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A Christian Social Order in America

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Decidified

Religion and Economic Life

Most Rev. Samuel A. Stritch, D. D.



We have invited you to gather here these days, not so much to discuss the origins and nature of the maladies which afflict the body social, as by discussion and interchange of experiences to learn better the application of the Christian Remedy which alone is potent to restore social health and vigor. Tragic, indeed, it is to see many men, driven by their very distress, seek relief from the panderers of social nostrums. It is not that they reject the pharmon of the Church, but that they know nothing of it. We shall rest content if this Conference results in so familiarizing you with this Remedy that you will lend yourselves to spreading a wider knowledge of it and its wider use. It will prove just as effective to relieve the maladies which grievously torment industrialized democratic society as it was in other days to give new life to social forms, fitting and needful for the times.

The Problem of Human Solidarity

Pope Pius XI in his Encyclical Letter *Quadragesimo Anno* calls the Social Question "the difficult problem of human solidarity."¹ Nowhere has it been characterized more briefly and comprehensively. Basically it is a problem of human solidarity, and scholars who have given it deep study agree on its difficulty. In every organism each member must function after its nature and yet in such harmony with other members as to make the united function the action of the whole and for the whole.

There is a certain limited and imperfect individualism in every member which, however, is not injurious to or violative of the perfect individuality of the whole. Human society must be organic for it is made up of living things. Thus we find in human society individuals, families, private associations, each of which, functioning according to its own nature, must contribute in harmony with the others to the welfare of the commonwealth under the inspiration of Religion. When harmony in the functioning of the members is not found, there is disease and the threat of death in the whole organism.

Now it is not true that antagonisms between the members of the body social is a natural thing. Pope Leo XIII says: "The great mistake that is made in the matter now under consideration is to possess oneself of the idea that class is naturally hostile to class: that rich and poor are intended by nature to live at war with one another. So irrational and so false is this view that the exact contrary is the truth. Just as the symmetry of the human body is the result of the disposition of the members of the body, so in a State it is ordained by nature that

¹ P. 4. For uniformity and convenience quotations from *Quadragesimo Anno* have been taken from the translation published by the N. C. W. C., entitled *Forty Years After*. Page references are to the ninth edition. Cited hereafter as Q. A.

these two classes should exist in harmony and agreement and should, as it were, fit into one another so as to maintain the equilibrium of the body politic.² Where harmony between classes and all social members is not found there is the unmistakable symptom of a social malady. Our efforts these days will be to discover the ways and the means to solve the difficult problem of human solidarity.

Interest in the Social Problem

Despite the fact that there are still some men who either refuse to recognize the existence of grave social maladies or are blind to them and talk rhetorically about inexorable social and economic laws beyond the control of the human will, it is gratifying to see the hitherto unheard of phenomenon of a widespread interest in seeking the Remedy for our social ills. It is not only the scholar, the statesman, the leader in business and industry, the public administrator who is intensely studying this question; the man in the factory, on the street corner, in the office has an equally intense interest. Unfortunately, men too often lend an ear to the prophets of pretty nothings and are deceived by strange theories. Still this very fact indicates the interest which everywhere obtains, an interest which is the root of our best hope for leading men to see that the Christian Remedy is the specific. There is unquestionably a wide realization today of the gravity of our social maladies and an almost universal effort for the relief of them. There is a great fundamental sanity in men and, whatever injuries they may have suffered, our social institutions still reflect the Gospel of Christ. It is not too much to expect that, when men do know and understand the Christian Remedy, they will reach for it and with it bring health and strength to human society.

The Church and the Social Question

Has the Church an answer to the Social Question? Pope Leo XIII says: "no practical solution of the question will ever be found without the assistance of Religion and the Church. . . . Doubtless this most serious question demands the efforts of others besides Ourselves—of the rulers of States, of employers of labor, of the wealthy and of the working population themselves. . . . But We affirm without hesitation that all the striving of men will be vain if they leave out the Church."³ Pope Pius XI says: "It is not, of course, the office of the Church to lead men to transient and perishable happiness only, but to that which is eternal. Indeed, 'the Church believes that it would be wrong for Her to interfere without just cause in such earthly concerns': but She can never relinquish Her God-given task of interposing Her authority, not indeed in technical matters, for which She has neither the equipment nor the mission, but in all those that have a bearing on moral conduct. . . . For, though economic science and moral discipline are guided each by its own principles in its own sphere, it is false that the two orders are so distinct and alien that the former in no way depends on the latter."⁴

Yes! The Church has an answer. On May 15, 1891, Pope Leo XIII,

² *Rerum Novarum*, p. 10. Quotations from this Encyclical are taken from the translation published by the Paulist Press. Cited hereafter as R. N.

³ R. N. p. 8.

⁴ Q. A. p. 14, quoting R. N.

marvelously anticipating much that has come to pass, in his celebrated letter *Rerum Novarum* gave that answer. Had men heeded that answer and not allowed themselves to be deceived by the rhetorical mouthings of irrational individualists and the desertmakers, their troubles would be insignificant at this time. Stouthearted men, however, did listen and few though their number was, they in their schools and institutions and literature kept alive the Leonine Teachings to which, in no small measure, is due the turn of the tide in social matters during these past four decades. Still it is sad to be forced to state that generally the answer of Pope Leo XIII went unheeded. On May 15, 1931, Pope Pius XI, with a firm reassuring voice, amidst universal distress, in the language of changed conditions, restated that answer in his Letter *Quadragesimo Anno*. Men, no longer under the delusion of mere dreams and keenly alive to facts, did listen, and let us hope that this answer of Pope Pius XI will be heeded and made the basis of social restoration.

Before referring even briefly to the substance of the answer of the Church, let us carefully recall the distinction made by the Popes lest in a matter so fraught with difficulties there may be some misunderstanding. They have stressed the fact that in the technical matters of economics the Church claims no voice. The direct social matters which concern the Church are those which fall under the moral law. She leaves to the State, economists, and others the purely economical, and reserves to Herself the right directly to teach only in the field of the economico-moral.

However, Pope Leo XIII says: "Neither must it be supposed that the solieitude of the Church is so occupied with the spiritual concerns of Her children as to neglect their interests temporal and earthly. Its desire is that the poor, for example, should rise above poverty and wretchedness and should better their condition in life: and for this It strives."⁵

Without claiming a mission in the field of the purely social and strictly economic, the Church does foster and encourage all efforts which promote human welfare and happiness.

The Answer of the Church

Let us now briefly give the substance of the answer of the Church. Her contribution is twofold and with it in hand the State, economists, and other experts will be able to build social and economic structures on lasting foundations. She fixes the moral principles to which free social and economic behavior must conform and she states these principles in the terms of contemporary social and economic practice. In addition, she is the witness to imperishable truths without which every effort at social reconstruction is doomed to failure. While it would be fair and right to say that the observance of the whole Christian moral code is a postulate of right social and economic free behavior, we shall limit ourselves to the need of the two outstandingly needed virtues in our social and economic relations. The first of these is Justice and the second, Charity. Sometimes in emphasizing the social bearing of these virtues we speak of Social Justice

⁵ R. N. p. 16.

and Social Charity. Note the order in which these virtues are mentioned, for true charity must follow and not precede justice. Men in their social relations must never seek to do from charity what justice demands. Look over the Letters of the Popes and you will find the following captions: "The Right Use of Money," "Employer and Employee," "The Dignity of Labor," "The Workingman's Rights," "Hours of Labor," "Child Labor," "Just Wages," "Workingmen's Associations," "The Right of Property," "Capital and Labor," "Principles of Just Distribution," "The Uplifting of the Proletariat," "Family Wage," and the like. Under each of these, in terms of our social and economic problems, clearly there are stated the demands of justice. Charity supplements and enobles justice and it is charity which prompts cooperation among men in society, mutual assistance in sickness, old age and unemployment and that understanding which is so needed for united action.

The Church, in stating the demands of these virtues in the specific terms of our problems, and demanding that every man under penalty of violating the moral law meet these demands, offers the very first requisite for a true solution of the Social Question. But Her contribution is even greater than this for She stands witness to immutable truths without which there can be no solution. Courageously She defends the right of private ownership but She says that ownership has a twofold aspect, individual and social. Here is a basic point for sound economy. Man has the right to own property, but in its use he may not be anti-social or forgetful of his duties to his fellowmen. At once irrational Individualism and impossible Collectivism stand condemned. Again the Church upholds the ideal of the Christian family, stable and sanctified by the Sacrament of Matrimony. All sane men are agreed that the welfare of society rests ultimately on the welfare of the domestic society, the family. Destroy it and in effect you have destroyed private ownership, noble incentives, and right order. In upholding the ideal of the Christian family the Church makes a mighty contribution to the solution of the Social Question. I shall mention only one other teaching of the Church which has a direct bearing on the solution of the Social Question. She is witness to Christ and Christ Crucified, in Whom and through Whom alone there can be true brotherhood among men, wholehearted cooperation, and human solidarity. In standing witness to these truths, the Church points the way to a true answer to the Social Question and, if others will unite with Her in building our social and economic institutions with the skill of experts on the basis of the answer of the Church, speedily we shall be relieved of social maladies and experience the health that brings happiness and strength.

Religion and American Democracy

And this answer of the Church to the Social Question is wholly congenial to the spirit of our democratic institutions.

In our beginnings Jefferson wrote that for the success of our Democracy religion, morality, and education must forever be encouraged. From Jefferson to Roosevelt every President of the United States has stressed the need of Religion for the preservation, the

adaption to changed conditions, and the development of our democratic institutions. We need no importation of political or economic systems based on irreligious or anti-religious philosophies. Not less democracy, but more is our ambition. Our Fathers fixed the principles and expressed them in our institutions. Their work is not done. To us falls the task of interpreting these same principles in terms of changed conditions to the end that all may enjoy full freedom within the law. Religion today is as essential to our success as it has ever been. Accepting the contribution which Religion alone can make with the honest endeavor of all, we can and must achieve, in the spirit of our own institutions, true human solidarity.

Now, the Popes are insistent on the urgency of finding the solution of the Question. Pope Leo XIII says: "Every one must put his hand to work which falls to his share, and that at once and immediately, lest the evil which is already so great may by delay become absolutely beyond remedy."⁶ Pius XI says: "No stone, then, must be left unturned to avert these grave misfortunes from human society."⁷

It will be the endeavor of all gathered here these days, in the light of Christian Truths and Christian Morals with the cooperation of experts in the economic field and leaders in society, to outline THE CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ORDER.

⁶ R. N. p. 34.

⁷ Q. A. p. 47.

The Apostolate of Pius XI in Social Action

Most Rev. John T. McNicholas, O. P., S. T. M.

The Apostolate of Social Action of Pope Pius XI, apart from the divine guidance of the Holy Ghost given to him as the only world-teacher of morality, implies an arduous life study of every aspect of fundamental questions dealing with the welfare of human society.

More than sixteen years ago Pius XI ascended the watch-tower of Peter. His vigilance has astonished the world. He has studied profoundly during these years the whole human family. He has observed every group. He is as familiar with the neo-pagan degradation of poverty as if he were living in the midst of it; he knows its causes, its history. Pius XI, as the Apostle of the oppressed, knows the height and depth and fullness of the oppression of all the children of men. He speaks as a true Father who loves his poor and oppressed children.

Economists, capitalists, industrialists, laboring men, and the authorities of all right-minded governments of the world have been forced to listen to the arguments and to the pleas of Pope Pius XI for justice for all groups.

As we hurriedly review his Encyclical Letters, without considering other Pontifical documents, allocutions, brief addresses, Apostolic Letters, and Epistles we realize in some small measure the masterful scholarship, the profound understanding of human nature, the thorough familiarity with actual conditions everywhere, the fearless leadership, and the loving care of the Common Father of Christendom—Pius XI.

Christian Ideal

During the last sixteen years the Holy Father has given us direction on Christian peace and the Christian kingdom of the Saviour of the world; on Christian supremacy in Christ the King; on Christian culture and progress; on Christian education, and Christian marriage; on Christian scholarship in the saints; on Christian missions; on Christian unity; on Christian history; on Christian action in one's own sanctification and in the forming of public opinion; on Christian political action; on the Christian priesthood; on Christian recreation; on Christian principles and moderation under persecution; on Christian forbearance during world-wide distress; on the Christian challenge to Atheism, Communism, Socialism, and Secularism; on Christian labor; on Christian capital; on Christian industry; on the Christian state; on the Christian restoration of society. Pius XI has held aloft the true Christian ideal. He has presented the genuine Christian man, in all the fullness of nature and grace, who has attained his full stature in the brotherhood of Christ. He has at the same time fearlessly warned all Christians of the dangers they face and of the snares laid for them in the pagan world of our day. Every pressing human problem of the social order has been studied by Pius XI. Every aspect has been considered and solutions have been offered that have surpassed in their wisdom those proposed by the wisest of worldly men. On one occasion I was privileged to have the Holy

Father say to me, while speaking of the evils of today and their solution: "If we expect to be heard, we must speak so plainly that we cannot possibly be misunderstood."

Pius XI has spoken so clearly on the reform of the social order in the State and on the correction of morals that he cannot be misunderstood. We must be sincerely grateful to the Department of Social Action of the Nation Catholic Welfare Conference for interpreting the mind of our Holy Father, and for promoting discussion clubs and industrial conferences which have done so much in our country to make social justice better understood. Its greater task, however, is before it, namely, to have social justice applied.

Pope Should Speak

We can touch but briefly on a few considerations of the Apostolate of Pius XI on Social Action. First of all, it is clear that the Holy Father, in speaking on any question which directly or indirectly has a moral aspect, is not transgressing his province as the supreme moral teacher of the world. It is both his right to speak and his duty to teach the world.

In his first message to the world, the Pope said, "The Church does not desire, neither ought she to desire, to mix up, without a just cause, in the direction of purely civil affairs."¹ It is true that men for the most part are engaged in their economic occupation in the varying grades of society or in the hierarchy of the social order. This economic occupation of the overwhelming majority of mankind up to the present has been necessary that they might keep body and soul together.

It is wrong to think of the social and economic question as one belonging exclusively to the material order, and therefore one that does not fall within the competence of the Church. Pope Leo XIII said: "It is the opinion of some, and the error is already very common, that the social question is merely an economic one, whereas, in point of fact, it is above all a moral and religious matter, and for that reason must be settled by the principles of morality and according to the dictates of religion."² Pius XI says most explicitly: "The Church never can relinquish her God-given task of interposing Her authority, not indeed in technical matters, for which She has neither the equipment nor the mission, but in all those matters that have a bearing on moral conduct. . . . Our weighty office of propagating, interpreting, and urging in season and out of season the entire moral law, demands that both social and economic questions be brought within our supreme jurisdiction, in so far as they refer to moral issues."³

If men lie or are dishonest in economics, the Church must show them that this is bad morality. If the economic laws of a State do not conform to the unchangeable code of morals, it is the duty of the Church to show directly that they are bad morally. Indirectly, it becomes evident that they are also bad economics.

The distress of the apostolic and social heart of Pope Pius XI is expressed in these words of the *Quadragesimo Anno*: "Most men are

¹ *Ubi Arcano*, December 23, 1922. *Encyclicals of Pius XI*, Ryan, p. 34.

² *Graves de Communi* (1901). *The Great Encyclical Letters of Pope Leo XIII*, p. 485.

³ *Q. A.* p. 14.

affected almost exclusively by temporal upheavals, disasters, and ruins. Yet if we view things with Christian eyes, and we should, what are they all in comparison with the ruin of souls? Nevertheless, it may be said with all truth that nowadays the conditions of social and economic life are such that vast multitudes of men can only with great difficulty pay attention to that one thing necessary, namely, their eternal salvation. . . . We can scarcely restrain Our tears when We reflect upon the dangers which threaten them. . . . The condition of the economic world today lays more snares than ever for human frailty.”⁴

Unemployment

Pius XI is thoroughly familiar with the extraordinary problem of unemployment in our country and its serious consequences to the social order. His grave concern is to make the whole world recognize the right of every man to work honestly and to work under human conditions and to receive human wages which will allow him either to maintain his family in modest comfort and reasonable security, or to give him the assurance that he can marry and found a home under these conditions. The Holy Father's social concern is to strengthen the family economically and spiritually, and so bring about a lasting reform which will benefit both State and Church.

The Pope's paternal heart goes out to the countless thousands in our country who are hungry, to the sick poor, especially those who are utterly neglected, and to those who are without shelter. He knows our extreme riches and our extreme poverty. He longs to aid the poor, the unemployed, and the sick in our slums. He realizes the sad plight of the Negro in our country. With the sense of Christ, and with a mind and heart attuned to the mind and heart of Christ, we can hear Pius XI crying out: "These are human souls, redeemed by the blood of Christ. It is my divine commission to help souls everywhere—to feed His lambs and His sheep."

Poverty, cold, hunger, unemployment, and resulting sickness are giving men little or no opportunity to work for their soul's salvation, are embittering them, poisoning their minds and hearts, turning them against religion, and making dangerous radicals of many who could be useful members of society. The degradation of their poverty and the inhuman conditions under which they live make many of them vicious and arouse in them a violence of passion which seems beyond control.

Mass Production

Our country is engaged in mass production. We have also taught the whole world mass production. Consequences not anticipated by the industrial capitalists call for adjustments which should be made in justice and charity. Groups that engage in mass production for profit only have a driving force that knows no moderation. They cannot be expected to see the evils of over-industrialization. Capitalists who see limitless opportunities for gain cannot weigh with a calm judgment the dangers and injustice arising from over-capitalization.

If capitalists and industrialists could live for a few months under the same conditions that millions of deserving unemployed men, eager

⁴ Q. A. pp. 40, 41.

to work, are forced to live, there would be the beginning of a real understanding between capital and labor.

While Pius XI condemns in strong language the evils of capitalism and points out fearlessly the unjust treatment accorded the poor and laboring man, he never arrays class against class. With perfect detachment from the spirit of the capitalist and industrialist, the Holy Father sees clearly that strange perversion which frequently is the companion of wealth and which makes the wealthy the oppressors of the poor and laboring classes. The Pope explicitly says: "It is the primary duty of the State and of all good citizens, to abolish conflict between classes with divergent interests, and thus foster and promote harmony between the various ranks of society."⁵ Pius XI always speaks as the Father who loves all his children, whatever be their differences. As the Common Father, his heart goes out to all classes. He loves all, he seeks to serve all.

Reform Through Moral Principles

Pope Pius XI calls for "the reform of the social order and the correction of morals."⁶ The reform of the social order refers principally to the State. We should not infer from this that the Holy Father wishes to change the structure of our government. Christ did not come to found an earthly kingdom, nor even to direct earthly rulers in dealing with matters purely civil. Speaking of social economics, the Pope says: "The Church has never proposed a definite technical system, since this is not her field. She has nevertheless clearly outlined the guiding principles which, while susceptible of varied concrete applications according to the diversified conditions of times and places and peoples, indicate the safe way of securing the happy progress of society."⁷ To condemn whatever is morally wrong in a government is within the supreme moral magistracy of the Church. To indicate the principles and norms which allow the State liberty of action and at the same time direct it to avoid moral pitfalls is the right and duty of the Church.

Individualism

Pope Pius XI condemns the evil of individualism which has all but destroyed the highly developed social life which once flourished in a variety of prosperous institutions organically linked with one another. Our present plight in the mind of the Pope is that we have now only individuals and the State. Individuals are too powerful. Economics are badly organized and over organized. As the Holy Father says: "The State . . . is submerged and overwhelmed by an infinity of affairs and duties."⁸

We have an excessive number of societies which often work at cross purposes. They are organized to promote the interest of all groups. Through them minorities often become powerful and dangerous; but these societies have no organic unity which binds them and enables them to serve the State as subsidiary organizations.

⁵ Q. A. p. 27.

⁶ cf. Q. A. p. 26.

⁷ *Atheistic Communism (Divini Redemptoris)*, March 19, 1937, p. 24, par. 34. N. C. W. C. edition.

⁸ Q. A. p. 26.

Our present duty is to help to restore the organic form of social life. We need institutions organically linked with one another which will relieve the State, and do things by delegated civil authority. The Pope makes clear his mind when he says: "Just as it is wrong to withdraw from the individual and commit to the community at large what private enterprise and industry can accomplish, so too it is an injustice, a grave evil, and a disturbance of right order for a larger and higher organization to arrogate to itself functions which can be performed efficiently by smaller and lower bodies. This is a fundamental principle of social philosophy unshaken and unchangeable, and it retains its full truth today."⁹

Social Hierarchy

The Holy Father emphasizes the fact that there is a hierarchy in the social order. He says: "It is not true that all have equal rights in civil society. It is not true that there exists no lawful social hierarchy."¹⁰ There is a hierarchy of intelligence in the men with whom we associate. There is a hierarchy of resourcefulness, of beauty, of physical stature of men. If we consider the human body, we find there is a hierarchy in its members. It is St. Paul who says: "If the foot should say, because I am not the hand, I am not of the body. . . . And if the ear should say, because I am not the eye, I am not of the body. . . . If the whole body were the eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God hath set the members every one of them in the body as it hath pleased him." (I Cor. 12: 15-18.)

The varied groups of society are members of the social body. There is a hierarchy in its members. If all groups wished to be physicians, or lawyers, or scholars, or farmers, or engineers, we should have the disruption of society. It is natural that there be many social groups which are formed by reason of the intellectual gifts, inclinations, and circumstances of individuals. It is advantageous that these groups be organically linked together for the common good. These members of the social body have naturally varied functions and dignity, which in no way militate against the nature and dignity of man. The dignity of workmen certainly exceeds the dignity of lazy and voluntarily idle men.

Vocational Groups

In the hierarchy of society the groups can be classified as social orders. We understand at once what is meant by ecclesiastical grades or orders, but it is extremely difficult to translate the Latin word used by the Holy Father, *ordines*. The authorized translation we have renders it into English as "vocational groups." The Holy Father does not hesitate to say: "The aim of social legislation must be the re-establishment of vocational groups."¹¹ And again he declares: "Let those in power, therefore, be convinced that the more faithfully this principle be followed, and a graded hierarchical order exist between the various subsidiary organizations, the more excellent will be both the

⁹ Q. A. p. 26.

¹⁰ *Atheistic Communism*, par. 33, p. 22 (N. C. W. C. edition).

¹¹ Q. A. p. 27.

authority and the efficiency of the social organization as a whole, and the happier and more prosperous the condition of the State.'¹²

There should be no misunderstanding of the words of the Holy Father. The varying social orders must not be understood as a necessity arising from nature, but rather as an advantage to the social body; they do not mean that the Pope wants anything what can be called servitude. The suggestion does not mean the breaking down of the framework of a constitution or of a State where justice prevails. For us it means that we work out in our own American democratic way and by constitutional methods, something which will give our social orders or vocational groups the character of a public legal entity which could settle affairs of minor importance. Perhaps it would be advisable to consider a new NRA that would be constitutional and so modified as to be helpful to little as well as to big business; that would encourage, wherever it could be reasonably done, a contract of partnership in preference to a wage contract; that would give a man something of proprietorship in his job. Such provisions will call for readjustments—not the readjustments, however, which follow bloody revolutionary violence, but those of social justice.

Social Legislation

We need more social legislation in our country. Its provisions should be characterized by good common sense and be calculated to promote the general welfare. This should not be brought about by arousing class against class. The leaders and friends of social justice and of all men of good will should, by calm reasoning and by peaceful collaboration, make it evident, first, that there is no longer any place in America for the industrial or capitalistic dictator. The employer must recognize the public and social aspect of his duties. He really exercises a public office which should bind him to his employees, whenever possible, not as their master but as a partner who may or may not have a controlling interest. Secondly, capital must be satisfied henceforth with a fair return on its investment. It should seek nothing more. Thirdly, there should be some suitable legal recognition, according to the spirit of our constitution and the genius of our people, of social orders or vocational groups which will include representatives of employers and workingmen of the same profession or trade who will have specific delegated authority to direct and to coordinate activities in all matters of common interest. Fourthly, under the penalties of the law, violence in strikes and specified abuses should be forbidden. Fifthly, the injustices and frauds which are taking place under the obscurity of the common name of our corporations, especially our monopolistic corporations, should be terminated.

Our social legislation needs profound study. I venture to hope that a committee appointed by this Conference, made up of members especially qualified to consider every aspect of social legislation, will be able to keep in a very exceptional way those in our respective states as well as those at Washington whose duty it is to enact our laws promoting social justice. I have merely indicated some points which Pius XI has considered when treating the social question.

¹² Q. A. p. 26.

Our labor and trade unions are not vocational groups, but they are very necessary to protect the laboring and oppressed classes according to our actual conditions. It is regrettable, however, that they are not taking a united stand for the common good of the rank and file of men who must live or eke out an existence by the sweat of their brow. There is no objection to having different types of unions, but there are serious objections to warfare between the unions. If peace prevailed among them, careful study should then enable their committees to suggest a legislative program which would show the advantages of the reestablishment of graded hierarchical social orders. Such a program would be most powerful in bringing peace to our whole country and in securing Social justice for the poor and for all who labor.

Correction of Morals

The Pope insists on the correction of morals today. There are many revolutionary spirits who sincerely believe that in Communism is to be found the remedy for the abuses of capitalism. Many who are guided by Marx feel that he offers a philosophy of life which will prove the panacea for the poor and the oppressed. Marx did not give us a philosophy; he gave us a technique of revolution. Marxism insists upon action. It has no interest in academic speculations. Whatever cannot be verified by experience it regards as without value. Many who will not admit that they are followers of Marx are nevertheless infected by his false revolutionary technique.

It is manifest that one of the basic things which true Christian Social Action must do is to popularize the truth of fixed and immutable principles of morality. If these are not accepted as unchanged and unchangeable, then we must logically expect disorder, tragedy, and revolution in society. Those who have might on their side will seize and maintain political power. Without fixed principles of morality there can be no reform of society, there can be no peace among the nations. No commandment of love, either of God or of man, will be recognized.

How infinitely superior is the law of the Gospel and of love to every other system! This National Conference has a most urgent duty. It was formulated by Pius XI in his first Encyclical: "To hasten the return of Christ to society by means of good works and organized social action is the duty incumbent on every Catholic."¹³

Communism denounces only certain wrongs in society, with the intention of promoting strife among the classes. This is part of its revolutionary technique. Catholic social action is an apostolate of love; first, love of God, then, love of all men, even of Communists, in order to save them. It will promote love not only among individuals and groups, but also among nations. It will hold aloft the Declaration of Pope Benedict XV: "The command of love among individuals, found in the Gospels, differs in no respect from that which should reign among states and peoples."¹⁴

¹³ *Quas Primas*, December 11, 1925. *Encyclicals of Pius XI*, Ryan, p. 148.

¹⁴ *Pacem Dei*, Benedict XV, May 23, 1920. A. A. S. Vol. XII, p. 215.

An American Opportunity

Most Rev. Edward Mooney, D. D.

This gathering marks the close of a significant period of study in the application of Christian principles to social order. We have discussed how the American people can organize themselves in their industries, trades, and professions to end the unemployment, the poverty, and the national waste that afflict us and to create a social order dedicated to justice and the common good and rooted in the love of God and neighbor which Christ taught.

We have tried to take a comprehensive view of the factors involved. We have frankly looked to government as more than the mere guardian of law and order. We have envisioned government as playing an active though not controlling social role. We have put first emphasis in our thinking on what the people themselves in their own ownership and work can do to get us out of a morass, a despair-breeding morass, that threatens to mark the grave of national prosperity, family stability, and individual human dignity. We have focussed our thought on conditions that are American, but we have guided it by principles that are universal—because they are Catholic. We have met in the spirit of an authentic American tradition and of a surging American determination to translate that tradition evermore into nationwide practice. Monsignor Corrigan has set this forth with fact and feeling. It is my privilege briefly to note a few points—three points to be precise—which bring out the characteristically American quality of the opportunity which a constructive Christian program of social order presents.

The Constitution

Our Constitution is the charter of all that is distinctively American in our national spirit. That document was written in a period as pagan as the Christian centuries had up to that time known. Yet provisionally that charter of ordered liberty was not written in the pagan spirit of that day.

A short time before it was written, indeed in the very year our independence was declared, there appeared in Great Britain a book whose author has been hailed as the "Father of Political Economy." That book formulated a whole theory of economic life which was based on unabashed self-interest, a theory which taught in effect that the general good stems automatically from the unrestrained operation of general greed. That pioneering economist of the English-speaking world was Adam Smith. His book *The Wealth of Nations* captured the mind of a neo-pagan generation and has dominated the economic thought of many generations since. It was the neo-pagan economic bible of its day and almost down to our own.

Moreover, the very year we began to live under our Constitution France was to raise the swelling tide of this returning paganism in society by forbidding the people to organize in their working lives for the better attainment of their rights in industry. In the name of liberalism—of all things—and in the defense of "freedom of contract," the workers were made to stand apart from one another, to

deal with employers either each alone or one pitted against the other, and therefore to be either well off or miserably oppressed as uncontrolled power or capricious chance determined.

These two telling facts indicate the temper of the age in which our Constitution was written—an age that was renegade to the traditions of Christendom in economic theory and practice and fateful in setting up the currents which have carried us where we are in industry, commerce, and finance. Yet the Founding Fathers built this nation on principles which, logically at least, cut straight across those evil currents. The very preamble of our Constitution enshrines root ideas which come out of the Christian centuries. Our government, the Constitution said, was “to establish justice.” Our government was to “promote the general welfare.” The high-sounding phrases can be mere words. Much American history, let us frankly admit, has made them mere words. Otherwise we would not be confronted with the picture which rich America presents today—in which widespread unemployment and inhuman poverty stand out in the midst of gigantic possibilities for work, production, and general prosperity. But they were great words and our shame is that we so long forgot them.

Justice and General Welfare

As a nation, then, we were baptized with a great Christian formula—the formula of justice and the general welfare. To establish justice is to demand from the citizen the practice of a great virtue, the virtue which makes us give every man his strict due. To promote the general welfare is to demand from the citizen the practice of an even greater virtue, the virtue of lending oneself in considerate cooperation with others to the achievement of purposes that benefit the whole body politic even at a sacrifice of immediate individual self-interest. The general welfare has a far wider scope than a simple justice. It seeks the good of the community as a whole, the common weal, the *bonum commune* of the Christian centuries. Theologians of the older day spoke of the virtue it calls for as “general justice;” recent encyclicals use the more apt and meaningful term “social justice.” What it implies in the concrete so far as the economic order is concerned is evident from the whole tenor of the Encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno*, where the general welfare is indicated as the dominant norm in determining the use of the means of production, the control of credit, the scale of wages, the division of profits, and the prices of goods. It is clear that the government which undertakes to “promote the general welfare” assumes a delicate and far-reaching task. But it is inspiring to think that, in an age when the policy of *laissez-faire* was in full flower and fruit, the founders of our nation recognized that task of government and thus refused to turn against the Christian centuries and to canonize greed.

A Significant Distinction

In the second place, I would have you note in the pondered words of the Constitution that while the government was to establish

justice, it was only to promote the general welfare. To me there is a world of meaning in that distinction. When we say that government is to establish justice we clearly denote, for instance, that government is to legislate against injustice, whether it be the injustice of an open theft that takes what a man already has, or, I might add, the injustice of a secret theft that keeps from an employee's paycheck the living wage to which he is entitled. When we say that government is to promote the general welfare, we just as clearly connote or imply that government was to leave to the citizens themselves the initiative in achieving general welfare, that government was to leave to the people themselves and in the first instance the duty of making their ownership and work serve themselves and others. I like to think that the Founding Fathers sensed that here was something too personal, too complicated for government, alone and in the first instance, to undertake. No doubt they saw that government would then possess too far-reaching a power over the manifold activities of its citizens; a power which could be invoked some day, for example, to fix all prices and determine all incomes in what would turn out to be—as it has turned out to be in a country we all know—a fruitless and blighting effort to create even a minimum of human well-being. But in undertaking to promote the general welfare, government did retain a function, did assume a duty—to give impetus, to afford guidance, to exercise effective supervision, to the end that in the human relationships of production, distribution, and exchange social justice should be observed.

During these days we have been considering this twofold, distinct but related responsibility of citizenry and government to work out and to carry out a constructive program of social justice. Happily for us as Christians and proudly for us as Americans, it is easy to see that the practical plan for a Christian Social Order outlined by Pope Pius XI squares absolutely with the fundamental ideas of government set forth in our American Constitution. In proof of this it is sufficient to recall that the system of occupational groups which is at the very core of the papal program envisages a whole series of interrelated organizations in industry, agriculture, and the professions, set up and controlled not by government but by the agents of production themselves, by capital and labor acting in cooperation under the conviction that their interests as parts of an organic social body are essentially in harmony and not in conflict. The basic idea of the scheme is that these comprehensive groups are self-originating and self-controlled with only that amount of governmental action which is necessary to safeguard the common good. In so many words, the Pope envisions government as "directing, watching, stimulating and restraining as circumstances suggest or necessity demands."¹ Do not these very phrases reecho the words of our American constitution that government is "to promote the general welfare?"

The Corporative State and the Encyclical

In this connection it might not be out of place to utter a word of warning against the misleading inferences of hasty and inaccurate

¹ Q. A. p. 26.

thinking about the papal program. The words "corporations" and "corporative system" have been used in the encyclicals to designate these occupational groups and the social order of which they are the distinctive feature. "Ah," concludes the indiscriminating thinker in tones either of regret or exultation, depending on his attitude toward the Pope, "so the Pope is for the corporative state." "See," says the Sunday supplement writer, "the Pope is a fascist." They are, indeed, a bit upset when in the same encyclicals they read the Pope's restrained but unmistakable strictures on the corporative State as "substituting itself in the place of private initiative," as "excessively bureaucratic" and as being in danger of "serving particular political aims rather than contributing to the initiation of a better social order."²

The truth, of course, is that there is a world of difference between a corporative system and a corporative State. The corporative system of social order is essentially a coordination of non-political vocational groups organized and controlled by the members themselves for the attainment of social justice in their mutual relationships of production, distribution, exchange, or service. The corporative State is a State in which government welds these vocational groups into its own very framework as genuine organs and institutions of the State, controls them utterly, and uses them to exercise its own domination over human relationships in production, distribution, exchange, and service. The difference, it strikes me, is something like the difference between the regulated physical contact between two bodies and their chemical fusion—and that's a real difference. Better yet, for us as Americans, the difference is brought out in the words of our Constitution which set up a government to promote and not to control the general welfare. The corporative social order of Pius XI fits into our fundamental American ideas of government and does not call for an American corporative State.

Occupational Groups

As a final indication of the Christian Social Order as an American opportunity let me briefly instance a further analogy between what Americanism means in the sphere of civics and what a Christian Social Order means in the sphere of economics. Our American system divides governmental powers among the federal authorities, the states, the counties, and the cities or towns. The principle is followed that the governmental unit which best can deal with a situation should actually do so, that the governmental unit which embraces the people involved in any issue should deal with that issue. At the root of the system is the idea that rights can best be maintained and duties best discharged by the unit of government which is closest to those rights and duties. The principle is evidently sound even if our efforts to apply it have at times led us to allow important national needs to go uncared for. Not any controversy regarding its application, however, but the principle itself is what I want to emphasize here and now.

² Q. A. p. 30.

The system of occupational groups sponsored in the social encyclicals applies the same principle to economic activity. The people in the industries and professions, organized locally, regionally, and nationally, bound together not merely according to the position they occupy in the labor market but according to the diverse functions they exercise in society, would cooperate in making their ownership and their work productive of good for themselves and for society. In this system issues are dealt with by those who can best do so because they are directly involved in them; rights are maintained and duties discharged by those who are closest to those rights and duties. Here we have the fundamental principle of local self-government applied in the field of economics, just as in our American governmental tradition it is applied in the field of civics. Here we have, so to speak, a system of concentric circles, embracing those whose interests lie within each circle and centering on the great pivotal issue of the general welfare which it is the function of the people themselves to establish and maintain and the function of government to promote.

The Christian Social Order an American Opportunity

To sum up, then, a Christian Social Order envisages a well defined partnership, dedicated to social justice and inspired by the charity of brotherhood in Christ, between government—federal, state, or city—and the self-governing, democratically organized membership of the industries, of agriculture, of the trades and the professions. Who that knows the genius of America as expressed in our governmental ideals and institutions can fail to see that such a Christian Social Order represents a truly American opportunity? Who that sees this can fail to see further that it represents a distinctively American Catholic responsibility?

The Conference we are closing bears impressive witness to the fact that the Catholics of Milwaukee, under the far-seeing leadership of their Archbishop, are alive to that responsibility. The nationwide Catholic organization which has sponsored this Conference bears even more impressive witness to the fact that the Church in America is alive to that responsibility. The National Catholic Welfare Conference was set up by the bishops of the United States nearly twenty years ago for purposes which compass the discharge of that responsibility. They had in mind as one of their prime objectives the contribution which American Catholics can make to the establishment of a Christian Social Order in our country. They had in mind to make American Catholics more highly appreciate and other Americans more clearly understand the social value of the Christian heritage which the Church guards and transmits from generation to generation. They had in mind to bring to bear on all the reaches of social life the saving force of those undying moral laws which are written in the heart of man and in the word of God. This purpose is either manifest or latent in the work of all the departments which the N.C.W.C. has set up for the ordered furtherance of a great fundamental aim. That purpose is explicit and exclusive in the work of the Social Action Department under whose auspices this Conference has been held, and in the desire of the department to keep

in close touch with the two nationwide federations of Catholic women and Catholic men, the National Council of Catholic Women and the National Council of Catholic Men as vehicles for the diffusion of Catholic social principles and agencies for their application to American life.

With the publication of the Social Encyclicals the work of the Social Action Department has been given a clearer focus and a more definite immediate scope. Those Encyclicals not only formulate principles; they propose a program for a Christian Social Order. A world in torment is looking for a program—not merely for what the practical man will call vague principles. The thinking part of our American world will assay the proposals of that program in the light of their adaptability to national traditions and institutions which rightly are still held sacred. Here as elsewhere economic individualism is intellectually bankrupt. Thinking men see that it is in reality the negation of a social program. In the reaction against the excesses of its heyday and against the general misery of its grand debacle, individualism's favorite defense is to raise the cry "Americanism," and to point to the specter of government absolutism as the looming alternative. This defense is valid against Communism which invokes government absolutism for the pretended relief of the proletariat. This defense is valid too, against the various types of Fascism which invoke government absolutism for the protection of property. This defense is not valid against the program for a Christian Social Order which the great Encyclicals adopt. That program, as you know who have followed the discussions of these days of study, stands for the protection of private property and for the uplift of the proletariat through a more just distribution of that property, but it does not stand for any sort of government absolutism. On the contrary, that program retains, in its system of occupational groups, the democratic processes which Americans revere, and reflects, in its attitude toward government's part in economic life, the traditional Christian principles which the Founding Fathers wrote into our American Constitution. A Christian Social Order, therefore, not only presents a real American opportunity; it represents our only opportunity to save the things for which we love America.

Catholic Action and Social Action

Most Rev. Edwin V. O'Hara, D. D.

The First National Catholic Social Action Conference has provided a platform for the enunciation of the moral principles involved in the planning of a Christian Social Order. Moreover, it has presented, at least in broad outline, a sketch of the social and economic organization of the principal American industries, with indications of the extent of their conformity or non-conformity with Christian moral principles. The purpose of the Conference has been constructive; it has sought to emphasize positive achievements of industry in harmony with the papal encyclicals; it has sought to open new avenues for such an advance. I have undertaken in cooperation with Bishop Alter, assistant chairman of the Social Action Department of the N.C.W.C. to make a resume in a series of short statements, of the principles which may be regarded as basic to the development of a Christian Social Order in a democratic society.

Basic Principles

The following points give popular expressions to these basic principles:

- 1) That industrial and financial power must not be divorced from social responsibility; those exercising such power must always have in view the good of the industry or business as a whole and also the common good.
- 2) That a prominent aim of industry should be to provide stable employment so as to eliminate the insecurity and the other social ills that arise from excessive changes of employment and residence.
- 3) That as machinery is introduced into industry, workers thereby displaced should be guaranteed adequate protection.
- 4) That employment should be available for workers at not less than a family living income.
- 5) That a Christian Social Order in America will look forward to some participation by employees in profits and management.
- 6) That a wide distribution of ownership of productive property should be encouraged by legislation.
- 7) That there should be limitations of hours of labor in keeping with human need for rest and relaxation. This is especially true in regard to the labor of women and young persons. The industrial employment of children outside of the family should be prohibited.
- 8) That monopoly should be controlled in the public interest.
- 9) That collective bargaining, through freely chosen representatives, be recognized as a basic right of labor.
- 10) That minimum wage standards be set up by law for labor unprotected by collective bargaining.
- 11) That the legitimacy of the profit motive in the development and conduct of business be frankly recognized; and its control in the interest of the common good should not aim at its extinction.

- 12) That there must be an increase of wealth produced, if there is to be an adequate increase of wealth distributed.
- 13) That a proper objective of monetary policy is to avoid rapid and violent fluctuations in commodity price levels.
- 14) That after a man has given his productive life to industry, he should be assured of security against illness and dependent old age.
- 15) That a balance must be maintained between industrial and agricultural population; and between the rewards for industrial and agricultural activity.
- 16) That a healthy agricultural system will encourage the family farm rather than the commercial farm.
- 17) That a Christian Social Order involves decent housing for all the people.
- 18) That the family, rather than the individual, is the social and economic unit; and its needs should be recognized both by industry and by the State.
- 19) That there are natural rights possessed by human persons and families which God has given and which the State cannot abrogate.
- 20) That a Christian Social Order, organized on the basis of self-governing industries and professions, according to the plan proposed by Pius XI in his Encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno*, will establish social justice and promote industrial peace.
- 21) That a Christian Social Order can be maintained only on the basis of a full acceptance of the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Action

Beyond the enunciation of these principles, we are charged with the further responsibility of translating these principles into action. As the Holy Father has so emphatically stated, the first step is to enlist zealous, competent, and prudent clergy in the more thorough study of the moral principles and of the social and economic facts involved. A forward step in this regard was made last summer by the establishment of social action schools for the clergy. These schools were conducted in Milwaukee, under the direction of Most Rev. Samuel Stritch, with 120 priests in attendance, representing 10 different archdioceses and dioceses; in Toledo, under the direction of Most Rev. Karl Alter, with 50 priests in attendance, representing 6 dioceses; in San Francisco, under the direction of Most Rev. John J. Mitty, with 45 priests, representing 4 dioceses; in Los Angeles, under the direction of Most Rev. John J. Cantwell, with 50 priests, representing 4 dioceses—in all 4 schools with a total attendance of nearly 300 priests and representing 24 dioceses. In addition to this, there have been formed clergy groups in Chicago, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, New York, Brooklyn, and other dioceses to study the solution of the industrial problems. Nor can we neglect to mention diocesan directors of Rural Life in forty dioceses engaged in precisely these problems. The extension of this movement, with a Social Action Committee of clergy in each diocese established according to the plans and wishes of the Ordinary, but in the very nature of the case everywhere carrying similar connotation, would mark a great advance in the program.

But, as the Holy Father has said, this is only a step. There are hundreds of zealous laymen and laywomen who should be associated with these groups of clergy and be prepared to be veritable "apostles" of the Christian Social Order, both among working men and among employers. The preparation of these lay leaders and the formation of local "social action conferences" is obviously the next step. There will then be called into existence thousands of study clubs. Tens of thousands of intelligent men and women will become acquainted with Christian principles of the encyclicals and with the facts of the present social and economic order. Moreover, from these study groups will come the interested personnel for annual diocesan social action conferences, giving new momentum and wider diffusion to the excellent program of the industrial conferences which have been held for many years by the Catholic Conference of Industrial Problems, under the direction of the Social Action Department, N.C.W.C.

Nor can one overlook the great stimulation such groups can give to and receive from the Councils of Catholic Men and Women in a diocese.

We thus hail the First National Catholic Social Action Conference as a great advance in the program of Catholic Action. The Conference has explored the principles of a Christian Social Order; it has examined the grave economic maladjustments which threaten to prevent the establishment of such an order; finally, it has promoted an important movement among our clergy to comply with the request of the Holy Father that groups of priests should study these problems intently, under the direction of their respective bishops, and should "seek diligently, select prudently and train fittingly lay apostles amongst working men and amongst employers."¹

¹ Q. A. p. 46.

