

For an explanation ask the revolutions and the doctrines it teaches. Ask those meetings in which reckless demagoguery stirs up an ignorant and credulous mob against the Church. Ask the infidel Press whose writers, devoid of dignity, truth, and restraint, incessantly calumniate our actions. Ask those secret societies and their confederates, those dark underground leagues, whose hands equally ignorant and unprincipled are ever fanning the flames of rebellion, at the risk of provoking the most awful social explosions and disasters.

When, some years ago, the Labor question came up in the French Parliament, Bishop Freppel, a member of that Parliament, enlightened the Government in a masterly manner. In substance he told them that all sorts of solutions of the labor problems had been proposed—mutuality, participation of benefits, better taxation, co-operation suited to the changed conditions of manufactures, and what not? Finally, the Government brought in its solution also, namely, that solution there was none.

The Bishop, first of all, drew the attention of the House to the all-important and oft-forgotten fact, that the economic question had a moral side by which it exceeded the scope of Government and Parliament—a moral side which, if they did not mind, would elude their best efforts. Mutuality, no doubt, is a fine thing, but is incompatible with egotism; and egotism is a sentiment, or rather a vice, upon which the Government is unable to legislate. "Wherefore," said he, "I am convinced beforehand that what would carry out the plans of mutuality far better than all kinds of speeches would be the preaching of the great maxims of the Sermon on the Mount, 'do not to others what you would not have them do to you—do to others what you would have them do to you.'"

After mutuality came the sharing of benefits. This is better, especially when it is applied by men of honor and honesty; but you must observe that to induce a master to admit his workers to a share of the profits, he requires to be animated with a true sentiment of justice, and the sentiment of justice is again one of those matters which lie more or less beyond the action of laws. It is vain to raise wages if you do not curb the passions. The worker who earns 15s a day and spends 20s is on the high road to misery: he wants a superior power to moderate his desires.

Nor will any amount of instruction produce this result. "Instruction," said the Bishop, "useful for all things, is sufficient for nothing: it is a two-edged weapon that can be used for evil and for good—and all depends on its use."

Then there is personal interest, self-interest. "Without justice," said the Bishop, "and without self-sacrifice, you have the sweating system, man tyrannising over man, the strong over the weak, the great over the small. Self-interest is not the sole prime mover of labor. That would be egotism and materialism. For, after all, it is not for self-interest alone, but to fulfil a duty, that the honest worker toils for his master, and the good master works for his employee. Nobody excludes personal interest; but justice and self-sacrifice—those are the sole motives that hinder it from becoming egotism."

Then the Bishop answers the objection, "So you want to bring us back to the Middle Ages, set up again the old régime." "No," replied he, "our formula consists in borrowing what is best in the past and availing ourselves of its advantages. We are men of our time, and we believe that the greatest service we can render to-day is to organise society on Christian ideals, on the bases of justice and self-sacrifice."

Regarding particularly the corporation system in general, we don't want to bring back what was imperfect and defective in the last and other centuries. Nothing of the kind. Abuses had crept in demanding great reforms. It was necessary to let into those old institutions, which had become too narrow, a greater amount of air, of movement, of true liberty; and here lay the grave defect, the capital vice, of the French Revolution. Instead of being a great and vast reform, it was a radical revolution that swept the board clear of all the past; and that is why it proved a failure.

"What we blame," continued the Bishop, "in the legislators of 1791, was that they destroyed the corporations—those great institutions—without putting an equivalent in their place. You don't fell a still strong tree in order to lop off a few of its branches; you don't demolish

a house on account of a few weeds creeping up its walls. That organisation of labor which had been the fruit of time and experience and reason, which had contributed so much to the fame and glory of French manufacture, ought to have been rejuvenated, reformed, improved. What, above all things, had to be avoided was destroying without reconstruction."

Again the Bishop said: "Without religion you can do nothing fit to solve the labor question. Vincent de Paul alone did more for the sound solution of the labor question than all the writers of the reign of Louis XIV, and to-day, in Italy, one priest, Don Bosco, has succeeded better in preparing the solution of all labor problems than all the orators of the Italian Parliament. And that's the truth."

Clemenceau wanted justice alone as sufficient. The Bishop replied: "Allow me a medical comparison. That pithy, soft substance which eases all friction and lets all the bodily organs have simple and regular action, is called sinovia. Well, what that sinovia does in the human frame charity does in the social body. It can never be replaced." Then, continuing his argument, the Bishop spoke those truly eloquent words: "Justice and self-sacrifice are the two principles, the two elements of the solution of our labor problems. Now, what will strengthen in the minds of employers the sentiment of justice? What will defend them from the meanness of egotism? What will, on the other hand, give to workers moderation in their desires? What will calm, in both employers and employed, the fever of material gratification? Who will permeate the popular masses with lofty ideals? Who will feed in their hearts the fire of sacrifice? Who will remind the rich of the eminent dignity of the poor in the eyes of the Church, according to the sublime language of Bossuet? Who will repeat with the Bishop of Meaux that Providence has bestowed upon the poor 'assignators'—mark the word—assignments upon the superfluous revenues of the rich? Who will develop the splendid theme of St. Basil, St. Chrysostom, and St. Augustine on the providential relations between the rich and the poor? Who will proclaim, always and everywhere, the predominance of mind over matter, respect for the moral law, the holiness of duty, the authority of conscience, the grandeur of abnegation and self-sacrifice—all these things, which constitute the honor of Christian civilisation, and without which your instruction will come to nothing, and your endeavors end in smoke? Religion, with its great maxims and lofty lessons. Religion and she alone."

And what are our sapient modern legislators doing? They are expelling the Gospel from our public schools, banning the sublime code of justice, devotedness, and self-sacrifice. The workman trained in our godless schools will most likely become a rebel to social order, will deem every luckier man than himself an enemy, and be himself a maker of social war. Yet such legislators pretend to solve the labor question. Fools that invariably take the wrong road in all questions connected with the religious and social order! It is high time they saw the error of their ways. If they want social peace, let them take advantage of those grand moral forces of which Christianity holds the secret. Without religion I defy you to solve the labor question; without religion you are hopelessly impotent failures.

It is, indeed, hopeless to attempt the solution of the economic and labor question outside the two principles of which the Church is the immortal guardian: justice and charity. Justice, first of all, which is the primary basis of social economy, and justice, in the sense attached to the word of Christian doctrine, means an equitable proportion between wages and work, between toil and remuneration, means fidelity to legitimate contracts, respect for reciprocal engagements, possibility for every man to better his condition, without harm to anyone, the right for all to be treated in accordance with their capacity and merit.

Thus charity; for, however strict may be the accomplishment of the duties of justice, charity will always hold a large place in social economy. What would become of society, were the Church not there to envelop society in an immense network of services and functions, of charitable works and institutions, multiplying her helps, her establishments, and her creations of every kind, in proportion as the needs of mankind increase, engaging in the assistance of suffering and debility her priests, her