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MORAL FACTORS IN ECONOMIC LIFE

by

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and

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Three addresses delivered in the Catholic Hour, sponsored by the National Council of Catholic Men with the co-operation of the National Broadcasting Company and its associated stations.

I. Poverty and Wealth.
II. Economic Security.
III. The Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on the Condition of Labor.

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INTRODUCTION

The three addresses contained in this pamphlet present a condensed summary of the teaching of the Catholic Church on the questions of property and income. They were delivered in the Catholic Hour over the network of the National Broadcasting Company on April 26, May 3, and May 10, 1931.

The first address emphasizes the traditional Catholic doctrine of the stewardship of wealth, and the indispensability of moral justice in modern industrial capitalism; the second sets forth the fundamental Christian dogmas which give every worker and his family the right to economic security; and the third summarizes the principles laid down by Pope Leo XIII in his **Rerum Novarum**, for the eradication of social injustice and the establishment of industrial peace and order.

Numerous requests have been received for copies of these addresses, and to meet this need they have been published in the present form.

things; the other,—the obligations of man-to-man justice.

When David offered Israel's gifts of gold and silver and precious stones for the building of the Temple, he cried out before the assembled multitude: "Thine, O Lord, is magnificence, and power, and glory, and victory: and to thee is praise: for all that is in heaven, and in earth, is thine: thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art above all princes. Thine are riches, and thine is glory: thou hast dominion over all: in thy hand is power and might: in thy hand greatness, and the empire of all things" (I PAR. xxix, 11-12). In words no less impressive, the Chosen People were instructed in their duties of justice one to another: "Thou shalt not refuse the hire of the needy, and the poor, whether he be thy brother, or a stranger that dwelleth with thee in the land, and is within thy gates. . . . Thou shalt not have divers weights in thy bag, a greater and a less: Neither shall there be in thy house a greater bushel and a less. Thou shalt have a just and a true weight, and thy bushel shall be equal and true: that thou mayest live a long time upon the land which the Lord thy God shall give thee." (DEUT. xxiv. 14; xxv, 13-15). Speaking by the mouth of Malachy, last of the prophets, God threatens: "I will come to you in judgment, and will be a speedy witness against sorcerers, and adulterers, and false swearers, and them that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widows, and the fatherless: and oppress the stranger, and have not feared me, saith the Lord of Hosts" (MAL. iii, 5).

In the fulness of time, the Master, Jesus Christ,

the Son of God, was born into the world. The nations had long watched for His coming, and eagerly awaited His message. "Do not think," He said, "that I come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill" (MATT. v, 17). Graphically, He drove home the great truths of the Original Covenant: God's sovereign ownership of all things, and man's duty of justice toward his fellow man. In illustration, the Divine Teacher told of a certain rich man, Dives, who was clad in royal purple and fine linen, and who feasted sumptuously, while a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores, lay without at his gate and pleaded in vain for the scraps that fell from his table. One day the beggar did not appear in the customary place. He had died, and the angels had carried him into Abraham's bosom. "And," as St. Luke adds, "the rich man also died, and he was buried in hell" (xvi, 22). Our Saviour narrated this incident to point out that although the rich man had not robbed others, he had sinned gravely by ignoring his obligations to them as fellow mortals, and by denying in his conduct that the future life is only a projection of the present.

In the beginning of His public career, the Saviour sounded the keynote of the New Dispensation: "Unless your justice abound more than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (MATT. v, 20). Justice, He taught, is more than keeping clean the outside of the cup and the platter; more than merely conforming to the accepted customs of one's time; more than simply keeping "within the law." In St. Thomas' fine phrase, justice must restrain not only the hand, but also the heart. ***(Summa Theologica,***

1. 2ae., Q. 91, 5). That is the justice of Jesus Christ. That, the fulfilling of the Law.

How widely that standard of justice differs from what prevails in economic life today! How often a business man will enter into a price agreement that is oppressive, and will silence his conscience with the thought: "This is entirely legal, the law cannot touch me." How often he will authorize an untruthful advertising campaign, and justify his act by saying: "This is the practice of the trade. Everyone else is doing it." How often, knowing that some of his employees cannot live normal lives on their paltry earnings, he will refuse to grant wage increases, or will even order reductions, and take refuge in the argument: "I pay the market price for labor; that is all my competitors are paying, and I don't owe my help a cent more." The dominant ethics of business is aptly summarized in the remark: "Jones is a good citizen: he observes the law of his Church on Sunday, and the laws of business the rest of the week. Business is business."

What wonder, then, that at least thirty millions of men, women, and children are now eating either the bread of charity or none at all! We have a poverty that is both old and new. The old has been accumulating since the beginning of the century, from one business depression to the next. But the new is upon us. Families that would have spurned public aid a year ago, now accept it gladly. Some of the existing poverty is due to incapacity, shiftlessness, or vice, but the far greater part is due to the implicit denial of God's ownership of all property, and the disregard of His teaching that justice is a thing of conscience, and not merely

the legalistic cleansing of the outside of the cup. The starting point for the abolition of poverty is the sincere recognition by all, especially by those in industrial and political control, that the Creator is the sole owner of all things; and that He has given every honest worker the right to the happy mean between affluence and want. The pious man, in Proverbs, prayed: "Lord, give me neither beggary, nor riches" (xxx, 8). This ideal was recently stated in modern terms by a labor leader who pleaded: "All that we want is that every man can send his children to school with enough to eat, and can have a little picture on the wall, and be able to lay something aside for a rainy day."

But, it is objected, the present economic system is a vast and intricate machine which will run smoothly only so long as it is not interfered with from without. Introduce a foreign element, such as moral obligation, and you will clutter up the works; you will stop it. To this, let it be answered, that to regard economic society as a machine is most misleading. The economic system is not mere steel and brass. Nor is it automatic. It is not operated by steam and electricity. It is highly personal, and its driving principle is individual self-seeking. The decisions on wages and prices are made within the system by free human beings. And all these, as human beings, whether their station be high or low, are in the Divine plan, accountable, in conscience for their acts.

It is more accurate to speak of the economic system as a problem to be solved rather than as a machine to be kept running; and, as in simple multiplication, if the operation does not include ***all*** the factors, the result will not be correct. In solving

the economic problem the factor to be reckoned with above all others is morality. What does this mean? Briefly, it means that two assets in every community—human personality and family life—are sacred, and must be safeguarded, whatever the cost.

God has decreed that human dignity is of immeasurably greater worth than any physical thing. Every man, woman, and child bears the divine image, and is destined for immortal life. It follows that the labor of the worker differs essentially from the energy extracted from coal, oil, or chemicals, and that it may not be purchased as are material commodities. Consequently, when competition among workers depresses yearly incomes below the level at which the breadwinner and his dependents are able to live as God intended them to live, competition must be restrained. How is this to be done? In the present regime of corporate capitalization, and of national, and even of international, competition of goods, the only effective device is the collective wage contract, negotiated by employers and workers through their freely chosen representatives. As industry and finance are now organized, justice in wage determination can be secured in no other way.

The other great moral value that must be protected is the family. One's answer to the question, "Has morality a place in economics?" is determined largely by one's attitude toward the family institution. If we are of that number who regard the family merely as a passing stage in human evolution, a biological form to be subordinated to the production of pig-iron, factories, or skyscrapers, we shall insist, regardless of the effects on the

marriage bond and the well-being of children, on the freest competition of men with men, and men with women, in commerce and in industry. But if we hold the family to be a divinely ordained institution, necessary alike for the protection of its members and the perpetuation of the race, we shall regard the economic system as the servant of family life, and shall shrink in horror at the thought that the future of the species is to be determined by the uncontrolled higgling of the labor market. Taking the position that human beings are incomparably above things, and that family life is divinely decreed as necessary for human welfare, we are forced to the conclusion that a family wage, sufficient for present and future needs, must be the first charge on production, and that all other items of cost must yield in its favor.

But why, it is asked, is the moral factor not permitted to operate as it should, in modern economic life? To answer this query it is necessary to remember that industrial capitalism is still in its babyhood. At least six thousand years of civilization, built around home manufacture, lie behind us; and within the span of an ordinary life we have passed from a domestic to a factory, from a village to a national, economy. Yet we still use the ethical yardstick of a generation when everyone knew everyone else; and we cling to the notion that our obligations of justice and charity end with our family and immediate circle. We forget that, through commerce and industry, we are able to affect adversely the lives of persons hundreds or thousands of miles away, as also great masses in our own city whom we have never met. The average man will be painfully honest with his friends

in a golf match, but will endanger the lives of unknown pedestrians by disregarding traffic laws. He will not cheat in a game of bridge, but he will not be oversensitive about profiteering in bread, though the advance of a cent in the price of a loaf may be the difference between some child's having bread or going without it. He will visit an old employee who is ill in a hospital, but he will not scruple to order the speeding-up of his machines in a distant city, though the result may be a score of accidents.

True, not all engaged in commerce and industry exercise wide influence over their fellowmen. Modern capitalism is organized in hierarchical order, with powers increasing according to the size of establishments. At the lowest level is the small business man, whose influence is necessarily limited. But at the top are the captains of industry and the owners of credit who, in the palm of their hand, hold millions of human lives, not only at home, but in foreign lands as well. Between these extremes are men of varying degrees of power and control. But whatever the individual's compass of influence, in Catholic teaching he is merely the trustee of his office. Although not answerable to an electorate for the proper exercise of his authority, as is a public official, he is responsible to Him from Whom all authority derives.

Not to the system, but to each person in the system, God speaks. He says to the business man, of humblest or highest rank: You exercise authority over your fellow men, but the authority you exercise is Mine. I have loaned it to you as a fiduciary trust. I will hold you accountable for it, and your accountability will be in proportion to the

extent of your power. You have obligations towards your fellow men, your brother and "the stranger," in whatsoever place your authority reaches. You must serve Me through them, for I am the Lord your God.

ECONOMIC SECURITY

(Address delivered by the Rev. Francis J. Haas, Ph, D., in the Catholic Hour, May 3, 1931)

No idea is in more complete accord with American traditions than that of personal liberty. The Fathers of the Republic were hardy frontiersmen, accustomed to self-help, and inured to the blows of oppression. They spoke from out their hearts when they declared: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." It was their reasoned conviction that every person has a right to live, to be free, and to seek happiness; and that these rights may not be invaded by others, for the reason that all individuals essentially are equal. In 1789 this doctrine, voiced in the Declaration of Independence, was made the groundwork of the Constitution. Thenceforth every American was to be secure in his life and goods, and free to follow the dictates of his conscience. He was not to be denied freedom of speech or of peaceable assemblage; and even when accused of crime he was entitled to trial by jury and guarantees to the safety of his person. Moreover, his freedom was extended to his household. Except in name, the American citizen was to be a free-born lord. His abode might not be entered without a certified warrant, for a man's home is his castle.

These principles of individual and family immunity which lie at the very root of American political life, are in perfect agreement with the

age-old teaching of Catholic Faith. When Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into the world, He did more than merely visit man. He became man. By this act He vested the human race with a new dignity; He raised man's nature to a higher order of nobility. And He made no exceptions: every child of Adam, by virtue of birth, was thenceforth to be admitted to brotherhood with Jesus Christ, and to sonship to God the Father. None was to be barred from sharing the privileges and rights of inheritance. All were to enjoy the prerogatives of heavenly citizenship, and none was to be denied the opportunity of using the goods of the earth to realize his eternal destiny. One person might not justly stand in the way of another's normal development, for in the divine democracy, no one essentially was more important than another. This basic truth, the Divine Master taught, is to be the controlling rule of law in the court of final judgment. The "least" of mankind is as great as the greatest. If you did a kindness "to one of these my least brethren," he said, "you did it to me," your Judge (MATT. xxv, 40).

The Saviour further insisted that the life, not only of the individual is sacred; that of the race is equally inviolable. Not alone those now on earth, but also those of generations yet to come must be protected. He reaffirmed the original commandment that husband and wife shall be "two in one flesh." More than that, He made the marriage contract a holy undertaking, a sacrament, to be dissolved for no cause whatsoever, to be sundered only by death.

Starting from these premises, the Catholic Church points out the remedy for the evils of pre-

sent-day industrialism. Emphatically it declares that the worker and his dependents have a right before God, not merely to a competence for the passing day, but to a remuneration sufficient to free them from undue anxiety about the future. In one word, they have a right to economic security.

Pope Leo XIII in his Encyclical of 1891 deduces this conclusion from the nature of human beings. A brute beast, he says, "has no power of self-direction," but is determined physically in his actions by two instincts: "self-preservation and the propagation of the species." Both instincts "can attain their purpose by means of things which are close at hand." But with man, matters are different. True, man is in part animal, but, in addition, he possesses the divine powers of reason and freedom of choice, which distinguish him from the brute. The great Pontiff declares: "It must be within his right to have things not merely for temporary and momentary use, as other living beings have them, but in stable and permanent possession; he must have not only things which perish in the using, but also those which, though used, remain for use in the future." What is equally important, the Pope insists that a man's right to security in the future extends to his whole family. He asserts: "Nature dictates that a man's children, who carry on, as it were, and continue his own personality, should be provided by him with all that is needful to enable them honorably to keep themselves from want and misery in the uncertainties of this mortal life."

These principles, according to the Holy Father, are not to remain in the realms of speculation. They must be put into practice in everyday life.

The closing section of the Encyclical concludes: "Among the purposes of a Society should be to try to arrange for a continuous supply of work at all times and seasons; and to create a fund from which the members may be helped in their necessities, not only in case of accident, but also in sickness, old age, and misfortune."

In the present critical moment two major tasks confront us: that of feeding the thirty millions of our fellow-countrymen who are suffering from varying degrees of want; and that of planning for the future, to the end that no worker and his family will be denied the opportunity of living in reasonable comfort and security. The first is a duty of charity; the second, an obligation of justice.

In the face of necessity, charity asks no questions. When a family lacks food and fuel, the average individual or social worker does not bother to inquire: "Who is at fault?" "Has this family wasted its income through mismanagement, or is it a victim of some grasping landlord or employer?" These questions are reserved for a later time. The immediate task is to get food and fuel into this home. This duty is dictated by both humanity and charity, and to the credit of our people be it said that in countless instances this duty has been, and is being, heeded. Employers, here and there, have refrained from discharging workers, and have kept them on payrolls at a loss. Wage-earners in more than one industry, in order to provide employment for their entire number, have voluntarily agreed among themselves to work but five days a week instead of six, thereby contributing to charity the equivalent of one-sixth of their weekly income.

Teachers, in many localities, have assessed themselves fixed weekly amounts in order to feed, during school hours, the children of fathers who are out of work. Various branches of government have appropriated greater or less sums for relief, or for emergency public works. Recently, here in New York City, perhaps the most generous large city in the country, the sum of eight million dollars was raised by public subscription to aid the unemployed. Only during the past week, at the call of their Cardinal Archbishop, Catholics in the Archdiocese of New York gave a sum in excess of one million dollars for the relief of the needy and destitute in the Metropolis. All these activities are unmistakable evidence of the fine, sympathetic responsiveness of the American people to the plight of those in suffering and distress.

Still, this policy cannot be pursued indefinitely. We must plan for the future; and the planning must take into account one factor that has been all but ignored in the past: justice, based on human worth. Charity may, in some small measure, atone for wrongs already done; but justice, grounded on the moral law, is the sole guarantee of security, not alone for the toiling masses but also, let it be said in all earnestness, for those in industrial and credit control.

It may be objected that as a working rule, justice is too vague, abstract and indefinite; it is not practicable in the complexities of modern industrial life. True, it has not the tangible qualities of a unit of weight or measure; a pound, a gallon or a yard. Yet, it will take its place in our national economy if we are willing to answer honestly, according to the requirement of morality and right,

certain simple questions. These questions are: (1) How much machinery should there be? (2) What standard should be used in regulating the speed of machinery? and (3) Who is to do the regulating?

When we ask, How much machinery should there be? we approach the greatest single cause of unemployment in the United States. It is a commonplace to say that American industry is overdeveloped. We have put too much of the national income, in the form of profits, into the enlargement of plants, and too little, in the form of wages, into the betterment of human beings. As a consequence, we have, on the one hand, too many mills, too many factories, too many mines, and too much cultivated land; and, on the other, too little purchasing power at the disposal of workers who would gladly buy the products of these mills, and factories, and mines, and farms. We have idle plants, and we have idle workers. The remedy is not far to seek. More of the national income must be paid out in wages, and less of it invested in material equipment. During the present crisis out of which we hope to pass, no economic proposal is so unjust and so socially suicidal as that which advocates wage reductions.

From a purely statistical standpoint, unemployment is an index of the success of the machine: the more unemployed there are, the greater the evidence that machinery has been successful. But we must reverse the method of measurement. Morality requires that machines, and not breadlines, be used as statistical indexes; and that machines be evaluated in terms of human life and not human life in terms of machines. Here we have the answer to the question, How much ma-

chinery should there be? Whichever method is used to arrive at the result,—whether a single national economic council, or loosely affiliated institutes in the several industries,—we must see to it that plant equipment does not extend beyond the point at which it must be purchased by impairing human interests through inadequate wages. This is only the bare minimum of justice. In a land as wealthy as ours, shop and plant facilities should be enlarged only after due allowance has been made to insure a generous and comfortable livelihood for every industrious worker and his family.

A second vital question is, What standard should be used in regulating the speed of machinery? This question bears directly on the problem of unemployment. Obviously, if only a small percentage of workers operating machines at high speed can turn out the entire product required, the rest of the workers will be unemployed. In view of the production methods prevailing generally throughout American industry, including piece-work and premium plans, and the "stretch out" and the belt-conveyor system, the problem of speed regulation is of utmost importance. In its moral aspects, the whole issue is contained in the question, Should the man be adjusted to the machine, or should the machine be adjusted to the man? If we disregard the moral dignity of human beings, we shall not hesitate to key up mechanical operations far beyond the physical endurance of workers, and we shall set the top limit of speed only by the impossibility of securing new labor replacements. But if we regard the worker as a being whose dignity is respected by even God Himself, we shall use the machine for what it is, an instru-

ment of human needs, and make it conform to the normal capacities of toiling men and women. Justice to the worker and to society demands this as the minimum standard.

The third question is no less fundamental: Who is to regulate the speed of machinery? Surely, regulation cannot be left to workers alone. With human nature such as it is, doubtless the necessary social product would not be forthcoming. Nor on the other hand, should the regulation of machinery be left to employers alone. No group, either workers or employers, is sufficiently sensitive to the human rights of others to be permitted to exercise the almost unlimited power that goes with the direction of a mechanized industry. There must be a system of checks and controls to balance the conflicting claims of employers and consumers, on the one side, with those of workers, on the other. True, not antagonism but co-operation must be the guiding principle of action, nevertheless the organized strength of capital must be matched with the organized strength of labor. In this way, dictatorship by either group is impossible, and a reasonable measure of justice to all will be assured. Genuine democracy in industry, with respect to both the rapidity of production and the distribution of output is not an Utopian dream. It will come when the Christian concept of the sacredness of every person without exception is recognized as the foundation of human society.

The great Pope Leo XIII stated the matter tersely in these words: "There is nothing more useful than to look at the world as it really is— and at the same time look elsewhere for a remedy for its troubles." Briefly, realism and morality will

do away with economic insecurity. The first fact to be recognized is that the worker is wage-centric: his existence depends on his having a guaranteed annual income. His livelihood and that of his dependents are rendered uncertain, if not impossible, through the short-time contract. To live normal lives, and to be free from crushing anxiety, the worker and his family must be assured a yearly remuneration sufficient to meet not only day-to-day needs, but also the usual contingencies of sickness, accidents, and old age. Whether or not industry can be stabilized is not the question. In any case, wages must be stabilized. Wages are the equivalent of human life, and human life is sacred. Only this combination of realism and morality can maintain society in health and security.

THE ENCYCLICAL ON LABOR

(Address delivered by Rev. Dr. John A. Ryan in the Catholic Hour, May 10, 1931)

During the present week several groups of persons from America and various parts of Europe will arrive in Rome to celebrate the anniversary of the Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, "On the Condition of Labor." This papal pronouncement was made May 15, 1891. Forty years later it retains sufficient vitality to evoke pilgrimages in honor of its principles and in testimony of its achievements.

What is the nature of this mighty document and why was it issued? It is a comprehensive treatment of the relations between capital and labor, of the right of private property and of remedies for industrial evils. The main reason of its publication can be stated in the words of its august author: "Some remedy must be found, and quickly found for the misery and wretchedness which press so heavily at this moment on the very poor." Like his Divine Master, Pope Leo had "compassion on the multitude."

During the quarter of a century immediately preceding the year 1891, Bishop Ketteler in Germany, Cardinal Manning in England, Cardinal Mermillod in Switzerland, Baron Vogelsang in Austria, Cout de Mun in France, Professor Perin in Belgium, Professor Toniolo in Italy and many other Catholic leaders had been denouncing the evils of modern industrialism and seeking adequate remedies. The Knights of Labor had been condemned by the Church authorities in Canada and Cardinal Gibbons had journeyed to Rome to prevent a similar action

against this labor organization in the United States. All Catholic thinkers held that the social question could be solved only through Christian principles, but they had different ideas about the meaning and the application of these principles. According to one school the remedy for bad industrial conditions was to be sought in the benevolence of the employing class and the Christian resignation of the laboring class. Another Catholic group insisted upon the necessity of Christian justice.

Moved by the sufferings of the workers, the need of all for sound doctrine and "the responsibility of the Apostolic office," Pope Leo determined to draw up a comprehensive statement on the social question; to set forth clearly and definitely "the principles which truth and justice dictate for its settlement." He spoke with the full voice of Apostolic authority: "in the exercise of the rights which belong to Us," were his own words. "No practical solution of the question," he continued, "will be found without the assistance of religion and the Church."

The proposition that industrial questions, relations and practices are all governed by religion and morality is the most fundamental and far reaching general doctrine in the Encyclical. This teaching contradicts and condemns such familiar assertions as the following: "the Church should have nothing to say about business;" "religion and economics do not mix;" "priests and bishops should preach the Gospel instead of discussing industrial questions." Against all such shallow utterances the Encyclical reasserts and restates the traditional doctrine of the Church, that economic as well as other human

actions are subject to the moral law; that buying and selling, borrowing and lending, employing and serving, wage paying and rent paying, are either right or wrong, good or bad, just or unjust. None of these practices nor any other industrial practice can claim immunity from the moral law or asylum in an unmoral vacuum. No intelligent and loyal Catholic can read the Encyclical and continue to accept the Pagan doctrine that Christian principles have no business in the market place.

While the Encyclical has been called the Magna Charta of labor, while it was written primarily on behalf of labor, and while it affords much more comfort to the toiling masses than to any other social group, it is not a partisan pronouncement. It ignores neither the rights of the rich nor the duties of the poor. Immediately after the introductory paragraphs, it enters upon a systematic and somewhat lengthy defense of private property and refutation of Socialism. Many of us can recall a period when this was the only part of the Encyclical that received attention in the speeches and writings of Catholic leaders and publicists. In those days the Socialist movement loomed as a serious menace to justice, religion and social welfare. Happily that time and that danger have passed, at least in the United States. Against Socialism I delivered many speeches and wrote many articles, including a prolonged debate in a popular magazine; nevertheless I have been silent on the subject for at least fifteen years. I see neither profit nor glory in slaying the slain.

Pope Leo admonishes the workers not to indulge in dreams of equality or of earthly happiness. He

stresses the manifold differences that "naturally exist among mankind." Men differ in "capacity, skill, health and strength." Inequality of fortune is consequently inevitable. Earth cannot be made paradise; for "to suffer and to endure is the lot of humanity." Nor is class naturally hostile to class; on the contrary capital and labor are mutually dependent and should live in mutual agreement. Employers must treat their employees not as "chattels to make money by," but as persons endowed with the dignity and worth of men and Christians. On the other hand, the laborer should "carry out honestly and fairly all equitable agreements," abstain from injury and violence to the property or person of the employers, and "have nothing to do with men of evil principles."

So much for the general viewpoint of the Encyclical. Let us turn now to its specific and constructive proposals. The most important of these can be summarized under four heads: namely, wages, unions, the State, and property.

As regards wages, Pope Leo repudiates freedom of contract as a universal determinant of justice. "There is," he declares, "a dictate of nature more imperious and more ancient than any bargain between man and man, namely that the remuneration must be sufficient to support the wage-earner in reasonable and frugal comfort. If through necessity or fear of a worse evil the workman accept harder conditions because an employer will give him no better, he is made the victim of force and injustice."

This is the doctrine of the living wage. Pope Leo does not say that it represents complete justice. It is merely the minimum of justice, the amount that

is ethically due to every wage-earner by the mere fact that he is a human being, with a life to maintain, and a personality to develop. The special qualifications which entitle men to more than the minimum of justice, such as skill, hazard, responsibility, cost of training, etc., are not formally considered in the Pope's discussion. The living wage that he has in mind is an amount sufficient not merely for the worker himself, but also for the proper maintenance of his family.

The enduring importance of this declaration is demonstrated by two outstanding facts. First, the majority of male adult workers, even in the United States, have not yet obtained the living wages demanded by the Encyclical. The second fact is even more striking and more significant. According to all competent students, the existing industrial depression is mainly due to the capacity of our industries to produce more goods than can be sold. The surplus products cannot be sold because the masses who would like to buy more have not the necessary purchasing power. If all our workers had been getting living wages during the prosperous years of the last decade the depression would not have been nearly so severe nor the recovery nearly so long delayed.

The teaching of the Encyclical on wages is as vital, as pertinent and as beneficent today as when it came from the pen of the Vicar of Christ forty years ago.

Let us turn now to what Pope Leo has to say on labor unions. The Catholic Church has always regarded organization, whether of employees or of employers, as the normal condition. She has never accepted the philosophy of individualism and unlimit-

ed competition. Pope Leo deplores the disappearance of the ancient guilds, and expresses gratification over the existence of various forms of workmen's associations; "but it were greatly to be desired that they should become more numerous and more efficient." Men have a natural right to enter them, a right which cannot be annulled by the State. "We may," says the Pope, "lay it down as a general and lasting law, that workingmen's associations should be so organized and governed as to furnish the best and most suitable means for attaining what is aimed at, that is to say, for helping each individual member to better his condition to the utmost in body, mind and property." On the other hand, Pope Leo denounces those societies which "are in the hands of secret leaders, . . . who do their utmost to get within their grasp the whole field of labor, and force workingmen either to join them or to starve."

The first of the two passages just quoted implicitly, yet unmistakably, condemns the insidious "open shop" campaign, and every other movement which seeks to render the unions ineffective by denying the right of adequate collective bargaining.

Pope Leo makes more than one reference to joint associations of employers and employees, "which draw the two classes more closely together." The underlying principle is exemplified in joint conferences for the establishment of trade agreements, in shop committees, works councils and other arrangements for increasing the control of labor over employment conditions and industrial operations. Upon the application and extension of this principle and these methods depends to a very great extent the attainment of industrial peace.

Concerning the State, Pope Leo lays down one general principle and several specific applications. "Whenever the general interest or any particular class suffers or is threatened with injury which can in no other way be met or prevented, it is the duty of the public authority to intervene." No more comprehensive authorization of State intervention could be reasonably desired. Applying the principle to industrial relations, Pope Leo declares that the law should forestall strikes by removing the unjust conditions which provoke them; protect the worker's spiritual welfare and his right to Sunday rest; restrict the length of the working day, so that men's labor will not "Stupify their minds and wear out their bodies," prohibit the employment of children "in workshops and factories until their bodies and minds are sufficiently developed," prevent the entrance of women into occupations for which they are not fitted; and provide all classes of workers with "proper rest for soul and body." While the Pope does not explicitly declare that the State should enforce a living wage, he clearly indicates that such action should be taken in default of voluntary arrangements.

The teaching of the Encyclical on the obligation of the State to the working classes is particularly pertinent to our own country, where influential persons and groups still proclaim the shallow slogan, "no class legislation." Pope Leo was a great realist as well as a more intelligent humanitarian than those who profess adherence to this fallacious and inhuman proposition. He was well aware that if the State is to apply the principles of distributive justice it must legislate for the specific needs of each

class. "The richer classes," he says, "have many ways of shielding themselves, and stand less in need of help from the State; whereas the mass of the poor have no resources of their own to fall back upon, and must chiefly depend upon the assistance of the State. And it is for this reason that wage-earners, since they mostly belong to that class, should be specially cared for and protected by the Government."

Sixteen or seventeen years ago, the manager of a public utility corporation unctuously and patronizingly assured me that he had great admiration for the Catholic Church because it was such a staunch defender of private property. Recalling the glorious history of the Church on this subject, I was moved to pity for this man's ignorance. He was under the impression that the attitude of the Church toward private property is merely that of a super-policeman. Had he read Pope Leo's Encyclical on Labor he would have found not only a defence of the *institution* of private property but a demand for a better *distribution*. It should be the policy of the State, said Pope Leo, "to induce as many as possible of the humbler class to become owners." As a consequence, "property will become more equitably divided," and "the gulf between vast wealth and sheer poverty will be bridged over."

The Pope's observations on this subject afford little comfort to the defenders of industrial autocracy. He deplores the division of industrial society into two classes, one of which "holds power because it holds wealth; which has in its grasp the whole of labor and trade; which manipulates for its own benefit and its own purposes all the sources of supply, and which is even represented in the councils of

the State itself." Those students and thinkers who believe that industrial relations will not be stabilized nor industrial peace assured until the wage-earners become to a great extent participants in the ownership of industry, will find considerable encouragement in Pope Leo's declaration on private property.

Universal living wages, effective labor unions, adequate legislation and a wider diffusion of property—these four specific remedies would solve the social question, or at least bring it as near to solution as is attainable by the instruments of economics and politics.

A few signs of the effects of the Encyclical are wide recognition that industrial questions have religious and moral aspects and that the solution of these questions is to be found mainly in the principles of justice; the almost universal acceptance of the principle of a living wage; the encouragement given to labor organization; the improved attitude of the laboring classes toward the Catholic Church; the quickening of the conscience of the employing classes, and the general, even though sometimes belated and inadequate, response of Catholic leaders to the exhortation to study and strive to solve the social question.

If Catholics have been too timid in applying the doctrines of the Encyclical to actual industrial conditions, the explanation is to be found in the complexity of the problems and in the weakness of the flesh, despite the willingness of the spirit. Moreover, the last ten years have witnessed a great improvement in the attitude of Catholics toward the Encyclical, as regards interest, comprehension and courage.

In closing I shall try to summarize in a few sentences the spirit of the Encyclical on Labor. Almost at the beginning of the document we find these words: "A small number of very rich men have been able to lay upon the teeming masses of the laboring poor a yoke little better than that of slavery itself." Were I or any other priest to use this language without quotation marks in a sermon many good persons would assume that the preacher had turned radical if not Bolshevik. Later on we find the Pope rejecting the notion that the Church is so concerned with the spiritual needs of her children as to "neglect their temporal and earthly interests." The Church wishes that the poor, he continues, "should rise above poverty and wretchedness and better their condition in life, and for this she makes a strong endeavor." Hence he published this Encyclical so full of sympathy for the working classes and so comprehensive in its specifications of reform and remedies. On the other hand, the Vicar of Christ exhibits all these things in their proper proportions. He insists that material well-being will not make earth a paradise. Improved labor conditions are not the end of life; they are only a means to virtuous living and to the attainment of life eternal. When comprehensive charity and justice are placed upon this eternal foundation they become infinitely more significant and make an immeasurably more powerful appeal than when they are advocated on the basis of mere humanitarianism or class consciousness. We who demand industrial righteousness and industrial reforms in the spirit of the Encyclical can feel assured that we are promoting the purposes of God, that we are considering the welfare of labor *sub specie aeternitatis*—in the light of eternity.