, after 1500 years of Papal power. With the usual air of superiority he wrote: "But the Churches only took up social work at the end of the 19th Century." Which was precisely my complaint. For nearly 15 centuries the Roman clergy had contemplated without any serious interference with it, a social order in which, apart from its other vices, the great mass of the people, the workers, were treated with grave injustice and, during most of the time with contempt and cruelty.

If an apologist were to plead that the clergy had so much to do in looking after the immortal souls of men that you could not expect them to study social conditions you would smile, if you know the moral history of Europe, but you might grant the plea a certain amount of logic. But the Catholic apologist does not, and dare not, put forward that very frail excuse. He says, on the contrary, that the Church is, and always was, the friend, the very best friend, of the workers. I hardly need to quote Catholic literature on that. It is the supreme champion of justice and has always stood with its flaming sword between the helpless workers and the greedy. In a moment we shall find the Pope saying that very emphatically.

As far as the past is concerned we will briefly run over the record in the next chapter, but two reflections at once occur to us. Must not this championship of the cause of the workers have been extraordinarily ineffective seeing that the workers themselves had to wage a prodigious fight in the last century against injustices which had lasted for centuries? And is it not a singular thing that the pronouncements of Popes on the subject which Catholic apologists quote all belong to the last 50 years? With great audacity, they quote, when they call the Church the friend of freedom and democracy, writers of nearly seven centuries ago like Thomas Aquinas (who defended slavery), but they do not seem to get further back than Pope Leo XIII when they seek proof of the Church's interest in the workers. Everybody who knows anything about socio-economic history knows that the great fight, the heroic and bloody fight, the fight in which you hazarded your life or liberty, for justice to the workers was, broadly, from about 1780 to 1880, yet the first favorable Papal declaration they quote is of the year 1891.

Why dig up so much history, Catholics peevishly ask me? The value of the Church today lies in its teaching today, and Catholic writers fill books with the bold and sound declarations of the Popes from 1891 onward. The fight was still on, and the "great

Pope" ranged himself on the side of the workers with such utterances that he was called the Pope of the Workers, even the Socialist Pope, the author of the Magna Charta of Labor. I remember the fuss well, having just then been appointed professor in a Catholic seminary. Radical papers were lyrical; reactionary papers were annoyed. But before you rush to a library for a Catholic book to tell you all about this "Charter of Labor's Rights" read the biographical notice of Leo XIII in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*; and it is so sound that the Catholic revisers—to be polite—of the latest edition of that work have not ventured to alter it. The writer, Dr. Bryant, tells how Leo startled the world with his radicalism in 1891 but adds that he fell back into sheer reaction before he died. He says:

In 1902 the Sacred Congregation of Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs issued instructions concerning Christian democracy in Italy, directing that the popular Christian movement which embraced in its program a number of social reforms such as factory laws for children, old-age pensions, a minimum wage in agricultural industries, an eight hour day, the revival of trade guilds, and the encouragement of Sunday rest, should divert its attention from all such things as savoured of novelty and devote its energies to the restoration of the Temporal Power.

Did you ever find your attention called to that miserable change of the Pope's social creed in any one of the very numerous books and pamphlets written in America on the grand and inspiring call for justice of Leo XIII? You certainly did not. Catholic Truth does not do such things. In science a man who made much of a passage from an earlier great scientist and did not mention that it was retracted in his later years would be discredited. In the field of sacred literature he is just clever.

However, what was this bold and "magnificent" declaration of Pope Leo XIII? It is contained in the encyclical (or to-all-the-world) letter *Rerum novarum*—these encyclicals are named from the first two words of the Latin text—of the year 1891. You will find it useful to consider the historical background. Some ten years earlier the Pope had struck a bargain with Bismarck. The Catholic Church in Germany would enlist all its power in Bismarck's fight against Socialism and for militarism if he would quit his campaign against the Church itself. It did not make an atom of difference to Social Democracy. At the German election of 1887 the Socialists polled 763,128 votes: at the election of 1890 their vote rose to 1,427,298. In 1890 the Socialist vote in Austria was 750,000, and it was about half a million in France. In other words, the policy of sheer opposition to Socialism had dismally failed. Catholic workers were leaving the Church in millions because it opposed justice to the workers.

So Leo, or his advisers—he knew nothing about economic matters, or indeed any other matters except Church stuff and the Latin classics—had the brilliant idea of taking the wind out of the Socialist sails by a solemn statement of the attitude of the Church to Labor questions which would displease the employers and presumably win the admiration of the workers. The Encyclical was

translated into most languages, and even the secular press hailed it as a revolutionary pronouncement. It still shines in American apologetic literature. The Catholic will tell you that the Church has formulated the Charter of the Rights of Labor in two great encyclicals, the *Rerum Novarum* of Leo XIII and the *Quadragesimo anno* of the later (and the present) Pope. When you inquire, however, you will find that the latter has not been translated into English—for reasons which you will understand presently—but the message of Leo XIII is (if you conceal his retraction of it) written in letters of bronze on a block of granite.

Surely, you think, it must be really good. You shall judge for yourself. I have just read it carefully through once more and made a synopsis of it, and, as a cheap translation is still available, you can check my *precis* of it.

It opens with the reflection that something must be done to improve the condition of the workers. The guilds, which under the lead of the Church so long protected them, were, the Pope says, "destroyed in the last century." As every student of such matters knows that they died a natural death, or were (if there is any question of destruction) destroyed by the workers themselves in the 15th Century, this is not a promising beginning. It gets worse. Owing to the spread of irreligion the callous world of the 19th Century put nothing in the place of these beneficent Catholic guilds, and the workers were left to be exploited by "a small number of very rich men," while "crafty agitators" led the workers by the nose in the wrong direction. Socialism cannot be accepted as a remedy because it is itself unjust and futile. It denies the right of private property—the Pope seems to think that under Socialism you cannot have your own books, carpets, or etchings—and in this it is immoral. It preaches a class-war, which is wicked, wasteful, whereas if employers and workers were all religious (Catholics) they would live in a beautiful atmosphere of brotherhood, and the rich would give generous alms to the poor. That is the Pope's idea of the Middle Ages.

About half the encyclical is taken up with moral platitudes and factual inaccuracies of this sort. The idea that the workers of Europe were protected by guilds until the French Revolution and that from then until 1890 nothing was done for them would bring the wrath of a teacher upon a sophomore. Unions of any kind were truculently forbidden in all countries, Catholic and Protestant, from the 16th Century until the 19th, but at least there was in England, and not in Catholic lands, the crude and costly machinery of Poor Relief. In England, moreover, the workers won the right of union before 1830, and under Place and Owen (Atheists both) there was a great development of Trade Unions. There was also a long series of Factory Acts for the reduction of hours and the protection of the workers, and by 1891 the leading States were considering or inaugurating schemes of old-age pensions, widows' pensions, sick and unemployment insurance, etc. The Kaiser formulated this program for Germany and at once started work on it in 1890.

However, let us come to the "constructive" part of the great Charter. If the workers realize that it is "no disgrace" to work if you do not happen to "possess the gifts of fortune," and if the

employers "do not tax the workers beyond his strength" and "give every one that which is just" this "thorny problem of capital and labor is well on the way to settlement. It takes a Pope to discover things like that. For a moment the capitalists get a jolt when the Pope says that "it is only by the labor of the working man that States grow rich" but, needless to say, he does not pass on to Marx's theory of surplus value, of which he had probably never heard. It is just a clumsy way of saying that capital cannot dispense with labor. Then, after an excursus on the divine origin of authority and the duty of the State to check employers who impose conditions which injure the morals, religion, or health—as I said, Britain already had a whole code of laws checking such employers—of the workers, the Pope gets to concrete proposals.

The "revolution" is supposed to be here. The Pope mentions the strike as a weapon of the workers and does not condemn it. He is content to say that if the State were guided by religion it would see that the grounds of strikes did not exist. Then we get the "rights" of the workers. They must have a day's rest on Sunday (and go to church), they must not be compelled to work such hours that it "stupifies their minds and wears out their bodies," and the wages must be "sufficient to support a frugal and well-behaved working man." All this had been a platitude of Radical (and much Liberal) as well as Socialist literature for several decades, and the astonishment of the world that a Pope should endorse the claim of one day's rest in seven (which had been normal in Protestant countries for three centuries) and that men should not be overworked is really a proof of its insincerity in its new admiration of the Church of Rome. If there was any "revolution" it was in the fact that the Roman Church had comprehensively and officially opposed the rights of the workers for more than 100 years, or since they had been clearly formulated on the eve of the French Revolution, and now that it saw the workers deserting it in millions it admitted the most elementary of those rights.

The American Catholic apologists on the social side completely ignore these aspects of the Pope's deliverance. They surely know that what he calls "crafty agitators" had been demanding these rights for the workers for 100 years yet they represent the Pope as putting some profound new social wisdom before the world. They lay no stress on the really revolutionary—if it were clearly and sincerely meant—statement that "it is only by the labor of the working man that States grow rich." Catholic social writers would not dare to say that themselves in America today. It is the essential basis of Bolshevism, the essential meaning of the hammer and sickle. But I agree with them here that the Pope meant no more than that the miner produces coal and the agricultural worker corn. Any other meaning is quite inconsistent with the Pope's—indeed all Popes—settled social ethic that the division of the race into masters (private employers) and wage-earners is in accordance with the divine will.

As to the Sunday rest—which, by the way, Britain, America, Germany, etc., not only granted but sternly insisted on for religious reasons—the profit of the Church itself is here too clear for us to consider it disinterested. Of the Pope's protest against overwork also we take no notice. At the time when he wrote this there

had been a mighty and successful struggle for the reduction of hours and the curtailment of the work of women and children in Great Britain for 70 years and for a generation in America, France, and Germany. It was Catholic countries like Italy, Spain, and Portugal that needed the moralist, and neither then nor at any later date until Socialism became a power did they carry out any serious reform. In fact, the worst condition of labor, especially child labor, continued to be found in Catholic South Italy, Spain (except 1932-6), Portugal, and Poland right down to the outbreak of the war.

The gem of the encyclical is said by the apologists to be the demand for "a living wage." It is the minimum demand that any reformer ever drew up because, obviously, the far greater question is: What is a living wage? The Pope, in any case, did not use that very familiar phrase, and how any Catholic employer in the world could object to what he did say is incomprehensible. In two passages the Pope goes beyond the hoary old Church-platitude that in rewarding labor employers must be "just"—leaving it to them to say what is just. The first short passage is said in one "official" translation to be that the wage must provide "the means of living a tolerable and happy life." The word "happy" is here arbitrarily inserted. The Latin text has no such word. The other official translation is that the wage must suffice "to support the wage-earner in reasonable and frugal comfort." The word "reasonable" again is a trick. The correct translation is: "The wage must be enough to feed a frugal and well-behaved worker." What a revolutionary sentiment in the year 1891!

In the next paragraph the Pope remembers that workers have families to support. He says: "If the worker receives a wage on which he can support himself, his wife, and his children **becomingly**, he will be able to save and to have a small capital." He is to buy land (as that will keep him out of Socialism). I have emphasized the significant word in this passage, as the Catholic translators again play tricks with it. And if the reader finds my translation of it ambiguous I reply that it is deliberately ambiguous in the original. The Latin here is poor and unusual—just for the sake of vagueness. As a matter of fact the official clerical biographer of Leo XIII, Msgr. T'Serclaes, says that the Pope's references to a living wage led everywhere to stormy disputes as to what precisely he meant, and a Belgian archbishop wrote to Rome for a clarification of them. He got none. So we may dismiss the gems of social wisdom of Leo XIII and the dishonest comments of American apologists who tamper with the text and conceal the fact that through one of the Congregations of Cardinals, of which the Pope is the head, Leo XIII in 1902 recanted his "Charter," and ordered Catholic workers to quit talking about the rights of Labor!

According to these apologists Leo's "immortal" utterance remained the Roman standard on such matters until 1931, when Pius XI, in the encyclical *Quadragesimo anno* re-affirmed and developed its teaching; and these two declarations are the wisest and soundest of all counsels on the great issue of Capital and Labor. But, as I have already said, while these apologists talk very fulsomely about the encyclical of 1931 they, as far as I can discover, never translate it. There is certainly no translation issued by the

British Catholic authorities and I cannot trace any in America, though the essential meaning of an "encyclical" letter is that it is addressed to the whole Catholic world, and the hierarchy in each country is to publish a translation of it. Dr. Ryan, the Catholic oracle on social questions, translated all the earlier encyclicals of Pius XI but did not touch this one.

I explained in an earlier booklet why this "great" encyclical is so scurvily treated by Catholics and was almost ignored by the press. It tells Catholics that the corporative state—Fascism, in plain English—is the true model in economic matters and must be enforced when the authorities are Catholics! I will again give a faithful summary of it, but first let us get the true historical framework.

There was not, as the apologists claim, a continuity of Papal policy. There was exactly the opposite. Not only did Rome, as I have said, formally reverse its policy, but that policy had so palpably failed that the three Popes who followed Leo XIII never endorsed it. I have shown elsewhere that the Church of Rome continued to lose to the Socialists. In Germany the Socialist vote, which had risen to 1,427,298 in 1890 had increased to 2,107,076 by 1898; and it was chiefly in Germany that the Pope had expected good results from his encyclical. In France the number of Socialists doubled between 1893 and 1900. In Austria the vote rose from 750,000 in 1890 to 1,041,948 in 1907. And Socialism began to spread in Italy itself. The vote rose from 27,000 in 1892 to 175,000 in 1900. The Church, losing heavily, continued to denounce Socialism and to permit local churches to experiment in Christian Socialism, as we shall see later. Then came the war, the Russian Revolution, and the rapid spread of Atheistic Communism as well as Socialism.

The desperate officials at the Vatican learned, however, as time went on that the modern world was not necessarily committed to radical and democratic principles. A very large proportion of the middle class as well as the wealthy were alarmed at the threat to "private enterprise," or the chance of making a fortune, and, while these men had in the 19th Century provided the backbone of the anti-clerical party everywhere, they now sought clerical as well as conservative allies against Bolshevism. To win a good support in the working class they joined in the cry that Bolshevism set out to destroy religion, and therefore threatened civilization, and their press echoed the libels against and grossly misrepresented Russia. So there was formed the grand anti-Bolshevik alliance of ministers and morons, bankers and bandits, journalists, and Jesuits all over the world. The Vatican dropped its coquetting with Russia and, as we saw in the first series, entered into a brazen alliance with the gangs of criminals who were the nucleus groups of the next movement.

So you know what to expect of an encyclical on the workers composed by the present aristocratic Pope, who was then Secretary of State, in 1931. "Quadragesimo anno" means "in the fortieth year" (since Leo's encyclical), and is really an amazing suggestion of continuity of policy. The Pope recalls the work of Leo. There was vast and increasing misery amongst the workers—in the leading countries they had, as a matter of fact, had their real wage doubled or trebled in half a century—and "the eyes of all were turned to the



Chair of Peter." Leo issued his marvelous encyclical, which "owed nothing to either Liberalism or Socialism"—its best points were, we saw, platitudes of benevolent Liberalism—but was inspired by the genius of the Pope and Catholic teaching. The world was "stupified at the novelty of his teaching," which "overthrew all the idols of Liberalism," and the message produced the most salutary fruits everywhere. These Liberals had done a little for the workers, it is true, but it was the Pope's encyclical that the workers had to thank for all the social legislation that was passed after 1891 and for the full establishment of Trade Unions, which the Liberals had opposed.

After devoting a quarter of the long letter to this childish theme the Pope says that he is going to develop Leo's principles. He does not even hint at the retraction. At great length he proves that the right of private ownership is based on moral principles, so Socialism is immoral. "No good Catholic can be a good Socialist." As to Communism it is beneath discussion. Capital and Labor are equally indispensable, and the product must be "justly" divided; but he does not go a step beyond Leo in defining what a "just wage" is. The workers must have unions, but there must be no class-war, and in view of the need for harmonious cooperation a new type of union or "syndicate" which has lately appeared deserves attention. There must be unions of both workers and employers and conferences of delegates from each side. The worker is quite free to belong or not belong to the syndicate, but he has to pay the fees in any case. The Pope, who has the Italian model before him, omits to say that if a worker does not join the union he will get no labor-ticket. Strikes are forbidden, and if the two sides cannot agree the government must intervene. But if they will all join the Catholic Church and reform their morals the machine will march on oiled wheels.

In other words, Mussolini's Corporative State is the ideal, and from Slovakia to Peru the new Catholic countries are adopting it and expressly quoting this encyclical as the reason. Did or did not the Pope know that Mussolini devised this economic structure simply in order to have both industrialists and workers in his power when the time came for war-industries and forced loans? Obtuse as the Vatican is in such matters the clergy must have known this, and must have known also that, while the industrialists really suffered in the matter of forced loans to the government the workers were enslaved and impoverished. So now you know why, though Catholic apologists in America insist that the papal encyclicals are the grand Charters of Labor they are so very reticent about this latest official utterance on the workers' rights.

### Chapter III

## THE ACTUAL RECORD OF THE BLACK INTERNATIONAL

Leo XIII, we saw, opened his solemn pronouncement to the world with a summary of social history which was as near to the truth as Cape Cod is to Tierra del Fuego. I do not for a moment suggest that he knew this but felt it quite safe to give his fantastic version of European history to Catholics who are not allowed to read the truth. Do not misunderstand me. Apologists and missionaries of the Black International—lots of them—do lie. Many of them in America who repeat the Pope's words are compelled by their task to read, and give in their writings sufficient proof that they have read, ordinary expert works on the history of the struggle of the workers in modern times. But you would not expect a Pope to have leisure for that sort of thing. In fact if he knew the historical truth he might not be able to write those sonorous and vapid generalizations which Catholics mistake for deep or inspired thought. In the next book we shall see some of these highly-polished gems of historical fiction from an earlier encyclical of Leo XIII. He writes history (and economics) like a devout nun. The workers, we found him saying, were happy and prosperous under the gilds, which the Church had inspired, until the French Revolution. Then "irreligion" made the world of employers callous and brutal. Nothing was substituted for the protection of the gilds, and. . . . Well there you are. That is why the workers of the last century were so exploited. You have only to bring back the employers to the true Church (as in that country which I described in the first chapter) and the world of Labor will take on the brightness and warmth of a garden in spring.

Except for the howler about the gilds this is really what Catholic apologists commonly say on the subject. The Church "broke the fetters of the slave" and brought light and justice to the workers of the pagan world. In due time—five or six centuries later—it created the gilds which spread a rich religious mantle of protection over the workers of Europe. Protestantism destroyed the protection—the little difficulty about what happened in the Catholic half of Europe may (and had better be) disregarded—and so the arrival of the Industrial Era found them the helpless prey of the exploiters. The world must return to the principles of the Middle Ages when the workers were so happy.

The real record of the Church in relation to the workers can be summed up even more shortly than that, for it is much nearer to the truth to say that the Church was comprehensively indifferent to the condition of the workers from the time it won power until Leo wrote his "great" Charter of their Rights. That condition varied with the economic development of Europe but until at least the French Revolution it was one of galling subjection and exploitation, and the Church never condemned this. It is a long story

for a short chapter, but I may point out the fallacy or the untruth of the chief statements on which the claim of the apologist is based. And if I have here to be very brief and rather dogmatic it may be advisable to explain to some of my readers that I have dealt with these points and given the proper authorities in several of my Little Blue Books and in my **True Story of the Roman Catholic Church**.

Catholic writers used to boast how the Church was communistic and anti-rich from its infancy, but they have done their best recently to make the word Communism stink in folk's nostrils so they drop this argument. It would be as bad as boasting how Catholic commercial travelers, or their medieval equivalent, used to lock their wives in "girdles of chastity" when they set out on their rounds. In any case it is false. The theory is based upon a statement about one particular church in Acts, which even many theologians consider a pious romance. Paul's letters are the earliest documents, and they reflect a division of classes, with rich slave-owners and even imperial officials. In fact Catholic literature includes wealthy relatives of the Emperor Vespasian in the Roman Church.

More important is the claim about slavery; and let me say at once that it is one of the most blatantly untruthful claims the apologists make. No Pope, no Father of the Church, no body of churchmen ever condemned slavery until the 18th Century. St. Augustine, the dominant oracle of western or Roman Christendom, expressly defended it as of divine appointment (**City of God**, Book XIX, ch. XV), and Thomas Aquinas and all the other Schoolmen followed Augustine. There is not an expert work on the subject that does not explain that the old type of slavery was destroyed by the economic collapse of the Roman Empire, and that before that time Roman moralists and Emperors had done a great deal for the slave.

After the year 500 the workers of Europe are called in our modern literature "serfs," but the reader is rarely warned that still for centuries all literature was Latin, and there are not different words in Latin for "slave" and "serf." The workers were—and the Popes from 600 onward owned vast numbers of them—just servi as they had been under paganism, and Vinogradov, one of the best historical sociologists of recent times, says that they were in law and fact, "slaves." They were bought and sold like cattle, and no law protected them from cruelty. So the only real change when the Roman Church came to dominate Europe in the 5th Century was that, whereas in the Roman Empire, two workers out of three had been free (See Darrow's **Slavery in the Roman Empire**), literate, and almost pampered, in the new Europe not one worker in ten was free or literate or had a life of elementary comfort and decency.

This "era of the serfs" lasted until the 12th or 13th Century, when the majority were emancipated. Again there is no modern expert who does not trace this emancipation to what we may broadly call economic causes. The nobles sold freedom to immense bodies of serfs so that they could go on the looting expeditions of the Crusaders or enjoy the more luxurious life which Arabs had taught Europe. Kings emancipated bodies of serfs to help fight their rebellious nobles: nobles emancipated them to fight the kings or

other nobles. Abbeyes and bishops were, says the Catholic historian Muratori, the last to emancipate them, saying that they must not "alienate Church property." At the same time Europe was rapidly recovering economically and far larger bodies of craftsmen were required in the towns (which, for the same reasons, now got charters of liberty).

The famous guilds had begun long before this, and the Church, instead of having inspired them, tried for more than a century to suppress them. They seem to have been formed by the workers on the model of the unions (colleges) of the old Greek and Roman workers, traces of which survived. I have elsewhere quoted decrees from the Capitularies of Charlemagne and later Church Councils showing how drastically the Church condemned them. It could not suppress so it appropriated them, and for several centuries they certainly helped the workers. That is to say, the skilled workers. Writers on the guilds (Gross, Walford, etc.) do not remind the reader that while in the towns even the prostitutes had guilds and walked in the sacred processions (of course, the writers I have named do not tell this), the agricultural workers, who were at least four-fifths of the workers of Europe, had none or any other kind of protection. Further, every single real expert on any country in Europe during this period, the so-called Age of Chivalry, the best part of the Middle Ages (1100 to 1400), agrees that the lords and landowners regarded the workers as dirt under their feet, robbing and torturing them barbarously. It was an age of wild license, of fiendish cruelty, and you can imagine—or read Eccardus for Germany, Brissot for France, and Thorold Rogers or Traile for England, the chief authorities on the workers—how the unarmed mass of the people fared.

All the leading historical experts on the period use the same language as Professor A. Luchaire, the highest authority on France in the 13th Century. He says (*Social France at the Time of Philippe Auguste*) that "feudalism seemed to take a ferocious delight in seeing flames consume burgher's houses and the villeins [workers] who lived in them" (p. 5); that the knight or noble "was almost everywhere a brutal and pillaging soldier" (p. 249); and that "the noble had an untameable antipathy to and a profound contempt of the villein: that is, for the serf, peasant, laborer, citizen, or burgher" (p. 271). Such was France, the most advanced country in Europe, in what Catholics call the most beautiful part of the Middle Ages; and every leading authority on Italy, England, or Germany at the time gives exactly the same picture. Pope Leo XIII had as naive an idea of the time as has the school-ma'am who talks to her class about the beautiful Age of Chivalry and the Knights Errant. And in our age of historical scholarship this sort of thing is solemnly made the basis of a social argument by the spiritual leaders of 200,000,000 folk and is most respectfully treated by editorial writers and essayists.

It would be pertinent to show that while the workers who were subject to the Pope were thus as unprotected from the brutality of their "betters" as the slaves of old—indeed less than the slaves of Rome from the time of the Emperor Hadrian—and lived for the most part (on the land) in sordid and brutalizing conditions, the workers of Arab Spain, who cannot have been far short in number

of the workers of the whole of Christian Europe, were relatively happy and prosperous and generally educated. But I cannot enlarge on that in this little sketch. Let me just say, on the strength of the research and the general consensus of authorities in ancient Rome, medieval Europe, and Arab Spain which I give in a dozen works, that the period which the Pope and his apologists choose as the Golden Age of the workers was for them the blackest age, apart from Spain, between their good condition in the Roman Empire and the improvements they have won in modern times. None but Catholic apologists and a few American teachers of history who play up to them now write such trash about the Middle Ages. The period had great art, but four-fifths of the workers, scattered outside the cities, never even saw this.

It is true that the condition of the growing body of industrial workers became harder in some respects after the Reformation. The apologists make a ridiculous attempt to connect this with (at least in England) the suppression of the monasteries, the chief effect of which for the workers was that crowds of men and women who had idly hung about the fat monasteries for food instead of working for it had now the choice of working or starving. In point of fact Protestant England set up a system of Poor Relief which, crude as it was—like most government measures 300 years ago—did discriminate to some extent between “sturdy beggars” and the real needy.

But the answer to any Catholic attempt to make capital out of the fact that, as trade and industry expanded, the lawyers, in the interest of the rich, made the law harsher against the workers, especially in regard to unions, is easily found when we compare Catholic and Protestant countries. The three countries of Europe which sank most notably from the best level of the Middle Ages after the Reformation were beyond any question Catholic Italy, Spain, and Portugal. There the lot of the worker fell to the level at which we found it in the first chapter and remained at that level until our time. The exceptions only strengthen my point. When anti-Papal statesmen took over Italy from the Pope and his puppets at Naples the status of the workers began to rise—until Mussolini shared his power with the Pope. In Spain and Portugal also there were periods of anti-clerical Liberalism or (1932-6) Socialism during which the condition of the workers was improved and schools for their children were opened. Under the present Papal-Fascist regime they have fallen back toward a condition of ill-paid illiterate serfdom. These are platitudes of socio-political history.

I have not spoken of France because it did not, like Italy, Spain, and Portugal, build round itself a Chinese Wall to protect its Catholic population from the taint of non-Catholic influences. It was open to receive ideas from England, Holland, and Germany, and it saw a considerable growth of skepticism. Even its clergy were remarkably independent of Rome. Yet it remained predominantly Catholic, and it retained medieval vices (tortures, etc.) in proportion to its Catholicism. Here I have to notice only the condition of the workers. There is no dispute about it. Apologists find a second Catholic Golden Age in the days of Louis XIV: a vicious, selfish, scandalous monarch who regarded the people only as a source of wealth for his corrupt court. If you read French try to

see the documents in Martin's authoritative history relating to the appalling condition of the agricultural workers when Louis was building his palaces. Brissot, the chief French authority on the history of the workers, shows that the wage even of the skilled workers fell under Louis XIV to about 38 cents a day (of 12 to 14 hours) and the price of food rose.

But their condition on the eve of the Revolution is well known, and it is equally well known—in fact eagerly claimed by apologists who know as little about the French Revolution as they do about the Russian—that anti-clericals educated the people up to and inspired that inauguration of the first attempt in Christendom to redeem and uplift the workers. People will not understand our own time unless they see that we still live in the new age, an age of struggle against privilege for freedom, democracy, enlightenment, and justice to the workers, which opened at the French Revolution; in a sense you might say the American Revolution, since it was in some respects more than political though in just these respects its roots were in French anti-Papal literature.

I hope some day to write a worthy history of this period. Already for 150 years men and women, touched by the vision of a wiser and juster social order, have fought for freedom, justice, and enlightenment. A million of them have lost their lives in the struggle, yet but for the rousing of Russia the race in most countries would have lost all that it had won in those 150 years of sweat and blood. Even now that victory is certain in the sense that the nests of pirates in Berlin, Rome, and Tokio will be destroyed the race makes no totalitarian war against them because so few people understand the struggle in all its range. The coalition of the Roman Church with the bandits is concealed from the majority—I just received a letter from a distinguished clergyman, no lover of Rome, who writes that I will startle England if I can prove that coalition!—whereas, if you know the whole period, it is the logical and almost inevitable policy of the Papacy. And with so much hidden and the perspective distorted some of the leaders in the present fight, men who mouth about freedom and democracy, hope to save the Roman Church from chastisement or loss of power because it will help to put kings back on their thrones, restore privilege, and check the aspirations of the workers.

I have tried in all my works for the past ten years to get people to see the events of contemporary life in this historical perspective, but I must here confine myself to the question of the workers. The French Revolution proved a false dawn of the new age, and when it and the compromise of the Napoleonic regime were destroyed the fight had to begin again, under a dense cloud of reaction. Let us say that the period from about 1830 to 1930 was one of increasing victory for the workers. The real wage in the larger industrialized states was trebled. Universal free education was won, and this meant at all events the erection of a ladder by which the abler workers might ascend to a higher level. Immense social services—hygienic, medical, recreational, educative, and financial—were provided. The right to unions was almost completely established. It all fell far short of the ideal, but let us be just. That age which the Pope blandly blames for all that is wrong, which he represents as undoing the justice won for the workers in

earlier Catholic ages was one of the most progressive that the world had yet seen; for the workers of imperial Rome had not had to fight for such privileges as they had.

Well, what share has the Church of Rome had in the victorious struggle? Should we be far away from the historical truth if we said, None? Apologists search the darker lanes of recent history for some obscure priest or layman—generally in bad odor in his Church at the time—who dared to say a word for the improvement of the condition of the workers, for the emancipation of the Slaves, for justice to women, and so on. That neither the Vatican nor any national branch of the Church joined in the great word until the last decade of the 19th Century, when wholesale apostasy of the workers alarmed the Black International, they have to grant. But this thimble-rigging game of claiming the credit for “the Church” when one man is honest and asking us to blame “not the Church but the individual” when a hundred are dishonest begins to be resented even by the Catholic laity.

I made a broad examination of the mighty campaign for reform—which means to rid the world finally of medievalism—during the last 150 years in my recent **How Freethinkers made Notable Contributions to Civilization** (1938). I showed that in periods when Catholics regarded Freethinkers as an insignificant and negligible minority they provided the great majority of the leaders in every branch of the reform-movement. A Catholic survey of that magnificent fight for man, the grandest of all epics, naming all Catholics in Europe or America who made any such notable contribution would be a farce, yet all the time the Church was boasting that it ruled a third of the white race. Even the men who are claimed, like the Chartist leader in England Bronterre O'Brien, were apostates in most cases.

Or take, as we have done before, the contrast of Catholic and Protestant lands. In the first chapter I distributed countries, as they were before the war threw everything into confusion, into three groups. I do not imagine that any student of social matters will question the general distribution, and quarrels about the exact position of this or that country do not affect the conclusion. The workers enjoy the best conditions where Catholicism has no influence on public life and the worst conditions where it has its greatest influence. They are worst paid and least protected by law, and have the feeblest social services in the lands where the ruling class profess docility to the Pope. In Russia, where Catholicism simply does not exist, the workers have the finest position they ever had in history, and they were rapidly advancing, when the Pope's war against them broke out, to a level higher than is or ever was, found in any other civilization. Whether you agree to that or no the broad truth remains; the position of the workers rose in proportion as Papal influence fell. I wonder if there is any normally-minded Catholic worker in America who will question my distribution of the leading countries of the world according to the status of the workers and the Catholic element in the country, or will claim that his Church has anything to do with the high position, from material and historical reasons, of the workers of America. Yet these Catholic workers cannot open one of their books on social questions without reading that the two

encyclicals I analyzed show the Popes as the best friends of Labor.

In other words, we have in this controversy, as in so many others that concern the Church, all the facts on one side and all the rhetoric on the other. The Papal encyclicals are not merely rhetoric but platitudinous rhetoric. That of Leo XIII in those passages of it which won most attention just took up and, with a certain amount of vagueness, repeated demands which had for decades been considered elementary in serious discussions of such matters. Was there, in fact, on the capitalist side any responsible writer who said that "overwork was just as long as you did not specify the hours for any industry"—at that time the burning question, which the Pope carefully avoided, was the eight-hour day—or who questioned that the worker had a right to a decent wage as long as you refused to say what in any industry a decent wage was? And the second Encyclical officially took back the slight concessions—already quietly withdrawn—of the first because it put the workers under a Corporative State, in which any demands of theirs are finally settled by the employers or the government. Both encyclicals, moreover, lay heavy stress on something which is anathema to every social student. They say that the rich justify the larger share they take of the wealth produced if they give generously in charity to the poor.

If the apologist falls back, as he usually does, upon the fact that the Church has always sternly insisted on justice his case is worse than ever. Such preaching is, and always was, barren. There is a Catholic church in New York which the Tammany leaders have attended for the last 100 years, and the services and sermons have spoken of justice as often as they did in other chapels. Under the Pope's nose, in Italy, Catholic employers made the vilest use, in the sulphur mines, of child labor that you would find anywhere in Europe. Almost as sordid a use of child labor was made in the tailoring business in Poland, and in agriculture and various industries in Spain, Portugal, and South America. So it has been for ages, though the employers listened Sunday after Sunday to the Catholic gospel of justice. The ethic has been the same in all ages; the practice has varied considerably, and the facts I have given even in this short sketch show that the actual treatment of the workers was always nearest to the ideal of justice where public life was influenced by those whom the Church denounced.



## Chapter IV

## THE COMEDY OF CHRISTIAN SOCIALISM

I have found it necessary at this point to make a few excursions into older history because it was impossible to ignore the Pope's amazing statement that the workers enjoyed happier conditions when the world was Catholic and that their modern grievances are due to the collapse of Papal authority over a large part of the earth. How Catholics tolerate such howlers and then respectfully read articles in their press about the profound wisdom and sagacity of the Popes is the one problem of Church life I have never mastered. But let me remind the reader that this discussion of the status of the workers is part of a broader study of the Roman Church which we are making. The starting-point of it was: What is the real nature of the Church of Rome, of the Black International in particular, that it should enter into alliance with the vilest forces of modern times? One of the difficulties of the general public in America have loudly boasted that their Church has always been, and especially in Papal declarations during the last half-century, the champion of Labor against greed. We have seen that it was, on the contrary, always in alliance with wealth and greed and is in its present alliances merely pursuing its normal policy.

I imagine that after the war, when Socialism and Communism spread once more, what is left of the Catholic Church will to a great extent turn to what is called Christian Socialism, and we may glance at it. The movement was, of course, never Socialistic, and in so far as it was adopted in Catholic countries, it never used the word Socialism. It was called Christian or Catholic Democracy or Social Party, and its express purpose was to divert the workers from Socialism, which Leo XIII condemned as emphatically in 1891 as Pius XI did in 1931. The movement began in England in 1849 when people still distinguished between the state Socialism of Marx, which then had few adherents in Britain, and other varieties such as Robert Owen's voluntary Socialism.

This British movement, founded by two clergymen of the Church of England, Charles Kingsley and F. D. Maurice, assisted by the barrister (of the same Church) Ludlow, which borrowed the title Socialism as it was loosely used by the Owenites, never had a large body of adherents and did not last long. Ludlow admitted that its chief aim was "to Christianize Socialism," or to show the workers that they need not leave the Church because they demanded a betterment of their condition. But it was a group of men and women who very sincerely felt that something must be done for the workers when the Chartist movement so sensationally collapsed in 1848 and it did render material services in education and in helping Trade Unions and Cooperative Societies. It was continued in the Guild of St. Matthew, which was closely associated with

the "High" or ritualist branch of the Church, and there was a less advanced Christian Social Union.

I once took the chair for a lecture by the Rev. Stewart Headlam, head of the Guild of St. Matthew, and the audience numbered 30 or 40. When we sipped a whisky and soda together afterwards he said that he had given this eloquent lecture on "The Brotherhood of Men under the Fatherhood of God" a score of times and got almost no response. Why? I discreetly reminded him that the Church had taught the Fatherhood of God just as dogmatically in the long ages of tyranny and exploitation and suggested that perhaps the employers reflected that since the Father condemned his children to an eternal hell the little hell they gave their workers sometimes did not matter much.

I need not trace the echoes of this movement in the religious world of America—the Christian Labor Union of 1872, the Knights of Labor, the Christian Social Union, etc.—as Catholics were not involved in them. It was in Germany, after 1870, that the movement which we generally call Christian Socialism spread amongst the Catholic workers. It was, of course, not merely not Socialism but the very opposite of it, since the sole aim was to prevent Catholic workers from joining the Social Democrats. The whole movement, in Britain, America, and Germany, rather reminds us of the clergymen who try to keep their young men and girls from wicked dance-halls by arranging chaste dances or ping-pong games, with non-alcoholic refreshments, in the parish hall.

It was more serious and more resolutely Catholic when it spread to Austria. Its appropriation of the name Socialism was in this case peculiarly ironical. Not only had it no sincere program of improvement of the condition of the workers but it at first consisted of violently anti-Socialist middle-class men, and it soon absorbed the Conservative body of Catholics. The urban workers, especially at Vienna, were too well read in social history to be duped by the romantic version of the Church's attitude to Labor that the priests offered them and, as is well known, they passed bodily to Socialism and in free elections won complete power over Vienna and a few other towns year after year. It was particularly exasperating for the Church because the Austrian workers were so well behaved that it was in this case impossible to fabricate stories of "Red atrocities." I spent a week amongst them at the time when the depression and the mutilation of the country by Versailles had brought upon Vienna such economic stringency that, police-officials assured me, the patience of the workers was strained to breaking point. I saw 10,000 armed police drawn across a short section of the Ring between the rich inner city and an industrial suburb. But not a clash occurred, though I verified that half the workers suffered grave privation.

It was therefore the policy of the Church to hold the ignorant and priest-ridden agricultural workers, which would ensure its control of the national government and so give it, in case of need, power over the Socialist municipal governments. The title "Socialist" became farcical when the Catholic nobles and land-owners were enlisted in the party and their influence over the rural population secured, so we need not pay any attention to the few ameliorative measures, such as agricultural cooperatives, which they passed.

But the story, as it developed, is so characteristic of Vatican strategy that it is vitally relevant to the point we are considering.

In the stress of the terrible experiences of 1918 and 1919 the so-called Christian Socialists cooperated amiably with the Social Democrats in reconstituting the beggared Austrian state on a democratic basis, and then for a time they became, with this immense rural backing, the chief party in the country. It was led by a clerical professor, Seipel, whose position was much the same as that of Dr. Ryan in the American Church. But with the capture of the national government by the party it suited the Vatican to forget that churchmen must not interfere in politics—as a matter of fact the Church never sacrifices a single opportunity to put a priest at the head of a political party—and Seipel became Chancellor of the Austrian Republic and brought his party back to the old bitter hostility to the Social Democrats.

The situation that immediately ensued was falsely represented, as all Socialist constructive work was in the world-press and by the Church, but historians of the period have made it clear. While the Popes were blandly explaining that they opposed Socialism because it would not work and they therefore acted in the interest of the race Austria presented the spectacle of a bankrupt and totally inefficient national Catholic government, under a priest, kept alive by loans from the League of Nations—or subsidies from the power which equally dreaded the success of the Socialists—while Vienna, under its Socialist administration and refused any share in the international loans to the country, did such splendid work for the people (especially in education and re-housing) that an editorial in a Liberal London paper, the *News-Chronicle* (February 12, 1935) pronounced it “as close to the ideal Platonic Republic as the world has ever seen.” I may recall that the present Pope, who represented the Vatican in Germany for 12 years, was familiar with all this, yet in the encyclical *Quadragesimo anno*, which he issued in the name of the late Pope, he dwelt on the futility and danger to civilization of Socialism in the usual Catholic manner.

Rome has only one effective answer in such cases, violence, and in an earlier booklet of the past series I told what happened. The Christian Socialist government, led by the priest-ridden and piously unscrupulous Dollfuss, allied itself with the Fascists and destroyed Social Democracy. It was the time when Hitler was supposed to leave Austria in Mussolini's sphere of influence, and the Papal encyclical of 1931 ordered Catholics, in effect, to adopt the corporative state. As Hitler made public his real plans and his growing power the Austrian Catholics split, many joining the Nazi Greater Germany movement; and, when the triumph of the Nazis was put beyond question the head of the Austrian Church, Cardinal Innitzer, threw off the mask and delivered the country to the Beast of Berchtesgaden. The long, and heroic struggle of the Austrian workers was over. They passed under the vile tyranny of the Pope's ideal corporative state and the Gestapo.

Not less instructive is the development in Italy. Socialism began to grow rapidly in that country in the last decade of the 19th Century. The situation here was peculiar because the Popes had, since the Italian government had taken over the Papal States,

forbidden Catholics to take any part in national politics. Leo XIII had permitted them to enter municipal politics, and in 1905 the sagacious Vatican was forced to acknowledge its blunder and remove the ban altogether. Leo had, we saw, sourly ordered Italian Catholics in 1902 to drop all concern about the living wage and industrial betterment and concentrate on the recovery of the Temporal Power. The removal of the political ban reopened the question of social activity, and a People's Party, a variant of Christian Socialism, was established. Led by the priest Murri, it was violently anti-Socialist—see his work *Battaglie d'Oggi*—but it appealed to the people against a middle class which Murri not unfairly represented as solidly opposed to the Church and had to make increasing concessions to the demands for justice to the workers. But Murri, though secretary to a cardinal, went on to write in scathing terms about the higher Roman clergy themselves and was excommunicated.

The rapid advance of Socialism and Communism after the war compelled the Vatican to reconsider its attitude and permit a new extension of the Popular Party, or the Catholic Union of the People of Italy. Women now had the franchise in Italy, and with their aid the union might provide a political counterpoise to Socialism. It could do this only by making concessions to the reform-program, and under a new priest-leader, Luigi Sturzo, it became less and less ecclesiastical and more exigent in its demands for the workers. Then came the rise of Fascism and the spirited fight of the Fascists against the Socialists and Communists. Large numbers of the Catholic party joined the Fascists—one of them was in Mussolini's first cabinet—since they understood that the Church's primary object was the destruction of Socialism, and helped to put the Duce on the throne. The Vatican followed its usual policy of having representatives in both camps as long as the issue was doubtful.

Seldes describes the situation in his work *The Vatican*, which is so lenient to Rome that I at first mistook its author for a Catholic. In 1922 and 1923 the Catholic peasants of the Union cracked Fascist skulls even more than the Socialists and Communists did in the daily fights. The struggle continued as fiercely as ever although Mussolini seized power in 1922. We are again reminded of the real usurpation of power by Mussolini and Hitler who never won more than a minority of the people in free elections. Fascism in Italy was far outnumbered by the Catholic, Liberal, Socialist, and Communist opposition. And we are equally reminded of the evil wrought by the Vatican. Mussolini sent envoys to it with a promise to make concessions to the Church if the Pope would condemn the Popular Party. Alternatively he threatened Church property if the Pope did not. So in June 1923 the Pope acted. Sturzo resigned his leadership of the Party on the ground that priests must not interfere in politics and retired to a monastery. The Party lost ground, and at the final reconciliation of Mussolini with the Church and his rich reward of it for its services it was entirely sacrificed. The workers of Italy, who had fought for their rights for 140 years and sacrificed hundreds of thousands of lives passed, with the Pope's solemn blessing, into the ignoble slavery of the Corporative State.

It will now be apparent why, in spite of the tragic features

of the story, I speak of the Comedy of Christian Socialism. It is not merely because the invariable aim of the movement in all forms was to weaken Socialism or prevent its growth by luring workers to stay at a half-way house in that direction, and in most forms it was bitterly opposed to Socialism. This is so far acknowledged that in most forms it avoided the title Socialist and preferred Social Union or Christian Democracy; but if any reader is inclined to suggest on that account that I have no right to include these Catholic and Protestant movements under the title Christian Socialism let him consult, for instance, so authoritative a work as *The Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*.

In speaking of comedy, however, I am thinking of the policy of the Vatican in its occasional use of the movement. Pope Leo XIII discovers in the twentieth year of his pontificate that Liberalism has ruined the excellent status of the workers which his Church had secured. That is comic enough, as I explained it is still more ridiculous in the eye of any serious student of such matters because he knows that as long as the mass of the workers were uneducated it was mainly left to middle-class Liberals to win the first instalments of justice for them. Even Socialist writers often call the middle half of the 19th Century the Age of the Benevolent Bourgeois. Irony apart, not only were great Socialist pioneers like Marx, Engels, and Lasalle, middle-class men but there is a very honorable list of Liberals in the fight—the fight against the Conservatives and the Churches—to liberate the workers from their medieval bondage. In England for instance, it was middle-class Liberals like Owen, Place, Bentham, Brougham, etc.—who won education, shorter hours, and less ghastly working conditions for them.

It was the rise of Socialism and the threat to private enterprise which caused the Liberals to raise the cry (as shibboleth) that we must have "evolution not revolution" and propose reform by instalments. In other words, they invented the program of moderate industrial reforms—a living wage, shorter hours, factory and workshop inspection, weekly rest and occasional holidays, etc.—which the Christian Socialists took over. What is more amusing is that it was just this program which the Pope took over from the Liberals, whom he heavily censured for their wickedness to the workers, in 1891. The three points of his Charter were common-places of Liberal literature by that time, and the better Liberals had got beyond them and were demanding or favoring schemes of insurance, pensions, and so on.

But the ignorance of the literature of the subject displayed in these Papal Encyclicals is well known to students of these matters. What is of more interest here is that American Catholic apologists are still substantially in the stage of Leo XIII and still quote his encyclical as a grand revolutionary utterance. The whole "social welfare" movement of the American Papal Church has the same aim as Leo had, to distract men from Socialism or to keep up the working-class membership of the Church, and, though some of its writers go farther than others, if there is anything like an agreed body of teaching endorsed by the bishops it certainly does not go beyond advanced Liberalism. It is now quite common for writers who are Liberals even in the political sense

to say that the age of *Laissez-faire* is over and the state must interfere in the interest of the workers, but Popes and American Catholic writers on social questions talk as if they had not noticed the developments of the last quarter of a century.

The broad plea of the apologists, when they are confronting the workers and not preaching to their richer congregations, is that the Church in its wisdom has established the truth midway between Liberalism and Socialism. I need not speak here of Coughlin, who does not represent the Church and will be disowned whenever it becomes expedient. The general position is that Liberalism does not go far enough while Socialism goes too far. It enhances the comic aspect of the situation if you examine the grounds on which they oppose Socialism. With a dry medieval pedantry that must equally amuse the professor of ethics and the professor of economics they prove by elaborate arguments that the right of private ownership is asserted by "natural moral law," of which God is the author, so Socialists who deny it are sinful or immoral. It is like chewing sawdust and has as much relation to the actual problems of life as have arguments for a flat earth. You would hardly expect verbal camouflage of this sort to hide even from a sophomore the fact that Rome really hates Socialism because free-thinking generally accompanies it and because the use of the Church's international machinery to check the growth of Socialism keeps it in alliance with the rich, the privileged and the powerful. The Catholic position never was between Liberalism and Socialism, but Rome found it expedient to let bodies of Catholics take up a position between Liberalism and complete reaction.

The irony is now complete. The Church swings back to reaction under the impression that it is going to recover world-power and leaves the American apologists looking very foolish as they still chant the praises of the Papal Charters of Labor. It was possible to conceal from the public the way in which Leo XIII emphatically withdrew his Charter of the Rights of the Workers. This was done in a letter to the bishops and priests of Italy, and the foreign press, which had been enthusiastic about Leo's "revolutionary" utterance in 1891, would offend Catholics if it noticed the retraction of 1902. The same attempt was made to keep the American (and British) public unaware of the really revolutionary encyclical of 1931, in which Catholic workers are told that they must join syndicates or corporations which are overshadowed by corporations of the employers and drastically subject to the state, which will not permit strikes. I have read French and German translations of this encyclical but found none in English, though the very idea of an encyclical is that it is addressed to all nations and must be translated into all their languages.

The wheel has turned full circle. For fourteen centuries the Church was on the side of the masters and had nothing to say about the pitiful condition of the workers. Owing to the victory of reaction over the French Revolution this lasted until the middle of the 19th Century. Some of the Churches then began to propose half-measures to conciliate the workers, but the Church of Rome was the last to patronize even these half measures. At the end of the last century, however, the Vatican began to wonder whether the emancipation of the workers was not, like democracy, likely to be

permanent and it began to trim in such countries as it thought this profitable. The monstrous progress of reaction and decay of idealism in the last ten years have given it courage and it boldly enjoins the Catholic world to run up the pirate-flag of the Fascist state. One Catholic country after another obeys, but in America the slick apologists conceal the Papal orders and continue to drone that the Roman Church is, and always was, the angel with a flaming sword that keeps the greedy and the exploiter out of their medieval paradise.

## Chapter V

### THE CHURCHES AND RACIAL INJUSTICE

Some day the students of the sociology-class will puzzle over this controversy of our time as to who helped or who did not help workers. They will read that before the end of the 19th Century manhood suffrage or complete democracy was established nearly everywhere, and that the workers were something like four-fifths of the adult voting males. Why need anybody help them? You know the answer. Broadly, they helped themselves. The great advance of social and labor legislation, of municipal services, etc., from 1890 onward was due to their pressure. What Leo XIII said had no more influence on the development than Emerson's essays and less than Maeterlinck's essays. It was not until the Popes returned to reaction that they had a real influence on contemporary life.

The conception of the Pope as a beneficent and highly effective moral power protecting the weak from injustice is on a level with the medieval myth of the knight-errant. I have read large numbers of medieval chronicles and never came across the figure of a knight-errant, a knight who even occasionally set out from the castle to rescue the distressed and smite the cartiff. Naturally it would be a left-handed compliment to their religion if we had to say that one in a hundred of them did this, but all real authorities on the Middle Ages seem to have found, like myself, that the figure is a sheer myth largely founded on the silly Spanish fiction, which Cervantes caricatures in *Don Quixote*. As Prof. Medley says in Traills' *Social England*, if a knight met a maid unprotected on the road he raped her; and I differ from the learned professor only in this that according to all the leading authorities on woman in the Middle Ages she is not likely to have waited to be raped. In fact, if I were malicious I would press further the parallel of the knight errant and the Pope. According to all the historians of the time the knight spent his days roaming the land, not to give help, but to acquire wealth in such ways. . . . But I will not be tempted to say unkind things of the Church to which I once belonged and, stodgy as the work may be, let us return to the statement of facts.

▲ And just to complete the record we may glance at other

victims of medieval oppression and exploitation who, being minorities, really needed a champion after the workers had become strong. This should not apply to women seeing that they are half the adult-race, but it does; and they had the greater claim on the assistance of the Roman Church from the fact that they have been through all the modern age of increasing skepticism more loyal and more generous to the priests than the men. It would seem too big a subject to engage upon at the tail-end of a booklet but we may simplify it. A chapter in my *How Freethinkers made Notable Contributions to Civilization* sketches the fight against injustice to woman, which means far more than the refusal of political rights, and shows that in America the leaders—F. D'Arusmont, L. Mott, the Grimkes, A. Kelly, L. Coleman, M. J. Gage, L. M. Child, E. Rose, H. Gardener, C. C. Stanton, and S. B. Anthony were for the most part Deists (in the early stage) or Atheists, and that in any case there was not a Catholic amongst them. Priests jeered at their crusade. It was the same in England and Europe generally. I enlisted in the fight, lecturing and writing for the women, about 1900, and in the whole 20 years never heard of a priest or even a prominent Catholic woman who helped. Once, near the end I was invited to address in London the Irish (presumably Catholic) Women's Suffrage Society. I got no audience and was told that anyway it would not have meant more than half a dozen Catholic girls. I trust I am not misinformed but I was told that the one nominally Catholic woman in the movement, Mrs. Despard, had left the Church.

Let us try the Jews. I read lately that there is a sort of circus-group going about America consisting of a Catholic priest, a Protestant minister, and a Jewish rabbi telling from a common platform how Christians and Jews love each other. Adversity has made stranger bedfellows than this holy trinity. It is just a sign of a wintry age, for Churches. Jews, like the workers, have had to fight themselves for emancipation from the Christian tyranny and exploitation which lasted from the Dark Age to our own time, and which the Pope's allies are restoring. There is a persistent statement in Catholic literature that the knights-errant of the Vatican always protected the Jews. From whom? Certainly not from the Moslem, who were most friendly with them, and not, until this perversity of human nature which we call Nazism began from the modern skeptical states in which some Jews have grown rich and powerful. I looked up the learned Catholic Encyclopedia and in support of this statement of the apologists it quoted five Popes. Look up what the Jews have to say about those five "champions" of their race in Graetz's standard *History of the Jews*. He shows that four of the five made great financial profit out of the Jews and the fifth was harsh and cruel to them but protested against the infamous popular massacres of them.

I have a long essay on Anti-Semitism in Christian times in No. 2 of *The Appeal to Reason Library*. To sum it in a few lines, the Jews were from the 5th to the 11th Century despised and badly treated in Christian countries as the murderers of Christ, while in Arab Spain, Sicily, and Persia they had complete freedom, except when fanatics got power, and made equal contribution with the Arabs to the culture and prosperity of the great civiliza-



tion. From 1100 to 1500 they suffered such savage treatment in Christian countries that the number of victims of massacres is estimated to exceed a million. The great oracle of the Middle Ages, the Thomas Aquinas who is now said to have been so modern in sentiment—we will consider that in the next book—instructed a Christian princess that they were the “slaves” of Christians and it was not unjust to seize their wealth. The Reformation brought some improvement, but it was the growing skepticism of countries like England, Holland, and France that inspired a more humane attitude. In short the Church of Rome had idly contemplated a monstrous cruel racial injustice for 1400 years and has never given a clear moral lead to its followers, as is amply proved by the birth of modern Anti-Semitism in Catholic Austria and the recurrence of pogroms in other Catholic countries. It has been said in reference to the collapse of civilization in the Dark Age: “The Popes finished what the Huns had begun.” We may say of the sufferings of the Jews in the last ten years: The Huns finished what the Popes began.

Finally, there is the question of the colored folk in America. We have here a problem the solution of which requires a delicate balance of social sagacity and moral sentiment. When, during the fifty years that the Roman Church in America has claimed to be a moral power that could contribute materially, in fact uniquely, to the national guidance have its leaders made a clear and categorical pronouncement on the Negro question, on which whole libraries were written? Dubois and other spokesmen of the colored Americans have declared that Catholics are amongst the most stubborn of their opponents. We may surely at least say that Catholics as a body, clerical and lay, have shown and show no superior moral and humanitarian feeling to others. They have insisted on the removal of the colored folk from contact with them, often even in church, just like others.

The problem of the colored population in the United States is notoriously the sequel to one of the most monstrous racial crimes of modern times. In that crime England came to take as active a part as Catholic countries, but it is just to take into account the fact that it was drawn in by the vast profit which Spain and Portugal, the originators of the traffic in African flesh and blood, derived from it. This brought the question of black slavery within the sphere of Rome's moral jurisdiction and kept it there even after Britain and America had emancipated the slaves. Where will you find the luminous wisdom, the austere and uncompromising idealism, of the Papacy on that subject? It emerges clearly from all the controversy on the subject that the crime had two ecclesiastical roots apart from the greed of Spanish and Portuguese traders. The clergy decided that since the conversion of the Americans was checked by the imposition of forced labor it was expedient (for the good of the Church) to employ Africans, and that the cruelty and misery which this involved for the Africans was compensated by the fact that it brought them into the Church outside of which—as the Church then taught—there was no salvation.

A point which is never made in the endless controversy on this subject—at least I have never found it mentioned except by the Rev. Dr. Agate in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*—is that

slavery was the more easily imposed upon the Africans because the Church had never condemned it. Most writers on the subject imagine a long interval between what they call ancient slavery and the beginning of the African slave-trade; some, in fact many, suppose that, through the efforts of the Church of Rome, slavery had died with the pagan Romans. There was, on the contrary, as Dr. Agate shows, a continuous traffic in slaves. It was one of the chief industries in the west of England (in Irish slaves) in the 10th Century, and it flourished in north Italy until the middle of the 15th Century, when the Turks destroyed the commerce of the Venetians and the Genoese. The heirs of these, the Spanish and Portuguese, merely transferred the traffic to the Atlantic. No Papal or theological pronouncement forbade them. Thomas Aquinas had, like Augustine, put the seal of Catholic scholarship upon it.

As to the abolition of the traffic we never find the Roman Church mentioned amongst the claimants of merit. It was not even a moral problem in Catholic lands until the French revolutionaries, whom the Pope anathematized, condemned it in their colonies. The moral guide of the universe failed to see what a Protestant apologist has called "the blackest crime of modern times." It was only in the light of a skeptical age that the Popes realized that the brotherhood of man implied that **all** men, white, black, and yellow, are brothers and had a right to freedom and a decent life.

We might extend this inquiry over other fields. When did Rome condemn that cruel and stultifying employment of children which continued through Catholic ages and survives in full horror in Catholic countries? Why is there not a word of rebuke of it in the wonderful Charters of the Rights of Labor? The people of half of Europe are virtually enslaved to Germany today, the whips of the Gestapo replacing the whips of the ancient galley-slave overseers. What has Rome said about it? Japan astonishes the world by the savagery of its treatment of the helpless, and the Vatican enters into closer diplomatic relations with it. But we will be content to have made one point clear. The Vatican has never helped the workers because its natural alliance is with the exploiters of the workers. Its apologists plead that it must look always to "the good of the Church." Yes, just as the managers of a corporation assign as the first principle of all employers to work for the good of the firm—for its advancement in wealth and power. So it has always been; and if the line of Papal policy has shown some strange deviations and meanderings in the last 50 years the cause is quite clearly seen in the development of contemporary life. For the moment it is back on the straight line. The corporative state makes and works a serf under the feudal tyranny of masters and pastors.

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