

Committee on Social Questions.

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The above Committee was appointed by the Bishop in accordance with a resolution of Synod. Signed articles by members of the Committee will be published in the GAZETTE. Each individual is alone responsible for his own article. The Committee invite suggestions as to methods of work, criticism of articles and questions on social topics. Communications should be addressed to the Rev. M. W. Butterfield, the Secretary, Waerenga-a-hika, Gisborne.

A Few Elementary Ideas on the Church Catechism & Socialism.

I have been asked to contribute a few words in explanation of some misunderstood phrases in the Church Catechism. The articles by members of the Committee will not all be of such an elementary character. This is merely an introduction, for which I crave indulgence from those to whom the thoughts are obvious, for the sake of many who have found the phrases difficult to understand, or to defend against those who cavil at Church teaching.

1st. "Being by nature the children of wrath." The doctrine of the "utter depravity of human nature" is not the doctrine taught by the Church Catechism. When ultra- and anti-Christian Socialists attack this phrase they read into it a meaning that does not exist there and was never intended. Beings with a warped nature, inclined as we are to sin, must be naturally inclined to incur God's displeasure: our imperfect nature being the result of a previous fall from righteousness is itself a disappointment to the God Who originally made it good, but the *person, individual, or child* is not an object of God's wrath—he is an object of God's love. All men are born in one sense as God's loved children, but cannot be adopted into the chosen family except by an act of God's *Grace*, which takes out the warp and makes them "children of grace." The image of God is in every person born into this world, but it is dimmed by sinfulness: this sinfulness is an object of repugnance to the all Holy God. To represent this as a doctrine intended to keep people in slavery to ecclesiasticism can be

done only by deliberately misunderstanding the words.

2. "An inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven." An heir is a person who will come into possession of an estate by-and-bye. To inherit an estate is to come into the possession of it; an *inheritor* is one who has already come into possession. As Christians we *have inherited* the Kingdom: it is ours now. It is an inheritance that brings many responsibilities but great privileges, many duties but unspeakable joy. The Church Catechism does not teach that we should live a life of abstraction from the world, taking no part in movements for the social betterment of mankind—it teaches rather that everyone who is a member of the Kingdom whose King is also our Brother, should do his utmost to live the life of brotherhood and bring others into the family *now*. True Christian Socialism and brotherhood is essential to the realisation of the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth for which we pray in the Lord's prayer, "Thy Kingdom come." The fact that all social problems will finally be settled only after this life by the complete removal of sin, precludes us neither from striving for perfection here on earth and helping others towards its attainment, nor from doing our utmost to solve present problems in a way consistent with the spirit of true brotherhood and as perfectly as possible in a world so corrupted by sin.

The fundamental ideas of the Church's teaching with regard to the solution of social problems are contained in "Our Duty towards our Neighbour." It condemns such ultra-socialistic ideas as destroy family life. "To love, honour, and succour my father and mother." State nurseries in which children would be brought up apart from their parents, although they might result in better disciplined children and better instructed children, would exclude the possibility of love of parents and leave little room for parental love for children. It would be impossible for children to love, honour, and succour their parents if they were brought up in State nurseries. It is generally recognised that homes for orphans are the more humanising and the more successful morally and socially when they are small and the conditions are assimilated as much as possible to those of family life.

"To honour and obey the King and all that are put in authority under him," although it has reference first to a system of Royalty, yet is quite

consistent with democracy and the best socialistic systems. The King is to be obeyed as the concrete representative of constituted authority, not as an autocratic ruler. He is the representative of the "powers that be."

"To submit myself to all my governors, teachers, spiritual pastors, and masters." The absolute equality of man with man, is a doctrine consistent neither with reason, nor with any orderly system of government, nor with the ideas of Christianity. If there is to be order and system there must be governors and masters. There must be the representatives of authority and law; anarchy is inconsistent with true Socialism—is in fact the antithesis of Socialism and of all order. The Christian Church is truly Socialistic on this point; all must be willing to lay aside private liberty when its exercise is not conducive to the well-being of the whole State: we must love our neighbour as ourselves. We are thus limited in the exercise of our freedom by the consideration of the interests of others; therefore we need laws to regulate the extent of personal freedom, and conserve the interests of the whole State: these laws must be enforced by men appointed for this work—"masters," "magistrates," "governors:" this is true Socialism and true Christianity. Our Blessed Lord Himself was obedient to the law, and to the government.

"To order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters:" This phrase has frequently been made the object of severe criticism, by those who are not true Socialists, and those who persist in fastening on the Church the charge of bolstering up a "squirearchy" system: the system of "God bless the squire and his relations and keep us in our proper stations."

If all men are *not equal*, either in brain power, will power, personal influence, physical strength or any other quality, there must be some men "better" than others. It is the duty of all to respect greatness and goodness and ability of any kind. I respect the strength of the wharf labourer and the miner. I respect the bravery of the man with the V.C. on his breast. I respect the scholarship of the great scientist or the genius of the great musician. They are in their department my betters. All good gifts whether of mind or body are endowments of the Holy Spirit—the person who possesses them has been endowed with them by God: I see in him a work of Divine wisdom; I must order