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# THE CATHOLIC AND HIS UNION

By Norman C. McKenna



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By

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# The Catholic and His Union

George Brush is my name,  
America's my nation;  
Ludington's my dwelling-place  
And Heaven's my destination.

1. This bit of verse from an old midwestern ballad was used by Thornton Wilder to introduce his novel about a Christian who was confused about many things and certain only of his destination. Not certain of reaching it, but certain that he wanted to get there. How to get to heaven by the most direct and surest route was the problem that troubled Wilder's hero. The problem is age-old and ever new; no matter how much is said and written about it, some new facets always turn up. It is true the principles to be applied in solving the problem are as old as Christianity; the difficulty is that the circumstances of applying them are always changing.

2. Sometimes the befuddled Christian meets the problem by changing himself to suit the circumstances, which may seem to be the easiest thing to do at the time, but which makes him less a Christian. Sometimes the Christian gets beaten down by the circumstances, despondently gives up all hope of solving the problem, and tries to forget his destination. But most Christians, fortunately for themselves and the world, bravely continue to face the circumstances, and persist in plodding toward their destination. And the bravest of the brave not only plod on, but on their way do their best to change the circumstances to suit them.

3. This is what Christians have been doing since the apostles left the upper room in Jerusalem. At some times and in some places the Christian effort to change the world, to make

it a clearer, surer path to heaven has met with notable success, only to have the ever-changing world block the path or detour it with errors of one kind or another.

### **A Cleared Path**

4. At one high point of Christian success in changing the world, the thirteenth century, the Christian made his living in circumstances which served to remind him of his heavenly destination, and actually helped him on his way. His working conditions were regulated by Christian principles; his master had pledged himself to pay a living wage and to charge no more than a just price; the beginning workingman was sure of advancement according to prescribed conditions. The economic system in which the Christian made his living was, in general, all in favor of his spiritual as well as his temporal welfare because the conditions were fixed by organizations inspired by Christian principles—the guilds. So the Catholic workingman of the thirteenth century logically belonged to workingmen's organizations of the time; he was a guildsman. Since the guilds were the only workers' organizations of the time, the Catholic workingman was free to join whichever one covered his craft.

5. Unlike his counterpart of modern times, the thirteenth century worker did not need to be concerned about whether his guild would dip into its treasury to aid some anti-Christian organization, nor had he to worry about the possibility of his guild waging economic war in the form of class struggle. He did not worry about these things because the leaders of the guilds were Catholic and there was no one propagandizing in favor of any anti-Christian organization; no one propagandizing in favor of class war. There was no one agitating for state control of all the means of production, mild or severe.

### **Our Moral Code**

6. As a member of a guild, the thirteenth century Catholic had another advantage over his present-day descendant; he



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associated only with Catholic workingmen, and Catholic fellow-guildsmen. That didn't mean that all his associates were honest men, and pure men, but it did mean that their behavior, good, bad, or indifferent, was always in relation to the prevailing moral code, and they could be brought to book in accordance with that code. So, compared with the problems faced by the Catholic unionist of today, the problems of the thirteenth century guildsmen were comparatively simple—in so far as his part in the labor movement of the day was concerned.

7. But even while the guilds spread throughout Europe, some of the problems facing the Catholic in the AFL and CIO today began to take shape. The problems, like the labor movement itself, trace back to the guild system. Begun in a world dominated by Catholicism, the guilds moved along in the tides of the time into a world in which Catholicism was first challenged in isolated places, and finally, in some, completely displaced. The one world of Catholicism was broken into several worlds: in some, Catholicism held its position of pre-eminence as a faith and way of life; in the other, newly formed worlds, Protestantism of several types held pre-eminence.

The path to heaven was lined with detour signs.

8. With the displacement of one, unquestioned moral code by several, differing and many-times challenged codes, the Catholic workingman, even within the guild, was faced with a problem which was to grow both in extent and in gravity. Where he once associated and worked with men whose faith and morals were the same as his in all essentials, the Catholic workingman now found his fellow-workers in some places questioning Catholic authority, in others altering their way of life to suit their own interpretation of Catholic morality, in still others completely rejecting Catholicism for one of several new Protestant creeds. The Catholic workingman realized with the rise of Protestantism that religion is far more than a form of worship, more than a profession of articles of faith; he found that it is a way of life—the rise of Protestantism changed not simply the altars, the books, the ceremonies, the titles of min-

isters of God, but as well, the relationship of worker to worker, of worker to master craftsman, of worker to consumer. The guild system, originally a natural and logical expression of Catholicism in the temporal matters of working conditions, fair wage and just price, began to change, taking on the mottled color of reformation Europe.

### **No Perfect System**

9. The Catholic workingman of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries knew well what history amply shows, that life in the Middle Ages was far from perfect: the predominance of Catholicism had never meant perfection in the lives of all who professed the Faith. But the overall objective of the Christian social order of the early guild days was the service of the common good. Imperfect as every humanly devised system must be, the guild system had flaws which showed in great or less degree in one place and other, in one or another craft. As long as these flaws could be measured against the unchangeable standard of Catholicism, the guild system was capable of correction, of being returned to its proper objective.

10. But once the unchangeable standard was put aside as the true measure of belief and practice, it became increasingly difficult to keep in mind the objective of workingmen's organizations—because many were turning to the new and ever changing standards.

11. The master-craftsman who had always offered his goods at a price considered just by guild standards now found these standards the subject of debate. Why should he ask only a just price? Why not ask a price indicated by the demand for his goods?

12. The journeyman worker, once held to strict standards of craftsmanship, now found his fellow-workers debating the gainful possibilities of turning out more goods by making them of poorer material, or by hurrying a process which adherence to

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standards had formerly made slow and careful. Why not turn out more goods, make more money—and what did it matter if a buyer complained he was getting shoddy?

13. The apprentice, once compelled to undergo careful training and show by his industry and growing craftsmanship that he merited the classification of journeyman, now found masters who would shorten his training and be less exacting about the quality of his workmanship. Why not look for such masters?

14. Anyone could debate the merit, the usefulness of standards of fair trade, fair practice; any master, journeyman, apprentice, could create his own standards, and if his own guild persisted in holding fast to exacting standards, the dissenters could travel about until they found themselves accepted. If a man could stand up and debate the primacy of the pope, and argue about the necessity of the Mass—why then couldn't he challenge the rules that bound him to a just price, an honest day's work, an honest product?

### **Rise of Individualism**

15. The debating bore its fruit in the rise of individualism. Concern for the common good gave way to concern for the main chance, the opportunity to accumulate wealth. Did not one of the greatest of the debaters, Calvin, teach that the wealthy were the elect, the certain to be saved? What if Catholicism insisted upon a code of justice—justice to one's fellow worker; to one's master; to one's apprentice; to the purchaser of the goods—wasn't this code of justice subject to debate along with all other things?

16. Couldn't one then debate the old teaching that work was a means to salvation; that earnings were intended for temporal needs; that wealth was not to be sought as an end in itself? So the temporal was shoved out of its place as subordinate to the spiritual; work became a means of acquiring wealth; earnings were not simply to take care of temporal needs, but a

path to power and a position in society; and wealth was sought as an end in itself. Indeed the disturbance of the proper order of things reached the point where the spiritual was made in some cases to serve the temporal: if the priests, the bishops and the pope would not keep silent about economic affairs, they were to be confined to the sanctuary, or just ignored. When the Church thundered against the enslavement of Africans and the Indians of the new world, the exploiters turned a deaf ear; getting the wealth of the new world out of its mines was an economic matter—not a subject to be discussed by theologians. Let the priests pray at the altar; leave the exploiters to work out their own economics.

17. They did work it out, and what finally emerged was a system of classes with hostile interests—the class of those with wealth, and the class of those without. And those without would now work harder and harder for those who had wealth and wanted more.

### **Lowered Standards**

18. The master craftsman became a merchant; now he worked less and traded more, and to get more goods to sell, he hurried the work of the journeyman and apprentice; to get more profit than his competitor, he used less expensive material, and he paid his workers less and he made their working hours longer.

19. The time-consuming methods of handcrafts could be speeded by the use of newly developed machines; steam power was faster than man and horse power; labor-saving devices put more goods on the market, brought a bigger profit; brought more wealth to the master-turned-merchant. The quickening of transportation opened new markets; improved means of communication enhanced the value of the faster transportation.

20. The industrial revolution was under way. Now we find workingmen's organizations, reflecting the general reformation of society, falling more and more distinctly into a

strictly class type of organization. The master, as a merchant, now had interests sharply different from those of his journeymen and apprentices. The master was in the class of capital, or management. The journeyman and apprentice were in the class of labor. The guilds, originally designed to serve the common good, were now, by force of circumstances, turned more and more to the exclusive service of their members—labor.

21. The guild system of the eighteenth century was carried overseas to America, and guilds, or colonial versions of European guild organizations, appeared in the colonies. These were the forerunners of modern American unions and it was, indeed, the impact of America's development which contributed much to an American version of guild ideas and guild organization in the colonies. As in Europe, in the colonies there were guilds for the leading crafts—printers, cobblers, carpenters, metalsmiths, wainwrights, coopers and so on. With the American revolution the differences between the American and European guilds became more pronounced, and the American labor movement got its start in a society still changing from the old to the new.

### **A Hostile Time**

22. There were strikes and lockouts in America before 1776, and many more of the troubles we commonly associate with the labor movement of the twentieth century. Early American attempts to cope with labor-management disputes gradually built up a body of government and public policy which eventually found its way into the state and municipal laws. It was a trend toward more and more repression of workers' organizational efforts and group action by workers. Attempts by workers to win a living wage and to improve working conditions through higher pay and shorter hours were regarded as revolutionary and anarchical. Attempts to rally workers to strike were denounced and punished as criminal conspiracies.

23. Thus the American labor movement began its career as a "criminal conspiracy." The remnants of guilds, now known as unions, or associations, and the newly organized unions—all found themselves outside the pale of respectable society. The workers were restricted and repressed until their plight became so bad that socially-minded intellectuals and charitably inclined people outside the working class set up a clamor on labor's behalf. These well-meant efforts, while helpful in places, did not reach the basic causes of labor's trouble. The worker was being denied his human rights by the federal, state and municipal laws, by public leaders, by the press. Labor did win a round when the U. S. Supreme Court decided in the case of Commonwealth vs. Hunt that the organization of a labor union was not criminal conspiracy. Labor won another round when the Workingmen's Party in New York City entered politics and published its platform—a summary of all that had to be done to re-establish the worker as a free American citizen. This first concerted political effort by labor yielded a partial victory when Tammany, the burgeoning political force in New York, adopted most of the planks in the Workingmen's Party platform and won the election. The platform swiping launched Tammany's career as a "friend" of labor; it knocked the props from under labor's political effort, and added confusion to an already badly confused situation.

### **The Marxist Cure-all**

24. The good intentions of social reformers were not enough to get the worker on his feet; political organization was not enough; Supreme Court decisions were not enough; if organized workers made a gain through any of these means in one place, they lost ground elsewhere. Apparently what was needed was a complete philosophy of labor, and many leaders of labor thought they had found the philosophy in the ideas of some of the social reformers—in the neo-Socialism of the middle nineteenth century. It remained for Karl Marx and Ferdinand Lassalle to crystallize labor's yearnings and hopes into what came to be known variously as Socialism or Marxism. (Not the

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Communism of modern times; modern Communism is an evolution of the Bolshevik split with the Mensheviks in Russia after the revolution of 1917. Marxism in the American labor movement was chiefly Socialism, with extremist Socialists forming a violent but small fringe on the movement.)

25. The great attraction of Socialism to the labor leaders of the 1860's and '70's was its apparent ability to provide all the answers. Socialism explained everything: how the workman had gotten into his present plight; how the capitalist had reached his power; how governments had been shaped to serve the interests of the capitalist class; how society was now divided into two clear and antagonistic classes, and finally, why and how the working class must organize and fight for its rights.

26. The rise of Socialism was not without some good effects. It served to rouse Catholic workers and Catholic leaders, to an alarming situation: all workers, including Catholics, were being organized into unions, many of whose leaders were Socialists, or inclined in the direction of Socialism to varying degrees. Socialism was a new and growing influence in the labor movements of Europe and America. Coincident with the growth of Socialism in Europe, and sometimes inspired by it, was the rise of anti-clericalism—that is to say, a criticism of the leaders of the Church by Catholics as well as non-Catholics. Since Socialism is basically anti-religious (although many Socialists and many Socialist groups today are not anti-religious) Catholic leaders of the time discovered a further danger—Socialism could lead workers through anti-clericalism into anti-religionism. Catholic workers could be made into atheists.

27. As if the picture were not sufficiently confused, there was added to it a revival of Freemasonry and other secret societies. America had its own gloomy addition to this dark picture in the secrecy of union organization and the use of violence in labor disputes. American unions resorted to secrecy to protect their leaders from blacklisting, a common manage-

ment practice of the time, and they resorted to violence in desperate reaction to the brutal violence employed by anti-union industrialists.

### Dilemma for Christians

28. A more hopeless situation could hardly be conjured for the Catholic workingman. He was faced with the alternatives of trying to survive as an individualist in a jungle-law economy, or of joining a labor organization which was probably led by Socialists or near Socialists; by men who were anti-clerical, anti-religious or, in many cases, hardly Christian in any positive way; by men who accepted violence as a necessary means: by men who might be members of a secret society condemned by the Church.

29. For a minority of Catholic workers, it is true, this alternative did not present itself—they belonged to workers' organizations in parts of Europe which were wholly Catholic, and free of Socialist ideas. But for the great majority of Catholic workers in Europe, and all Catholic workers in America, the situation presented a grave spiritual problem.

30. The problem was first faced fully and analyzed carefully by Bishop Emmanuel von Ketteler of Mainz, Germany. This prelate was already familiar with the problems of the working class, from his own studies of their difficulties. Von Ketteler was well informed; he spoke from experience and his first statement on the question shows how well he had mastered the problem.

31. It was in his book, *Christianity and the Labor Question*, that Bishop von Ketteler wrote, in 1864: "It would be a great folly on our part if we kept aloof from this movement merely because it happens at the present time to be promoted chiefly by men who are hostile to Christianity. The air remains God's air though it be breathed by an atheist, and the bread we eat is no less the nourishment provided by God though



kneaded by an unbeliever. It is the same with unionism: it is an idea which rests on the divine order of things, though the men who favor it most do not recognize the finger of God in it, and often turn it to wicked use.

32. "Unionism, however, is not merely legitimate in itself and worthy of our support, but Christianity alone commands the indispensable elements for directing it properly and making it a real and lasting benefit to the working classes."

### Neutral Unions

33. Since there were at the time in Germany Catholic unions and Christian unions (composed of Catholics and Protestants who professed their belief in Christ) Bishop von Ketteler's problem of spiritual leadership was no simple one. He did make clear that where there were no Catholic or Christian unions, Catholics could, as he stated above, join the other unions which became known as neutral unions. (Neutral, that is, in regard to religion.)

34. The problem in America had its own variation. Here the chronology of events, so far as labor is concerned, begins with the issuance of the encyclical *Humanum Genus*, on April 20, 1884,<sup>1</sup> in which Pope Leo XIII condemned Freemasonry and repeated previously published bans on Catholic membership in Masonic lodges and other secret societies whose pledges, ceremonies or principles were contrary to Catholic teachings. Masonic societies and imitative groups were expanding in Canada and the United States at the time the encyclical was published.<sup>2</sup> In some places veterans of the Civil War, seeking civil service positions, joined Masonic and similar groups.

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<sup>1</sup> But the Church in America had to warn Catholics against secret societies as early as 1794, at the first meeting of the Catholic bishops in the United States. Cf. *The Catholic Church and Secret Societies in the United States*, by Father Fergus McDonald, C.P., U. S. Catholic Historical Society, New York.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

Since Irish emigrants formed a large part of the Federal Army during the Civil War and settled in the big eastern cities, Catholic alarm was readily understandable. Many other Catholics were attracted to those fraternal groups which offered insurance benefits.

### The Knights of Labor

35. At the time the Knights of Labor, predominant labor organization in the United States, was driving to expand its membership. In western Pennsylvania the Molly Maguires, a highly secretive organization, was matching the violent repression practiced by the coal and steel magnates with its own violent reprisals. The thoroughly anti-labor press gave the labor movement no opportunity to state its case. All the odds were against labor: labor, apparently, was all wrong, in leadership, objectives and means. And, added the press, when labor did listen to anyone, it listened only to Socialists and anarchists—a gross distortion of the situation.

36. So it happened that in September, 1884, with the new encyclical against Freemasonry still fresh, Archbishop Elzear Taschereau<sup>3</sup> of Quebec took alarm over the appearance in his archdiocese of a group calling itself the Knights of Labor. This Canadian branch of the Knights “assumed all the outward Masonic symbols of a secret society,” according to Msgr. Bernard O’Reilly, in his *Life of Leo XIII*. Quebec was then, as it still is, a predominantly Catholic city. Archbishop Taschereau acted promptly to block what appeared to be a threat to the faith of the people for whose spiritual guidance he was responsible. He proposed to the Holy See the question of Catholic membership in the Knights of Labor. The response authorized him to condemn the Knights. This he did in a pastoral letter.

The decree from Rome was sent to the Canadian bish-

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<sup>3</sup> Made Cardinal June 7, 1886, in the same consistory which elevated Archbishop Gibbons to the Sacred College.

ops but not to the American hierarchy.<sup>4</sup> The bishops in America had been debating the status of the Knights since their inception but were inclined to delay action because the interests of so many workingmen were so deeply involved. Prompted by the Holy See, Archbishop James Gibbons of Baltimore, as dean of the American hierarchy, called a meeting of the metropolitans (archbishops) of the United States in Baltimore, October 28, 1886.

### A Problem Understood

37. At the same time the Quebec ban prompted Terence Vincent Powderly, head of the American Knights of Labor, and a Catholic, to appeal to Archbishop Gibbons for a hearing. Powderly submitted the constitution and by-laws of his organization to Archbishop Gibbons and the archbishops. (The preliminary meetings of the labor leader and the prelate were far from happy encounters: Powderly was an irascible, undiplomatic man and he was then fighting desperately to save his much battered organization. Fortunately Archbishop Gibbons saw beyond the issue of the moment; like his predecessor in a similar plight in Europe, Bishop von Ketteler, Archbishop Gibbons realized the Church would have to clarify the whole situation for the future guidance of Catholic workingmen in America.)

38. In the discussion, Archbishop Gibbons espoused the cause of the Knights. A subsequent vote showed ten of the twelve archbishops concurring with his view that the Knights should not be condemned. This decision, together with the documents used in reaching it, was communicated to the suffragan bishops, of whom 60 out of 63 concurred. Archbishop Gibbons then brought the question before the Holy See. There he was accompanied by Henry Cardinal Manning of England, who supported Archbishop Gibbons' position. The Holy See upheld the decision of the American hierarchy, and rescinded

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<sup>4</sup> *Catholic Church and Secret Societies in the United States.*

the ban decreed in Canada. Archbishop Taschereau, following the Holy See's directions, lifted the ban on the Canadian branch of the Knights.

39. The Knights of Labor represented the first concerted attempt by American labor to organize on a national scale. Earlier labor organization covered cities, states and regions—chiefly the northeastern states—but the Knights won adherents in the midwest, the far west and Canada. Unfortunately the Knights were torn by internal difficulties—Powderly was criticized by his associates who sought to introduce newer ideas of unionism into his organization. The times were against the Knights: press and public officials were almost unanimously hostile to any sizable, effective labor organization; the Catholic clergy were suspicious and in some places openly hostile, still fearful of secret societies and violent tactics. The history of the Molly Maguires in western Pennsylvania, along with every other bit of violence in labor disputes of the day—all were heaped on the heads of the Knights.

40. But the Knights served their role in American labor history, and must be credited with two accomplishments: they were instrumental in clearing the way for Catholic membership in American unions; they paved the way for a national labor organization. Out of their organizing efforts eventually evolved the American Federation of Labor. With the rise of industrial employment, part of the AFL seceded to form the Congress of Industrial Organizations in 1936.

### **A Marxist Complication**

41. But a Catholic statement of “no objection” to membership in the Knights of Labor still did not answer every Catholic question on union membership. Contemporary with the rise of the Knights there was in Europe a growth of Marxist influence in the labor movement. Of more particular concern to Catholics, though, was the incomplete grasp of the social problem by Catholic theologians. Unlike the many bishops, priests

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and Catholic laymen of today who speak and write understandingly and helpfully on social problems, Catholic spokesmen of the nineteenth century, with some exceptions like Bishop von Ketteler, did not come to full grips with the whole social problem.

42. Father Francis J. Connell, C.S.S.R., writing in *Ecclesiastical Review* for February, 1947, page 81, comments: "Until the closing decade of the nineteenth century, theologians gave little attention to the moral aspects of the strike, and when they did treat of it, they were inclined to pass a severe judgment on those who participated in this form of protest. . . . The severe judgment of the theological school of those days was due in great measure to the indubitable fact that many strikes were inspired by the Socialist movement. Moreover, *Rerum Novarum* had not yet appeared, to give the Catholic world in definite and detailed form the full Christian concept of the rights of the worker. Since this masterpiece of Leo XIII was promulgated, theologians have not failed to defend, adequately and equitably, the right to strike."

43. When *Rerum Novarum* did appear in 1891, Leo XIII introduced his counsel on union membership with a comment on the labor movement of the time.<sup>5</sup>

44. "Certainly, the number of associations of almost every possible kind, especially of associations of workers, is now far greater than ever before. This is not the place to inquire whence many of them originate, what object they have, or how they proceed. But the opinion is, and it is one confirmed by a good deal of evidence, that they are largely under the control of secret leaders and that these leaders apply principles which are in harmony with neither Christianity nor the welfare of States, and that, after having possession of all available work, they contrive that those who refuse to join with them will be forced by want to pay the penalty. Under these circumstances, workers

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<sup>5</sup> New translation, p. 32, paragraph 74.

who are Christians must choose one of two things; either to join associations in which it is greatly to be feared that there is danger to religion, or to form their own associations and unite their forces in such a way that they may be able manfully to free themselves from such unjust and intolerable oppression. Can they who refuse to place man's highest good in imminent jeopardy hesitate to affirm that the second course is by all means to be followed?"

### Pope Leo's Views

45. It is plain from the above that Pope Leo preferred Catholic unions to Catholic membership in neutral unions, for the grave reasons he cites: the menace to faith and morals, the internal strife and want of charity in the neutral unions of the time. His solution is clearly intended to meet the problems of the period in which the encyclical was written.

46. Most encyclicals are Papal statements on a problem of the day, giving an analysis of a current world or regional problem in the light of eternal truths taught by the Catholic Church. After analysis of the problem, the encyclical gives directives or counsel to Catholics who must cope with the problem which prompted the encyclical. In other words, while the principles applied in encyclicals are changeless and timeless, the *particular* counsels given in each one may apply only to a special time or place. When new circumstances change a problem, a pope may issue a new encyclical to make a former one apply more exactly to the altered problem, or one of his successors may issue his own encyclical for the same purpose. Hence Leo XIII's counsel on unions stated above was adjusted to later conditions by his successors.

47. Thus we find Pope Pius X, in 1912, making his own statement on neutral unions, in the encyclical *Singulari Quadam*. The encyclical was written in response to a question raised by the bishops of Germany. They asked the Holy Father to clear up a controversy raging between those who favored Catholic unions and those who favored Catholic mem-

bership in Christian unions. The latter were labor organizations restricted to Catholics and Protestants who professed belief in the divinity of Christ.

### The Role of the Bishop

Pius X replied: "The bishops have the right to give their approval to the membership of Catholic workers in such trade unions."

48. The favorable meaning of the word approval is emphasized by Father von Nell-Bruening in his *Reorganization of Social Economy*. His book, incidentally, offers an extensive discussion of the controversies which prompted the bishops' question.

49. Pius X added: "This, however, we grant on condition that suitable precautions be taken to obviate those dangers which, as we have said, are to be found in such organizations.

50. "The chief of these precautions are as follows: First of all, care must be taken that the Catholic workers who are members of these trade unions be enrolled also in those Catholic societies for workingmen called Workingmen's Associations. Should this entail some sacrifice for them, we take it for certain that eager as they are for the preservation of their faith, they will make it."

51. Although the statement was given for German Catholics in the year 1912, a universal counsel is stated clearly: Catholics who are active in the labor movement by virtue of membership in a labor organization, should also be members of a Catholic workingmen's organization. At the time, there were no Catholic workingmen's associations in the United States. The only organization of this type which lasted any length of time was a Catholic workingmen's association (*Arbeiterwold*) organized in St. Louis about the turn of the century, but this was for German-speaking Catholics only. The idea apparently did not spread beyond this limited, foreign language group. It

was not until the founding of the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists in 1937 that American Catholic workingmen had an organization such as Pope Pius recommends.

52. The German bishops in 1912 raised a question peculiar to their country, where there were Catholic unions. There never have been Catholic unions in the United States, although there are Catholic unions in French-speaking parts of eastern Canada. The absence of Catholic unions in the United States raised questions peculiar to this country. The Church's counsel on these questions could still be found in *Rerum Novarum*, *Singulari Quadam*, and in the statements of American bishops made through their agency, the National Catholic Welfare Conference. Catholic workingmen in America were free to join neutral unions. But still they did not have the Catholic organization which would further their spiritual welfare. Pope Pius XI brought the Church's counsel on unions up to date in 1931, in *Quadragesimo Anno*. He also declares unequivocally "there should always be" associations to look after the spiritual welfare of Catholic workingmen.

### Why Not Catholic Unions?

53. First he notes that conditions in certain countries made it impossible to form Catholic unions: <sup>6</sup> ". . . where either the laws of a country, or certain special economic institutions, or that deplorable dissension of minds and hearts so widespread in contemporary society and an urgent necessity of combating with united purpose and strength the massed ranks of revolutionists, have prevented Catholics from founding purely Catholic labor unions. Under these conditions, Catholics seem almost forced to join secular (neutral) labor unions."

54. In the same section, Pius XI sets down the conditions of Catholic membership in secular unions: "These unions, however, should always profess justice and equity and give Cath-

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<sup>6</sup> *Quadragesimo Anno*, p. 15, section 35, new translation.



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olic members full freedom to care for their own conscience and obey the laws of the Church. It is clearly the office of bishops, when they know that these associations are on account of circumstances necessary and are not dangerous to religion, to approve of Catholic workers joining them, keeping before their eyes, however, the principles and precautions laid down by Our Predecessor, Pius X of holy memory. Among these precautions the first and chief is this: Side by side with these unions there should be associations zealously engaged in imbuing and forming their members in the teaching of religion and morality so that they in turn may be able to permeate the unions with that good spirit which should direct them in all their activity. As a result, the religious associations will bear good fruit even beyond the circle of their own membership.”

### Conclusions for Guidance

55. A review of the papal statements given above points to several conclusions which may be fairly drawn: 1. Catholics are free to join neutral unions, that is, those affiliated with the CIO, AFL, the railway brotherhoods, or bona fide independent unions like the National Federation of Telephone Workers; 2. Catholics who join unions should also join a Catholic workingmen's association; 3. Catholics in unions should strive for a morally responsible leadership and oppose the spread of Marxism as an anti-religious and anti-democratic philosophy, and oppose as well anti-democratic and immoral union policies which depend on racketeering and other corrupt practices.

56. A fourth conclusion must be added, although it is not so pertinent today as it was in the early days of the CIO, when many Catholics asserted that Catholic workingmen should not join the CIO because many Communists were to be found in the CIO leadership and rank and file. The fourth conclusion is this: <sup>7</sup> that any authoritative prohibition of Catholic membership in a neutral union is a ruling to be made properly only

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<sup>7</sup> See last quotation above; also *Singulari Quadam*.

by the bishops. It has happened, during the CIO's organizing drives, in 1937 and subsequently, that some Catholics have so criticized the CIO or the labor movement generally that Catholic workingmen have either doubted their moral right to union membership or have even actively opposed the organizing drives of particular unions. A case in point is the opposition of some Catholics to membership in CIO and AFL unions of bank employees.

57. The first conclusion stated above, that Catholics are free to join neutral unions has been buttressed by a growing school of Catholic thought that Catholics are not only free to join unions, but are also morally bound to do so. That is, Catholics have a *duty* to be union members, a duty in justice and charity to their fellow workers, regarding the union as a means of collective protection and betterment of the workers' lot; a duty to their families, regarding the union as a means of securing a living wage, healthful working conditions, and reasonable tenure of employment and provision for the future. Many Catholics, clerical and lay, who are well versed in American labor problems, policies and practices, declare firmly that Catholics have a *duty* to join unions. Their views are ably expressed by one of the most prominent of them, Bishop Francis J. Haas of Grand Rapids, Mich. Bishop Haas stated his view in a reply to a question put at the school of social action for priests of the Detroit archdiocese, in August, 1940, "Do Catholics have a duty to join a union?"

58. "Yes, decidedly so," Bishop Haas replied, and added, "the Catholic wage or salary worker in the United States should not hesitate to join any of the AFL, or CIO unions or railroad brotherhoods on the ground that they violate justice or that they will undermine his religious faith. On the contrary, it is his duty, as it is of all wage earners, to join any of these organizations which he believes will best meet his needs, and to do his part to develop its effectiveness and prestige."

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### **White Collar Unions**

59. Note that Bishop Haas includes salary workers in his statement. There are many unions open to salary workers, unions of teachers, newspaper workers, librarians, nurses and others usually described as professional workers. Wherever Catholic spokesmen have urged Catholic working people to join unions, they have by specific words or clear implication, included professional people and all salaried workers. That means bank tellers, too, and employees of the Wall Street exchanges and financial houses.

60. It is true that at this stage of American unionism few would raise the question whether it were morally prudent for a Catholic workingman to join an American union. As remarked above by Bishop Haas (and by many other Catholics in authority) there is no good reason for a Catholic to hesitate about taking union membership. At the same time no Catholic unionist with his eyes open would deny that there are temptations in the labor movement which could lead an uninformed or wobbly Catholic astray. But these temptations are virtually the same as those which face the Catholic who engages in any kind of social or public work. They fall into two main categories: the temptations to grab power and self-glory at the expense of the union's or the community's good, or to misappropriate funds intended to be administered only for the good of the union or the community. The other large category of temptations are those which entice the Catholic unionist or public office-seeker to sacrifice Christian principles to gain the support of Marxist elements.

### **Double Standard**

61. The Catholic who yields to such temptations puts aside the unchanging criteria of Christian morality to accept the changing morality of public opinion, or more usually, the custom of the occupation. Thus a Catholic in public office is tempted to dip his hand in the public till because many other officials he knows do the same, and none of them see anything

wrong in the act. Similarly a Catholic unionist is tempted to accept a "kick-back" from an employer for a union contract which is not just to the union members. His excuse is that it is common custom in his union or industry to make such kick-back arrangements.

62. The Catholic office seeker may be tempted to keep a canny silence about the support given him by the *Daily Worker*, counting on Communist votes to aid his election, because, as it is frivolously said, in politics, as in love and war, all is fair. Presumably the only thing wrong about such an arrangement would be the indiscretion of being caught at it. Similarly the Catholic unionist may be tempted to accept quietly the support of Communist cells in his union to drum up the necessary majority.

63. In either case, the use of Communist support would involve a sacrifice of principle, some form of deceit and double-dealing. Communists, being astute politicians, give support only when they expect favors in return. How can a Catholic promise to advance the fortunes of *any* Communist?<sup>8</sup> The individual Communist is *inseparable* from the world-wide, revolutionary, anti-religious, anti-democratic Communist movement. If the office seeker or the unionist solicits Communist support in the belief he is assuming no obligation to Communism, then he is a fool; if he seeks such support with the hope of ignoring promises made to win the support, then he is a liar.

64. There are temptations to the Catholic unionist, but the temptations are peculiar to unionism only in nomenclature. In politics money obtained through extra-legal means, through tortuous interpretation of a law, or similar sharp practices—such money is called graft. In union circles such money may be called a "kick-back," gained through an "under-the-hat" arrangement or a "sweetheart contract." There are many

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Pope Pius XII address to Rome street railwaymen, February 22nd, warning against any support of materialistic policies in government.

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names for pilfering a fund you are pledged to administer honestly—the names apply to various minor or major infractions of the commandment, “Thou shalt not steal.”

### **Temptations for Unionists**

65. There are moral dangers, too, for the rank-and-filer, dangers in inverse proportion to the unionist's education and practice as a Catholic. The Catholic unionist with a sound training in his religion, one who regularly reads Catholic periodicals and books, one who frequents the sacraments—such a Catholic unionist is not easily inveigled into supporting or winking at dishonest, or undemocratic, or Marxist unionism. With a well informed Catholic mind and spirit, he is alert to all dangers, no matter their disguise. On the other hand the Catholic with little or no Catholic schooling, with little or no acquaintance with Catholic publications, whose practice is limited to keeping in good standing in the Church—or is a hit-and-miss proposition—such a Catholic unionist is easy prey to Marxist propagandists or dishonest unionist leaders.

66. It should be apparent to any non-Catholic unionist that these moral dangers menace not only the individual unionist who professes a belief in God—be he Catholic, Protestant or Jew—but what is more, they menace the whole labor movement. Patently the union movement in any given spot cannot progress if it be burdened by an allegiance to the Communist Party, or by an unscrupulous, undemocratic “top control.”

67. What is to be done then, to protect both the labor movement and the individual members of it from these evil forces? For Catholics, the papal statements given in previous pages supply the answer. Let the Catholic workingman join the union of his occupation—but let him further strive to bring into that union, and ultimately, the whole labor movement, the good influence of Christian principles.

68. In other words, let him be an apostle. And that is precisely what Pope Pius XI counsels in the conclusion of *Quadra-*

*gesimo Anno*:<sup>9</sup> “The first and immediate apostle to the workers ought to be workers; the apostles to those who follow industry and trade ought to be from among themselves.”

69. There is not space here to state the whole argument for such an apostolate. Let us recall simply what was said above about moral dangers in public life, and the chief reason for their existence: the substitution of an unchanging moral code for the adjustable, inconstant moral code of public opinion and current custom. It is up to the Catholic unionist to do his utmost to supplant the inconstant code for the constant one. It is no insuperable task: there are many union leaders and union members, in the AFL, CIO, brotherhoods and legitimate independent unions who are morally responsible persons. These men and women hold themselves strictly to a code of behavior they learned from God-fearing parents, from religious training, from regular practice of their religion. These morally upright unionists are consistent in the practice of their religion—be it Catholicism, Protestantism or Judaism. Their common virtue and strength is this: they adhere to a moral code that is outside of them, above them, a code written not by fallible humans like themselves, but, in origin, by divine direction.

### **Why An Apostolate?**

70. What does this apostolate involve? Would a unionist-apostle be less a unionist? No: on the contrary; he would be a better and more useful unionist for his apostolate. First, because he cannot embark on the apostolate—the work of reforming other persons and institutions—until he first reforms himself. This self-reform, for a Catholic, means a reform in reference to his state in life and his occupation. It is a study of how to be a good Christian in the circumstances peculiar to each individual’s way of living and means of livelihood. For example, the doctor is bound by a code of professional ethics, which may vary in specific ways from country to country, or city to city—but the doctor is bound also by another code of

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<sup>9</sup> *Quadragesimo Anno*, p. 51, section 141.

ethics—the application of divine law to his calling. The doctor is forbidden to procure an abortion or prescribe a means of preventing birth. The lawyer is similarly bound by a professional code of ethics—and as well by the divine law. He is bound, for instance, to administer an estate in his care in a morally responsible way. Similarly, the unionist has his own sphere of obligations—a professional code so to speak, which binds him to act in reference to the common good of all unionists and all workingmen—and a code of higher ethics, derived from the divine law, which binds him not to steal, not to abuse delegated power, not to further the cause of anti-religion.

71. There is no law without its protectors and interpreters. For the Catholic, the protector and interpreter of divine law is the Catholic Church. The Catholic unionist who would set out to be an apostle in the labor movement must, to be consistent, seek his principles of reform and principles of action in Catholic sources. These he will find in one or another of the many Catholic labor schools throughout the country. In these schools he will find the next requirement for the apostolate: right information, a training in Christian criticism of the social order, a guidance in the application of Christian principles.

### **Helps for the Unionist**

72. Here are the means available to the unionist who would be an apostle to the labor movement: 1. Labor schools conducted by diocesan priests, by religious orders of priests and brothers, by the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists; 2. Membership in the ACTU; 3. Catholic labor periodicals; 4. Days of recollection and weekend retreats for persons in the same union or industry, for ACTU groups, for those attending Catholic labor schools.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Of first importance in the field of Catholic labor education is the formation or development of a Christian conscience in the sphere of workingmen's problems. Catholic labor schools should seek the coordinated progress of their students in the truths of the Faith and in the moral law. They should instill a Catholic spirit while they form a Catholic mind.

73. The unionist will find in the ACTU and other Catholic labor schools an atmosphere favorable to the discussion of the spiritual problems of a Catholic workingman; the mutual encouragement of spiritual development; contact with priests and with lay persons well versed in today's labor problems and the solutions for them in the application of Christian social principles.

74. The courses in Catholic labor schools vary in names and topics but common to each is the stress on morally responsible conduct in labor-management relations, in the discharge of a unionist's and union official's duties and a concern for the common good. The unionist is taught to examine the social, economic and political order in the light of Christian principles, and, moreover, taught to criticize this order in a *constructive* way. In many schools he is taught parliamentary law, by which our Congress conducts its business and by which most unions conduct their meetings. (Where they don't, they should.) Most schools give a review of the American labor movement, to impart a right perspective of unionism and show the unionist how American labor won its way to its present position. Some schools offer lessons in labor-management relations, embracing negotiating, bargaining and policing of contracts. And all Catholic labor schools explain the industries and professions plan set forth in the encyclicals. This is more conveniently termed the industry council system.

### **Industry Council Plan**

75. That system, or plan, is one which every Catholic unionist should understand. It is amply explained in NCWC pamphlets and other publications. To explain it very briefly, it would work this way: in every industry, labor, management and government representatives would form a council. This council would work out a production schedule for as long a period as may be practicable in the industry—a year is usually suggested—and this schedule would be determined in a way de-



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signed to yield to labor a living annual wage; to management, a fair return on investment; to the consumer, a fair price on the product. Wages, prices and profits would be studied and determined in relation to each other. An adaptation of the plan is already in operation in the garment industry in New York, with modifications developed by that industry. But the plan has not yet been adopted in any of the basic industries such as steel, coal or autos.

76. Supposing the unionist completes a course in a Catholic labor school, and masters the details of the industry council plan. Here he has an idea that would be good for the labor movement to adopt. How does he go about it?

77. His most effective approach to the problem is to introduce the idea to union discussions. This may be done by a resolution at a local meeting moving the appointment of a committee to study the plan. It might be done by a similar resolution at his union's regional or international convention. But the committee should be instructed to report back on the possibilities of proposing the plan in the union's next negotiations with management. In other words, the industry council plan gets absolutely nowhere if a union meeting or convention simply adopts a resolution in favor of it. A resolution directing action is what is needed.

### **Rank-and-File Reform**

78. Suppose the unionist-graduate of a Catholic labor school realizes his union or local is controlled from the top by undemocratic officials. A reform is called for. How does he go about it? His first step would be to study his union's constitution and by-laws, and urge his fellow members to do the same. His next step would be to organize a group of reform-minded members into a rank-and-file movement to work for the true administration of the union's laws. If, as happens in some cases, the laws have been amended or tortuously interpreted to work for the official's benefit at the expense of the rank-and-file, the reform group would have to work for a con-

stitutional convention at which the laws could be rightly amended. But whatever reform movement the unionist starts should be started as a leaven in the mass—*not* as a power-politics maneuver. The reformer must remember he is waging a war of ideas and principles—not a war of muscle, or even, primarily, a war of votes. If he can convince other members of the need for reform, they will give their votes to the movement. But the union reform is not simply a matter of putting the rascals out; it is far more, it is a constructive change for the better—and the reformer must have the better uppermost in mind.

79. The same sort of reform by the rank-and-file is in order in unions dominated by Communists or persons obligated to the Communists for votes. The unionist-reformer must not only apprise other members of the dangers of allowing Communists to continue in control of the union, but he must also be ready to propose a constructive program for the union to use in place of the program followed by the Communists. Government, like nature, abhors a vacuum—if you want to end Communist or top-control of your union, what program have you to replace the deposed program? Reformers should study their union's problems thoroughly, and then work out a comprehensive program which offers a solution for, or at least, a means of handling, every problem faced by the union.

80. Displacing a racketeering or Communist administration with a democratic trade union administration of course involves politics. Now politics is the science of administering public affairs; politics of itself is neither good nor evil; neither effective nor ineffective—*but*—a particular political system may be good or bad, effective or ineffective. The system's moral quality depends on the ends of the system, and the means used to achieve those ends. The effectiveness of a political system will also vary with the choice of means, the choice of leaders and the intrinsic value of its basic principles. So when the word politics is mentioned, there is no reason to assume that it stands for the wrong kind of politics.

81. There is nothing wrong in using right political means to achieve a right political end. There is nothing wrong in Christian trade unionists using political means to change the political complexion of a union, but when they do so, they must not only be scrupulous about ends and means, but also be wary of dangers attached to the use of politics.

### Sectarian Blocs

82. The most obvious danger is that of forming, or even appearing to form, a religious political bloc in the union movement. There is always a strong temptation to form such a bloc, in the often confusing ebb and flow of influence in union affairs. The Catholic unionist would like to bring a Christian influence to bear in the formation of his union's policies, in the direction of its thought. In some cases this Christian influence is expressed in a negative way, by the support of an anti-Communist caucus at the time of union elections. In other cases it may be expressed in a positive way, by the seeking out of competent candidates to run for union office, either against Communists, or even when Communism is not a major issue—when the desired end is getting the union the best possible leaders.

83. But in either case, the Christian influence is expressed *not* by seeking the election of Catholics *because* they are Catholics, but rather the election of candidates, Catholic *or* non-Catholic, who will support democratic and progressive principles of unionism. Thus, as a matter of exactitude, the Catholic unionist is seeking not so much the election of particular *personalities*, as he is seeking the election of particular *principles*.

*The emphasis is of the greatest importance.*

84. Any sectarian policy of "Catholics elect Catholics" springs from ignorance of the principles which should motivate Catholics carrying on the labor apostolate. Such a policy is replete with errors. In the first place, the Church has never

given counsel of this sort to Catholics even in those places where the election results might decide whether the country was to be dominated by Communists. When the bishops of Italy and Hungary urged all Catholics to go to the polls in the 1947 elections and exercise the franchise as a civic duty, they did not urge or even suggest the election of Catholics. Instead they advised the conscientious consideration of the men and issues of the election, and a responsible vote on these. What was said by the bishops of Italy and Hungary has been said by Catholic leaders wherever citizens are free to vote. The voter should choose what he conscientiously believes to be the best program for his country, and the candidates best fitted to serve his country.

85. It is presumptuous for any Catholic to believe that the best candidates are necessarily Catholics simply and solely because they are Catholics. Since that is so in municipal, state and federal politics, is there any reason for a difference in union politics? As a matter of fact, in some cases, candidates backed by pro-Communist caucuses are nominal Catholics. Obviously these Catholics do not deserve the true unionist's support. In some cases, candidates who are Catholics are anti-Communist, but they are leagued with elements which seek to run the union in an undemocratic way. Such Catholics, whose principles are obviously un-Catholic, dishonest and dangerous should be opposed by all conscientious unionists.

### **A Basis in Man's Dignity**

86. There is no good served by voting along sectarian lines. If it be argued that Catholics have, on the whole, the best program of social reconstruction, it can also be argued that there are Protestant and Jewish trade unionists who adhere to a virtually similar program of social reconstruction—as expressed by Protestant and Jewish leaders. Sectarian politics would thus do more harm than good—if played by Catholics, it would understandably alienate the Protestants and Jews who would like to reconstruct the social order because they, like Catholics,

believe in God, and believe in the dignity of man flowing from his creation in the image and likeness of God.

87. In place of sectarianism in union politics, then, a far better mode of good political operation would be one based on a common denominator of sound principles. Such a basis brings the political planners close to their real objective: the election of morally responsible leadership. The first task would then be to find a group of unionists who sincerely believe in that objective. These unionists, by acceptance of such a principle of action, would be, in mind and heart, inclined to a right view of political ends and means.

88. Acceptance of a right principle of action must be followed by determination to use only right means to achieve the good political end. Here we run into difficulty with those who firmly believe that a right end justifies the use of any means. This is the old saw, "the end justifies the means" which has been wrongly attributed to some Catholic theologians. No Catholic theologian ever taught such an unmoral philosophy.

### **Morally Right Means**

89. It is an obligation on those who teach and those who lead in the apostolate of the labor movement to make crystal clear that any political means used by a democratic caucus must be chosen and carried out in accordance with the moral law.

90. This can be made clearer by pointing out two examples of violation of this rule. In the first, a leader in a democratic caucus, fighting a close election against pro-Communist elements, by a ruse persuaded a group of pro-Communist electioneers to surrender to him their election leaflets. It was a clever trick, but it was a trick, it was basically, unfair, undemocratic, and enabled the pro-Communists to allege that the democratic caucus was unscrupulous in its methods.

91. In the second example, a democratic ticket was elected by a narrow margin. Because of the close vote, the pro-Com-

munists resorted to a standard political device, of demanding a recount. They had a clear right to such a recount under the union's election laws. Faced with the possibility of losing an apparently won election by one or two votes, one of the democratic candidates suggested stuffing the ballot boxes during the recount—a plain choice of wrongful means. Fortunately he was voted down, the recount was held, and his platform's victory upheld.

92. At about the same time another close election in the same international was lost to pro-Communists, allegedly because their members of the election committee had stuffed the boxes. Such a tactic we can expect from the pro-Communists and other anti-democratic elements in the labor movement; such tactics must never be chosen by democratic elements.

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93. There is one weighty consideration which every Catholic unionist should keep in mind: that Catholics, even an individual Catholic, or two or three Catholics not belonging to any organization, but acting on their own initiative, are very often regarded by non-Catholics as expressing the mind and the will of their bishop, or of the whole Catholic Church. Thus, if a few Catholic unionists suddenly decide to campaign against a Communist or dishonest union administration, there are those who will immediately charge that the hierarchy has inspired the campaign. Any Catholic unionist who decides to enter union politics should remember that whatever he does will be linked to the Church, or probably more specifically, to his own bishop.

### **Criticism of Catholics**

94. An even closer link will be alleged in the case of Catholics who are graduates of Catholic labor schools or members of the ACTU. It has happened that when they, as individuals, took part in reform movements in unions, the people in need of reform alleged that the movement was a deep plot inspired

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by the bishop of the place, or even by the Vatican. Their reasoning went along this line: the Catholic labor school, or the ACTU, operates only by permission of the bishop; when Catholic unionists take part in a political campaign in a union, it must be, therefore, with the knowledge and approval of the bishop—further, since the bishop is a spiritual leader, it is to be presumed that the bishop himself inspired the Catholic unionist's entry into politics.

95. It is a line of thought and a conclusion which the Catholic unionist should keep well in mind when he contemplates any kind of political action. The trouble with the critics' reasoning is that it skips by several facts. In the first place, the efforts of Catholics to bring a Christian influence into the labor movement is not official Catholic Action, as defined in the *Manual of Catholic Action*<sup>11</sup> approved by the Holy See. Because it is not official Catholic Action, it does not have to meet the strict conditions laid down for such activities by the Church, and hence does not require close supervision by the bishop. What it does have in the way of approval is largely a statement of "no objection" by the bishop and his permission for the school or group to attract a Catholic membership, to have a priest as spiritual mentor. Up to this point all of this amounts to a rather negative approval; to this the bishop usually adds words of encouragement and a blessing on the occasion of an anniversary or Communion breakfast.

96. But with all the encouragement and good will the bishop may show the school or group, he still does not accord a blanket and official approval to all of the school or group's activities or decisions. He does not because the policies and activities are, for the large part, in the field of liberty, that is, questions on which Catholics are not bound to hold a united opinion. Catholics are bound to unity in essentials, that is, matters of faith and morals, but they are free to hold varying opinions in doubtful things, that is questions of the best kind

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<sup>11</sup> By Msgr. Luigi Civardi, Sheed & Ward.

of government, or economics, or other temporal devices, whose moral quality would depend on their ends and means.

### **Liberty in Temporal Matters**

97. Christian principles belong in the field of essentials, but their application in temporal matters is generally in the field of liberty. Thus, while the Christian citizen should, as a matter of principle, cast his vote for whomever he believes to be the best candidate, his application of this principle is in the field of liberty: he could freely vote for a Democrat, a Republican, or a Farmer-Laborite. Similarly, while Catholic unionists should guide their actions by Christian principles, it may happen that there is more than one good way to apply a particular principle. The Catholic unionist is free to choose what appears to him the best way—on the ground of practicality, appropriateness, time, or other circumstances. In such doubtful matters, the Church expects no uniformity. The attempt to link the hierarchy with every decision and action of Catholic unionists is therefore patently unfair. The bishops should not be held responsible for decisions and actions of which they have no foreknowledge.

98. This concern about the bishops' responsibility for Catholic unionists' activities has been voiced in quarters not at all friendly to the Church. It is significant that some of those who complain the loudest are those hit hardest by reform movements in the rank and file of unions under their control. Some of the complainants are Communist; some are the czars of old-line, top-control, undemocratic unionism.

99. In many cases the attempts to link Catholic authorities with union politics is the result of a confusion on the part of the Catholic unionists concerned, and on the part of bystanders. The confusion may start with a misconception on the part of the unionist as to the right manner of applying a principle. The Catholic unionist may not understand that Christian principles are best introduced in society as bread is made to rise: the leaven is introduced in the mass of dough. The Catholic unionist is expected to be the leaven in the mass



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of the labor movement; as indeed, every Catholic should be the good leaven in the whole mass of society.

### **No Perfect Men**

100. If all men applied good principles perfectly, we would have a Utopia on earth. They don't; they misunderstand; they misjudge; they do some things half-right, some things all wrong. And so some Catholic unionists misunderstand the leaven principle—some misunderstand it so badly that they think it works only with the force of great numbers. And they are the type who try to reform unions by using Tammany tactics—any expedient means to achieve the reform—bad means to realize a good end.

101. The use of good means to achieve union reform is sometimes misunderstood by honest, reform-minded unionists because the unionists who start the reform movement don't always take the trouble to show bystanders what they are about. Union reformers should remember that they must win friends and influence people. Since their cause is an honest one, they should be completely honest and frank in propagandizing the cause. That is another reason why sectarian politics should never be attempted. Catholic unionists who believe a union needs reform should discuss their ideas frankly with non-Catholic unionists whose characters reveal a sense of moral responsibility. Obviously, reform movements must have constructive platforms; any unionist who proposes to reform his union must be ready to state the useful policies he would carry out in place of the undesirable policies he wants to displace.

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### **Other Reform Methods**

102. The reform of unions is not always accomplished by the ballot box. Political measures are often over-emphasized by reason of certain national heritages, but the fact is that principles of sound unionism can be introduced and practiced

in unions by means other than political. These other means depend chiefly on the reformers' willingness to serve the union. A rank-and-filer who is always ready to help his union, whether it be to lick postage stamps or to write organizing pamphlets, will certainly pull more weight in influencing union policy than will the unionist who comes around only at election time.

If a unionist is always helpful to his union, other unionists will the more readily accept his principles as also helpful to the union.

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103. The position of the Catholic in a union is basically the same as the position of the Catholic in any activity which has temporal ends. For the Catholic, all things concerned with the here and now relate to his salvation. Each one of a man's thoughts, words and deeds can be a help or a hindrance to him in his main task: saving his immortal soul. The Catholic is taught to think, speak and act in all things in a way consonant with his beliefs. He should, whether he be a Congressman, a ditch digger, a bank president or a shop steward, act as a morally responsible person. There can be no difference, for the Catholic, between the morality of his public life and the morality of his private life. The Holy Father very recently pointed this out in his feast day statement, on St. Eugene's day, June, 1947, when he cited the error of what he termed minimalism. The minimalist, Pope Pius explained, is the Catholic who would limit Christianity to worship inside the Church. The Catholic cannot be a minimalist; he must be a Christian seven days of the week, in all his waking hours.

### **No Compromise**

104. It follows that the Catholic, as a unionist, cannot compromise with policies which are, in end or means, or both, opposed to Christian principle and practice; he can and should co-operate with non-Catholic unionists in the attainment of legitimate labor objectives, using legitimate means; he should

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always be guided by Catholic social principles when he has the opportunity to formulate labor policies; he should strive to introduce into the world of labor ideas a concern for the common good; he should work for a balanced labor policy which avoids the extremes of selfish individualism and state socialism.

105. The Catholic workingman should be a useful unionist. He should not accept union benefits without doing his share in gaining them; he should attend union meetings faithfully, take an active interest in all union activities and volunteer for committee work; he should carry out his part in union activities in such a way as to raise the level of individual responsibility of all union members; his activities as a unionist should contribute toward a better understanding of unionism in his community.

## STUDY CLUB OUTLINE

(Numbers in parenthesis refer to paragraphs.)

1. What problems must be faced by every Christian? (1)
2. Has the social order ever helped the Christian meet his major problem? (4)
3. Cite some major differences between medieval guilds and modern unions. (5)
4. What development posed a new problem for the medieval workingman? (7-8)
5. Explain the alteration of guild standards. (10)
6. How did individualism get its start in the days of the guilds? (15)
7. How did the explorers of the New World respond to the Church's counsels? (16)
8. What developments changed the condition of labor? (20)
9. Did the guild idea spread beyond Europe? (21)
10. Was American labor free to organize in the early days of the nation? (22)
11. How did the American government tend to regard labor organization? (22-23)
12. Did early American unions win support from any non-labor groups? (23)
13. What great need on the part of the labor movement was apparently met in the mid-nineteenth century? (24)
14. Were there any good effects of the rise of Socialism? (26)
15. What confused the labor picture in post-Civil War America? (27)
16. What dilemma then faced the Catholic workingman? (28)

17. Who first analyzed the modern Christian worker's major problem? (30)
18. Explain the meaning of neutral unions. (33)
19. How did Freemasonry figure in labor problems of the last century? (34)
20. Why was labor organization so difficult in the 1870's and '80's? (35)
21. Who was Terence Vincent Powderly? (38)
22. How did Cardinal Gibbons aid labor's cause? (38)
23. Describe the Catholic views on unions just prior to *Rerum Novarum*. (41-42)
24. What notably helpful advice did Leo XIII give Catholic workingmen in *Rerum Novarum*? (44)
25. Summarize the papal criticism of unions in 1891. (45)
26. Explain the purpose of encyclicals. (46)
27. What did Pius X say about unions? (47)
28. What need of Catholic workingmen went unfulfilled until recent years? (51)
29. What were Pius XI's views on unions? (53)
30. State the conclusions to be drawn from Papal statements on unions up to 1931. (55)
31. Do Catholics have a duty to join unions? (57)
32. Should salaried workers join unions? (59)
33. Name some of the temptations facing a Christian unionist. (61)
34. How can the Catholic unionist guard against anti-Christian ideas? (65)

35. How can Protestants, Jews and Catholics co-operate for the good of unionism? (69)
36. What is meant by the apostolate? (70)
37. Is there a code of ethics for unionists? (70)
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45. What important rule must guide the democratic caucus? (89)
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49. Explain why Catholic efforts to reform unions are sometimes misguided, or at other times greatly misunderstood. (99)
50. How can good principles be propagated in unions by non-political methods? (102)
51. Explain, from your own experience, how the Catholic unionist can be of use to his union. (104-105)

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Other sources: Pertinent books and pamphlets may be read or bought at ACTU offices and Catholic labor schools. Priests will find much useful material in *Social Action Notes for the Clergy*, published monthly by the NCWC Social Action Dept., 1312 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington 5, D. C.









