

APOSTOLICAL LETTER OF OUR HOLY FATHER LEO
XIII., BY DIVINE PROVIDENCE POPE.

TO THE PATRIARCHS, PRIMATES, ARCHBISHOPS, BISHOPS AND
OTHER ORDINARIES IN PEACE AND COMMUNION
WITH THE APOSTOLIC SEE.

Venerable Brothers, Health and Apostolic Benediction.

THE grave discussions on economical questions which for some time past have disturbed the peace of several countries of the world are growing in frequency and intensity to such a degree that the minds of thoughtful men are filled, and rightly so, with worry and alarm. These discussions take their rise in the bad philosophical and ethical teaching which is now widespread among the people. The changes also which the mechanical inventions of the age have introduced, the rapidity of communication between places and the devices of every kind for diminishing labor and increasing gain all add bitterness to the strife; and lastly matters have been brought to such a pass by the struggle between capital and labor, fomented as it is by professional agitators, that the countries where these disturbances most frequently occur find themselves confronted with ruin and disaster.

At the very beginning of our Pontificate we clearly pointed out what the peril was which confronted Society on this head, and we deemed it our duty to warn Catholics, in unmistakable language, how great the error was which was lurking in the utterances of Socialism, and how great the danger was that threatened not only their temporal possessions, but also their morality and religion. That was the purpose of our Encyclical Letter *Quod Apostolici Muneris*, which we published on the 18th of December, in the year 1878; but as these dangers day by day threatened still greater disaster, both to individuals and the Commonwealth, we strove with all the more energy to avert them. This was the object of our Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* of the 15th May, 1891, in which we dwelt at length on the rights and duties which both classes of Society—those namely, who control capital, and those who contribute labor—are bound in relation to each other; and at the same time we made it evident that the remedies which are most useful to protect the cause of religion, and to terminate the contest between the different classes of Society, were to be found in the precepts of the Gospel.

Nor, with God's grace, were our hopes entirely frustrated. Even

those who are not Catholics, moved by the power of truth, avowed that the Church must be credited with a watchful care over all classes of Society, and especially those whom fortune had least favored. Catholics, of course, profited abundantly by these letters, for they not only received encouragement and strength for the admirable enterprises in which they were engaged, but also obtained the light they desired, by the help of which they were able with greater safety and with more plentiful blessings to continue the efforts which they had been making in the matter of which we are now speaking. Hence it happened that the differences of opinion which prevailed among them were either removed or their acrimony diminished and the discussion laid aside. In the work which they had undertaken this was effected, viz.: that in their efforts for the elevation of the poorer classes, especially in those places where the trouble is greatest, many new enterprises were set on foot; those which were already established were increased and all reaped the blessing of a greater stability imparted to them. Some of these works were called *Bureaus of the People*, their object being to supply information. Rural Savings Banks had been established, and various associations, some for mutual aid, others, of relief, were organized. There were Working Men's Societies and other enterprises for work or beneficence. Thus under the auspices of the Church, united action of Catholics was secured as well as wise discrimination exercised in the distribution of help for the poor who are often as badly dealt with by chicanery and exploitation of their necessities as they are oppressed by indigence and toil. These schemes of popular benevolence were, at first, distinguished by no particular appellation. The name of *Christian Socialism* with its derivatives which was adopted by some was very properly allowed to fall into disuse. Afterwards some asked to have it called *The Popular Christian Movement*. In the countries most concerned with this matter there are some who are known as *Christian Socialists*. Elsewhere the movement is described as *Christian Democracy*, and its partisans *Christian Democrats*, in contradistinction to those who are designated as *Socialists*, and whose system is known as *Social Democracy*. Not much exception is taken to the former, i. e., *Christian Socialism*, but many excellent men find the term *Christian Democracy* objectionable. They hold it to be very ambiguous, and for this reason open to two objections. It seems by implication to covertly favor popular government, and to disparage other methods of political administration. Secondly, it appears to belittle religion by restricting its scope to the care of the poor, as if the other sections of Society were not of its concern. More than that, under the shadow of its name there might easily lurk a design to attack all legitimate power, either civil or

sacred. Wherefore, since this discussion is now so widespread, so exaggerated and so bitter, the consciousness of duty warns us to put a check on this controversy and to define what Catholics are to think on this matter. We also propose to describe how the movement may extend its scope and be made more useful to the Commonwealth.

What *Social Democracy* is and what *Christian Democracy* ought to be, assuredly no one can doubt. The first, with due consideration to the greater or less intemperance of its utterance, is carried to such an excess by many as to maintain that there is really nothing existing above the natural order of things, and that the acquirement and enjoyment of corporal and external goods constitute man's happiness. It aims at putting all government in the hands of the people, reducing all ranks to the same level, abolishing all distinction of class, and finally introducing community of goods. Hence, the right of ownership is to be abrogated, and whatever property a man possesses, or whatever means of livelihood he has, is to be common to all.

As against this, *Christian Democracy*, by the fact that it is Christian, is built, and necessarily so, on the basic principles of Divine Faith, and provides for the betterment of the masses, with the ulterior object of availing itself of the occasion to fashion their minds for things which are everlasting. Hence, for *Christian Democracy* justice is sacred; it must maintain that the right of acquiring and possessing property cannot be impugned, and it must safeguard the various distinctions and degrees which are indispensable in every well-ordered Commonwealth. Finally it must endeavor to preserve in every human society the form and the character which God ever impresses on it. It is clear, therefore, that there is nothing in common between *Social* and *Christian Democracy*. They differ from each other as much as the sect of Socialism differs from the profession of Christianity.

Moreover, it would be a crime to distort this name of *Christian Democracy* to politics, for although democracy, both in its philological and philosophical significations, implies popular government, yet in its present application it is to be employed that, removing from it all political significance, it is to mean nothing else than a benevolent and Christian movement in behalf of the people. For the laws of nature and of the Gospel, which by right are superior to all human contingencies, are necessarily independent of all modifications of civil government, while at the same time they are in concord with everything that is not repugnant to morality and justice. They are, therefore, and they must remain absolutely free from political parties, and have nothing to do with the various changes of admin-

istration which may occur in a nation; so that Catholics may and ought to be citizens according to the constitution of any State, guided as they are by those laws which command them to love God above all things, and their neighbors as themselves. This has always been the discipline of the Church. The Roman Pontiffs acted upon this principle whenever they dealt with different countries, no matter what might be the character of their governments. Hence, the mind and the action of Catholics who are devoted to the amelioration of the working classes can never be actuated with the purpose of favoring and introducing one government in place of another.

In the same manner, from *Christian Democracy*, we must remove another possible subject of reproach, namely: that while looking after the advantage of the working people they should act in such a manner as to forget the upper classes of Society; for they also are of the greatest use in preserving and perfecting the Commonwealth. As we have explained, the Christian law of charity will prevent us from so doing. For it extends to all classes of Society, and all should be treated as members of the same family, as children of the same Heavenly Father, as redeemed by the same Saviour, and called to the same eternal heritage. Hence the doctrine of the Apostle who warns us that: "we are one body and one spirit called to the one hope in our vocation; one Lord, one Faith and one Baptism; one God and the Father of all who is above all, and through all, and in us all." Wherefore on account of the nature of the union which exists between the different classes of Society and which Christian brotherhood makes still closer, it follows that no matter how great our devotion may be in helping the people, we should all the more keep our hold upon the upper classes, because association with them is proper and necessary, as we shall explain later on, for the happy issue of the work in which we are engaged.

Let there be no question of fostering under this name of *Christian Democracy* any intention of diminishing the spirit of obedience, or of withdrawing people from their lawful rulers. Both the natural and the Christian law command us to revere those who, in their various grades, are above us in the State, and to submit ourselves to their just commands. It is quite in keeping with our dignity as men and Christians to obey, not only exteriorly, but from the heart, as the Apostle expresses it, *for conscience' sake*, when he commands us to keep our soul subject to the higher powers. It is abhorrent to the profession of a Christian for any one to be unwilling to be subject and obedient to those who rule in the Church, and first of all to the bishops whom (without prejudice to the universal power of the Roman Pontiff) "the Holy Ghost has placed to rule the Church of

God which Christ has purchased by His blood." (Acts xx., 28.) He who thinks or acts otherwise is guilty of ignoring the grave precept of the Apostle who bids us to obey our rulers and to be subject to them, for they watch, having to give an account of our souls. Let the faithful everywhere implant these principles deep in their souls, and put them in practice in their daily life, and let the ministers of the Gospel meditate them profoundly, and incessantly labor not merely by exhortation but especially by example to make them enter into the souls of others.

We have recalled these matters which on other occasions we have made the subject of our instructions, in the hope that all dissension about the name of *Christian Democracy* will cease and that all suspicion of any danger coming from what the name signifies will be put at rest. And with reason do we hope so; for neglecting the opinions of certain men, with regard to the power and the efficacy of this kind of *Christian Democracy*, which at times are exaggerated and are not free from error, let no one, however, condemn that zeal which, according to the natural and Divine law, has this for its object, viz.: to make the condition of those who toil more tolerable; to enable them to obtain, little by little, those means by which they may provide for the future; to help them to practice in public and in private the duties which morality and religion inculcate; to aid them to feel that they are not animals but men, not heathens but Christians, and so to enable them to strive more zealously and more eagerly for the one thing which is necessary, viz.: that ultimate good for which we are all born into this world. This is the intention; this is the work of those who wish that the people should be animated by Christian sentiments and should be protected from the contamination of Socialism which threatens them.

We have designedly made mention here of virtue and religion. For, it is the opinion of some, and the error is already very common, that the social question is merely an economic one, whereas in point of fact, it is above all a moral and religious matter, and for that reason must be settled by the principles of morality and according to the dictates of religion. For even though wages are doubled and the hours of labor are shortened and food is cheapened, yet if the workingman hearkens to the doctrines that are taught on this subject, as he is prone to do, and is prompted by the examples set before him to throw off respect for God and to enter upon a life of immorality, his labors and his gain will avail him naught.

Trial and experience have made it abundantly clear that many a workman lives in cramped and miserable quarters, in spite of his shorter hours and larger wages, simply because he has cast aside the restraints of morality and religion. Take away the instinct which

Christian virtue has planted and nurtured in men's hearts, take away prudence, temperance, frugality, patience and other correct natural habits, no matter how much he may strive, he will never achieve prosperity. That is the reason why we have incessantly exhorted Catholics to enter these associations for bettering the condition of the laboring classes, and to organize other undertakings with the same object in view; but we have likewise warned them that all this should be done under the auspices of religion, with its help and under its guidance.

The zeal of Catholics on behalf of the masses is especially noteworthy by the fact that it is engaged in the very field in which, under the benign inspiration of the Church, the active industry of charity has always labored, adapting itself in all cases to the varying exigencies of the times. For the law of mutual charity perfects, as it were, the law of justice, not merely by giving each man his due and in not impeding him in the exercise of his rights, but also by befriending him in case of need, "not with the word alone, or the lips, but in deed and in truth;" being mindful of what Christ so lovingly said of His own: "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another as I have loved you, that you love also one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for the other." This zeal in coming to the rescue of our fellow-men should, of course, be solicitous, first for the imperishable good of the soul, but it must not neglect what is necessary and helpful for the body.

We should remember what Christ said to the disciples of the Baptist who asked him: "Art thou he that art to come or look we for another?" He invoked, as the proof of the mission given to Him among men, His exercise of charity, quoting for them the text of Isaias: "The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the Gospel preached to them." (Matth. xi., 5.) And speaking also of the last judgment and of the rewards and punishments He will assign, He declared that He would take special account of the charity men exercised towards each other. And in that discourse there is one thing that especially excites our surprise, viz.: that Christ omits those works of mercy which comfort the soul and refers only to external works which, although done in behalf of men, He regards as being done to Himself. "For I was hungry and you gave Me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me to drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; naked and you covered Me; sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me." (Matth. xxv., 35.)

To the teachings which enjoin the twofold charity of spiritual and corporal works, Christ adds His own example so that no one may

fail to recognize the importance which He attaches to it. In the present instance we recall the sweet words that came from His paternal heart: "I have pity on the multitude" (Mark vii., 2), as well as the desire He had to assist them even if it were necessary to invoke His miraculous power. Of His tender compassion we have the proclamation made in Holy Writ, viz.: that "He went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil." (Acts x., 38.) This law of charity which He imposed upon His apostles, they in the most holy and zealous way put into practice; and after them those who embraced Christianity originated that wonderful variety of institutions for alleviating all the miseries by which mankind is afflicted. And these institutions carried on and continually increased their powers of relief and were the especial glories of Christianity and of the civilization of which it was the source, so that right-minded men never fail to admire those foundations, aware as they are of the proneness of men to concern themselves about their own and neglect the needs of others.

Nor are we to eliminate from the list of good works the giving of money for charity, in pursuance of what Christ has said: "But yet that which remaineth, give alms." (Luke xi., 41.) Against this, the Socialist cries out and demands its abolition as injurious to the native dignity of man. But if it is done in the manner which the Scripture enjoins (Matth. vi., 2), and in conformity with the true Christian spirit, it neither connotes pride in the giver or inflicts shame upon the one who receives. Far from being dishonorable for man it draws closer the bonds of human society by augmenting the force of the obligation of the duties which men are under with regard to each other. No one is so rich that he does not need another's help; no one so poor as not to be useful in some way to his fellow-man; and the disposition to ask assistance from others with confidence, and to grant it with kindness is part of our very nature. Thus justice and charity are so linked with each other, under the equitable and sweet law of Christ, as to form an admirable cohesive power in human society and to lead all of its members to exercise a sort of providence in looking after their own and in seeking the common good as well.

As regards not merely the temporary aid given to the laboring classes, but the establishment of permanent institutions in their behalf, it is most commendable for charity to undertake them. It will thus see that more certain and more reliable means of assistance will be afforded to the necessitous. That kind of help is especially worthy of recognition which forms the minds of mechanics and laborers to thrift and foresight so that in course of time they may be able, in part at least, to look out for themselves. To aim at that is

not only to dignify the duty of the rich towards the poor, but to elevate the poor themselves; for while it urges them to work for a better degree of comfort in their manner of living, it preserves them meantime from danger by checking extravagance in their desires, and acts as a spur in the practice of the virtues proper to their state. Since, therefore, this is of such great avail and so much in keeping with the spirit of the times, it is a worthy object for charity to undertake with all prudence and zeal.

Let it be understood, therefore, that this devotion of Catholics to comfort and elevate the mass of the people is in keeping with the spirit of the Church and is most conformable to the examples which the Church has always held up for imitation. It matters very little whether it goes under the name of "*The Popular Christian Movement*," or "*Christian Democracy*," if the instructions that have been given by Us be fully carried out with the submission that is due. But it is of the greatest importance that Catholics should be one in mind, will and action in a matter of such great moment. And it is also of importance that the influence of these undertakings should be extended by the multiplication of men and means devoted to the same object.

Especially must there be appeals to the kindly assistance of those whose rank, worldly wealth and culture give them importance in the community. If their help is excluded, scarcely anything can be done which will be of any assistance for the wants which now clamor for satisfaction in this matter of the well-being of the people. Assuredly the more earnestly many of those who are prominent in the State conspire effectually to attain that object the quicker and surer will the end be reached. We wish them to understand that they are not at all free to look after or neglect those who happen to be beneath them, but that it is a strict duty which binds them. For no one lives only for his personal advantage in a community; he lives for the common good as well, so that when others cannot contribute their share for the general object, those who can do so are obliged to make up the deficiency. The very extent of the benefits they have received increases the burden of their responsibility, and a stricter account will have to be rendered to God who bestowed those blessings upon them. What should also urge all to the fulfillment of their duty in this regard is the widespread disaster which will eventually fall upon all classes of Society if this assistance does not arrive in time; and therefore is it that he who neglects the cause of the distressed poor is not doing his duty to himself or to the State.

If this social movement extends its scope far and wide in a true Christian fashion, and grows in its proper and genuine spirit, there will be no danger, as is feared, that those other institutions, which

the piety of our ancestors have established and which are now flourishing, will decline or be absorbed by new foundations. Both of them spring from the same root of charity and religion, and not only do not conflict with each other, but can be made to coalesce and combine so perfectly as to provide by a union of their benevolent resources in a more efficacious manner against the graver perils and necessities of the people which confront us to-day.

The condition of things at present proclaims, and proclaims vehemently, that there is need for a union of brave minds with all the resources they can command. The harvest of misery is before our eyes, and the dreadful projects of the most disastrous national upheavals are threatening us from the growing power of the socialistic movement. They have insidiously worked their way into the very heart of the State, and in the darkness of their secret gatherings, and in the open light of day, in their writings and their harangues, they are urging the masses onward to sedition; they fling aside religious discipline, they scorn duties and clamor only for rights; they are working incessantly on the multitudes of the needy which daily grow greater, and which, because of their poverty, are easily deluded and hurried off into ways that are evil. It is equally the concern of the State and of Religion, and all good men should deem it a sacred duty to preserve and guard both in the honor which is their due.

That this most desirable agreement of wills should be maintained, it is essential that all refrain from giving any causes of dissension in hurting and alienating the minds of others. Hence in newspapers and in speeches to the people, let them avoid subtle and useless questions which are neither easy to solve nor to understand except by minds of unusual ability and only after the most serious study. It is quite natural for people to think differently in doubtful questions, but those who address themselves to these subjects in a proper spirit will preserve their mental calm and not forget the respect which is due to those who differ from them. If minds see things in another light it is not necessary to become alienated forthwith. To whatever opinion a man's judgment may incline, if the matter is yet open to discussion, let him keep it, provided his mental attitude is such that he is ready to yield if the Holy See should otherwise decide.

This Catholic action, of whatever description it may be, will work with greater effect if all of the various associations, while preserving their individual rights, move together under one primary and directive force.

In Italy we desire that this directive force should emanate from the Catholic Congresses and Reunions so often praised by us, to further which our predecessor and we ourselves have ordered that these meetings should be controlled and guided by the Bishops of

the country. So let it be for other nations, in case there be any leading organization of this description to which this matter has been legitimately entrusted.

Now in all questions of this sort where the interests of the Church and the Christian people are so closely allied, it is evident what they who are in the sacred ministry should do, and it is clear how industrious they should be in inculcating right doctrine and in teaching the duties of prudence and charity. To go out and move among the people, to exert a healthy influence on them by adapting themselves to the present condition of things is what more than once in addressing the clergy we have advised. More frequently also in writing to the Bishops and other dignitaries of the Church, and especially of late (to the Minister General of the Minorites, November 25, 1898,) we have lauded this affectionate solicitude for the people and declared it to be the especial duty of both the secular and regular clergy. But in the fulfillment of this obligation let there be the greatest caution and prudence exerted, and let it be done after the fashion of the saints. Francis, who was poor and humble, Vincent of Paul, the Father of the afflicted classes, and very many others whom the Church keeps ever in her memory, were wont to lavish their care upon the people, but in such wise as not to be engrossed overmuch or to be unmindful of themselves or to let it prevent them from laboring with the same assiduity in the perfection of their own soul and the cultivation of virtue.

There remains one thing upon which we desire to insist very strongly, in which not only the ministers of the Gospel, but also all those who are devoting themselves to the cause of the people, can with very little difficulty bring about a most commendable result. That is to inculcate in the minds of the people, in a brotherly way and whenever the opportunity presents itself, the following principles, viz. : to keep aloof on all occasions from seditious acts and seditious men ; to guard inviolate the rights of others ; to show a proper respect to superiors ; to willingly perform the work in which they are employed ; not to grow weary of the restraint of family life which in many ways is so advantageous ; to keep to their religious practices above all, and in their hardships and trials to have recourse to the Church for consolation. In the furtherance of all this, it is very efficacious to propose the splendid example of the Holy Family of Nazareth, and to advise the invocation of its protection, and it also helps to remind the people of the examples of sanctity which have shone in the midst of poverty, and to hold up before them the reward that awaits them in the better life to come.

Finally we recur again to what we have already declared and we insist upon it most solemnly, viz. : that whatever projects individuals

or associations form in this matter should be done with due regard to Episcopal authority and absolutely under Episcopal guidance. Let them not be led astray by an excessive zeal in the cause of charity. If it leads them to be wanting in proper submission it is not a sincere zeal; it will not have any useful result and cannot be acceptable to God. God delights in the souls of those who put aside their own designs and obey the rulers of His Church as if they were obeying Him; He assists them even when they attempt difficult things and benignly leads them to their desired end. Let them show also examples of virtue, so as to prove that a Christian is a hater of idleness and indulgence, that he gives willingly from his goods for the help of others, and that he stands firm and unconquered in the midst of adversity. Examples of that kind have a power of moving people to dispositions of soul that make for salvation, and have all the greater force as the condition of those who give them is higher in the social scale.

We exhort you, Venerable Brethren, to provide for all this, as the necessities of men and of places may require, according to your prudence and your zeal, meeting as usual in council to combine with each other in your plans for the furtherance of these projects. Let your solicitude watch and let your authority be effective in controlling, compelling, and also in preventing, lest any one under the pretext of good should cause the vigor of sacred discipline to be relaxed or the order which Christ has established in His Church to be disturbed. Thus by the correct, concurrent and ever-increasing labor of all Catholics, the truth will flash out more brilliantly than ever, viz.: that truth and true prosperity flourish especially among those peoples whom the Church controls and influences: and that she holds it as her sacred duty to admonish every one of what the law of God enjoins, to unite the rich and the poor in the bonds of fraternal charity, and to lift up and strengthen men's souls in the times when adversity presses heavily upon them.

Let our commands and our wishes be confirmed by the words which are so full of apostolic charity which the Blessed Paul addressed to the Romans: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, be reformed in the newness of your mind; he that giveth, with simplicity; he that ruleth, with carefulness; he that showeth mercy with cheerfulness. Let love be without dissimulation—hating that which is evil; clinging to that which is good; loving one another with the charity of brotherhood; with honor preventing one another; in carefulness, not slothful; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; instant in prayer. Communicating to the necessities of the saints. Pursuing hospitality. Rejoice with them that rejoice; weep with them that weep; being of one mind to one another; to no man ren-

dering evil for evil; providing good things not only in the sight of God but also in the sight of men."

As a pledge of these benefits receive the Apostolic Benediction which, Venerable Brethren, we grant most lovingly in the Lord to you and your clergy and people.

Given at Rome in St. Peter's the 18th day of January, 1901, in the 23d year of our Pontificate.

LEO XIII., POPE.