

it at a high cost, but their economic efficiency was a thing of the past. Their soul was reft from them with their religion. They gradually passed away, or became mere capitalistic societies.

The way was now open, both for political autocracy and for individualistic capitalism. What followed is too well known to call for description here. The domestic system, the factory system, and the industrial revolution are the successive milestones. With each step forward towards a loudly acclaimed national prosperity, the toiling masses were

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ground more helplessly beneath the feet of that merciless idol of modern commercialism to which the Reformation had surrendered them. The free craftsman of the Middle Ages, who could lift up his head as a man and a Christian, without envy of lord or king, had now become the merest slave of the machine and an instrument of wealth. And all this, thanks to the Reformation!

What Might Have Been.

But could this catastrophe have been averted by the Church, in view of the great progress in mechanical invention and in other material conditions? It certainly could have been. As John L. and Barbara Hammond state the case in their book, *The Town Laborer*:—

“Religion, in one form or another, might have checked this spirit by rescuing society from a materialistic interpretation, insisting on the conception of man as an end in himself (i.e., dependently upon God), and refusing to surrender that revelation to any science of politics or any law of trade. Such a force was implicit in the medieval religion that had disappeared, good and bad elements alike, at the Reformation.”

It had not indeed disappeared with the Reformation, but its voice had for the time been disregarded in the political and economic life of the nations. There was nothing “bad” in the elements of this religion itself. The evil was all, then as now, in the hearts of men and in their want of conformity to its teachings. By the unhappy separation from the Church founded by Christ upon Peter men had lost the one and only authority that could with certainty guide and direct them in the principles of social justice and of charity. Under Catholicism,

however unworthy individual representatives of the Church might at times be found, the principles which they were obliged to admit and to teach ever embodied the true spirit of Christian brotherhood. There was consequently not merely the possibility, but the moral certainty of reform.

Christian Economics.

As a teaching body, the clergy remained true to the unadulterated Gospel of Christ. The doctrine of the Church insisted upon the rights of the workingman, the just and reasonable distribution of earthly goods and the universal law of helpfulness and brotherly love. It repudiated the claim of the capitalist to dispose at pleasure of his property, without regard to the common good, and denied in all its phases the theory of a false individualism. So, too, the monk was kept within his strict, but voluntary, vow of poverty and the ecclesiastic might not appropriate for his own vanity or pleasure the proceeds of his benefices without defrauding the poor. To all alike was applied the principle so clearly expressed by St. Thomas in the famous passage quoted by Pope Leo XIII in his *Labor Encyclical*: “Man should not consider his outward possessions as his own, but as common to all, so as to share with them without difficulty when others are in need.” This doctrine has found its practical industrial expression for our own times in the concluding words of the pastoral on Social Reconstruction by the American bishops:—

“The laborer’s right to a decent livelihood is the first moral charge upon industry. The employer has a right to get a reasonable living out of his business, but he has no right to interest on his investment until his employees have obtained at least living wages. This is the human and Christian, in contrast to the purely commercial and pagan, ethics of industry.”

So the unbroken tradition is handed down and the inviolate teaching of the Church still continues from the Middle Ages, as it began with the preaching of Christ and the Sermon on the Mount.

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How God Answers Prayer
MONK OF ST. BERNARD REPLIES TO AMERICAN TOURIST.

The contrast between the irreligious cynicism of the current “age of jazz” and the quiet faith which for over a thousand years has animated the Monks of St. Bernard in their famous Hospice in the Alps, is illustrated in an article by Ernest Poole in an American journal. The story demonstrates the sorry showing made by modern materialistic flippancy when brought into comparison with the religious faith which has been responsible for saving the lives of so many Alpine travellers.

Mr. Poole tells of a journey across the Alps through the Pass of the Great St. Bernard, and of how, about ten miles from the top of the Pass, he met an old monk who accompanied him up the mountain-side to the Hospice. He relates the following incident which happened after they reached the Hospice:—

“Warmed and drowsy and comfortable, we went into the library to smoke. And here I found my tall old monk. He seemed to me much older now—weary, perhaps, from his twenty-mile trip. But as I joined the group around him I heard him say to one of them:

“How much finer and better it is to cross the range up here by the Pass than to go through the smoky tunnel below. In Summer it is splendid here, and also in Winter there are days when the glory of God seems to come down. And even in snowstorms it is safe. For you see that telephone on the wall.’ He pointed to an instrument like the one I had seen below. The wire goes to an inn,’ he said, ‘ten miles lower down the Pass. And in times of storm, when a traveller leaves the inn, they telephone to us up here, and one of us goes down with the dogs. So we reach him before he is overcome.’

“But are no lives still lost in Winter?” inquired a young American.

“No—not a life in many years.’ The tall old man was silent a moment. Then in a reverent tone he said, ‘For over 1000 years, my son, we have prayed for the safety of travellers here. And He has answered our prayers at last.’

The smart young American asked, ‘Was it the telephone?’

“The old mountain climber turned and looked at the Yankee with quiet eyes.

“‘Yes, my son—that is how God answered our prayers.’”

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