



READING PACKET FOR FEBRUARY 2016 MEETING

CONTENTS:

- 1. Rerum Novarum - Leo XIII**
- 2. The Common Man - GKC**
- 3. Government & the Rights of Man - GKC**
- 4. Democracy & Industrialism - GKC**
- 5. Sex & Property - GKC**
- 6. A Misunderstanding about Method - GKC**
- 7. Reflections on a Rotten Apple - GKC**
- 8. The Catholic Church & Private Property - Belloc**
- 9. The Restoration of Property - Belloc**

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The Holy See

RERUM NOVARUM

ENCYCLICAL OF POPE LEO XIII ON CAPITAL AND LABOR

To Our Venerable Brethren the Patriarchs,
Primates, Archbishops, Bishops, and other ordinaries
of places having Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See.

Rights and Duties of Capital and Labor

That the spirit of revolutionary change, which has long been disturbing the nations of the world, should have passed beyond the sphere of politics and made its influence felt in the cognate sphere of practical economics is not surprising. The elements of the conflict now raging are unmistakable, in the vast expansion of industrial pursuits and the marvellous discoveries of science; in the changed relations between masters and workmen; in the enormous fortunes of some few individuals, and the utter poverty of the masses; the increased self reliance and closer mutual combination of the working classes; as also, finally, in the prevailing moral degeneracy. The momentous gravity of the state of things now obtaining fills every mind with painful apprehension; wise men are discussing it; practical men are proposing schemes; popular meetings, legislatures, and rulers of nations are all busied with it - actually there is no question which has taken deeper hold on the public mind.

2. Therefore, venerable brethren, as on former occasions when it seemed opportune to refute false teaching, We have addressed you in the interests of the Church and of the common weal, and have issued letters bearing on political power, human liberty, the Christian constitution of the State, and like matters, so have We thought it expedient now to speak on the condition of the working classes. (1) It is a subject on which We have already touched more than once, incidentally. But in the present letter, the responsibility of the apostolic office urges Us to treat the question of set purpose and in detail, in order that no misapprehension may exist as to the principles which truth and justice dictate for its settlement. The discussion is not easy, nor is it void of danger. It is no easy matter to define the relative rights and mutual duties of the rich and of the poor, of capital and of labor. And the danger lies in this, that crafty agitators are intent on making use of these differences of opinion to pervert men's judgments and to stir up the people to revolt.

3. In any case we clearly see, and on this there is general agreement, that some opportune remedy must be found quickly for the misery and wretchedness pressing so unjustly on the majority of the working class: for the ancient workingmen's guilds were abolished in the last century, and no other protective organization took their place. Public institutions and the laws set aside the ancient religion. Hence, by degrees it has come to pass that working men have been surrendered, isolated and helpless, to the hardheartedness of employers and the greed of unchecked competition. The mischief has been increased by rapacious usury, which, although more than once condemned by the Church, is nevertheless, under a different guise, but with like injustice, still practiced by covetous and grasping men. To this must be added that the hiring of labor and the conduct of trade are concentrated in the hands of comparatively few; so that a small number of very rich men have been able to lay upon the teeming masses of the laboring poor a yoke little better than that of slavery itself.

4. To remedy these wrongs the socialists, working on the poor man's envy of the rich, are striving to do away with private property, and contend that individual possessions should become the common property of all, to be administered by the State or by municipal bodies. They hold that by thus transferring property from private individuals to the community, the present mischievous state of things will be set to rights, inasmuch as each citizen will then get his fair share of whatever there is to enjoy. But their contentions are so clearly powerless to end the controversy that were they carried into effect the working man himself would be among the first to suffer. They are, moreover, emphatically unjust, for they would rob the lawful possessor, distort the functions of the State, and create utter confusion in the community.

5. It is surely undeniable that, when a man engages in remunerative labor, the impelling reason and motive of his work is to obtain property, and thereafter to hold it as his very own. If one man hires out to another his strength or skill, he does so for the purpose of receiving in return what is necessary for the satisfaction of his needs; he therefore expressly intends to acquire a right full and real, not only to the remuneration, but also to the disposal of such remuneration, just as he pleases. Thus, if he lives sparingly, saves money, and, for greater security, invests his savings in land, the land, in such case, is only his wages under another form; and, consequently, a working man's little estate thus purchased should be as completely at his full disposal as are the wages he receives for his labor. But it is precisely in such power of disposal that ownership obtains, whether the property consist of land or chattels. Socialists, therefore, by endeavoring to transfer the possessions of individuals to the community at large, strike at the interests of every wage-earner, since they would deprive him of the liberty of disposing of his wages, and thereby of all hope and possibility of increasing his resources and of bettering his condition in life.

6. What is of far greater moment, however, is the fact that the remedy they propose is manifestly against justice. For, every man has by nature the right to possess property as his own. This is one of the chief points of distinction between man and the animal creation, for the brute has no power of self direction, but is governed by two main instincts, which keep his powers on the alert, impel him to develop them in a fitting manner, and stimulate and determine him to action without any power of choice. One of these instincts is self preservation, the other the propagation of the species. Both can attain their purpose by means of things which lie within range; beyond their verge the brute creation cannot go, for they are moved to action by their senses only, and in the special direction which these suggest. But with man it is wholly different. He possesses, on the one hand, the full perfection of the animal being, and hence enjoys at least as much as the rest of the animal kind, the fruition of things material. But animal nature, however perfect, is far from representing the human being in its completeness, and is in truth but humanity's humble handmaid, made to serve and to obey. It is the

mind, or reason, which is the predominant element in us who are human creatures; it is this which renders a human being human, and distinguishes him essentially from the brute. And on this very account - that man alone among the animal creation is endowed with reason - it must be within his right to possess things not merely for temporary and momentary use, as other living things do, but to have and to hold them in stable and permanent possession; he must have not only things that perish in the use, but those also which, though they have been reduced into use, continue for further use in after time.

7. This becomes still more clearly evident if man's nature be considered a little more deeply. For man, fathoming by his faculty of reason matters without number, linking the future with the present, and being master of his own acts, guides his ways under the eternal law and the power of God, whose providence governs all things. Wherefore, it is in his power to exercise his choice not only as to matters that regard his present welfare, but also about those which he deems may be for his advantage in time yet to come. Hence, man not only should possess the fruits of the earth, but also the very soil, inasmuch as from the produce of the earth he has to lay by provision for the future. Man's needs do not die out, but forever recur; although satisfied today, they demand fresh supplies for tomorrow. Nature accordingly must have given to man a source that is stable and remaining always with him, from which he might look to draw continual supplies. And this stable condition of things he finds solely in the earth and its fruits. There is no need to bring in the State. Man precedes the State, and possesses, prior to the formation of any State, the right of providing for the substance of his body.

8. The fact that God has given the earth for the use and enjoyment of the whole human race can in no way be a bar to the owning of private property. For God has granted the earth to mankind in general, not in the sense that all without distinction can deal with it as they like, but rather that no part of it was assigned to any one in particular, and that the limits of private possession have been left to be fixed by man's own industry, and by the laws of individual races. Moreover, the earth, even though apportioned among private owners, ceases not thereby to minister to the needs of all, inasmuch as there is not one who does not sustain life from what the land produces. Those who do not possess the soil contribute their labor; hence, it may truly be said that all human subsistence is derived either from labor on one's own land, or from some toil, some calling, which is paid for either in the produce of the land itself, or in that which is exchanged for what the land brings forth.

9. Here, again, we have further proof that private ownership is in accordance with the law of nature. Truly, that which is required for the preservation of life, and for life's well-being, is produced in great abundance from the soil, but not until man has brought it into cultivation and expended upon it his solicitude and skill. Now, when man thus turns the activity of his mind and the strength of his body toward procuring the fruits of nature, by such act he makes his own that portion of nature's field which he cultivates - that portion on which he leaves, as it were, the impress of his personality; and it cannot but be just that he should possess that portion as his very own, and have a right to hold it without any one being justified in violating that right.

10. So strong and convincing are these arguments that it seems amazing that some should now be setting up anew certain obsolete opinions in opposition to what is here laid down. They assert that it is right for private persons to have the use of the soil and its various fruits, but that it is unjust for any one to possess outright either the land on which he has built or the estate which he has brought under cultivation. But those who deny these rights do not perceive that they are defrauding man of what his own labor has produced. For the soil which is tilled and cultivated with toil and skill utterly

changes its condition; it was wild before, now it is fruitful; was barren, but now brings forth in abundance. That which has thus altered and improved the land becomes so truly part of itself as to be in great measure indistinguishable and inseparable from it. Is it just that the fruit of a man's own sweat and labor should be possessed and enjoyed by any one else? As effects follow their cause, so is it just and right that the results of labor should belong to those who have bestowed their labor.

11. With reason, then, the common opinion of mankind, little affected by the few dissentients who have contended for the opposite view, has found in the careful study of nature, and in the laws of nature, the foundations of the division of property, and the practice of all ages has consecrated the principle of private ownership, as being pre-eminently in conformity with human nature, and as conducing in the most unmistakable manner to the peace and tranquillity of human existence. The same principle is confirmed and enforced by the civil laws-laws which, so long as they are just, derive from the law of nature their binding force. The authority of the divine law adds its sanction, forbidding us in severest terms even to covet that which is another's: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife; nor his house, nor his field, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is his." (2)

12. The rights here spoken of, belonging to each individual man, are seen in much stronger light when considered in relation to man's social and domestic obligations. In choosing a state of life, it is indisputable that all are at full liberty to follow the counsel of Jesus Christ as to observing virginity, or to bind themselves by the marriage tie. No human law can abolish the natural and original right of marriage, nor in any way limit the chief and principal purpose of marriage ordained by God's authority from the beginning: "Increase and multiply." (3) Hence we have the family, the "society" of a man's house - a society very small, one must admit, but none the less a true society, and one older than any State. Consequently, it has rights and duties peculiar to itself which are quite independent of the State.

13. That right to property, therefore, which has been proved to belong naturally to individual persons, must in like wise belong to a man in his capacity of head of a family; nay, that right is all the stronger in proportion as the human person receives a wider extension in the family group. It is a most sacred law of nature that a father should provide food and all necessaries for those whom he has begotten; and, similarly, it is natural that he should wish that his children, who carry on, so to speak, and continue his personality, should be by him provided with all that is needful to enable them to keep themselves decently from want and misery amid the uncertainties of this mortal life. Now, in no other way can a father effect this except by the ownership of productive property, which he can transmit to his children by inheritance. A family, no less than a State, is, as we have said, a true society, governed by an authority peculiar to itself, that is to say, by the authority of the father. Provided, therefore, the limits which are prescribed by the very purposes for which it exists be not transgressed, the family has at least equal rights with the State in the choice and pursuit of the things needful to its preservation and its just liberty. We say, "at least equal rights"; for, inasmuch as the domestic household is antecedent, as well in idea as in fact, to the gathering of men into a community, the family must necessarily have rights and duties which are prior to those of the community, and founded more immediately in nature. If the citizens, if the families on entering into association and fellowship, were to experience hindrance in a commonwealth instead of help, and were to find their rights attacked instead of being upheld, society would rightly be an object of detestation rather than of desire.

14. The contention, then, that the civil government should at its option intrude into and exercise intimate control over the family and the household is a great and pernicious error. True, if a family finds itself in exceeding distress, utterly

deprived of the counsel of friends, and without any prospect of extricating itself, it is right that extreme necessity be met by public aid, since each family is a part of the commonwealth. In like manner, if within the precincts of the household there occur grave disturbance of mutual rights, public authority should intervene to force each party to yield to the other its proper due; for this is not to deprive citizens of their rights, but justly and properly to safeguard and strengthen them. But the rulers of the commonwealth must go no further; here, nature bids them stop. Paternal authority can be neither abolished nor absorbed by the State; for it has the same source as human life itself. "The child belongs to the father," and is, as it were, the continuation of the father's personality; and speaking strictly, the child takes its place in civil society, not of its own right, but in its quality as member of the family in which it is born. And for the very reason that "the child belongs to the father" it is, as St. Thomas Aquinas says, "before it attains the use of free will, under the power and the charge of its parents."⁽⁴⁾ The socialists, therefore, in setting aside the parent and setting up a State supervision, act against natural justice, and destroy the structure of the home.

15. And in addition to injustice, it is only too evident what an upset and disturbance there would be in all classes, and to how intolerable and hateful a slavery citizens would be subjected. The door would be thrown open to envy, to mutual invective, and to discord; the sources of wealth themselves would run dry, for no one would have any interest in exerting his talents or his industry; and that ideal equality about which they entertain pleasant dreams would be in reality the levelling down of all to a like condition of misery and degradation. Hence, it is clear that the main tenet of socialism, community of goods, must be utterly rejected, since it only injures those whom it would seem meant to benefit, is directly contrary to the natural rights of mankind, and would introduce confusion and disorder into the commonweal. The first and most fundamental principle, therefore, if one would undertake to alleviate the condition of the masses, must be the inviolability of private property. This being established, we proceed to show where the remedy sought for must be found.

16. We approach the subject with confidence, and in the exercise of the rights which manifestly appertain to Us, for no practical solution of this question will be found apart from the intervention of religion and of the Church. It is We who are the chief guardian of religion and the chief dispenser of what pertains to the Church; and by keeping silence we would seem to neglect the duty incumbent on us. Doubtless, this most serious question demands the attention and the efforts of others besides ourselves - to wit, of the rulers of States, of employers of labor, of the wealthy, aye, of the working classes themselves, for whom We are pleading. But We affirm without hesitation that all the striving of men will be vain if they leave out the Church. It is the Church that insists, on the authority of the Gospel, upon those teachings whereby the conflict can be brought to an end, or rendered, at least, far less bitter; the Church uses her efforts not only to enlighten the mind, but to direct by her precepts the life and conduct of each and all; the Church improves and betters the condition of the working man by means of numerous organizations; does her best to enlist the services of all classes in discussing and endeavoring to further in the most practical way, the interests of the working classes; and considers that for this purpose recourse should be had, in due measure and degree, to the intervention of the law and of State authority.

17. It must be first of all recognized that the condition of things inherent in human affairs must be borne with, for it is impossible to reduce civil society to one dead level. Socialists may in that intent do their utmost, but all striving against nature is in vain. There naturally exist among mankind manifold differences of the most important kind; people differ in capacity, skill, health, strength; and unequal fortune is a necessary result of unequal condition. Such inequality is far from being disadvantageous either to individuals or to the community. Social and public life can only be maintained by

means of various kinds of capacity for business and the playing of many parts; and each man, as a rule, chooses the part which suits his own peculiar domestic condition. As regards bodily labor, even had man never fallen from the state of innocence, he would not have remained wholly idle; but that which would then have been his free choice and his delight became afterwards compulsory, and the painful expiation for his disobedience. "Cursed be the earth in thy work; in thy labor thou shalt eat of it all the days of thy life."(5)

18. In like manner, the other pains and hardships of life will have no end or cessation on earth; for the consequences of sin are bitter and hard to bear, and they must accompany man so long as life lasts. To suffer and to endure, therefore, is the lot of humanity; let them strive as they may, no strength and no artifice will ever succeed in banishing from human life the ills and troubles which beset it. If any there are who pretend differently - who hold out to a hard-pressed people the boon of freedom from pain and trouble, an undisturbed repose, and constant enjoyment - they delude the people and impose upon them, and their lying promises will only one day bring forth evils worse than the present. Nothing is more useful than to look upon the world as it really is, and at the same time to seek elsewhere, as We have said, for the solace to its troubles.

19. The great mistake made in regard to the matter now under consideration is to take up with the notion that class is naturally hostile to class, and that the wealthy and the working men are intended by nature to live in mutual conflict. So irrational and so false is this view that the direct contrary is the truth. Just as the symmetry of the human frame is the result of the suitable arrangement of the different parts of the body, so in a State is it ordained by nature that these two classes should dwell in harmony and agreement, so as to maintain the balance of the body politic. Each needs the other: capital cannot do without labor, nor labor without capital. Mutual agreement results in the beauty of good order, while perpetual conflict necessarily produces confusion and savage barbarity. Now, in preventing such strife as this, and in uprooting it, the efficacy of Christian institutions is marvellous and manifold. First of all, there is no intermediary more powerful than religion (whereof the Church is the interpreter and guardian) in drawing the rich and the working class together, by reminding each of its duties to the other, and especially of the obligations of justice.

20. Of these duties, the following bind the proletarian and the worker: fully and faithfully to perform the work which has been freely and equitably agreed upon; never to injure the property, nor to outrage the person, of an employer; never to resort to violence in defending their own cause, nor to engage in riot or disorder; and to have nothing to do with men of evil principles, who work upon the people with artful promises of great results, and excite foolish hopes which usually end in useless regrets and grievous loss. The following duties bind the wealthy owner and the employer: not to look upon their work people as their bondsmen, but to respect in every man his dignity as a person ennobled by Christian character. They are reminded that, according to natural reason and Christian philosophy, working for gain is creditable, not shameful, to a man, since it enables him to earn an honorable livelihood; but to misuse men as though they were things in the pursuit of gain, or to value them solely for their physical powers - that is truly shameful and inhuman. Again justice demands that, in dealing with the working man, religion and the good of his soul must be kept in mind. Hence, the employer is bound to see that the worker has time for his religious duties; that he be not exposed to corrupting influences and dangerous occasions; and that he be not led away to neglect his home and family, or to squander his earnings. Furthermore, the employer must never tax his work people beyond their strength, or employ them in work unsuited to their sex and age. His great and principal duty is to give every one what is just. Doubtless, before deciding whether wages are fair, many things have to be considered; but wealthy owners and all masters of labor should be mindful of this

- that to exercise pressure upon the indigent and the destitute for the sake of gain, and to gather one's profit out of the need of another, is condemned by all laws, human and divine. To defraud any one of wages that are his due is a great crime which cries to the avenging anger of Heaven. "Behold, the hire of the laborers... which by fraud has been kept back by you, crieth; and the cry of them hath entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."(6) Lastly, the rich must religiously refrain from cutting down the workmen's earnings, whether by force, by fraud, or by usurious dealing; and with all the greater reason because the laboring man is, as a rule, weak and unprotected, and because his slender means should in proportion to their scantiness be accounted sacred. Were these precepts carefully obeyed and followed out, would they not be sufficient of themselves to keep under all strife and all its causes?

21. But the Church, with Jesus Christ as her Master and Guide, aims higher still. She lays down precepts yet more perfect, and tries to bind class to class in friendliness and good feeling. The things of earth cannot be understood or valued aright without taking into consideration the life to come, the life that will know no death. Exclude the idea of futurity, and forthwith the very notion of what is good and right would perish; nay, the whole scheme of the universe would become a dark and unfathomable mystery. The great truth which we learn from nature herself is also the grand Christian dogma on which religion rests as on its foundation - that, when we have given up this present life, then shall we really begin to live. God has not created us for the perishable and transitory things of earth, but for things heavenly and everlasting; He has given us this world as a place of exile, and not as our abiding place. As for riches and the other things which men call good and desirable, whether we have them in abundance, or are lacking in them-so far as eternal happiness is concerned - it makes no difference; the only important thing is to use them aright. Jesus Christ, when He redeemed us with plentiful redemption, took not away the pains and sorrows which in such large proportion are woven together in the web of our mortal life. He transformed them into motives of virtue and occasions of merit; and no man can hope for eternal reward unless he follow in the blood-stained footprints of his Saviour. "If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him."(7) Christ's labors and sufferings, accepted of His own free will, have marvellously sweetened all suffering and all labor. And not only by His example, but by His grace and by the hope held forth of everlasting recompense, has He made pain and grief more easy to endure; "for that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory."(8)

22. Therefore, those whom fortune favors are warned that riches do not bring freedom from sorrow and are of no avail for eternal happiness, but rather are obstacles;(9) that the rich should tremble at the threatenings of Jesus Christ - threatenings so unwonted in the mouth of our Lord(10) - and that a most strict account must be given to the Supreme Judge for all we possess. The chief and most excellent rule for the right use of money is one the heathen philosophers hinted at, but which the Church has traced out clearly, and has not only made known to men's minds, but has impressed upon their lives. It rests on the principle that it is one thing to have a right to the possession of money and another to have a right to use money as one wills. Private ownership, as we have seen, is the natural right of man, and to exercise that right, especially as members of society, is not only lawful, but absolutely necessary. "It is lawful," says St. Thomas Aquinas, "for a man to hold private property; and it is also necessary for the carrying on of human existence."" But if the question be asked: How must one's possessions be used? - the

Church replies without hesitation in the words of the same holy Doctor: "Man should not consider his material possessions as his own, but as common to all, so as to share them without hesitation when others are in need. Whence the Apostle with, 'Command the rich of this world... to offer with no stint, to apportion largely.'"(12) True, no one is commanded to distribute to others that which is required for his own needs and those of his household; nor even to give away what is reasonably required to keep up becomingly his condition in life, "for no one ought to live other than becomingly."(13) But, when what necessity demands has been supplied, and one's standing fairly taken thought for, it becomes a duty to give to the indigent out of what remains over. "Of that which remaineth, give alms."(14) It is a duty, not of justice (save in extreme cases), but of Christian charity - a duty not enforced by human law. But the laws and judgments of men must yield place to the laws and judgments of Christ the true God, who in many ways urges on His followers the practice of almsgiving - 'It is more blessed to give than to receive';(15) and who will count a kindness done or refused to the poor as done or refused to Himself - "As long as you did it to one of My least brethren you did it to Me."(16) To sum up, then, what has been said: Whoever has received from the divine bounty a large share of temporal blessings, whether they be external and material, or gifts of the mind, has received them for the purpose of using them for the perfecting of his own nature, and, at the same time, that he may employ them, as the steward of God's providence, for the benefit of others. "He that hath a talent," said St. Gregory the Great, "let him see that he hide it not; he that hath abundance, let him quicken himself to mercy and generosity; he that hath art and skill, let him do his best to share the use and the utility hereof with his neighbor."(17)

23. As for those who possess not the gifts of fortune, they are taught by the Church that in God's sight poverty is no disgrace, and that there is nothing to be ashamed of in earning their bread by labor. This is enforced by what we see in Christ Himself, who, "whereas He was rich, for our sakes became poor";(18) and who, being the Son of God, and God Himself, chose to seem and to be considered the son of a carpenter - nay, did not disdain to spend a great part of His life as a carpenter Himself. "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?"(19)

24. From contemplation of this divine Model, it is more easy to understand that the true worth and nobility of man lie in his moral qualities, that is, in virtue; that virtue is, moreover, the common inheritance of men, equally within the reach of high and low, rich and poor; and that virtue, and virtue alone, wherever found, will be followed by the rewards of everlasting happiness. Nay, God Himself seems to incline rather to those who suffer misfortune; for Jesus Christ calls the poor "blessed";(20) He lovingly invites those in labor and grief to come to Him for solace;(21) and He displays the tenderest charity toward the lowly and the oppressed. These reflections cannot fail to keep down the pride of the well-to-do, and to give heart to the unfortunate; to move the former to be generous and the latter to be moderate in their desires. Thus, the separation which pride would set up tends to disappear, nor will it be difficult to make rich and poor join hands in friendly concord.

25. But, if Christian precepts prevail, the respective classes will not only be united in the bonds of friendship, but also in those of brotherly love. For they will understand and feel that all men are children of the same common Father, who is God; that all have alike the same last end, which is God Himself, who alone can make either men or angels absolutely and perfectly happy; that each and all are redeemed and made sons of God, by Jesus Christ, "the first-born among many brethren"; that the blessings of nature and the gifts of grace belong to the whole human race in common, and that from none except the unworthy is withheld the inheritance of the kingdom of Heaven. "If sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God, and co-heirs with Christ."(22) Such is the scheme of duties and of rights which is shown forth to the

world by the Gospel. Would it not seem that, were society penetrated with ideas like these, strife must quickly cease?

26. But the Church, not content with pointing out the remedy, also applies it. For the Church does her utmost to teach and to train men, and to educate them and by the intermediary of her bishops and clergy diffuses her salutary teachings far and wide. She strives to influence the mind and the heart so that all may willingly yield themselves to be formed and guided by the commandments of God. It is precisely in this fundamental and momentous matter, on which everything depends that the Church possesses a power peculiarly her own. The instruments which she employs are given to her by Jesus Christ Himself for the very purpose of reaching the hearts of men, and derive their efficiency from God. They alone can reach the innermost heart and conscience, and bring men to act from a motive of duty, to control their passions and appetites, to love God and their fellow men with a love that is outstanding and of the highest degree and to break down courageously every barrier which blocks the way to virtue.

27. On this subject we need but recall for one moment the examples recorded in history. Of these facts there cannot be any shadow of doubt: for instance, that civil society was renovated in every part by Christian institutions; that in the strength of that renewal the human race was lifted up to better things-nay, that it was brought back from death to life, and to so excellent a life that nothing more perfect had been known before, or will come to be known in the ages that have yet to be. Of this beneficent transformation Jesus Christ was at once the first cause and the final end; as from Him all came, so to Him was all to be brought back. For, when the human race, by the light of the Gospel message, came to know the grand mystery of the Incarnation of the Word and the redemption of man, at once the life of Jesus Christ, God and Man, pervaded every race and nation, and interpenetrated them with His faith, His precepts, and His laws. And if human society is to be healed now, in no other way can it be healed save by a return to Christian life and Christian institutions. When a society is perishing, the wholesome advice to give to those who would restore it is to call it to the principles from which it sprang; for the purpose and perfection of an association is to aim at and to attain that for which it is formed, and its efforts should be put in motion and inspired by the end and object which originally gave it being. Hence, to fall away from its primal constitution implies disease; to go back to it, recovery. And this may be asserted with utmost truth both of the whole body of the commonwealth and of that class of its citizens-by far the great majority - who get their living by their labor.

28. Neither must it be supposed that the solicitude of the Church is so preoccupied with the spiritual concerns of her children as to neglect their temporal and earthly interests. Her desire is that the poor, for example, should rise above poverty and wretchedness, and better their condition in life; and for this she makes a strong endeavor. By the fact that she calls men to virtue and forms them to its practice she promotes this in no slight degree. Christian morality, when adequately and completely practiced, leads of itself to temporal prosperity, for it merits the blessing of that God who is the source of all blessings; it powerfully restrains the greed of possession and the thirst for pleasure-twin plagues, which too often make a man who is void of self-restraint miserable in the midst of abundance;(23) it makes men supply for the lack of means through economy, teaching them to be content with frugal living, and further, keeping them out of the reach

of those vices which devour not small incomes merely, but large fortunes, and dissipate many a goodly inheritance.

29. The Church, moreover, intervenes directly in behalf of the poor, by setting on foot and maintaining many associations which she knows to be efficient for the relief of poverty. Herein, again, she has always succeeded so well as to have even extorted the praise of her enemies. Such was the ardor of brotherly love among the earliest Christians that numbers of those who were in better circumstances despoiled themselves of their possessions in order to relieve their brethren; whence "neither was there any one needy among them." (24) To the order of deacons, instituted in that very intent, was committed by the Apostles the charge of the daily doles; and the Apostle Paul, though burdened with the solicitude of all the churches, hesitated not to undertake laborious journeys in order to carry the alms of the faithful to the poorer Christians. Tertullian calls these contributions, given voluntarily by Christians in their assemblies, deposits of piety, because, to cite his own words, they were employed "in feeding the needy, in burying them, in support of youths and maidens destitute of means and deprived of their parents, in the care of the aged, and the relief of the shipwrecked." (25)

30. Thus, by degrees, came into existence the patrimony which the Church has guarded with religious care as the inheritance of the poor. Nay, in order to spare them the shame of begging, the Church has provided aid for the needy. The common Mother of rich and poor has aroused everywhere the heroism of charity, and has established congregations of religious and many other useful institutions for help and mercy, so that hardly any kind of suffering could exist which was not afforded relief. At the present day many there are who, like the heathen of old, seek to blame and condemn the Church for such eminent charity. They would substitute in its stead a system of relief organized by the State. But no human expedients will ever make up for the devotedness and self sacrifice of Christian charity. Charity, as a virtue, pertains to the Church; for virtue it is not, unless it be drawn from the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ; and whosoever turns his back on the Church cannot be near to Christ.

31. It cannot, however, be doubted that to attain the purpose we are treating of, not only the Church, but all human agencies, must concur. All who are concerned in the matter should be of one mind and according to their ability act together. It is with this, as with providence that governs the world; the results of causes do not usually take place save where all the causes cooperate. It is sufficient, therefore, to inquire what part the State should play in the work of remedy and relief.

32. By the State we here understand, not the particular form of government prevailing in this or that nation, but the State as rightly apprehended; that is to say, any government conformable in its institutions to right reason and natural law, and to those dictates of the divine wisdom which we have expounded in the encyclical *On the Christian Constitution of the State*. (26) The foremost duty, therefore, of the rulers of the State should be to make sure that the laws and institutions, the general character and administration of the commonwealth, shall be such as of themselves to realize public well-being and private prosperity. This is the proper scope of wise statesmanship and is the work of the rulers. Now a State chiefly prospers and thrives through moral rule, well-regulated family life, respect for religion and justice, the moderation and fair imposing of public taxes, the progress of the arts and of trade, the abundant yield of the land-through everything, in fact, which makes the citizens better and happier. Hereby, then, it lies in the power of a ruler to benefit every class in the State, and amongst the rest to promote to the utmost the interests of the poor; and this in virtue of his office, and without being open to suspicion of undue interference - since it is the province of the commonwealth to serve

the common good. And the more that is done for the benefit of the working classes by the general laws of the country, the less need will there be to seek for special means to relieve them.

33. There is another and deeper consideration which must not be lost sight of. As regards the State, the interests of all, whether high or low, are equal. The members of the working classes are citizens by nature and by the same right as the rich; they are real parts, living the life which makes up, through the family, the body of the commonwealth; and it need hardly be said that they are in every city very largely in the majority. It would be irrational to neglect one portion of the citizens and favor another, and therefore the public administration must duly and solicitously provide for the welfare and the comfort of the working classes; otherwise, that law of justice will be violated which ordains that each man shall have his due. To cite the wise words of St. Thomas Aquinas: "As the part and the whole are in a certain sense identical, so that which belongs to the whole in a sense belongs to the part." (27) Among the many and grave duties of rulers who would do their best for the people, the first and chief is to act with strict justice - with that justice which is called *distributive* - toward each and every class alike.

34. But although all citizens, without exception, can and ought to contribute to that common good in which individuals share so advantageously to themselves, yet it should not be supposed that all can contribute in the like way and to the same extent. No matter what changes may occur in forms of government, there will ever be differences and inequalities of condition in the State. Society cannot exist or be conceived of without them. Some there must be who devote themselves to the work of the commonwealth, who make the laws or administer justice, or whose advice and authority govern the nation in times of peace, and defend it in war. Such men clearly occupy the foremost place in the State, and should be held in highest estimation, for their work concerns most nearly and effectively the general interests of the community. Those who labor at a trade or calling do not promote the general welfare in such measure as this, but they benefit the nation, if less directly, in a most important manner. We have insisted, it is true, that, since the end of society is to make men better, the chief good that society can possess is virtue. Nevertheless, it is the business of a well-constituted body politic to see to the provision of those material and external helps "the use of which is necessary to virtuous action." (28) Now, for the provision of such commodities, the labor of the working class - the exercise of their skill, and the employment of their strength, in the cultivation of the land, and in the workshops of trade - is especially responsible and quite indispensable. Indeed, their co-operation is in this respect so important that it may be truly said that it is only by the labor of working men that States grow rich. Justice, therefore, demands that the interests of the working classes should be carefully watched over by the administration, so that they who contribute so largely to the advantage of the community may themselves share in the benefits which they create - that being housed, clothed, and bodily fit, they may find their life less hard and more endurable. It follows that whatever shall appear to prove conducive to the well-being of those who work should obtain favorable consideration. There is no fear that solicitude of this kind will be harmful to any interest; on the contrary, it will be to the advantage of all, for it cannot but be good for the commonwealth to shield from misery those on whom it so largely depends for the things that it needs.

35. We have said that the State must not absorb the individual or the family; both should be allowed free and untrammelled action so far as is consistent with the common good and the interest of others. Rulers should, nevertheless, anxiously safeguard the community and all its members; the community, because the conservation thereof is so emphatically the business of the supreme power, that the safety of the commonwealth is not only the first law, but it is a government's whole reason of existence; and the members, because both philosophy and the Gospel concur in

laying down that the object of the government of the State should be, not the advantage of the ruler, but the benefit of those over whom he is placed. As the power to rule comes from God, and is, as it were, a participation in His, the highest of all sovereignties, it should be exercised as the power of God is exercised - with a fatherly solicitude which not only guides the whole, but reaches also individuals.

36. Whenever the general interest or any particular class suffers, or is threatened with harm, which can in no other way be met or prevented, the public authority must step in to deal with it. Now, it is to the interest of the community, as well as of the individual, that peace and good order should be maintained; that all things should be carried on in accordance with God's laws and those of nature; that the discipline of family life should be observed and that religion should be obeyed; that a high standard of morality should prevail, both in public and private life; that justice should be held sacred and that no one should injure another with impunity; that the members of the commonwealth should grow up to man's estate strong and robust, and capable, if need be, of guarding and defending their country. If by a strike of workers or concerted interruption of work there should be imminent danger of disturbance to the public peace; or if circumstances were such as that among the working class the ties of family life were relaxed; if religion were found to suffer through the workers not having time and opportunity afforded them to practice its duties; if in workshops and factories there were danger to morals through the mixing of the sexes or from other harmful occasions of evil; or if employers laid burdens upon their workmen which were unjust, or degraded them with conditions repugnant to their dignity as human beings; finally, if health were endangered by excessive labor, or by work unsuited to sex or age - in such cases, there can be no question but that, within certain limits, it would be right to invoke the aid and authority of the law. The limits must be determined by the nature of the occasion which calls for the law's interference - the principle being that the law must not undertake more, nor proceed further, than is required for the remedy of the evil or the removal of the mischief.

37. Rights must be religiously respected wherever they exist, and it is the duty of the public authority to prevent and to punish injury, and to protect every one in the possession of his own. Still, when there is question of defending the rights of individuals, the poor and badly off have a claim to especial consideration. The richer class have many ways of shielding themselves, and stand less in need of help from the State; whereas the mass of the poor have no resources of their own to fall back upon, and must chiefly depend upon the assistance of the State. And it is for this reason that wage-earners, since they mostly belong in the mass of the needy, should be specially cared for and protected by the government.

38. Here, however, it is expedient to bring under special notice certain matters of moment. First of all, there is the duty of safeguarding private property by legal enactment and protection. Most of all it is essential, where the passion of greed is so strong, to keep the populace within the line of duty; for, if all may justly strive to better their condition, neither justice nor the common good allows any individual to seize upon that which belongs to another, or, under the futile and shallow pretext of equality, to lay violent hands on other people's possessions. Most true it is that by far the larger part of the workers prefer to better themselves by honest labor rather than by doing any wrong to others. But there are not a few who are imbued with evil principles and eager for revolutionary change, whose main purpose is to stir up disorder and incite their fellows to acts of violence. The authority of the law should intervene to put restraint upon such firebrands, to save the working classes from being led astray by their maneuvers, and to protect lawful owners from spoliation.

39. When work people have recourse to a strike and become voluntarily idle, it is frequently because the hours of labor

are too long, or the work too hard, or because they consider their wages insufficient. The grave inconvenience of this not uncommon occurrence should be obviated by public remedial measures; for such paralysing of labor not only affects the masters and their work people alike, but is extremely injurious to trade and to the general interests of the public; moreover, on such occasions, violence and disorder are generally not far distant, and thus it frequently happens that the public peace is imperiled. The laws should forestall and prevent such troubles from arising; they should lend their influence and authority to the removal in good time of the causes which lead to conflicts between employers and employed.

40. The working man, too, has interests in which he should be protected by the State; and first of all, there are the interests of his soul. Life on earth, however good and desirable in itself, is not the final purpose for which man is created; it is only the way and the means to that attainment of truth and that love of goodness in which the full life of the soul consists. It is the soul which is made after the image and likeness of God; it is in the soul that the sovereignty resides in virtue whereof man is commanded to rule the creatures below him and to use all the earth and the ocean for his profit and advantage. "Fill the earth and subdue it; and rule over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and all living creatures that move upon the earth."(29) In this respect all men are equal; there is here no difference between rich and poor, master and servant, ruler and ruled, "for the same is Lord over all."(30) No man may with impunity outrage that human dignity which God Himself treats with great reverence, nor stand in the way of that higher life which is the preparation of the eternal life of heaven. Nay, more; no man has in this matter power over himself. To consent to any treatment which is calculated to defeat the end and purpose of his being is beyond his right; he cannot give up his soul to servitude, for it is not man's own rights which are here in question, but the rights of God, the most sacred and inviolable of rights.

41. From this follows the obligation of the cessation from work and labor on Sundays and certain holy days. The rest from labor is not to be understood as mere giving way to idleness; much less must it be an occasion for spending money and for vicious indulgence, as many would have it to be; but it should be rest from labor, hallowed by religion. Rest (combined with religious observances) disposes man to forget for a while the business of his everyday life, to turn his thoughts to things heavenly, and to the worship which he so strictly owes to the eternal Godhead. It is this, above all, which is the reason and motive of Sunday rest; a rest sanctioned by God's great law of the Ancient Covenant-"Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath day,"(31) and taught to the world by His own mysterious "rest" after the creation of man: "He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done."(32)

42. If we turn not to things external and material, the first thing of all to secure is to save unfortunate working people from the cruelty of men of greed, who use human beings as mere instruments for money-making. It is neither just nor human so to grind men down with excessive labor as to stupefy their minds and wear out their bodies. Man's powers, like his general nature, are limited, and beyond these limits he cannot go. His strength is developed and increased by use and exercise, but only on condition of due intermission and proper rest. Daily labor, therefore, should be so regulated as not to be protracted over longer hours than strength admits. How many and how long the intervals of rest should be must depend on the nature of the work, on circumstances of time and place, and on the health and strength of the workman. Those who work in mines and quarries, and extract coal, stone and metals from the bowels of the earth, should have shorter hours in proportion as their labor is more severe and trying to health. Then, again, the season of the year should be taken into account; for not unfrequently a kind of labor is easy at one time which at another is intolerable or

exceedingly difficult. Finally, work which is quite suitable for a strong man cannot rightly be required from a woman or a child. And, in regard to children, great care should be taken not to place them in workshops and factories until their bodies and minds are sufficiently developed. For, just as very rough weather destroys the buds of spring, so does too early an experience of life's hard toil blight the young promise of a child's faculties, and render any true education impossible. Women, again, are not suited for certain occupations; a woman is by nature fitted for home-work, and it is that which is best adapted at once to preserve her modesty and to promote the good bringing up of children and the well-being of the family. As a general principle it may be laid down that a workman ought to have leisure and rest proportionate to the wear and tear of his strength, for waste of strength must be repaired by cessation from hard work.

In all agreements between masters and work people there is always the condition expressed or understood that there should be allowed proper rest for soul and body. To agree in any other sense would be against what is right and just; for it can never be just or right to require on the one side, or to promise on the other, the giving up of those duties which a man owes to his God and to himself.

43. We now approach a subject of great importance, and one in respect of which, if extremes are to be avoided, right notions are absolutely necessary. Wages, as we are told, are regulated by free consent, and therefore the employer, when he pays what was agreed upon, has done his part and seemingly is not called upon to do anything beyond. The only way, it is said, in which injustice might occur would be if the master refused to pay the whole of the wages, or if the workman should not complete the work undertaken; in such cases the public authority should intervene, to see that each obtains his due, but not under any other circumstances.

44. To this kind of argument a fair-minded man will not easily or entirely assent; it is not complete, for there are important considerations which it leaves out of account altogether. To labor is to exert oneself for the sake of procuring what is necessary for the various purposes of life, and chief of all for self preservation. "In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread."(33) Hence, a man's labor necessarily bears two notes or characters. First of all, it is personal, inasmuch as the force which acts is bound up with the personality and is the exclusive property of him who acts, and, further, was given to him for his advantage. Secondly, man's labor is *necessary*; for without the result of labor a man cannot live, and self-preservation is a law of nature, which it is wrong to disobey. Now, were we to consider labor merely in so far as it is personal, doubtless it would be within the workman's right to accept any rate of wages whatsoever; for in the same way as he is free to work or not, so is he free to accept a small wage or even none at all. But our conclusion must be very different if, together with the personal element in a man's work, we consider the fact that work is also necessary for him to live: these two aspects of his work are separable in thought, but not in reality. The preservation of life is the bounden duty of one and all, and to be wanting therein is a crime. It necessarily follows that each one has a natural right to procure what is required in order to live, and the poor can procure that in no other way than by what they can earn through their work.

45. Let the working man and the employer make free agreements, and in particular let them agree freely as to the wages; nevertheless, there underlies a dictate of natural justice more imperious and ancient than any bargain between man and man, namely, that wages ought not to be insufficient to support a frugal and well-behaved wage-earner. If through necessity or fear of a worse evil the workman accept harder conditions because an employer or contractor will afford him no better, he is made the victim of force and injustice. In these and similar questions, however - such as, for example, the

hours of labor in different trades, the sanitary precautions to be observed in factories and workshops, etc. - in order to supersede undue interference on the part of the State, especially as circumstances, times, and localities differ so widely, it is advisable that recourse be had to societies or boards such as We shall mention presently, or to some other mode of safeguarding the interests of the wage-earners; the State being appealed to, should circumstances require, for its sanction and protection.

46. If a workman's wages be sufficient to enable him comfortably to support himself, his wife, and his children, he will find it easy, if he be a sensible man, to practice thrift, and he will not fail, by cutting down expenses, to put by some little savings and thus secure a modest source of income. Nature itself would urge him to this. We have seen that this great labor question cannot be solved save by assuming as a principle that private ownership must be held sacred and inviolable. The law, therefore, should favor ownership, and its policy should be to induce as many as possible of the people to become owners.

47. Many excellent results will follow from this; and, first of all, property will certainly become more equitably divided. For, the result of civil change and revolution has been to divide cities into two classes separated by a wide chasm. On the one side there is the party which holds power because it holds wealth; which has in its grasp the whole of labor and trade; which manipulates for its own benefit and its own purposes all the sources of supply, and which is not without influence even in the administration of the commonwealth. On the other side there is the needy and powerless multitude, sick and sore in spirit and ever ready for disturbance. If working people can be encouraged to look forward to obtaining a share in the land, the consequence will be that the gulf between vast wealth and sheer poverty will be bridged over, and the respective classes will be brought nearer to one another. A further consequence will result in the great abundance of the fruits of the earth. Men always work harder and more readily when they work on that which belongs to them; nay, they learn to love the very soil that yields in response to the labor of their hands, not only food to eat, but an abundance of good things for themselves and those that are dear to them. That such a spirit of willing labor would add to the produce of the earth and to the wealth of the community is self evident. And a third advantage would spring from this: men would cling to the country in which they were born, for no one would exchange his country for a foreign land if his own afforded him the means of living a decent and happy life. These three important benefits, however, can be reckoned on only provided that a man's means be not drained and exhausted by excessive taxation. The right to possess private property is derived from nature, not from man; and the State has the right to control its use in the interests of the public good alone, but by no means to absorb it altogether. The State would therefore be unjust and cruel if under the name of taxation it were to deprive the private owner of more than is fair.

48. In the last place, employers and workmen may of themselves effect much, in the matter We are treating, by means of such associations and organizations as afford opportune aid to those who are in distress, and which draw the two classes more closely together. Among these may be enumerated societies for mutual help; various benevolent foundations established by private persons to provide for the workman, and for his widow or his orphans, in case of sudden calamity, in sickness, and in the event of death; and institutions for the welfare of boys and girls, young people, and those more advanced in years.

49. The most important of all are workingmen's unions, for these virtually include all the rest. History attests what excellent results were brought about by the artificers' guilds of olden times. They were the means of affording not only

many advantages to the workmen, but in no small degree of promoting the advancement of art, as numerous monuments remain to bear witness. Such unions should be suited to the requirements of this our age - an age of wider education, of different habits, and of far more numerous requirements in daily life. It is gratifying to know that there are actually in existence not a few associations of this nature, consisting either of workmen alone, or of workmen and employers together, but it were greatly to be desired that they should become more numerous and more efficient. We have spoken of them more than once, yet it will be well to explain here how notably they are needed, to show that they exist of their own right, and what should be their organization and their mode of action.

50. The consciousness of his own weakness urges man to call in aid from without. We read in the pages of holy Writ: "It is better that two should be together than one; for they have the advantage of their society. If one fall he shall be supported by the other. Woe to him that is alone, for when he falleth he hath none to lift him up."(34) And further: "A brother that is helped by his brother is like a strong city."(35) It is this natural impulse which binds men together in civil society; and it is likewise this which leads them to join together in associations which are, it is true, lesser and not independent societies, but, nevertheless, real societies.

51. These lesser societies and the larger society differ in many respects, because their immediate purpose and aim are different. Civil society exists for the common good, and hence is concerned with the interests of all in general, albeit with individual interests also in their due place and degree. It is therefore called a public society, because by its agency, as St. Thomas of Aquinas says, "Men establish relations in common with one another in the setting up of a commonwealth."(36) But societies which are formed in the bosom of the commonwealth are styled *private*, and rightly so, since their immediate purpose is the private advantage of the associates. "Now, a private society," says St. Thomas again, "is one which is formed for the purpose of carrying out private objects; as when two or three enter into partnership with the view of trading in common."(37) Private societies, then, although they exist within the body politic, and are severally part of the commonwealth, cannot nevertheless be absolutely, and as such, prohibited by public authority. For, to enter into a "society" of this kind is the natural right of man; and the State has for its office to protect natural rights, not to destroy them; and, if it forbid its citizens to form associations, it contradicts the very principle of its own existence, for both they and it exist in virtue of the like principle, namely, the natural tendency of man to dwell in society.

52. There are occasions, doubtless, when it is fitting that the law should intervene to prevent certain associations, as when men join together for purposes which are evidently bad, unlawful, or dangerous to the State. In such cases, public authority may justly forbid the formation of such associations, and may dissolve them if they already exist. But every precaution should be taken not to violate the rights of individuals and not to impose unreasonable regulations under pretense of public benefit. For laws only bind when they are in accordance with right reason, and, hence, with the eternal law of God.(38)

53. And here we are reminded of the confraternities, societies, and religious orders which have arisen by the Church's authority and the piety of Christian men. The annals of every nation down to our own days bear witness to what they have accomplished for the human race. It is indisputable that on grounds of reason alone such associations, being perfectly blameless in their objects, possess the sanction of the law of nature. In their religious aspect they claim rightly to be responsible to the Church alone. The rulers of the State accordingly have no rights over them, nor can they claim any share in their control; on the contrary, it is the duty of the State to respect and cherish them, and, if need be, to defend

them from attack. It is notorious that a very different course has been followed, more especially in our own times. In many places the State authorities have laid violent hands on these communities, and committed manifold injustice against them; it has placed them under control of the civil law, taken away their rights as corporate bodies, and despoiled them of their property, in such property the Church had her rights, each member of the body had his or her rights, and there were also the rights of those who had founded or endowed these communities for a definite purpose, and, furthermore, of those for whose benefit and assistance they had their being. Therefore We cannot refrain from complaining of such spoliation as unjust and fraught with evil results; and with all the more reason do We complain because, at the very time when the law proclaims that association is free to all, We see that Catholic societies, however peaceful and useful, are hampered in every way, whereas the utmost liberty is conceded to individuals whose purposes are at once hurtful to religion and dangerous to the commonwealth.

54. Associations of every kind, and especially those of working men, are now far more common than heretofore. As regards many of these there is no need at present to inquire whence they spring, what are their objects, or what the means they imply. Now, there is a good deal of evidence in favor of the opinion that many of these societies are in the hands of secret leaders, and are managed on principles ill - according with Christianity and the public well-being; and that they do their utmost to get within their grasp the whole field of labor, and force working men either to join them or to starve. Under these circumstances Christian working men must do one of two things: either join associations in which their religion will be exposed to peril, or form associations among themselves and unite their forces so as to shake off courageously the yoke of so unrighteous and intolerable an oppression. No one who does not wish to expose man's chief good to extreme risk will for a moment hesitate to say that the second alternative should by all means be adopted.

55. Those Catholics are worthy of all praise-and they are not a few-who, understanding what the times require, have striven, by various undertakings and endeavors, to better the condition of the working class by rightful means. They have taken up the cause of the working man, and have spared no efforts to better the condition both of families and individuals; to infuse a spirit of equity into the mutual relations of employers and employed; to keep before the eyes of both classes the precepts of duty and the laws of the Gospel - that Gospel which, by inculcating self restraint, keeps men within the bounds of moderation, and tends to establish harmony among the divergent interests and the various classes which compose the body politic. It is with such ends in view that we see men of eminence, meeting together for discussion, for the promotion of concerted action, and for practical work. Others, again, strive to unite working men of various grades into associations, help them with their advice and means, and enable them to obtain fitting and profitable employment. The bishops, on their part, bestow their ready good will and support; and with their approval and guidance many members of the clergy, both secular and regular, labor assiduously in behalf of the spiritual interest of the members of such associations. And there are not wanting Catholics blessed with affluence, who have, as it were, cast in their lot with the wage-earners, and who have spent large sums in founding and widely spreading benefit and insurance societies, by means of which the working man may without difficulty acquire through his labor not only many present advantages, but also the certainty of honorable support in days to come. How greatly such manifold and earnest activity has benefited the community at large is too well known to require Us to dwell upon it. We find therein grounds for most cheering hope in the future, provided always that the associations We have described continue to grow and spread, and are well and wisely administered. The State should watch over these societies of citizens banded together in accordance with their rights, but it should not thrust itself into their peculiar concerns and their organization, for things move and live by the spirit inspiring them, and may be killed by the rough grasp of a hand from without.

56. In order that an association may be carried on with unity of purpose and harmony of action, its administration and government should be firm and wise. All such societies, being free to exist, have the further right to adopt such rules and organization as may best conduce to the attainment of their respective objects. We do not judge it possible to enter into minute particulars touching the subject of organization; this must depend on national character, on practice and experience, on the nature and aim of the work to be done, on the scope of the various trades and employments, and on other circumstances of fact and of time - all of which should be carefully considered.

57. To sum up, then, We may lay it down as a general and lasting law that working men's associations should be so organized and governed as to furnish the best and most suitable means for attaining what is aimed at, that is to say, for helping each individual member to better his condition to the utmost in body, soul, and property. It is clear that they must pay special and chief attention to the duties of religion and morality, and that social betterment should have this chiefly in view; otherwise they would lose wholly their special character, and end by becoming little better than those societies which take no account whatever of religion. What advantage can it be to a working man to obtain by means of a society material well-being, if he endangers his soul for lack of spiritual food? "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?"(39) This, as our Lord teaches, is the mark or character that distinguishes the Christian from the heathen. "After all these things do the heathen seek . . . Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His justice: and all these things shall be added unto you."(40) Let our associations, then, look first and before all things to God; let religious instruction have therein the foremost place, each one being carefully taught what is his duty to God, what he has to believe, what to hope for, and how he is to work out his salvation; and let all be warned and strengthened with special care against wrong principles and false teaching. Let the working man be urged and led to the worship of God, to the earnest practice of religion, and, among other things, to the keeping holy of Sundays and holy days. Let him learn to reverence and love holy Church, the common Mother of us all; and hence to obey the precepts of the Church, and to frequent the sacraments, since they are the means ordained by God for obtaining forgiveness of sin and for leading a holy life.

58. The foundations of the organization being thus laid in religion, We next proceed to make clear the relations of the members one to another, in order that they may live together in concord and go forward prosperously and with good results. The offices and charges of the society should be apportioned for the good of the society itself, and in such mode that difference in degree or standing should not interfere with unanimity and good-will. It is most important that office bearers be appointed with due prudence and discretion, and each one's charge carefully mapped out, in order that no members may suffer harm. The common funds must be administered with strict honesty, in such a way that a member may receive assistance in proportion to his necessities. The rights and duties of the employers, as compared with the rights and duties of the employed, ought to be the subject of careful consideration. Should it happen that either a master or a workman believes himself injured, nothing would be more desirable than that a committee should be appointed, composed of reliable and capable members of the association, whose duty would be, conformably with the rules of the association, to settle the dispute. Among the several purposes of a society, one should be to try to arrange for a continuous supply of work at all times and seasons; as well as to create a fund out of which the members may be effectually helped in their needs, not only in the cases of accident, but also in sickness, old age, and distress.

59. Such rules and regulations, if willingly obeyed by all, will sufficiently ensure the well being of the less well-to-do; whilst such mutual associations among Catholics are certain to be productive in no small degree of prosperity to the State. Is it

not rash to conjecture the future from the past. Age gives way to age, but the events of one century are wonderfully like those of another, for they are directed by the providence of God, who overrules the course of history in accordance with His purposes in creating the race of man. We are told that it was cast as a reproach on the Christians in the early ages of the Church that the greater number among them had to live by begging or by labor. Yet, destitute though they were of wealth and influence, they ended by winning over to their side the favor of the rich and the good-will of the powerful. They showed themselves industrious, hard-working, assiduous, and peaceful, ruled by justice, and, above all, bound together in brotherly love. In presence of such mode of life and such example, prejudice gave way, the tongue of malevolence was silenced, and the lying legends of ancient superstition little by little yielded to Christian truth.

60. At the time being, the condition of the working classes is the pressing question of the hour, and nothing can be of higher interest to all classes of the State than that it should be rightly and reasonably settled. But it will be easy for Christian working men to solve it aright if they will form associations, choose wise guides, and follow on the path which with so much advantage to themselves and the common weal was trodden by their fathers before them. Prejudice, it is true, is mighty, and so is the greed of money; but if the sense of what is just and rightful be not deliberately stifled, their fellow citizens are sure to be won over to a kindly feeling towards men whom they see to be in earnest as regards their work and who prefer so unmistakably right dealing to mere lucre, and the sacredness of duty to every other consideration.

61. And further great advantage would result from the state of things We are describing; there would exist so much more ground for hope, and likelihood, even, of recalling to a sense of their duty those working men who have either given up their faith altogether, or whose lives are at variance with its precepts. Such men feel in most cases that they have been fooled by empty promises and deceived by false pretexts. They cannot but perceive that their grasping employers too often treat them with great inhumanity and hardly care for them outside the profit their labor brings; and if they belong to any union, it is probably one in which there exists, instead of charity and love, that intestine strife which ever accompanies poverty when unresigned and unsustained by religion. Broken in spirit and worn down in body, how many of them would gladly free themselves from such galling bondage! But human respect, or the dread of starvation, makes them tremble to take the step. To such as these Catholic associations are of incalculable service, by helping them out of their difficulties, inviting them to companionship and receiving the returning wanderers to a haven where they may securely find repose.

62. We have now laid before you, venerable brethren, both who are the persons and what are the means whereby this most arduous question must be solved. Every one should put his hand to the work which falls to his share, and that at once and straightway, lest the evil which is already so great become through delay absolutely beyond remedy. Those who rule the commonwealths should avail themselves of the laws and institutions of the country; masters and wealthy owners must be mindful of their duty; the working class, whose interests are at stake, should make every lawful and proper effort; and since religion alone, as We said at the beginning, can avail to destroy the evil at its root, all men should rest persuaded that main thing needful is to re-establish Christian morals, apart from which all the plans and devices of the wisest will prove of little avail.

63. In regard to the Church, her cooperation will never be found lacking, be the time or the occasion what it may; and she will intervene with all the greater effect in proportion as her liberty of action is the more unfettered. Let this be carefully

taken to heart by those whose office it is to safeguard the public welfare. Every minister of holy religion must bring to the struggle the full energy of his mind and all his power of endurance. Moved by your authority, venerable brethren, and quickened by your example, they should never cease to urge upon men of every class, upon the high-placed as well as the lowly, the Gospel doctrines of Christian life; by every means in their power they must strive to secure the good of the people; and above all must earnestly cherish in themselves, and try to arouse in others, charity, the mistress and the queen of virtues. For, the happy results we all long for must be chiefly brought about by the plenteous outpouring of charity; of that true Christian charity which is the fulfilling of the whole Gospel law, which is always ready to sacrifice itself for others' sake, and is man's surest antidote against worldly pride and immoderate love of self; that charity whose office is described and whose Godlike features are outlined by the Apostle St. Paul in these words: "Charity is patient, is kind, . . . seeketh not her own, . . . suffereth all things, . . . endureth all things."(41)

64. On each of you, venerable brethren, and on your clergy and people, as an earnest of God's mercy and a mark of Our affection, we lovingly in the Lord bestow the apostolic benediction.

Given at St. Peter's in Rome, the fifteenth day of May, 1891, the fourteenth year of Our pontificate.

LEO XIII

REFERENCES:

1). The title sometimes given to this encyclical, *On the Condition of the Working Classes*, is therefore perfectly justified. A few lines after this sentence, the Pope gives a more comprehensive definition of the subject of *Rerum novarum*. We are using it as a title.

2). Deut. 5:21.

3). Gen. 1:28.

4). *Summa theologiae*, IIa-IIae, q. x, art. 12, Answer.

5). Gen. 3:17.

6). James 5:4.

7). 2 Tim. 2:12.

8). 2 Cor. 4:17.

9). Matt. 19:23-24.

10). Luke 6:24-25.

11). *Summa theologiae*, IIa-IIae, q. lxvi, art. 2, Answer.

12). Ibid.

13). Ibid., q. xxxii, a. 6, Answer.

14). Luke 11:41.

15). Acts 20:35.

16). Matt.25:40.

17). *Hom. in Evang.*, 9, n. 7 (PL 76, 1109B).

18). 2 Cor. 8:9.

19). Mark 6:3.

20). Matt.5:3.

21). Matt. 11:28.

22). Rom. 8:17.

23). 1 Tim. 6:10.

24). Acts 4:34.

25). *Apologia secunda*, 39, (*Apologeticus*, cap. 39; PL1, 533A).

26). See above, pp. 161-184.

27). *Summa theologiae*, IIa-IIae, q. lxi, are. I, ad 2m.

28). Thomas Aquinas, *On the Governance of Rulers*, 1, 15 (*Opera omnia*, ed. Vives, Vol. 27, p. 356).

29). Gen.1:28.

30). Rom. 10:12.

31). Exod.20:8.

32). Gen. 2:2.

33). Gen. 3:19.

34). Eccle.4:9-10.

35). Prov.18:19.

36). *Contra impugnantes Dei cultum et religionem*, Part 2, ch. 8 (*Opera omnia*, ed. Vives, Vol. 29, p. 16).

37). Ibid.

38). "Human law is law only by virtue of its accordance with right reason; and thus it is manifest that it flows from the eternal law. And in so far as it deviates from right reason it is called an unjust law; in such case it is no law at all, but rather a species of violence." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Ia-IIae, q. xciii, art. 3, ad 2m.

39). Matt. 16:26.

40). Matt. 6:32-33.

41). I Cor. 13:4-7.

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The Common Man

By G.K. Chesterton

The explanation, or excuse, for this essay is to be found in a certain notion, which seems to me very obvious, but which I have never, as it happens, seen stated by anybody else. It happens rather to cut across the common frontiers of current controversy. It can be used for or against Democracy, according to whether that swear-word is or is not printed with a big D. It can be connected, like most things, with religion; but only rather indirectly with my own religion. It is primarily the recognition of a fact, quite apart from the approval or disapproval of the fact. But it does involve the assertion that what has really happened, in the modern world, is practically the precise contrary of what is supposed to have happened there.

The thesis is this: that modern emancipation has really been a new persecution of the Common Man. If it has emancipated anybody, it has in rather special and narrow ways emancipated the Uncommon Man. It has given an eccentric sort of liberty to some of the hobbies of the wealthy, and occasionally to some of the more humane lunacies of the cultured. The only thing that it has forbidden is common sense, as it would have been understood by the common people. Thus, if we begin with the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we find that a man really has become more free to found a sect. But the Common Man does not in the least want to found a sect. He is much more likely, for instance, to want to found a family. And it is exactly <there> that the modern emancipators are quite likely to begin to frustrate him; in the name of Malthusianism or Eugenics or Sterilisation or at a more advanced stage of progress, probably, Infanticide. It would be a model of modern liberty to tell him that he might preach anything, however wild, about the Virgin Birth, so long as he avoided anything like a natural birth; and that he was welcome to build a tin chapel to preach a twopenny creed, entirely based on the text, "Enoch begat Methuselah", so long as he himself is forbidden to beget anybody. And, as a matter of historical

fact, the sects which enjoyed this sectarian freedom, in the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries, were generally founded by merchants or manufacturers of the comfortable, and sometimes of the luxurious classes. On the other hand, it is strictly to the lower classes, to use the liberal modern title for the poor, that such schemes as Sterilisation are commonly directed and applied.

It is the same when we pass from the Protestant world of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to the Progressive world of the nineteenth and twentieth. Here the form of freedom mostly claimed, as a boast and a dogma, is the freedom of the Press. It is no longer merely a freedom of pamphlets but a freedom of papers; or rather, it is less and less a freedom at all, and more and more a monopoly. But the important point is that the process, the test and the comparison are the same as in the first example. Modern emancipation means this: that anybody who can afford it can publish a newspaper. But the Common Man would not want to publish a newspaper, even if he could afford it. He might want, for instance, to go on talking politics in a pothouse or the parlour of an inn. And that is exactly the sort of really popular talk about politics which modern movements have often abolished: the old democracies by forbidding the pothouse, the new dictatorships by forbidding the politics.

Or again, it is the boast of recent emancipated ethics and politics not to put any great restraints upon anybody who wants to publish a book, especially a scientific book, full of psychology or sociology; and perhaps unavoidably full of perversions and polite pornography. As that modern tendency increased, it was less and less likely that the police would interfere very much with a man publishing the sort of book that only the wealthy could publish with sumptuous artistic plates or scientific diagrams. It is much more probable, in most modern societies, ' that the police would be found interfering with a man singing a song, of a coarse and candid description, bawling out a ballad of the grosser sort, or even using the more restrained medium of prose with a similar lack of restraint. Yet there is a great deal to be said for song, or even speech, of the old ribald sort, as compared with writing of the new sort, when it is at once analytic

and anarchic. The old obscenity had a gusto and a great virility even in its violence, which is not easily rendered in a diagram or a table of statistics; and the old was always normal and never had any of the horrors of abnormality. The point is that, here again, the Common Man does not generally want to write a book, whereas he may occasionally want to sing a song. He certainly does not want to write a book on psychology or sociology – or to read, it. But he does want to talk, to sing, to shout, to yell and howl on due and suitable occasions; and, rightly or wrongly, it is when he is thus engaged that he is much more likely to fall foul of a policeman than when he is (as he never is) writing a scientific study of a new theory of sex. The upshot of uplift, in the modern sense, is the same in practice as in the previous examples. In the actual atmosphere of the age, men will still be arrested for using a certain kind of language, long after they cannot be arrested for writing a certain kind of literature.

It would be easy to give other examples; but these contemporary examples are already too continuous to be a coincidence. It is equally true, for instance, that the liberating movement of the eighteenth century, the life in the American and French Revolutions, while it did really vindicate many virtues of republican simplicity and civic liberty, also accepted as virtues several things that were obviously vices: that had been recognised as vices long before, and are now again beginning to be recognised as vices so long afterwards. Where even ambition had once been a pardonable vice, avarice became an utterly unpardonable virtue. Liberal economics too often meant merely giving to those already rich the liberty to grow richer, and magnificently granting to the poor the permission to remain rather poorer than before. It was much more certain that the usurer was released to practise usury than that the peasant was released from the practices of the usurer. It was much more certain that the Wheat Pit was as big as the Bottomless Pit, than that the man who grew wheat would ever be found anywhere except at the bottom.

There was a sense in which “liberal economics” were a proclamation of freedom, for the few who were rich enough to be

free. Nobody thought there was anything queer about talking of prominent public men “gambling” in the Wheat Pit. But all this time, there were laws of all kinds against normal human gambling; that is, against games of chance. The poor man was prevented from gambling, precisely because he did not gamble so much as the rich man. The beadle or the policeman might stop children from playing chuckfarthing; but it was strictly because it was only a farthing that was chucked. Progress never interfered with the game of chuck-fortune, because much more than a farthing was being chucked. The enlightened and emancipated age especially encouraged those who chucked away other people’s fortunes instead of their own. But anyhow, the comparison remains continuous and clear. Progress, in the sense of the progress that has progressed since the sixteenth century, has upon every matter persecuted the Common Man; punished the gambling he enjoys and permitted the gambling he cannot follow; restrained the obscenity that might amuse him and applauded the obscenity that would certainly bore him; silenced the political quarrels that can be conducted among men and applauded the political stunts and syndicates that can only be conducted by millionaires; encouraged anybody who had anything to say against God, if it was said with a priggish and supercilious accent; but discouraged anybody who had anything to say in favour of Man, in his common relations to manhood and motherhood and the normal appetites of nature. Progress has been merely the persecution of the Common Man.

Progress has a hagiology, a martyrology, a mass of miraculous legends of its own, like any other religion; and they are mostly false and belong to a false religion. The most famous is the fancy that the young and progressive person is always martyred by the old and ordinary person. But it is false. It is the old and ordinary person who is almost always the martyr. It is the old and ordinary person who has been more and more despoiled of all his old and ordinary rights. In so far as this progress progresses, it is far more likely that six million men will be forbidden to go to sleep, because six men say that certain breathing exercises are a substitute for slumber, than that

any of the six million somnambulists will wake up sufficiently to clout the six men over their highbrowed but half-witted heads. There is no normal thing that cannot now be taken from the normal man. It is much more likely that a law will be passed to forbid the eating of grain (notoriously the parent of poisons like beer and whisky) than that it will be even faintly suggested, to men of that philosophy, that the economic evil is that men cannot grow grain, and that the ethical evil is that men are still despised for growing it. Given the purely progressive principle, and nothing else as a guide to our future, it is entirely possible that they may be hanged or buried alive for growing it. But of course, in a scientific age, they will be electrocuted – or perhaps only tortured by electricity.

Thus far my thesis is this: that it is not the Uncommon Man who is persecuted; but rather the Common Man. But this brings me into direct conflict with the contemporary reaction, which seems to say, in effect, that the Common Man had much better be persecuted. It is quite certain that many modern thinkers and -writers honestly feel a contempt for the Common Man; it is also quite certain that I myself feel a contempt for those who feel this contempt. But the actual issue must be faced more fully; – because what is called the reaction against democracy is at this moment the chief result of democracy. Now on this quarrel I am democratic, or at least defiant of the attacks of democracy. I do not believe that most modern people have seen the real point of the advantage or disadvantage of popular rule; and my doubt can be very largely suggested and summarised under this title of the Common Man.

To put it briefly; it is now the custom to say that most modern blunders have been due to the Common Man. And I should like to point out what appalling blunders have in fact been due to the Uncommon Man. It is easy enough to argue that the mob makes mistakes; but as a fact it never has a chance even to make mistakes until its superiors have used their superiority to make much worse mistakes. It is easy to weary of democracy and cry out for an intellectual aristocracy. But the trouble is that every intellectual aristocracy seems to have been utterly unintellectual. Anybody

might guess beforehand that there would be blunders of the ignorant. What nobody could have guessed, what nobody could have dreamed of in a nightmare, what no morbid mortal imagination could ever have dared to imagine, was the mistakes of the well-informed. It is true, in a sense, to say that the mob has always been led by more educated men. It is much more true, in every sense, to say that it has always been misled by educated men. It is easy enough to say the cultured man should be the crowd's guide, philosopher and friend. Unfortunately, he has nearly always been a misleading guide, a false friend and a very shallow philosopher. And the actual catastrophes we have suffered, including those we are now suffering, have not in historical fact been due to the prosaic practical people who are supposed to know nothing, but almost invariably to the highly theoretical people who knew that they knew everything. The world may learn. by its mistakes; but they are mostly the mistakes of the learned.

To go back no further than the seventeenth century, the quarrel between the Puritans and the populace was originally due to the pride of a few men in being able to read a printed book, and their scorn for people who had good memories, good traditions, good stories, good songs, and good pictures in glass or gold or graven stone, and therefore had less need of books. It was a tyranny of literates over illiterates. But it was the literates who were narrow, sullen, limited and often oppressive; it was the illiterates who were, at least relatively, gay and free and fanciful and imaginative and interested in everything. The Uncommon Men, the elect of the Calvinist theory, did undoubtedly lead the people along the next stretch of the path of progress; but what it led to was a prison. The book-reading rulers and statesmen managed to establish the Scottish Sabbath. Meanwhile, a thousand traditions, of the sort they -would have trampled out, yet managed to trickle down from the medieval poor to the modern poor, and lingering as legends in countless cottages and farmhouses, were collected by Scott (often repeated orally by people who could not read or write) to combine in the construction of the great Scottish Romances, which profoundly

moved and partly inspired the Romantic Movement throughout the world.

When we pass to the eighteenth century, we find the same part played by a new and quite contrary party; differing from the last in everything except in being the same sort of rather dried up aristocracy. The new Uncommon Men, now leading the people, are no longer Calvinists, but a dry sort of Deists drying up more and more like Atheists; and they are no longer pessimists but the reverse; only their optimism is often more depressing than pessimism. There were the Benthamites, the Utilitarians, the servants of the Economic Man; the first Free-Traders. They have the credit of having first made clear the economic theories of the modern state; and the calculations on which were mainly based the politics of the nineteenth century. It was they who taught these things scientifically and systematically to the public, and even to the populace. But what were the things, and what were the theories? Perhaps the best and broadest of them was a most monstrous and mythical superstition of Adam Smith; a theological theory that providence had so made the world that men might be happy through their selfishness; or, in other words, that God would overrule everything for good, if only men could succeed in being sufficiently bad. The intellectuals in this epoch taught definitely and dogmatically that if only men would buy and sell freely, lend or borrow freely, sweat or sack freely, and in practice, steal or swindle freely, humanity would be happy. The Common Man soon found out how happy; in the Slums where they left him and in the Slump to which they led him.

We need not continue, through the last two centuries, all the tale of the frenzy and folly inflicted by the fickleness of the educated class on the relative stability of the uneducated. The fickle intellectuals next rushed to the other extreme, and became Socialists, despising small property as they had despised popular tradition. It is quite true that these intellectuals had a lucid interval in which they proclaimed some primary truth, along with many priggish falsehoods. Some of them did rightly exalt liberty and human dignity and equality, as expressed in the Declaration of Independence. But

even that was so much mishandled that there is now a disposition to deny the truth along with the falsehood. There has been a reaction against Democracy; or, in plain words, the prigs are now too bored even to go on with their normal routine about the Common Man; the familiar routine of oppressing him in practice and adoring him in theory.

I do not adore him, but I do believe in him; at least I believe in him much more than I believe in them. I think the actual history of the relations between him and them, as I have narrated it, is enough to justify my preference. I repeat that they have had all the educational advantages over him; they have always led him; and they have always misled him. And even in becoming reactionaries, they remain as raw and crude as when they were revolutionaries. Their anti-democracy is as much stuffed with cant as their democracy. I need only allude to the detestable new fashion of referring to ordinary men as morons. First, it is pedantry, the dullest form of vanity; for a moron is only the Greek for a fool; and it is mostly sham pedantry, for most of those who mention morons hardly know they are talking Greek, still less why on earth they should. It also involves this moral evil: that a man who says that men are mostly fools knows at least that he has often made a fool of himself; whereas the morons are thought of like monkeys; as if they were a fixed tribe or caste. The Common Man may well be the victim of a new series of tyrannies, founded on this scientific fad of regarding him as a monkey. But it is doubtful whether he can be much more persecuted for having the instincts of a moron, than he has already been for having the instincts of a man.

Government & the Rights of Man

By G.K. Chesterton

I could never see why a man who is not free to open his mouth to drink should be free to open it to talk. Talking does far more direct harm to other people. The village suffers less directly from the village drunkard than it might from the village tale bearer, or the village tub-thumper, or the village villain who seduces the village maiden. These and twenty other types of evil are done simply by talking; it is certain that a vast amount of evil would be prevented if we all wore gags. And the answer is not to deny that slander is a social poison, or seduction a spiritual murder. The answer is that, unless a man is allowed to talk, he might as well be a chimpanzee who is only able to chatter. In other words, if a man loses the responsibility for these rudimentary functions and forms of freedom, he loses not only his citizenship, but his manhood.

But there are other personal liberties still permitted us, more elaborate and civilized than that simple human speech which is still closely akin to the chatter of the chimpanzees. By some official oversight, which I am quite unable to explain, we are still allowed to write private letters if we put them in public pillar-boxes. The Postmaster-General does not write all our letters for us; even the local postman has as yet no such local powers. I cannot conceive how it is that reformers have failed to note the need for uniting, reorganizing, coordinating, codifying, and linking up all this complex, chaotic, and wasteful system, or lack of system. There must be vast amounts of overlapping, with some six young gentlemen writing letters to one young lady. There must be a terribly low educational standard, with all sorts of poor people allowed to put into a private letter any spelling or grammar they like. There must be a number of bad psychological habits being formed, by foolish people writing their sons in the Colonies or their mothers in the workhouse. And all this anarchy and deterioration could be stopped by the simple process of standardisation of all

correspondence. I know if I use the word “standardisation,” Mr. H.G. Wells will welcome it and begin to think of it seriously [indeed there opens before me a vista of vast social reform].

On the face of it, the first and most obvious method would be for the Government to send round official forms for our friendly correspondence, to be filled up like the forms about insurance or Income Tax. Here and there, even in the most model communication, there would be words left blank, which the individual might be allowed to fill out himself. I have a half-formed ideal of an official love letter, printed in the manner of “I _____you,” so that the citizen might insert “love,” or “like,” or “adore,” with a view to the new civil marriage; or “renounce,” or “repudiate,” or “execrate,” with a view to the newer and more civil divorce. But even these blanks for verbal variation must be admitted with caution; for the aim of the whole reform is to raise the general level of all correspondence to a height unattainable by the majority of the people as yet.

It may be hinted that I plead for this reform with the passion of self interest, for it would enable me to neglect my correspondence in theory as I already neglect it in practice. I very seldom write to anybody; and I never write to the people I like best. About them I do not trouble, for they understand. But there are unanswered letters from total strangers about which I feel a remorse. Some day I shall make a list of the people I should have liked to answer, or advertise for them by such details as I can remember them. If I had any money I should like to leave them millions of it when I die. It may be said that I should get off cheaply, if the government would sent round to all these people an official card in my name [instead].

But I am not really converted to my own project, even by my own failure. I am not really convinced of the necessity of standardised correspondence, either by the existence of criminal letters or my own criminal neglect of letters. If or when, in some strange mood at some distant date, I should actually answer a letter, I should still prefer to answer it myself. even if I had nothing to write

except an apology for not writing, I should prefer my self-abasement to have the character of self-determination.

It is a most extraordinary fact that all modern talk about self-determination is applied to everything except the self. It is applied to the State but it is not applied to the very thing to which its verbal formula professes to apply. I, for one, do believe in that mystical doctrine of democracy, which pre-supposes that England has a soul, or that France has a self. But surely it is much more obvious and ordinary fact that Jones has a self and Robinson has a self. And the question I have here discussed under the parable of the Post Office is not the question of whether there are abuses in drink or diet, as there are calumny and blackmail in any pillar-box or postman's bag. It is the question of whether in these days the claims of government are to leave anything whatever of the rights of man.

Democracy & Industrialism

By G.K. Chesterton

It grows plainer, every day, that those of us who cling to crumbling creeds and dogmas, and defend the dying traditions of the Dark Ages, will soon be left alone defending the most obviously decaying of all those ancient dogmas: the idea called Democracy. It has taken not quite a lifetime, roughly my own lifetime, to bring it from the top of its success, or alleged success, to the bottom of its failure, or reputed failure. By the end of the nineteenth century, millions of men were accepting democracy without knowing why. By the end of the twentieth century, it looks as if millions of people will be rejecting democracy, also without knowing why. In such a straight, strictly logical and unwavering line does the Mind of Man advance along the great Path of Progress.

Anyhow, at the moment, democracy is not only being abused, but being very unfairly abused. Men are blaming universal suffrage, merely because they are not enlightened enough to blame original sin. There is one simple test for deciding whether popular political evils are due to original sin. And that is to do what none or very few of these modern malcontents are doing; to state any sort of moral claim for any other sort of political system. The essence of democracy is very simple and, as Jefferson said, self-evident. If ten men are wrecked together on a desert island, the community consists of those ten men, their welfare is the social object, and normally their will is the social law. If they have not a natural claim to rule themselves, which of them has a natural claim to rule the rest? To say that the cleverest or boldest will rule is to beg the moral question. If his talents are used for the community, in planning voyages or distilling water, then he is the servant of the community; which is, in that sense, his sovereign. If his talents are used against the community by stealing rum or poisoning water, why should the community submit to him? and is it in the least likely that it will? In such a simple case as that, everybody can see the popular basis of

the thing, and the advantage of government by consent. The trouble with democracy is that it has never, in modern times, had to do with such a simple case as that. In other words, the trouble with democracy is not democracy. It is certain artificial anti-democratic things that have, in fact, thrust themselves into the modern world to thwart and destroy democracy.

Modernity is not democracy; machinery is not democracy; the surrender of everything to trade and commerce is not democracy. Capitalism is not democracy; and is admittedly, by trend and savour, rather against democracy. Plutocracy by definition is not democracy. But all these modern things forced themselves into the world at about the time, or shortly after the time, when great idealists like Rousseau and Jefferson happened to have been thinking about the democratic ideal of democracy. It is tenable that the ideal was too idealist to succeed. It is not tenable that the ideal that failed was the same as the realities that did succeed. It is one thing to say that a fool went into a jungle and was devoured by wild beasts; it is quite another to say that he himself survives as the one and only wild beast. Democracy has had everything against it in practice, and that very fact may be something against it in theory. It may be argued that it has human life against it. But, at any rate, it is quite certain that it has modern life against it. The industrial and scientific world of the last hundred years has been much more unsuitable a setting for the experiment of the self-government than would have been found in old conditions of agrarian or even nomadic life. Feudal manorial life was a not a democracy; but it could have been much more easily turned into a democracy. Later peasant life, as in France or Switzerland, actually has been quite easily turned into a democracy. But it is horribly hard to turn what is called modern industrial democracy into a democracy.

That is why many men are now beginning to say that the democratic ideal is no longer in touch with the modern spirit. I strongly agree; and I naturally prefer the democratic ideal, which is at least an ideal, and therefore, an idea, to the modern spirit, which is simply modern, therefore, already becoming ancient. I notice that

the cranks, whom it would be more polite to call the idealists, are already hastening to shed this ideal. A well-known Pacifist, with whom I argued in Radical papers in my Radical days, and who then passed as a pattern Republican of the new Republic, went out of his way the other day to say, 'The voice of the people is commonly the voice of Satan.' The truth is that these Liberals never did really believe in popular government, any more than in anything else that was popular, such as pubs or the Dublin Sweepstakes. They did not believe in the democracy they invoked against kings and priests. But I did believe in it; and I do believe in it, though I much preferred to invoke it against prigs and faddists. I still believe it would be the most human sort of government, if it could be once more attempted in a more human time.

Unfortunately, humanitarianism has been the mark of an inhuman time. And by inhumanity I do not mean merely cruelty; I mean the condition in which even cruelty ceases to be human. I mean the condition in which the rich man, instead of hanging six or seven of his enemies because he hates them, merely beggars and starves to death six or seven thousand people whom he does not hate, and has never seen, because they live at the other side of the world. I mean the condition in which the courtier or pander of the rich man, instead of excitedly mixing a rare, original poison for the Borgias, or carving exquisite ornamental poignard for the political purposes of the Medici, works monotonously in a factory turning out a small type of screw, which will fit into a plate he will never see; to form part of a gun he will never see; to be used in a battle he will never see, and about the merits of which he knows far less than the Renaissance rascal knew about the purposes of the poison and the dagger. In short, what is the matter with industrialism is indirection; the fact that nothing is straightforward; that all its ways are crooked even when they are meant to be straight. Into this most indirect of all systems we tried to fit the most direct of all ideas. Democracy, an ideal which is simple to excess, was vainly applied to a society which was complex to the point of craziness. It is not so very surprising that such a vision has faded in such an environment. Personally, I like

the vision; but it takes all sorts to make a world, and there actually are human beings, walking about quite calmly in the daylight, who appear to like the environment.

Sex & Property

By G.K. Chesterton

In the dull, dusty, stale, stiff-jointed and lumbering language, to which most modern discussion is limited, it is necessary to say that there is at this moment the same fashionable fallacy about Sex and about Property. In the older and freer language, in which men could both speak and sing, it is truer to say that the same evil spirit has blasted the two great powers that make the poetry of life; the Love of Woman and the Love of the Land. It is important to observe, to start with, that the two things were closely connected so long as humanity was human, even when it was heathen. Nay, they were still closely connected, even when it was a decadent heathenism. But even the stink of decaying heathenism has not been so bad as the stink of decaying Christianity. The corruption of the best...

For instance, there were throughout antiquity, both in its first stage and its last, modes of idolatry and imagery of which Christian men can hardly speak. "Let them not be so much as named among you." [See Ephesians 5:3] Men wallowed in the mere sexuality of a mythology of sex; they organised prostitution like priesthood, for the service of their temples; they made pornography their only poetry; they paraded emblems that turned even architecture into a sort of cold and colossal exhibitionism. Many learned books have been written of all these phallic cults; and anybody can go to them for the details, for all I care. But what interests me is this:

In one way all this ancient sin was infinitely superior, immeasurably superior, to the modern sin. All those who write of it at least agree on one fact; that it was the cult of Fruitfulness. It was unfortunately too often interwoven, very closely, with the cult of the fruitfulness of the land. It was at least on the side of Nature. It was at least on the side of Life. It has been left to the last Christians, or rather to the first Christians fully committed to blaspheming and denying Christianity, to invent a new kind of worship of Sex, which is not even a worship of Life. It has been left to the very latest

Modernists to proclaim an erotic religion which at once exalts lust and forbids fertility. The new Paganism literally merits the reproach of Swinburne, when mourning for the old Paganism: "and rears not the bountiful token and spreads not the fatherly feast." The new priests abolish the fatherhood and keep the feast – to themselves. They are worse than Swinburne's Pagans. The priests of Priapus and Cotytto [fertility deities.] go into the kingdom of heaven before them.

Now it is not unnatural that this unnatural separation, between sex and fruitfulness, which even the Pagans would have thought a perversion, has been accompanied with a similar separation and perversion about the nature of the love of the land. In both departments there is precisely the same fallacy; which it is quite possible to state precisely. The reason why our contemporary countrymen do not understand what we mean by Property is that they only think of it in the sense of Money; in the sense of salary; in the sense of something which is immediately consumed, enjoyed and expended; something which gives momentary pleasure and disappears. They do not understand that we mean by Property something that includes that pleasure incidentally; but begins and ends with something far more grand and worthy and creative. The man who makes an orchard where there has been a field, who owns the orchard and decides to whom it shall descend, does also enjoy the taste of apples; and let us hope, also, the taste of cider. But he is doing something very much grander, and ultimately more gratifying, than merely eating an apple. He is imposing his will upon the world in the manner of the charter given him by the will of God; he is asserting that his soul is his own, and does not belong to the Orchard Survey Department, or the chief Trust in the Apple Trade. But he is also doing something which was implicit in all the most ancient religions of the earth; in those great panoramas of pageantry and ritual that followed the order of the seasons in China or Babylonia; he is worshipping the fruitfulness of the world. Now the notion of narrowing property merely to <enjoying> money is exactly like the notion of narrowing love merely to <enjoying> sex. In both cases an

incidental, isolated, servile and even secretive pleasure is substituted for participation in a great creative process; even in the everlasting Creation of the world.

The two sinister things can be seen side by side in the system of Bolshevik Russia; for Communism is the only complete and logical working model of Capitalism. The sins are there a system which are everywhere else a sort of repeated blunder. From the first, it is admitted, that the whole system was directed towards encouraging or driving the worker to spend his wages; to have nothing left on the next pay day; to enjoy everything and consume everything and efface everything; in short, to shudder at the thought of only one crime; the creative crime of thrift. It was a tame extravagance; a sort of disciplined dissipation; a meek and submissive prodigality. For the moment the slave left off drinking all his wages, the moment he began to hoard or hide any property, he would be saving up something which might ultimately purchase his liberty. He might begin to count for something in the State; that is, he might become less of a slave and more of a citizen. Morally considered, there has been nothing quite so unspeakably mean as this Bolshevik generosity. But it will be noted that exactly the same spirit and tone pervades the manner of dealing with the other matter. Sex also is to come to the slave merely as a pleasure; that it may never be a power. He is to know as little as possible, or at least to think as little as possible, of the pleasure as anything else except a pleasure; to think or know nothing of where it comes from or where it will go to, when once the soiled object has passed through his own hands. He is not to trouble about its origin in the purposes of God or its sequel in the posterity of man. In every department he is not a possessor, but only a consumer; even if it be of the first elements of life and fire in so far as they are consumable; he is to have no notion of the sort of Burning Bush that burns and is not consumed. For that bush only grows on the soil, on the real land where human beings can behold it; and the spot on which they stand is holy ground. Thus there is an exact parallel between the two modern moral, or immoral, ideas of social reform. The world has forgotten simultaneously that the making of

a Farm is something much larger than the making of a profit, or even a product, in the sense of liking the taste of beetroot sugar; and that the founding of a Family is something much larger than sex in the limited sense of current literature; which was anticipated in one bleak and blinding flash in a single line of George Meredith; "And eat our pot of honey on the grave."

A Misunderstanding about Method

By G.K. Chesterton

Before I go any further with this sketch, I find I must pause upon a parenthesis touching the nature of my task, without which the rest of it may be misunderstood. As a matter of fact, without pretending to any official or commercial experience, I am here doing a great deal more than has ever been asked of most of the mere men of letters (if I may call myself for the moment a man of letters) when they confidently conducted social movements or set up social ideals. I will promise that, by the end of these notes, the reader shall know a great deal more about how men might set about making a Distributive State than the readers of Carlyle ever knew about how they should set about finding a Hero King or a Real Superior. I think we can explain how to make a small shop or a small farm a common feature of our society better than Matthew Arnold explained how to make the State the organ of Our Best Self. I think the farm will be marked on some sort of rude map more clearly than the Earthly Paradise on the navigation chart of William Morris; and I think that in comparison with his News from Nowhere this might fairly be called News from Somewhere. Rousseau and Ruskin were often much more vague and visionary than I am; though Rousseau was even more rigid in abstractions, and Ruskin was sometimes very much excited about particular details. I need not say that I am not comparing myself to these great men; I am only pointing out that even from these, whose minds dominated so much wider a field, and whose position as publicists was much more respected and responsible, nothing was as a matter of fact asked beyond the general principles we are accused of giving. I am merely pointing out that the task has fallen to a very minor poet when these very major prophets were not required to carry out and complete the fulfilment of their own prophecies. It would seem that our fathers did not think it quite so futile to have a clear vision of the goal with or without a

detailed map of the road; or to be able to describe a scandal without going on to describe a substitute. Anyhow, for whatever reason, it is quite certain that if I really were great enough to deserve the reproaches of the utilitarians, if I really were as merely idealistic or imaginative as they make me out, if I really did confine myself to describing a direction without exactly measuring a road, to pointing towards home or heaven and telling men to use their own good sense in getting there if this were really all that I could do, it would be all that men immeasurably greater than I am were ever expected to do; from Plato and Isaiah to Emerson and Tolstoy.

But it is not all that I can do; even though those who did not do it did so much more. I can do something else as well; but I can only do it if it be understood what I am doing. At the same time I am well aware that, in explaining the improvement of so elaborate a society, a man may often find it very difficult to explain exactly what he is doing, until it is done. I have considered and rejected half a dozen ways of approaching the problem, by different roads that all lead to the same truth. I had thought of beginning with the simple example of the peasant; and then I knew that a hundred correspondents would leap upon me, accusing me of trying to turn all of them into peasants. I thought of beginning with describing a decent Distributive State in being, with all its balance of different things; just as the Socialists describe their Utopia in being, with its concentration in one thing. Then I knew a hundred correspondents would call me Utopian; and say it was obvious my scheme could not work, because I could only describe it when it was working. But what they would really mean by my being Utopian, would be this: that until that scheme was working, there was no work to be done. I have finally decided to approach the social solution in this fashion: to point out first that the monopolist momentum is not irresistible; that even here and now much could be done to modify it, much by anybody, almost everything by everybody. Then I would maintain that on the removal of that particular plutocratic pressure, the appetite and appreciation of natural property would revive, like any other natural thing. Then, I say, it will be worth while to propound

to people thus returning to sanity, however sporadically, a sane society that could balance property and control machinery. With the description of that ultimate society, with its laws and limitations, I would conclude.

Now that may or may not be a good arrangement or order of ideas; but it is an intelligible one; and I submit with all humility that I have a right to arrange my explanations in that order, and no critic has a right to complain that I do not disarrange them in order to answer questions out of their order. I am willing to write him a whole Encyclopedia of Distributism if he has the patience to read it; but he must have the patience to read it. It is unreasonable for him to complain that I have not dealt adequately with Zoology, State Provision for, under the letter B; or described the honourable social status of the Guild of the Xylographers while I am still dealing alphabetically with the Guild of Architects. I am willing to be as much of a bore as Euclid; but the critic must not complain that the forty-eighth proposition of the second book is not a part of the . [Note: There is no 48th proposition in Book II of Euclid. This is a trick question which would stump someone without even basic training, but which is obvious to the initiate: that is the meaning of the, which is “the proposition that the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal to each other”. It is interesting to know that the 48th proposition of the first book is the converse of the 47th – the famous Pythagorean Theorem.] The ancient Guild of Bridge-Builders will have to build many such bridges.

Now from comments that have come my way, I gather that the suggestions I have already made may not altogether explain their own place and purpose in this scheme. I am merely pointing out that monopoly is not omnipotent even now and here; and that anybody could think, on the spur of the moment, of many ways in which its final triumph can be delayed and perhaps defeated. Suppose a monopolist who is my mortal enemy endeavours to ruin me by preventing me from selling eggs to my neighbors, I can tell him I shall live on my own turnips in my own kitchen-garden. I do not mean to tie myself to turnips; or swear never to touch my own

potatoes or beans. I mean the turnips as an example: something to throw at him. Suppose the wicked millionaire in question comes and grins over my garden wall and says, “I perceive by your starved and emaciated appearance that you are in immediate need of a few shillings; but you can’t possibly get them,” I may possibly be stung into retorting, “Yes, I can. I could sell my first edition of .” I do not necessarily mean that I see myself already in a pauper’s grave unless I can sell ; I do not mean that I have nothing else to suggest except selling; I do not mean to brag like any common politician that I have nailed my colours to the policy. I mean to tell the offensive pessimist that I am not at the end of my resources; that I can sell a book or even, if the case grows desperate, write a book. I could do a great many things before I came to definitely anti-social action like robbing a bank or (worse still) working in a bank. I could do a great many things of a great many kinds, and I give an example at the start to suggest that there are many more of them, not that there are no more of them. There are a great many things of a great many kinds in my house, besides the copy of . Not many of them are of great value except to me; but some of them are of some value to anybody. For the whole point of a home is that it is a hotch-potch. And mine, at any rate, rises to that austere domestic ideal. The whole point of one’s own house is that it is not only a number of totally different things, which are nevertheless one thing, but it is one in which we still value even the things that we forget. If a man has burnt my house to a heap of ashes, I am none the less justly indignant with him for having burnt everything, because I cannot at first even remember everything he has burnt. And as it is with the household gods, so it is with the whole of that household religion, or what remains of it, to offer resistance to the destructive discipline of industrial capitalism. In a simpler society, I should rush out of the ruins, calling for help on the Commune or the King, and crying out, “Haro! a robber has burnt my house.” I might, of course, rush down the street crying in one passionate breath, “Haro! a robber has burnt my front door of seasoned oak with the usual fittings, fourteen window frames, nine curtains, five and a half carpets, 753 books, of which four were , one portrait of my great-grandmother,” and so on

through all the items; but something would be lost of the fierce and simple feudal cry. And in the same way I could have begun this outline with an inventory of all the alterations I should like to see in the laws, with the object of establishing some economic justice in England. But I doubt whether the reader would have had any better idea of what I was ultimately driving at; and it would not have been the approach by which I propose at present to drive. I shall have occasion later to go into some slight detail about these things; but the cases I give are merely illustrations of my first general thesis: that we are not even at the moment doing everything that could be done to resist the rush of monopoly; and that when people talk as if nothing could now be done, that statement is false at the start; and that all sorts of answers to it will immediately occur to the mind.

Capitalism is breaking up; and in one sense we do not pretend to be sorry it is breaking up. Indeed, we might put our own point pretty correctly by saying that we would help it to break up; but we do not want it merely to break down. But the first fact to realize is precisely that; that it is a choice between its breaking up and its breaking down. It is a choice between its being voluntarily resolved into its real component parts, each taking back its own, and its merely collapsing on our heads in a crash or confusion of all its component parts, which some call communism and some call chaos. The former is the one thing all sensible people should try to procure. The latter is the one thing that all sensible people should try to prevent. That is why they are often classed together.

I have mainly confined myself to answering what I have always found to be the first question, "What are we to do now?" To that I answer, "What we must do now is to stop the other people from doing what they are doing now." The initiative is with the enemy. It is he who is already doing things, and will have done them long before we can begin to do anything, since he has the money, the machinery, the rather mechanical majority, and other things which we have first to gain and then to use. He has nearly completed a monopolist conquest, but not quite; and he can still be hampered and halted. The world has woken up very late, but that is not our

fault. That is the fault of all the fools who told us for twenty years that there could never be any Trusts; and are now telling us, equally wisely, that there can never be anything else.

There are other things I ask the reader to bear in mind. The first is that this outline is only an outline, though one that can hardly avoid some curves and loops. I do not profess to dispose of all the obstacles that might arise in this question, because so many of them would seem to many to be quite a different question. I will give one example of what I mean. What would the critical reader have thought, if at the very beginning of this sketch I had gone off into a long disputation about the Law of Libel? Yet, if I were strictly practical, I should find that one of the most practical obstacles. It is the present ridiculous position that monopoly is not resisted as a social force but can still be resented as a legal imputation. If you try to stop a man cornering milk, the first thing that happens will be a smashing libel action for calling it a corner. It is manifestly mere common sense that if the thing is not a sin it is not a slander. As things stand, there is no punishment for the man who does it; but there is a punishment for the man who discovers it. I do not deal here (though I am quite prepared to deal elsewhere) with all these detailed difficulties which a society as now constituted would raise against such a society as we want to constitute. If it were constituted on the principles I suggest, those details would be dealt with on those principles as they arose. For instance, it would put an end to the nonsense whereby men, who are more powerful than emperors, pretend to be private tradesmen suffering from private malice; it will assert that those who are in practice public men must be criticized as potential public evils. It would destroy the absurdity by which an "important case" is tried by a "special jury"; or, in other words, that any serious issue between rich and poor is tried by the rich. But the reader will see that I cannot here rule out all the ten thousand things that might trip us up; I must assume that a people ready to take the larger risks would also take the smaller ones.

Now this outline is an outline; in other words, it is a design, and anybody who thinks we can have practical things without theoretical

designs can go and quarrel with the nearest engineer or architect for drawing thin lines on thin paper. But there is another and more special sense in which my suggestion is an outline; in the sense that it is deliberately drawn as a large limitation within which there are many varieties. I have long been acquainted, and not a little amused, with the sort of practical man who will certainly say that I generalize because there is no practical plan. The truth is that I generalize because there are so many practical plans. I myself know four or five schemes that have been drawn up, more or less drastically, for the diffusion of capital. The most cautious, from a capitalist standpoint, is the gradual extension of profit-sharing. A more stringently democratic form of the same thing is the management of every business (if it be a small business) by a guild or group clubbing their contributions and dividing their results. Some Distributists dislike the idea of the workman having shares only where he has work; they think he would be more independent if his little capital were invested elsewhere; but they all agree that he ought to have the capital to invest. Others continue to call themselves Distributists because they would give every citizen a dividend out of much larger national systems of production. I deliberately draw out my general principles so as to cover as many as possible of these alternative business schemes. But I object to being told that I am covering so many because I know there are none. If I tell a man he is too luxurious and extravagant, and that he ought to economize in something, I am not bound to give him a list of his luxuries. The point is that he will be all the better for cutting down any of his luxuries. And my point is that modern society would be all the better for cutting up property by any of these processes. This does not mean that I have not my own favourite form; personally I prefer the second type of division given in the above list of examples. But my main business is to point out that any reversal of the rush to concentrate property will be an improvement on the present state of things. If I tell a man his house is burning down in Putney, he may thank me even if I do not give him a list of all the vehicles which go to Putney, with the numbers of all the taxicabs and the time-table of all the trams. It is enough that I know there are a great many vehicles for him to choose from,

before he is reduced to the proverbial adventure of going to Putney on a pig. It is enough that any one of those vehicles is on the whole less uncomfortable than a house on fire or even a heap of ashes. I admit I might be called unpractical if impenetrable forests and destructive floods lay between here and Putney; it might then be as merely idealistic to praise Putney as to praise Paradise. But I do not admit that I am unpractical because I know there are half a dozen practical ways which are more practical than the present state of things. But it does not follow, in fact, that I do not know how to get to Putney. Here, for instance, are half a dozen things which would help the process of Distributism, apart from those on which I shall have occasion to touch as points of principle. Not all Distributists would agree with all of them; but all would agree that they are in the direction of Distributism. (1) The taxation of contracts so as to discourage the sale of small property to big proprietors and encourage the break-up of big property among small proprietors. (2) Something like the Napoleonic testamentary law and the destruction of primogeniture. (3) The establishment of free law for the poor, so that small property could always be defended against great. (4) The deliberate protection of certain experiments in small property, if necessary by tariffs and even local tariffs. (5) Subsidies to foster the starting of such experiments. (6) A league of voluntary dedication, and any number of other things of the same kind. But I have inserted this chapter here in order to explain that this is a sketch of the first principles of Distributism and not of the last details, about which even Distributists might dispute. In such a statement, examples are given as examples, and not as exact and exhaustive lists of all the cases covered by the rule. If this elementary principle of exposition be not understood, I must be content to be called an unpractical person by that sort of practical man. And indeed in his sense there is something in his accusation. Whether or no I am a practical man, I am not what is called a practical politician, which means a professional politician. I can claim no part in the glory of having brought our country to its present promising and hopeful condition. Harder heads than mine have established the present prosperity of coal. Men of action, of a more rugged energy, have brought us to the

comfortable condition of living on our capital. I have had no part in the great industrial revolution which has increased the beauties of nature and reconciled the classes of society; nor must the too enthusiastic reader think of thanking me for this more enlightened England, in which the employee is living on a dole from the State and the employer on an overdraft at the Bank.

Reflections on a Rotten Apple

By G.K. Chesterton

Our age is obviously the Nonsense Age; the wiser sort of nonsense being provided for the children and the sillier sort of nonsense for the grown-up people. The eighteenth century has been called the Age of Reason; I suppose there is no doubt that the twentieth century is the Age of Unreason. But even that is an understatement. The Age of Reason was nicknamed from a famous rationalist book. [Thomas Paine's *The Age of Reason* 1794-95.] But the rationalist was not really so much concerned to urge the rational against the irrational; but rather specially to urge the natural against the supernatural. But there is a degree of the unreasonable that would go even beyond the unnatural. It is not merely an incredible tale, but an inconsistent idea. As I pointed out to somebody long ago, it is one thing to believe that a beanstalk scaled the sky, and quite another to believe that fifty-seven beans make five.

For instance, a man may disbelieve in miracles; normally on some a priori principle of determinist thought; in some cases even on examination of the evidence. But on being told of the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, he is told something that is logical if it is not natural. He is not told that there were fewer fishes because the fishes had been multiplied. Multiplication is still a mathematical term; and a mob all feeding on miraculous fishes is a less mysterious or monstrous sight than a man saying that multiplication is the same as subtraction. Such a story, for such a sceptic, does not carry conviction; but it does make sense. He can recognise the logical consequence, if he cannot understand the logical cause. But no pope or priest ever asked him to believe that thousands died of starvation in the desert because they were loaded with loaves and fishes. No creed or dogma ever declared that there was too little food because there was too much fish. But that is the precise, practical and prosaic definition of the present situation in the modern science of economics. And the man of the Nonsense Age

must bow his head and repeat his *credo*, the motto of his time, *Credo quia impossibile*. ["I believe because it is impossible."]

Or again, the term unreason is sometimes used rather more reasonably; for a sort of loose or elliptical statement, which is at least illogical in form. The most popular case is what was called the Irish Bull; often suspected of resembling the Papal Bull, in being a supernatural monster bred of credulity and superstition. But even this old sort of confusion stopped short of the new sort of contradiction. If any Irishman really does say, "We are not birds, to be in two places at once," at least we know what he means, even if it is not what he says. But suppose he says that one bird has been miraculously multiplied into a million birds, and that in consequence there are fewer birds in the world than there were before. We should then be dealing, not merely with an Irish Bull but with a Mad Bull, and concerned not with the incredible but with the incomprehensible. Or, to apply the parable, the Irish have sometimes been accused of unbalanced emotion or morbid sentiment. But nobody says that they merely imagined the Great Famine, in which multitudes starved because the potatoes were few and small. Only suppose an Irishman had said that they starved because the potatoes were gigantic and innumerable. I think we should not yet have heard the last of the wrong-headed absurdity of that Irishman. Yet that is an exact description of the economic condition to-day as it affects the Englishman. And, to a great extent, the American. We learn that there is a famine because there is not a scarcity; and there is such a good potato-crop that there are no potatoes. The Irishman, with his bull or his bird, is quite a hard-headed realist and rationalist compared to that. Thus, the old examples of the fantastic fell far short of the modern fact; whether they were mysteries supposed to be above reason or merely muddles supposed to be below it. Their miracles were more normal than our scientific averages; and the Irish blunder was less illogical than the actual logic of events.

For it seems that we live to-day in a world of witchcraft, in which the orchards wither because they prosper, and the multitude

of apples on the apple-tree of itself turns them into forbidden fruit, and makes the effort to consume them in every sense fruitless. This is the modern economic paradox, which is called Over-Production, or a glut in the market, and though at first sight it sounds like the wildest fantasy, it is well to realise in what sense it is the most solid of facts. Let it be clearly understood, therefore, that as a description of the objective social situation at this instant in this industrial society, the paradox is perfectly true. But it is not really true that the contradiction in terms is true. If we take it, not as a description but as a definition, if we take it as a matter of abstract argument, then certainly the contradiction is untrue, as every contradiction is untrue.

The truth is that a third element has entered into the matter, which is not mentioned in this abstract statement of it. That element might be stated in many ways; perhaps the shortest statement of it is in the fable of the man who sold razors, and afterwards explained to an indignant customer, with simple dignity, that he had never said the razors would shave. When asked if razors were not made to shave, he replied that they were made to sell. That is *A Short History of Trade and Industry During the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*.

God made a world of reason as sure as God made little apples (as the beautiful proverb goes); and God did not make little apples larger than large apples. It is not true that a man whose apple-tree is loaded with apples will suffer from a want of apples; though he may indulge in a waste of apples. But if he never looks upon apples as things to eat, but always looks on them as things to sell, he will really get into another sort of complication; which may end in a sort of contradiction. If, instead of producing as many apples as he wants, he produces as many apples as he imagines the whole world wants, with the hope of capturing the trade of the whole world – then he will be either successful or unsuccessful in competing with the man next door who also wants the whole world's trade to himself. Between them, they will produce so many apples that apples in the market will be about as valuable as pebbles on the beach. Thus each

of them will find he has very little money in his pocket, with which to go and buy fresh pears at the fruiterer's shop. If he had never expected to get fruit at the fruiterer's shop, but had put up his hand and pulled them off his own tree, his difficulty would never have arisen. It seems simple; but at the root of all apple-trees and apple-growing, it is really as simple as that.

Of course I do not mean that the practice is at present simple; for no practical problem is simple, least of all at the present time, when everything is confused by the corrupt and evasive muddlers who are called practical politicians. But the principle is simple; and the only way to proceed through a complex situation is to start with the right first principle. How far we can do without, or control, or merely modify the disadvantages of buying and selling is quite another matter. But the disadvantages do arise from buying and selling, and not from producing: not even from over-producing. And it is some satisfaction to realise that we are not living in a nightmare in which No is the same as Yes; that even the modern world has not actually gone mad, with all its ingenious attempts to do so; that two and two do in fact make four; and that the man who has four apples really has more than the man who has three. For some modern metaphysicians and moral philosophers seem disposed to leave us in doubt on these points. It is not the fundamental reason in things that is at fault; it is a particular hitch or falsification, arising from a very recent trick of regarding everything only in relation to trade. Trade is all very well in its way, but Trade has been put in the place of Truth. Trade, which is in its nature a secondary or dependent thing, has been treated as a primary and independent thing; as an absolute. The moderns, mad upon mere multiplication, have even made a plural out of what is eternally singular, in the sense of single. They have taken what all ancient philosophers called the Good, and translated it as the Goods.

I believe that certain mystics, in the American business world, protested against the slump by pinning labels to their coats inscribed, *Trade Is Good*," along with other similar proclamations, such as, *"Capone Is Dead*," or *"Cancer Is Pleasant*," or *"Death Is*

Abolished,” or any other hard realistic truths for which they might find space upon their persons. But what interests me about these magicians is that, having decided to call up ideal conditions by means of spells and incantations to control the elements, they did not (so to speak) understand the elements of the elements. They did not go to the root of the matter, and imagine that their troubles had really come to an end. Rather they worshipped the means instead of the end. While they were about it, they ought to have said, not “Trade Is Good,” but “Living Is Good,” or “Life Is Good.” I suppose it would be too much to expect such thoroughly respectable people to say, “God Is Good”; but it is really true that their conception of what is good lacks the philosophical finality that belonged to the goodness of God. When God looked on created things and saw that they were good, it meant that they were good in themselves and as they stood; but by the modern mercantile idea, God would only have looked at them and seen that they were The Goods. In other words, there would be a label tied to the tree or the hill, as to the hat of the Mad Hatter, with “This Style, 10/6.” All the flowers and birds would be ticketed with their reduced prices; all the creation would be for sale or all the creatures seeking employment; with all the morning stars making sky-signs together and all the Sons of God shouting for jobs. In other words, these people are incapable of imagining any good except that which comes from bartering something for something else. The idea of a man enjoying a thing in itself, for himself, is inconceivable to them. The notion of a man eating his own apples off his own apple-tree seems like a fairy-tale. Yet the fall from that first creation that was called good has very largely come from the restless impatience for valuing things in themselves; the madness of the trader who cannot see any good in a good, except as something to get rid of. It was once admitted that with sin and death there entered the world something that we call change. It is none the less true and tragic, because what we called change, we called afterwards exchange. Anyhow, the result of that extravagance of exchange has been that when there are too many apples there are too few apple-eaters. I do not insist on the symbol of Eden, or the parable of the apple-tree, but it is odd to notice that

even that accidental image pursues us at every stage of this strange story. The last result of treating a tree as a shop or a store instead of as a store-room, the last effect of treating apples as goods rather than as good, has been in a desperate drive of public charity and in poor men selling apples in the street.

In all normal civilisations the trader existed and must exist. But in all normal civilisations the trader was the exception; certainly he was never the rule; and most certainly he was never the ruler. The predominance which he has gained in the modern world is the cause of all the disasters of the modern world. The universal habit of humanity has been to produce and consume as part of the same process; largely conducted by the same people in the same place. Sometimes goods were produced and consumed on the same great feudal manor; sometimes even on the same small peasant farm. Sometimes there was a tribute from serfs as yet hardly distinguishable from slaves; sometimes there was a co-operation between free-men which the superficial can hardly distinguish from communism. But none of these many historical methods, whatever their vices or limitations, was strangled in the particular tangle of our own time; because most of the people, for most of the time, were thinking about growing food and then eating it; not entirely about growing food and selling it at the stiffest price to somebody who had nothing to eat. And I for one do not believe that there is any way out of the modern tangle, except to increase the proportion of the people who are living according to the ancient simplicity. Nobody in his five wits proposes that there should be no trade and no traders. Nevertheless, it is important to remember, as a matter of mere logic, that there might conceivably be great wealth, even if there were no trade and no traders. It is important for the sort of man whose only hope is that Trade Is Good or whose only secret terror is that Trade Is Bad. In principle, prosperity might be very great, even if trade were very bad. If a village were so fortunately situated that, for some reason, it was easy for every family to keep its own chickens, to grow its own vegetables, to milk its own cow and (I will add) to brew its own beer, the standard of life and property might be very high

indeed, even though the long memory of the Oldest Inhabitant only recorded two or three pure transactions of trade; if he could only recall the one far-off event of his neighbour buying a new hat from a Gypsy's barrow; or the singular incident of Farmer Billings purchasing an umbrella.

As I have said, I do not imagine, or desire, that things would ever be quite so simple as that. But we must understand things in their simplicity before we can explain or correct their complexity. The complexity of commercial society has become intolerable, because that society is commercial and nothing else. The whole mind of the community is occupied, not with the idea of possessing things, but with the idea of passing them on. When the simple enthusiasts already mentioned say that Trade is Good, they mean that all the people who possess goods are perpetually parting with them. These Optimists presumably invoke the poet, with some slight emendation of the poet's meaning, when he cries aloud, 'Our souls are love and a perpetual farewell.' In that sense, our individualistic and commercial modern society is actually the very reverse of a society founded on Private Property. I mean that the actual direct and isolated enjoyment of private property, as distinct from the excitement of exchanging it or getting a profit on it, is rather rarer than in many simple communities that seem almost communal in their simplicity. In the case of this sort of private consumption, which is also private production, it is very unlikely that it will run continually into overproduction. There is a limit to the number of apples a man can eat, and there will probably be a limit, drawn by his rich and healthy hatred of work, to the number of apples which he will produce but cannot eat. But there is no limit to the number of apples he may possibly sell; and he soon becomes a pushing, dexterous and successful Salesman and turns the whole world upside-down. For it is he who produces this huge pantomimic paradox with which this rambling reflection began. It is he who makes a wilder revolution than the apple of Adam which was the loosening of death, or the apple of Newton which was the apocalypse of gravitation, by proclaiming the supreme blasphemy

and heresy, that the apple was made for the market and not for the mouth. It was he, by starting the wild race of pouring endless apples into a bottomless market, who opened the abyss of irony and contradiction into which we are staring to-day. That trick of treating the trade as the test, and the only test, has left us face to face with a piece of stark staring nonsense written in gigantic letters across the world; more gigantic than all its own absurd advertisements and announcements; the statement that the more we produce the less we possess.

Oscar Wilde would probably have fainted with equal promptitude, if told he was being used in an argument about American salesmanship, or in defence of a thrifty and respectable family life on the farm. But it does so happen that one true epigram, among many of his false epigrams, sums up correctly and compactly a certain truth, not (I am happy to say) about Art, but about all that he desired to separate from Art; ethics and even economics. He said in one of his plays: "A cynic is a man who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing." [The quotation is from *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892).] It is extraordinarily true; and the answer to most other things that he said. But it is yet more extraordinary that the modern men who make that mistake most obviously are not the cynics. On the contrary, they are those who call themselves the Optimists; perhaps even those who would call themselves the Idealists; certainly those who regard themselves as the Regular Guys and the Sons of Service and Uplift. It is too often those very people who have spoilt all their good effect, and weakened their considerable good example in work and social contact, by that very error: that things are to be judged by the price and not by the value. And since Price is a crazy and incalculable thing, while Value is an intrinsic and indestructible thing, they have swept us into a society which is no longer solid but fluid, as unfathomable as a sea and as treacherous as a quicksand.

Whether anything more solid can be built again upon a social philosophy of values, there is now no space to discuss at length here; but I am certain that nothing solid can be built on any other

philosophy; certainly not upon the utterly unphilosophical philosophy of blind buying and selling; of bullying people into purchasing what they do not want; of making it badly so that they may break it and imagine they want it again; of keeping rubbish in rapid circulation like a dust-storm in a desert; and pretending that you are teaching men to hope, because you do not leave them one intelligent instant in which to despair.

The Catholic Church and the Principle of Private Property

The Catholic Church, then, is the protagonist on the one side, and a body of thought, vaguely grouped under the term "Socialist." The protagonist on the other-and this division rules throughout Europe.

Let us now examine the exact doctrine of the Catholic Church in this matter.

I think it may be fairly stated as follows :—

1. The right to property in material things is a moral right, attaching not only to the community, but also to private corporations, i.e., corporations other than the community, to families, and to individuals.
2. This right extends not only over objects consumed in use, but also over objects consumed in production, and over land. It does not attach to particular categories of things. Its boundaries may vary with varying customs and traditions. But its presence as a normal institution of human society is essential to the health of that society.
3. Like every other right, this right stands in a certain scale of proportion to the rest. It may be suspended for the service of a greater right; it must not be suspended for the service of a lesser.
4. Finally, this function of property, like all other human attributes, is distorted when it is defined in isolation. It must be taken in with the mass of all other human functions, and is subject, as is every one of them, to the general modifications imposed by the generalities of human existence.

This definition is a long one, and contains several terms necessarily vague. It is none the less, I think, inclusive and exclusive, and if we put it to the test of a few concrete instances, we shall find it will stand the test.

(a) During a siege, or in a boat of shipwrecked men, when one individual or portion of the community owns the sole store of food, has he a right in property over it? Can he use it or withhold it at pleasure?

No. His right in property yields to a higher right, which is the right of human beings to subsistence. What was his property in normal circumstances can be

claimed for the use of all and distributed to all.

(b) A portion of the community owns all the stores of clothing, housing, and food. In the exercise of this right, many of the community suffer wretchedness; they have not a normal human subsistence. Is the government bound to respect the right of Private Property to such a degree as to allow the wretchedness to continue?

No. The general needs of human existence here modify the strict isolated definition of Private Property. Human subsistence must be found and the wretchedness must be relieved. It is better that this be done by the owner of his own will. Such an action is of profit to him as well as to his neighbour. But if he fail in this, the executive power of the community has a moral right to interfere.

© I suffer some discomfort and annoyance, not to the degree of wretchedness or misery. I am disturbed, but not lowered in my human dignity nor seriously interfered with in my main human functions, by the unequal distribution of goods. Have I the right to compel a more equal distribution under these circumstances, or has the executive of the State, the "Prince" as it may technically be called, the moral right to interfere with the institution of Private Property for my relief?

No. I have not the right to do so-it would be theft. Nor has the government the right to do it for me. It would be injustice. It is, of course, a question of degree and of circumstances. But the distinction between wretchedness and annoyance or discomfort is a very important one, for in it lies one great part of the modern quarrel. If Property be not a moral institution with moral rights attaching to it, then even a small measure of discomfort due to unequal distribution has a right to relief at the expense of the better off. But if it is a moral institution, then only acute necessity has an imperative right to relief at the expense of existing property.

(d) If by the vote of a conscious, active, and sincere majority-the real expression of strong majority opinion-it be determined that Private Property shall cease to exist in the State, and that the control of material objects shall be vested solely in the officials of the State, is the execution of that decision, with the consequences it involves, moral or not?

It is immoral. No mere majority vote can justly suppress a normal human right.

The right of a majority to govern is less than the right of a man to normal living. Thus a majority would not have the right to forbid marriage to the minority merely because it was a majority, and because those thus unjustly treated were a minority.

(e) If the whole of a political* community comes to such a decision that property shall cease among its members, would that decision be moral, and might it stand without offence to justice?

Yes; supposing such a purely hypothetical state of affairs to be possible it would create no injustice. Supposing a political body of men to adopt this inhuman conclusion, then, while they were in that mood, obviously they could so act without doing wrong to any member; being all agreed.

In both these cases, you have again what comes in everywhere in human affairs-the question of degree. The former of the two propositions just mentioned is quite clear in the case of fifty-one men with an income of £200 a year establishing Communism by a majority vote, because the other forty-nine had £250 a year each. But it is less obvious, and indeed less true, as the proportion changes. An overwhelming majority of a community in which a very few controlled all land and machinery would have the right to effect a better distribution but not on that account to deny the fundamental principle of Property.

Again, a community wholly Communist with one or two small proprietors in its midst might justly insist on the disappearance of such anomalies.

But none of these cases can, in the real world, arise. Men do not desire to dispossess themselves of property, nor by a free vote would they ever destroy its existence where it was generally established. But in pure theory an overwhelming majority, and still more unanimity of opinion, is the master of its own temporal arrangements. It would be ridiculous to deny, for instance, that a few score emigrant families, filled with a Communist enthusiasm and starting out to found their Utopia, had no moral right to pool their private properties and make the experiment. Of course they have that right.

And here I must note a principle which will have to be repeated more than once even in these few pages.

Though Catholic principle does not deny the right of an isolated community to act

thus, and it certainly does not call it sinful to act thus, yet it does most emphatically deny the normality of the action. Catholic principle does most certainly affirm that men in their right senses and with any hope of establishing a permanent organization, must base this upon the co-existence of Private Property side by side with Public. Catholic common sense perceives that, in a very short time, Communist experiment would lead in practice to the contravention of certain other Catholic principles which are absolute.

Among other things, it would lead to the super-session of the authority of the Family by that of the State, and to the negation of individual freedom in things where such a freedom is essential to the salvation of the soul.

*Religious orders are not a case in point. They abandon property precisely because property is normal to ordinary human life in this world, from which they withdraw themselves for a peculiar unpolitical, unworldly end. Their community of goods is no more an argument against property than is their celibacy against marriage.

The Restoration of Property

The difficulties before us in the restoration of property are twofold. They are, first of all the philosophy under which the modern world, particularly in this country, has been created and has lived increasingly during the last 300 years; and secondly, the actual state of society produced by that philosophy. I distinguish between the two. A philosophy—or a religion, which is the only practical form of any philosophy—is a state of mind, a mood, an attitude towards the universe, and in the long run that produces its fruit in institutions, examples of action, of manner, of little daily details which flow from the philosophy. But you must distinguish between the two, because the first is not easily approachable in the same way in which the second is approachable.

Let us take things in their logical order. There is a certain philosophy called natural religion we all have in us, and under which we should all live were we free of tradition (which of course is impossible to man) or had we nothing but an unpolluted tradition; and it must be justly taken that under those conditions property exists, in the sense, that is, of property well divided. One can imagine no more normal human society, no society more normal to man as we know him, as he is. A society in which men live in security, such that every production of wealth with that which they possess maintains them in the community, and can be handed on to their posterity. That is normal to man. All our folklore, all our fairy tales, morals, proverbs, point to that as being our norm. If I steal my neighbour's watch I am not punished—a poor man would be punished, but I should not be—I am blamed on the theory that it is property which I am infringing. We all think normally, in our human consciences, in terms of property. That, I say, is a fundamental which we must all admit.

Of course a man naturally owns, and naturally will have the tradition and security that goes with ownership, but to that philosophy was added another philosophy which came in slowly over the Greco-Roman world, and happily got through to our world, called the conversion of the Roman Empire. There was a slow transmogrification from the old Pagan religion into a more conscious, more active and more dangerous, but perhaps more developed state of mind, which was called Christendom, and under that again property was established, and in a very interesting way; because the Christian religion, having baptised the Greco-Roman

world, had such an effect upon it that slowly and inevitably the slave became an owner. By very slow degrees it happened, and before the end of the Middle Ages, throughout the west of Christendom, on the whole and taking it by and large, there had been a commonwealth established in which most men owned and most men could transmit what they owned to their posterity. There was the guild for the craftsman and the village community for the peasant. That was the norm of that society, and men were pretty happy under that society, and the test of normality is whether people are happy or not. If you doubt whether they were happy or not, go to the places which they carved, and see the songs which they sang, and compare them with the songs which we sing. As for carving, well go and look at the carving.

Now that philosophy was warped by a great revolution which began after the Black Death, and was growing in the early 16th century; but after a tremendous fight, by the middle of the 17th century, Europe had decided to divide into two camps from exhaustion. The old tradition could not conquer the new revolt, and the new revolt could not conquer the old religion. One of the camps said, 'I have done with all the old things, I have got some new principle altogether,' and the other said, 'No. I am going on,' but did not only say it was going on, but organised itself for resistance lest it should be swamped; and those two camps in Europe went on. You will remember that in those days the Greek Orthodox Church hardly counted.

Now under those two philosophies, the first philosophy, the rebellious philosophy, won. The general term for it is Protestant, but it was much more, it was also the general emancipation from the clerical system of the Middle Ages spread out in all sorts of ways. There is no generic term for it, but it won, and having won it produced very slowly, by stages of which many are familiar, after generations, what is known as the Capitalist System, in which efficiency was produced not by the supervision of work or by the guild, but by competition; in which the peasant, because he was the less instructed, was destroyed under competition; in which, not exactly because men worshipped Mammon but because they worshipped the competitive idea, the rich man ate up the small man until we arrived at the state of affairs where we are now, called Industrial Capitalism...

Now let us proceed to the second point, which is part of the first. I say this philosophy has produced Industrial Capitalism. What do we mean by that? Not the use of certain machines, because they might just as well be held by a guild as by

an individual. What we mean essentially is plutocracy. We mean that the mass of men have lost their security and their choice of how they shall live within the limits wherein men should normally have such choice. So that I cannot to-day, and Mr. Chesterton cannot to-day, write what we think, as we would have done in the 17th century or even in the 18th, without the agreement of a few vulgarians who happen to have the money.

Our second point is that this philosophy has produced a certain state of society. The change in philosophy is our root difficulty, but the second is that it has produced a certain state of society. It is a state in which by far the greater part of men are attuned to being wage slaves, that is, a state of society in which a man is more afraid of losing his job than of anything else. It is that which controls us all. Of course the mass of the people who are really poor are entirely wage slaves. They have withdrawn themselves from the worst of the conditions by certain amount of organisation, but still, that is the norm of our society; and the great struggle among the few who are free from this condition is to avoid being a wage slave, and the greatest misfortune is to die a wage slave. But we are all attuned to that state of mind in this country. Think for instance of the extraordinary phrase 'Unemployment.' The Rothschilds, if there are any left, are unemployed. It is not having nothing to do which is the disaster, it is not getting money for doing things. The disaster is in not having security...

We have had during the last fifty or sixty years inventions and discoveries, such as the internal combustion engine and the distribution of electric power, which might have aided enormously the distribution of property if our philosophy had been right. But more important in my judgment is this. Industrial Capitalism has broken down. It has broken down for a very simple arithmetical reason—it distributes less purchasing power than it creates. I am not going to speak of Major Douglas's scheme of Social Credit, because that is merely an indirect method of distributing property, which I prefer to achieve by direct means. Industrial Capitalism has broken down, not because it is tired or old or wicked, but because it is producing an amount of wealth greater than it is distributing purchasing power for that wealth; and to put it very crudely indeed, if I want to make a hundred thousand boots, or rather employ men to make those boots, by the time the boots are made I have distributed to the men who make them the money wherewith to purchase thirty thousand boots, and what am I to do with the seventy thousand boots left? I must sell them to the Colonies. And supposing they

also learn to turn a handle, and produce the boots themselves, where are you? That is why Industrial Capitalism has broken down.

One of the results is that people are getting disgusted and saying something must be done. We cannot tell people what to do in a cut and dried system. No man attempting the restoration of property, or Distributism as it is sometimes called, can say, "Here is my cut and dried plan." You cannot do it, because it is normal to man, organic; it is not mechanical, it is not theoretical. What we can do is to advance something on the way, to propagate the idea, to propagate its results, to insist upon it here and there, in this reform and that, by blocking this abuse and that, until there shall be established in society a certain growth which will lead ultimately towards better distribution of property. We do not want, and it would be folly to attempt, and it is not human to regard, and it is futile to desire the equal distribution of property. If you have a society in which the norm, it may not even be the majority, but the determining number of men are possessed of security in what they do, producing with their personality and with their production fully secured for the future, you have established a healthy state, you have reconstructed property; and if you will consider that, doing it organically, without revolution, you may, in spite of the enormous obstacles in front of you, do the trick. That is the rule I put before myself, and which, if I could come back to life after my death, I should probably find completely ruined.
