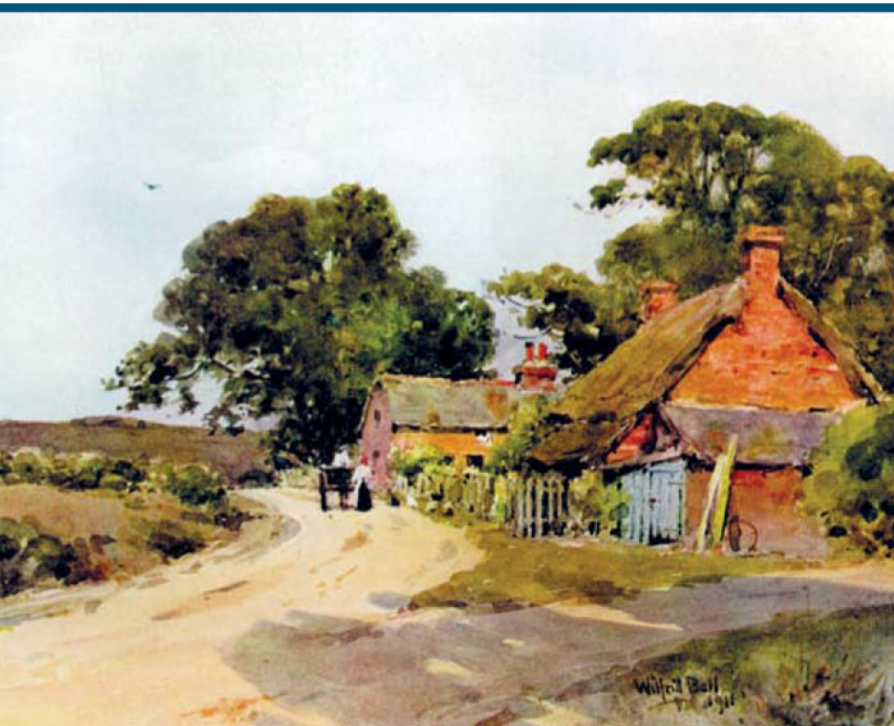


# FLEE TO THE FIELDS

*The Faith and Works of the*  
**Catholic Land Movement**



*With an original Preface by Hilaire Belloc  
and a new Introduction by Dr. Tobias Lanz*





## FLEE TO THE FIELDS

“With desolation is all the land made desolate: because there is none that considereth in the heart.”

—JEREMIAS xii: 11

“He made the nations of the earth for health.”

—WISDOM i: 14

*To Mrs. James Wright, with sincere thanks.*

# FLEE TO THE FIELDS

## *The Faith and Works of the* Catholic Land Movement

BY

Rev. John McQuillan, D.D.; Commander Herbert Shove, D.S.O., R.N.;  
H. Robbins; Very Rev. Vincent McNabb, O.P., S.T.M.;  
Captain Reginald Jebb, M.A., M.C.; Right Rev. Monsignor J. Dey, D.S.O.;  
K.L. Kenrick, M.A.; George Maxwell;  
and Rev. H.E.G. Rope, M.A.

*With a Preface by Hilaire Belloc*



Norfolk, VA  
2003

Flee to the Fields.

Copyright © 2003 IHS Press.

First published in 1934 by Heath Cranton, Ltd., of London.

Preface, footnotes, typesetting, layout, and cover design  
copyright 2003 IHS Press.

All rights reserved.

IHS Press was unable to locate the holders of the original copyright to this Heath Cranton volume. Any information leading to their identification would, therefore, be much appreciated. Additionally, the Editors wish gratefully to acknowledge assistance received from Mr. Louis Jebb, who was kind enough to provide a photograph of Reginald Jebb, his grandfather, along with biographical details.

This edition of *Flee to the Fields* has been published largely as it first appeared in 1934. The spelling, punctuation, and formatting of the London, 1934, edition has been maintained as far as possible. The Editors have omitted the original Appendix, *Unemployment: A Distributist Solution* (originally published by the Birmingham Branch of the Distributist League, and thus popularly known as the "Birmingham Scheme") for its inclusion in a latter volume in which its import and practicality will be perhaps better appreciated.

ISBN-13 (eBook): 978-1-932528-30-5□□

#### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Flee to the fields : the founding papers of the Catholic land movement /  
with a preface by Hilaire Belloc.

p. cm.

Papers by John McQuillan and others.

Originally published: London : Heath Cranton, 1934. With new pref.  
by Tobias Lanz.

ISBN 0-9718286-0-1 (alk. paper)

1. Urban-rural migration--Great Britain. 2. Country life--Great Britain. 3. Agricultural colonies--Great Britain. I. Title: Founding papers of the Catholic land movement. II. Title: Catholic land movement. III. Belloc, Hilaire, 1870-1953. IV. McQuillan, John.

HT384.G7F54 2003

307.24--dc21

2002191929

Printed in the United States of America.

Frontispiece: A watercolor painting by Wilfrid William Ball (1853–1917), featured in *The Village Homes of England* (1912), by Sydney R. Jones.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   | PAGE |
|---|------|
| Introduction.....   | 7    |
| <i>by Dr. Tobias Lanz</i>   |      |
| Preface.....  | 15   |
| <i>by Hilaire Belloc</i>  |      |
| The Blessing given by the Holy See to the<br>Catholic Land Associations and their work..... | 19   |
| <i>by E. Cardinal Pacelli</i>   |      |
| <br>FLEE TO THE FIELDS  |      |
| I. The Origins.....   | 21   |
| <i>by the Rev. John McQuillan, D.D.</i>   |      |
| II. The Rise and Fall of Industrialism.....   | 25   |
| <i>by Commander Herbert Shove, D.S.O., R.N.</i>   |      |
| III. The Line of Approach.....  | 47   |
| <i>by H. Robbins</i>  |      |
| IV. Training for the Land.....  | 63   |
| <i>by the Rev. John McQuillan, D.D.</i>   |      |
| V. The Family.....  | 69   |
| <i>by the Very Rev. Vincent McNabb, O.P., S.T.M.</i>  |      |
| Appendix.....   | 78   |
| VI. The Community.....  | 81   |
| <i>by Captain Reginald Jebb, M.A., M.C.</i>   |      |
| VII. The Church and the Land.....   | 93   |
| <i>by the Right Rev. Monsignor J. Dey, D.S.O.,<br/>Rector of Oscott College</i>             |      |
| VIII. The Case for the Peasant.....   | 105  |
| <i>by K.L. Kenrick, M.A.</i>  |      |
| IX. The Reconstruction of the Crafts.....   | 119  |
| <i>by George Maxwell</i>  |      |
| X. Looking Before and After.....  | 131  |
| <i>by the Rev. H.E.G. Rope, M.A.</i>  |      |



*“The Land Movement is realist. It rejects fashion; it rejects that denial of free will which is involved in the dogma of inevitable progress. It will put back the clock as far as may be necessary to ensure the happiness and integrity of man. When noon is Angelus-time the clock is right.”*



## Introduction

**F***lee to the Fields* was first published in 1934 as a collection of essays that articulated the basic ideas of the Catholic Land Movement. This movement had been formed in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1929 by clergy and laymen to re-establish an agrarian social economy that could counter the prevailing industrial regime. It was part of a broader social and intellectual movement that came to be known as Distributism, which advocated a widespread distribution of land and wealth among the general population. It was believed that this decentralized economy could better integrate economics with family and community life and thereby create a more just and humane social order. The Catholic Land Movement was the most concrete and ambitious implementation of distributist principles. It sought to demonstrate that there was a workable alternative to Capitalism and Socialism, both of which were highly dependent on industrialization and massive urban populations for their survival.

The industrial régime, as Hilaire Belloc noted in the original preface to this book, has but one goal, and that is the accumulation of material wealth. To the orthodox Catholic, this all-consuming desire wrought terrible social consequences. Industrialism centralized production and thereby created a monopolistic economy under which millions of people had been forced (or seduced) from farm and village, to take up a barrack-like existence in burgeoning cities. The loss of property subsequently reduced most Englishmen to a state of economic servility, in which they were wholly dependent on industry for survival. Likewise, this impoverished proletariat could be easily manipulated through elaborate social programs enacted by a government that was firmly under the control of the new industrial ruling class. But perhaps the most troubling consequence of industrializa-

tion was that it created conditions under which a healthy religious culture could no longer flourish. For, by severing human beings from family, community, and nature, industrialization had effectively dissolved the primordial bonds that made religion tangible, and hence believable.

In countering industrialism, the Catholic Land Movement did not attempt to create an agrarian utopia, nor was it a Luddite rejection of technology. Rather, it was a prudent approach to economic life that was based on small-scale agriculture, craft-making, and retailing. It grew out of the papal encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), both of which exhorted Catholics to combat modernity in general, and the destructive social consequences of industrialism in particular. As such, the Land Movement was explicitly based on the cornerstone of Catholic social teaching – social subsidiarity – which holds that an individual should rely on the most basic levels of social and technical complexity to achieve his goals. Higher levels are called upon only when the lower echelon is insufficient to the task. Thus, by relying on the household, family, community, and nature's bounty to provide as many basic needs as possible, people could free themselves from economic dependence and the political control of the plutocrats, and thereby regain a modicum of human dignity and freedom.

But the overarching goal of the Catholic Land Movement went beyond the establishment of a just and equitable economy. It was an attempt to preserve the conditions under which a vibrant Catholic culture could thrive, and to provide thereby a spiritual challenge to the totalitarian, materialist culture that was being created by industrialization. Just as the culture of materialism achieved its greatest strength in the urban-industrial milieu, so religion, especially Catholicism, was strongest in the rural-agrarian milieu. To the Distributists, the establishment of a vibrant and self-sustaining rural socio-economy was thus of vital importance. It was this desire to sustain an agrarian Christian culture against that of industrialism, rather than a desire to return all of society to some mythical agrarian past, that was the essential social vision of the leaders of the Catholic Land Movement. In time, it was hoped that industrial production could be decentralized, and be integrated into rural life to enhance

## INTRODUCTION

it, rather than remain a centripetal force that was destined to destroy it completely.

The relationship between a healthy rural economy and a healthy religion was explicit. Both rely on the most basic social unit, the family; for it is here that the principles of social subsidiarity are most fully implemented. Historically, the family farm has always relied on the simplest form of technology (or technique), and energy, which is the human being and his labor. Organized through the structure of the household, human labor can provide for the basic human needs of food, clothing, shelter, and reproduction. In addition to these material requirements, the family performs an even more important role as the building block of religion. For it is at the family level that the active ingredients of religious faith – the feelings of trust, obedience, discipline, and fidelity – are cultivated. The family nurtures and sustains these bonds of love, which hold Christian society together. Moreover, the household plays the pivotal role in cultural reproduction by passing on customs, mores, and beliefs. But once the family begins to disintegrate, its ability to pass on a culture's traditions diminishes. As this dynamic recedes, a culture begins to atrophy.

Religion also flourishes in a rural setting because the notion of time is different. Rural time has always followed the rhythms of nature – day and night, the passing of the seasons, and the cycle of life and death. This is the pace of Creation. As such, rural peoples are able to enjoy and experience the fullness of time. With greater leisure at their disposal, they are able to spend a greater portion of their life developing and practicing their faith. After all, religion is a creative endeavor, and like all creative endeavors its grandeur and beauty is a function of time – the more time that is spent contemplating, praying and living a faith, the more that faith grows and deepens. Moreover, in the pre-industrial world, religion was all-encompassing. It permeated every aspect of life, including both public and private spheres. In contrast, religion has been thoroughly privatized in the modern world, a process that began with the Protestant Reformation, and one that has been accelerated through the process of industrialization, whereby man has lost all relationship to natural time. Modern man is no longer tied to time that is centered on God and Creation. He is tied to a new concept of time that is centered on the machine and production.

## FLEE TO THE FIELDS

By being cut off from Creation, modern man lives a solipsistic existence. He exists in an artificial milieu wholly of his own making, and he constantly labors to sustain it. To Karl Marx, this modern human became alienated because he was severed from the fruits of his labor. But Marx was only partly right. As the Distributists knew full well, modern man was certainly alienated. But his alienation involved far more than the disruption of the natural labor process. It stemmed from the disruption of the entire Order of Being, of which work was an essential part, but not its entirety. Industrialization destroys all spiritual bonds that man has to family, community, nature, and God. In short, it destroys culture. Thus, while the industrial régime can produce enormous amounts of material wealth and useful technologies, it cannot produce true religion, because it does not have a true culture that is based on these necessary spiritual connections. And when religion does take root in the urban-industrial milieu, it becomes perverted or stunted, because it is severed from the fullness of Creation. The Protestant Reformation grew out of such a narrow world, and its intellectual cousins, Socialism and Capitalism, with their narrow visions of material progress, have continued the rebellion against true religion, the natural world, and all authentic human experience ever since.

Despite a well-conceived economic program, the moral backing of Catholic hierarchies of England, Wales, and Scotland, and the intellectual support of a host of writers and activists, the Catholic Land Movement – and the entire Distributist project – failed, with the coming of World War Two. The reasons for this failure are multiple.

Firstly, the Movement came to an abrupt end because of financial problems. Although the Catholic hierarchies were happy to support the initiative on the *moral* level, they were not prepared to back up that support on the *practical* level. It was a grievous misunderstanding of the true situation of society in that day. It came about that when the first unemployed miners had been re-trained sufficiently well to enable them to make a “go” of farming, there was no land available to settle them on. A very modest request was made by the CLM to the bishops: please allow *one* collection a year to be gathered in all the parishes of the island, in order to maintain and

## INTRODUCTION

extend this worthy project. Despite the active support of Mgr. Dey, the answer was a categorical “no.”

Secondly, the movement was maligned and misunderstood. The Distributists and their American counterpart, the Southern Agrarians, were thoroughly repudiated by Establishment “intellectuals” and the Press. Liberals and Marxists alike viewed their ideas as a dangerous reaction to the social “progress” promised by the industrial régime. Among the modern intelligentsia, the label “reactionary” will kill an idea instantly, and the Distributists and Agrarians were labeled as such from the start. Moreover, distributist ideas never really gained a foothold among Catholics and other like-minded Christians either. Many were sympathetic to their aims, but saw them, wrongly, as something quaint and romantic, and hardly capable of providing a genuine alternative to industrial capitalism. Moreover, many Catholics sided with capitalism, because it ostensibly stood against the overt godlessness of Communism and the paganism of National Socialism.

The movement also failed because most of its most eloquent and forceful spokesmen died a few years after its inception. G. K. Chesterton died in 1936, Father Vincent McNabb in 1943, and Maurice Baring in 1945. Hilaire Belloc passed away in 1953, but had been incapacitated by a stroke years earlier. But perhaps one of the most important tangential reasons for the demise of the Catholic Land Movement and Distributism was the war itself. The movement could never gain momentum because of the dramatic changes created by World War Two. The influence of Keynesianism and the material and human demands of the war effort unified the State and business corporations to achieve an unprecedented increase of industrial production. This political-economic convergence helped win the war for the Allies, but it also re-ordered the entire global economy to the advantage of the State and the business corporation. Today, the only real economic “debate” is over the relative proportion of State versus corporate control over the economy. The expansion of industry in the post-war years also created staggering levels of personal wealth (though much of this was actually debt-based), and resulted in an unending proliferation of goods and technologies. This material explosion has so captivated and bewildered modern man that the

virtues of the simple life advocated by the Distributists have either lost their appeal or, more tragically, can no longer be imagined.

As we enter the twenty-first century, the industrial juggernaut seems everywhere ascendant. Through the language of triumphalism and inevitability, it has now imprinted itself upon the minds of political leaders, policy makers and intellectuals the world over – it is claimed that there is no alternative. Yet the problems that pervasive and excessive industrialization has created have grown as rapidly as its purported benefits. From massive environmental destruction and the growth of sprawling cities that fester with crime, poverty, and sexual dysfunction, to widespread psychological maladies that afflict ever-larger numbers of urban society, the negative effects of the industrial culture can be seen everywhere. These problems, which secular universities, think tanks, governments, and corporations allocate billions of dollars to “solve,” have been exacerbated by the very absence of what was lost with the industrialization of the world – the loss of intimate human relationships with other humans, nature, and God. And to cultivate and sustain such relationships requires access to what Pope Pius XII called “space, light, air and property.” These are the conditions of rural life, and they are also the conditions essential for human spiritual and physical health. And it is only when a sizable number of people live under such conditions that the overall health of a society can be assured.

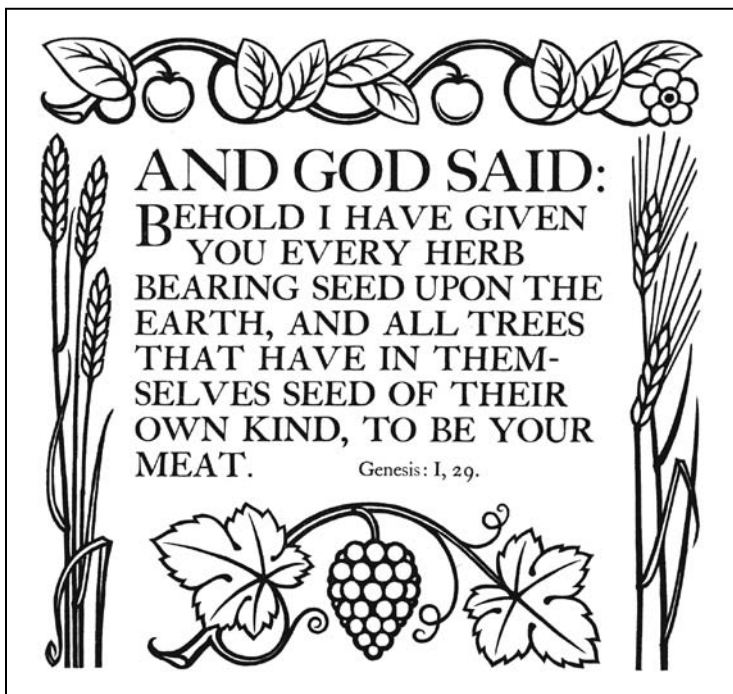
It is no irony that the leaders of the Catholic Land Movement foresaw the coming crisis of industrial society. As a group steeped in the wisdom of the Catholic faith, they could see beyond the extravagant promises of the industrial régime to recognize the damages it would inflict. Thus, in hindsight, the real reason that the Catholic Land Movement and its distributist vision failed is that it was premature. Throughout the twentieth century, most people believed that material progress was synonymous with social progress. Today, many are beginning to recognize the vulgarity and shallowness of modern life, but few have a coherent program and philosophy to combat it. The Distributists did, and this is why they remain so important today. In reading this classic text, one is immediately struck by the continuing relevance of their insights and critiques, which are based on timeless Christian principles and a

## INTRODUCTION

deep understanding of human nature. To be fully human requires a humane society, which can never be achieved under a socio-economic dispensation that is oriented wholly towards material ends. And the Distributists knew that the only way to redeem such an economy, and its religious foundation, was to move towards a decentralized economy in which agriculture played a central role.

If Catholics and other like-minded Christians are serious in combating the excesses of materialist society, they should begin by reading *Flee to the Fields* and implementing the basic principles contained therein. Catholic clergy and laymen must again seek ways to defend and enhance the rural parish and its constituency of farmers, artisans, and full-time mothers. Because these individuals experience the fullness of God's Creation, they are better able to live in the fullness of Catholic faith and culture. As such, they are the spiritual and material lifeblood of the Church. Those who are not active agrarians can nonetheless support the Faith by holding steadfastly to the distributist idea of subsidiarity in every realm of life. By reclaiming the household as the center of economic life, and by relying on thrift, physical labor, and frugality, all Christians are capable of battling the corrosive effects of industrialization. In pursuing such a philosophy the long-term goal of a more humane and decentralized economy can be realized. For it is only when economics again becomes subservient to religious mores that the virtuous life is possible.

DR. TOBIAS LANZ  
Government and International Studies  
University of South Carolina  
July 26, 2003  
Feast of St. Anne, Mother of the  
Blessed Virgin Mary



*An illustration from the Christmas, 1941, issue of *The Cross and the Plough*,  
the Organ of the Catholic Land Associations of England and Wales*



## Preface

All those who are sane and can see clearly know that our civilization after the poisonous effects of Industrialization must come to one of three conclusions; it may crash; it may re-establish servitude; or it may re-establish property. The observer of the moment, especially if he knows nothing of Europe and the past, concludes for one of the first two. All our constructive legislation, that is all our present efforts to escape a crash are directed towards the permanent Servile State; those who think that Socialism or Communism could be permanent may be neglected for they have no knowledge of Man.

But the third solution, the restoration of property, is envisaged even in this country by a small but growing body. It is small because the idea of property (save as the name for a privilege of the few against the many), has been eradicated out of the modern English mind as thoroughly as the old National religion was eradicated out of the eighteenth century mind. Only a small number of pioneers can ever be found to start a machine from cold.

But their number is growing simply because their ideal is instinctive to humanity. No man left a complete freedom of choice will be a slave. He may come to think slavery inevitable.

He may from habit think of himself as a slave in a slave society and regard its power to regulate his life as no more than the mitigation of his lot. Thus the shop assistant welcomes servile laws made by his masters, which in their interests as well as his own forbid him to work more than a certain number of hours. But give him complete freedom (a term which means, in England today, the possession of a large lump of capital) and he certainly would not welcome a law forbidding him to do any work he chose at any hour he chose to

do it. Your rich young man who goes in zealously for painting would not be pleased to find himself punished if he went on painting after six o'clock of a summer evening.

There is no freedom without property and therefore, as freedom is natural to the desire of man – a desire for the restoration of property when it has been lost is natural.

The movement therefore though still in its small beginnings is destined to grow. To what extent it may reach we cannot tell, but we know that the air we breathe is hostile to its growth.

Now a necessary accompaniment of a system of re-established property and in practice the foundation of it, is a re-established property in land, in all land, but particularly in agricultural land. It is the perception of this truth that has created the Catholic Land Associations. Truth confirms truth and the general truths of the Faith promote this particular truth that the complete citizen is a free man working upon the land. It is for this reason that the Catholic culture of Europe has instinctively preserved the peasant. But if we are to recreate a peasantry in a Society poisoned to the very roots with industrial capitalism we need two things, a general and a particular thing. The general thing is the state of mind in which the possession of property by the poor man, and especially the property in land and more especially the property in land which he shall cultivate for a livelihood, is normal and widely accepted. The particular thing is a state of law favouring small properties. The first of these necessities, the general one, I will not discuss in detail, it requires a department to itself, for it is largely coincident with a change in religion.

What has made industrial capitalism is not the machine but the mind of man perverted by a false philosophy. In our civilization the French heresiarch, Jean Cauvin, better known in the latinized form of "Calvin" stands at the origin of this perversion. The force that has destroyed property among us is greed. For if men regard wealth as the supreme good each will struggle to obtain the most of it, for himself. Under such competition, a smaller and smaller number obtain the desired thing and each new conglomeration swallows what is less than itself. In this the eternal paradox appears which was best expressed by Our Lord when He said that if you would save your

## PREFACE

life you would lose it. Millions all snatching from each other, each in order that he may clutch a maximum in his claws, end by a general spoliation wherein the vast majority are left with nothing. It can only be after the purging out of this main product of the Reformation that right living can return.

But side by side with the effecting of so vast a spiritual change must go the protection of the few who are engaged in it. You cannot sow the seeds of private property save in ground properly prepared. They will not germinate save under favourable conditions.

Today the state of law under which we live in England is poisonous to small property, especially in land. It is still more poisonous to the maintenance thereof. A heavy tribute must be paid to the lawyers guild. A tribute which increases in inverse proportion with the amount of land to be acquired. Title is rendered, for the purpose of furnishing money to the lawyers, as complicated as possible and there is no public map of which title can be established.

The economic advantage in purchase which the large man has over the small (because he can wait, because he has better information, because he can pay for all manner of aid) is uncorrected by laws especially advancing the efforts of the small man to acquire and hampering the efforts of the rich man. In the absence of such laws the establishment of small property in land is impossible.

Once established it can only be maintained by another series of protecting laws, for unrestricted competition would kill it. There must be some marketing of produce. Unless the laws curb the power of monopoly the market will be controlled by a capitalist trust, as is the glaring case in milk today in England. There must be some transport for produce. Unless the laws favour the small man capitalist transport and its monopoly will ruin him, and when I say the laws I extend the term to mean every regulation however small imposed by Public Authority. For instance if a man desires to grind his own wheat today in England he is heavily handicapped by regulations which favour big capitalist milling and impose a serious fine upon himself.

Now the organ of legislation in this country is Parliament. Of course we all know the real power is in the hands of the big Trusts, beginning with the banking monopoly of which the Politicians are

## FLEE TO THE FIELDS

either members or servants. Still, overtly and at the end of the chain of action comes Parliament.

But Parliament today means Plutocracy. It used to mean Aristocracy, which, whether liked or not, is a stable form of government and works in the open. Plutocracy is neither stable nor open, and is compelled to work through falsehoods.

The beastly condition of Parliament is a byword. The atmosphere of bribery and blackmail – it is rather a stench than an atmosphere – is the very air of what is called “Politics.”

Until you have got rid of that you can do nothing.

Those who insist upon the necessity of reform in the moribund and degraded machine at Westminster and better still its replacement by popular and monarchic powers are often thought futile precisely because that which they are attacking has become so heartily and deservedly despised. Yet the direction of their attack is right. It is the key point. So long as the legislative machine is controlled by and composed of the monopolists, all effort at restoring healthy economic life will fail.

My conclusion, then, is, that along with all other items of a programme for restoring a peasantry to England, there must go a programme for transforming the diseased centre of political power.

H. BELLOC.



*1918 wood engraving of Ditchling village by Eric Gill*

BLESSING GIVEN BY THE HOLY SEE TO THE  
CATHOLIC LAND ASSOCIATIONS AND THEIR WORK

*Dal Vaticano,*  
1<sup>st</sup> July, 1933.

Right Rev. Monsignor James Dey,  
Oscott College,  
Birmingham.

VERY REV. MONSIGNOR,

The Holy Father has heard with satisfaction of the progress already made by the five Catholic Land Associations of Great Britain, and prays this important work of restoring the sane and healthy life of the countryside may be abundantly blessed by God and result in a diminution of unemployment through the development of the agricultural resources of the country to the fullest extent possible.

As an encouragement to persevere in this good work, His Holiness most gladly imparts His Apostolic Blessing to all who are engaged in furthering this most praiseworthy enterprise.

With the assurance of my personal good wishes,

I am,

Yours very sincerely,  
E. Cardinal Pacelli.

*“An entirely practical proposal, that men should seek the most solid of things, which is the earth, for the most useful of things, which is food, is none the less dependent on the principle that it must not be sought in a servile or bestial or merely mechanical manner. If it were, it would not give the normal degree of human happiness, which it is the object of such an experiment to give. You can treat a man like a machine, but you cannot make him an unfeeling machine; you can treat a man as a beast, but you cannot make him a happy beast; you can treat a man as a slave, but you cannot at the same time produce out of mere food the sensation of freedom.”*

—G.K. Chesterton  
from the Foreword to  
*The Catholic Land Movement*, 1932

## CHAPTER I The Origins

*by the Rev. John McQuillan, D.D.*



IT WOULD BE QUITE IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY THAT ON A given day, at a given hour, there began in this country the Catholic Land Movement, but one can trace the gradual growth of a conviction which has translated itself into action. The Catholic Land Movement is in actual being. It has enabled Catholics to live and work on the land. If the young plant becomes a mighty tree, as is hoped, generations to come might be desirous to know the initial story of the mustard seed.

As a result of deliberation and study, both of the economic and religious condition of our country at the present time, and of the nature of man as such, there was growing in the minds and hearts of many Catholic men the determination to save their native land and save their Church by freeing themselves and helping to free others from the chains of Industrialism and city life; to develop the country by using its resources to the full, to develop their own personalities by living as freemen on their own land, to develop their Church by bringing it with them into every country district.

The motives behind the Catholic Land Movement will be more fully expounded in the course of this book. The above paragraph is merely a simple statement of what was in the thoughts of some earnest people before any action was taken at all.

It is correct to say that the movement began in Scotland. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of April, 1929, there was formed in Glasgow, with the permission of the Archbishop of Glasgow, the Scottish Catholic Land Association. This was the first Catholic Society devoted exclusively to the work of settling Catholics on the land. Later, the Scots Hier-

archy sent its patronage and blessing to the movement and wished it every possible success.

In January, 1930, it began to publish a quarterly magazine entitled *Land for the People*, wherein is explained the philosophy of the Catholic Land Movement. This paper has since become the organ of all the existing Catholic Land Associations.

The next group to be formed was in London, in January, 1931. It took the name of the English Catholic Land Association, and had the same objects as the one already established in Scotland.

The good example spread to Birmingham where the Midlands Catholic Land Association was set up on 1<sup>st</sup> March of the same year with the approval of the Archbishop of Birmingham. The Catholic Land Association previously existing in England was reformed in the following June, and obtained the patronage of His Eminence Cardinal Bourne,<sup>1</sup> and changed its name to the South of England Catholic Land Association.

Manchester was the next to move and on 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 1931, a group of Catholics there set going the North of England Catholic Land Association with the approval of the Bishop of Salford.

The youngest society of all is, at the time of writing, the Liverpool Catholic Land Association, established on 14<sup>th</sup> October, 1932, with the approval of the Archbishop of Liverpool.†

Thus there are five kindred land societies, each independent of the other, but pursuing the same end with extraordinary identity of programme and unique similarity of outlook. They are united by a Standing Joint Committee, representing each Association, by means of which each group is kept in touch with the others, and unity of policy or action is preserved.

To find the beginning of actual land work, as distinct from propaganda, one must return to Scotland. The Scottish Catholic Land Association leased Broadfield Farm, Symington, Lanarkshire, and took possession of it on 27<sup>th</sup> May, 1931. It was opened as a training centre for young men who wished to learn farming and to settle later on the land. They were accompanied by the present writer, who also became parish priest of the surrounding district – the whole of South Lanarkshire – a territory of over one hundred square miles.

---

† A sixth is being formed for the diocese of Nottingham.



## THE ORIGINS

In December of the same year this Association began to work Bonnaughton Farm, Bearsden, Dumbartonshire, which they intended to lease as a training centre for young women. They were not permitted to use this farm for such a purpose, so they converted it into another training centre for men and entered into possession of it on 28<sup>th</sup> May, 1932. No priest is in residence there; the trainees live beside the diocesan seminary, whose land they cultivate.

On the other side of the border also land work had begun. The South of England Catholic Land Association leased Old Brown's Farm, Chartridge, Chesham, Buckinghamshire, on 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 1932. This place, too, is conducted as a training centre, and is presided over by Mr. Bryan Keating, the Secretary of the Association who went with the first batch of trainees. For a time this little colony had the spiritual ministrations of Rev. Francis Tierney, of Salford Diocese.

Then the Midlands Catholic Land Association got to work and opened a training centre at West Fields Farm, Market Bosworth, Leicestershire, on 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 1933. Fr. Tierney went there from Old Brown's Farm and became the warden and chaplain of the new colony.†

The reason why a beginning was made with training centres will be explained in another chapter. Suffice it to say that the above record is a plain statement of what has been achieved in the infancy of the Catholic Land Movement.

Numbers of the young men adopted by the respective Associations are now fully trained in every branch of farming. Some have obtained situations on farms; some have become managers of farms. What the leaders of the movement desire for each of their trained men is a farm, a family farm, where each may live and work on his own land. The only obstacle to such an achievement is our poverty. When this has been removed, we shall have abandoned the chronicle of origins and come into the history of a new civilization.



---

† The present warden is the Rev. George Street.

## COMMANDER HERBERT WILLIAM SHOVE

During World War I, LCdr. Herbert Shove commanded the Royal Navy Submarines C-2 (1915–1916) and E-29 (1915–1922); he was called up again during World War II. He won both the Distinguished Service Order and the Order of the British Empire. During the inter-war years, he lived at Hallett's Farm at Ditchling, where he worked alongside the others in the community, and was especially well-known for his "illicit still"! Somewhat of an ideal Distributist, Shove was considered an authority on such varied arts as silversmithing, bee-keeping, farming, and distilling. He devoted much of his mental energy to economic theory, the best expression of which can be found in his excellent book on the history of trade and manufacturing, *The Fairy Ring of Commerce*, which was published in 1930 by the Birmingham Branch of the Distributist League. He also served as the Chairman of the South of England Catholic Land Association. Fr. Brocard Sewell said that, because of his beard, Shove looked very much like William Morris.

CHAPTER II  
The Rise and Fall of Industrialism

*by Commander Herbert Shove, D.S.O., R.N.*



IT IS A COMMON ERROR TO CONFUSE INDUSTRIALISM with modern scientific technique. To wish to end the industrial system is supposed to involve a desire to relinquish all those added powers over natural forces which man has acquired within the past couple of centuries. Logically, we are told – quite rightly – that if one proposes to do this one cannot stop short of a return to primitive savagery. There are many today who are alive to the necessity of a return to the land but who withhold support of the pioneers of the Land Movement because they think we are irrational fanatics in deprecating the use of, for example, the tractor plough. Or again, because we make it a crucial point that the new settlers shall produce as much as possible for their own immediate consumption rather than for market. These misapprehensions arise from the failure to recognize that the present industrial system is not merely an imperfect system to be reformed, or even an evil system to be ended, but an impermanent system that must, by its very nature, pass away within a comparatively short time.

The Industrial System is not essentially a matter of technique. It is that system wherein society is dominated by the idea of exchange for gain. Its overlords are middlemen whose test of everything is, “will it pay”; that is, “will it give us more power to effect further exchanges?” This is not necessarily the object of exchange. “The exchange of things is twofold,” says St. Thomas Aquinas, “one natural, as it were, and necessary, whereby the commodity is exchanged for another, or money is taken for a commodity in order to satisfy the

needs of life. Such-like trading, properly so-called, does not belong to the middlemen, but rather to housekeepers or civil servants who have to provide the household or the State with the necessities of life. The other kind of exchange is either that of money for money or of any commodity for money, not on account of the necessities of life, but for profit, and this kind of exchange, properly speaking, regards the middleman. The first kind of exchange is commendable because it supplies a natural need. The second is justly deserving of blame because, considered in itself, it satisfies the greed for gain, which knows no limit and tends to infinity. Hence trading, considered in itself, has a certain debasement attaching thereto, insofar as, by its nature, it does not imply a virtuous or necessary end."

It is to be observed – indeed St. Thomas goes on to say so – that the above passage does not mean that it is sinful to be a middleman or to trade for profit. But it does mean that this manner of life is not, in itself, deserving of high consideration. It must be controlled, first by the conscience of the merchant himself, recognizing that he is engaged in a highly dangerous occupation which may very easily become anti-social, and therefore, sinful, and secondly by the watchfulness of statesmen not themselves exposed to its temptations and able therefore to take a disinterested view.

Now the statesman is nothing if he have not the power to enforce his decisions. Justice without her sword becomes a laughing stock to the criminal. With the decline of the moral restraint of the Faith on the mercantile mind there has been associated, particularly in the countries wherein the authority of the Church has been most completely denied, a tendency to deny also the authority of the "Prince" (in the medieval sense). English medieval history is largely a record of more or less successful attempts by Kings to curb the power of overweening nobles. After the rise of the squirearchy, to whom the balance of power passed through the overthrow of the Church, the struggle became one between this class and the Crown. In this the squires were entirely successful.

The feudal theory of landholding was of a graduated personal responsibility of administration culminating in the King, who, as "Lord Paramount" was the trustee – under God – of the National Heritage. However far the practice fell short of this ideal it was

always recognized and often insisted upon. It put landlordism on a different, and a higher plane than commercialism. The rise of the squires destroyed it and its last vestiges – save in the verbiage of legal documents – were swept away by the Statute of Tenures – passed under the Commonwealth and re-enacted after the Restoration – whereby land was practically assimilated to goods and made the subject of absolute private ownership.

After this there was really nothing to give the landlord a right to regard himself as the superior of the trader. Nevertheless, the social prestige attaching to landholding has survived almost to this day, though ever diminishing. So, too, it would be grossly unfair to represent the squires as universally oblivious of their duties as trustees of their estates for the common good. Here again, most of us could name even living representatives of the true feudal tradition. Though it is to be feared that in a great many instances family pride is the ruling motive in the desire to “keep up” the estate; or, at best, the idea of a kind of “charity” towards “inferiors” who are not able to look after their own affairs. This doctrine of poverty as arising necessarily from natural inferiority is a legacy of the system of “Political Economy,” originated to salve the consciences of the wealthy during the elaboration of the system of mercantile dominance.

We have seen already how landed wealth was assimilated to mercantile. But throughout its history the squirearchy was constantly recruited from the ranks of the mercantile classes, whose riches were gained in the first place chiefly by exploiting the prowess of English seamen. At the outset, in Elizabethan times, these adventurers were hardly to be distinguished from pirates. One of the most famous of them originated the highly lucrative slave trade. Next came the trade to the Indies, the pioneers of which, the Portuguese, soon found that they had but blazed a trail for rivals from France, Holland and England. The Levant, and even Muscovy, also claimed attention. All these, however, were essentially trades in luxuries. Hardly anything was imported that could be produced at home; while all that was essential to national life and culture was so produced. But insofar as the trade was anything more than piracy something had to be exported in return.

For some centuries this export question had been an important one. England is a country well adapted to produce large quantities of high grade wool. The temptation to landlords to divert their land from tillage to sheep ranching wherever they were in a position to do so had proved too much for many of them as early as the fourteenth century. But, so long as the medieval idea of responsibility held, attempts, more or less successful, had been made to check this in the interests of the rural population and of national self-sufficiency.

Under the guild system of industry the introduction of devices which would tend to produce unemployment, or to deprive a trained workman of the advantage of his skill, was also discouraged. Medieval authorities, whether political or industrial, were alive to the injustice of such destruction of the wealth of the poorer classes in this immaterial form of personal skill, and interfered to restrain the use of such machines as, e.g., the gig mill and the fulling mill.

Mr. R.H. Tawney<sup>2</sup> in his admirable book on *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, has dealt at length with the effect of the hard Calvinistic theology of the Puritans on commercial morality. The permeation of England by this spirit was helped, throughout the seventeenth century, by a number of contributory causes. We have already touched upon the development of overseas trade out of the buccaneering of the sixteenth century. Along with this there was also going on an infiltration of Calvinistic ideas from Scotland and Holland, and later, after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, from the French Huguenot body. These influences tended to reinforce the indigenous growth of the spirit of mercantilism and overseas exploitation.

Once that spirit gains control of the sword of justice in a community the doom of its peasantry, and "landed aristocracy" is sealed. So also, as we hope to show in the remaining pages of this short outline, is the permanent greatness of the nation. This is due to the interaction of two natural economic causes, forgetfulness of which has led to many modern errors and false systems. Firstly, the difference in what we may call the "rigidity of the time factor" in agriculture and in industrial production. Secondly, the difference in the importance to human subsistence of organic and inorganic

substances; of things that grow and of things that are “made” from materials that do not grow. Closely connected with which is the distinction between things consumed in their use (fungibles) and things not so consumed (non-fungibles). We will first consider the operation of the time factor in enabling unrestricted commercialism to destroy national agriculture.

We have already pointed out the difficulty that confronts the overseas adventurer when, ceasing to be a mere pirate, he becomes a trader. Imports can only be paid for in exports.

It is, of course, by no means unusual at the outset for valuable imports to be obtained in return for practically valueless exports. But this stage does not last long. In India and the countries wherein the commercial greatness of England was chiefly built up, the people were not, even at the outset, unsophisticated savages. Large as were the profits of such trade, substantial payment was always necessary. The tributary system on which, e.g., the Spanish Empire was founded, depends on an initial military subjugation of the exploited territory which was only later, and very partially, the English method. Nor, of course, could payment be made in specie, for the precious metals are not English products, but rather those of the other parties to the trade. And the traditional wool or corn of earlier English export were in no demand.

*Manufactured* goods had therefore to be obtained for export. There are two methods of doing this. The first, which had been that of the old Hanse towns, of Venice and of the rival Italian cities which she eventually overthrew, is that of the “emporium,” which lives on the margin between the purchase and sales prices of goods in two independent areas between which its shipping affords a link, but neither of which is under its own governmental control. This, from the nature of the case, became the chief Dutch method and has been largely developed in London. But the insular position of the latter puts it at a disadvantage compared with the Dutch ports. The English merchants therefore sought to obtain their goods for export in their own country.

It was this fact that led to the Industrial Revolution and made England the centre of it. The already financially – and therefore, under the changed conditions of warfare, now militarily – pow-

erful class of merchants, the "Lords of Exchange," set themselves to foster and control production without reference to local, or even national need, but solely for "exchange value." They became capitalist "manufacturers."

That human raw material was available for the Industrial Revolution was very largely due to the thorough permeation of the landlord class with mercantile ideas and the struggle of the squires to compete with the growing wealth of the traders. That they ever entered into such competition was due to their ignorance of the essential difference in the time factors governing agriculture and trade. For capital embarked in agriculture can only be turned over at a rate fixed by the succession of the seasons. In trade this limitation does not exist. A profit can be made on each completed transaction, and the more highly organized is trade – as by credit devices, rapid transport etc. – the more frequently can deals be effected. Thus it may be said that whereas an agriculturist can only get rich "at simple interest," a commercialist – once a certain point is reached in the development of trade organization – can do so at "compound interest." It is therefore useless for the former to pit himself against the latter in the race for wealth.

Nevertheless, the money-minded squires made this attempt. They embarked on schemes of "agricultural improvement," designed to enable them to draw more rent from their lands. This was the real object of all such devices as the enclosures, which ousted the old small yeomen in favour of the later big tenant farmers. Some of the new methods of cultivation were real improvements from the point of view of increased production of essential foodstuffs, and even, more rarely, of increased employment. But that was not the end in view. We have not here space to go into detail. But it is notorious that the final result of the agricultural policy of the landlords of the eighteenth century was to drive crowds of country people who had hitherto enjoyed a frugal independence, into the ranks of day labourers, who, so far as they remained in the country, earned a pittance often below a bare subsistence level; while so far as – in the words of one callous landlord – they "hoolied away," it was to form the miserable proletariat of the industrial centres.



## THE RISE AND FALL OF INDUSTRIALISM

The piling up of these festering wens was welcomed by the more foolish – “progressive” – squires. Not only did they provide an outlet for displaced rural labour, but in them the population multiplied rapidly through the operation of another factor directly contrary to the accepted theories of the time. The recently formulated “Doubleday’s Law,” that human fertility varies inversely as the standard of physical comfort, had full play in the early slums. So that the demand for food forced up the prices of agricultural produce and enabled the landlords to raise rents yet further.

The formation of the industrial ant heaps was due to the realization by the industrious-merchants of the value to themselves of “time saving,” i.e., of speed in turnover. Even under a system of handwork, or the use of small appliances by home workers, – as in the “undertaker” system of the English textile industry – time is lost in the initial distribution of material and subsequent collection of manufactured goods. Only so long as the raw material is locally produced can such industries resist the concentrating effect of mercantilised production for a distant market.

In England the spearhead of the industrialist assault on the old order was unfortunately one particular textile – cotton. Not only did this command a ready sale in the countries wherewith the most lucrative trade could be driven, but its raw material was procurable under peculiarly advantageous circumstances; being grown by slave labour under British masters and in a country whose climate allowed of forcing down the standard of subsistence of the workers to a very low level. When, at the English end, was added the possession of such a port as Liverpool, in a district with a climate almost ideal for the processes of manufacture, the development of a concentrated factory industry in this commodity was, under the economic conditions of the time, practically inevitable. It was from Lancashire that the industrial canker spread to poison English life.

The origin of the frantic speeding up of modern industry is also to be found in the peculiar conditions of textile manufacture. Where rapidity of production is the end in view there is an inevitable race between the two branches of spinning and weaving. Under the old conditions of pure handwork weaving is a far quicker process

than spinning, though a more skilled and arduous one. Hence spinning was traditionally a sort of general "spare time" job for women, whereas weaving was a whole time job for male specialists. The introduction of the first great speeding up device, Kay's flying shuttle,<sup>3</sup> accentuated this difference and stimulated the series of spinning inventions which, throughout the eighteenth century, led to a reversal of the old order, so that the problem became one of weaving fast enough to keep the spindles continuously running. The result, as we all know, is the modern automatic power loom and the troubles about the number thereof a single operative shall be compelled to attend.

Though the factory system, especially in Lancashire, was actually initiated before its introduction, the use of "power" in industry consolidated and helped it to become universal. The developed industrial city was essentially nothing more than a small group of steam engines round which those whose livelihood depended on attending the machines they drove were forced to crowd. The common way of looking at the application of power-driven machinery to industry is that it multiplies the productive power of the individual workman. Leaving aside any question of its moral effect on him — a matter which is to be dealt with by another contributor to this symposium — this is a very partial view. In the first place, it does not multiply the raw material, and cannot therefore produce more of the finished product than could an adequate number of hand-workers in the same time, or a lesser number in a longer time. Secondly, its effect on quality is, generally speaking, deleterious. Its real economic effect is to increase the rate of turnover and thus *cheapen production by saving the subsistence of additional or, — if demand does not increase proportionately with increased rate of output, — of displaced workers.*

When the common worker has been reduced to something approximating to a bare subsistence level, the importance of this to the machino-facturer is primary. To reduce the "wages bill" relatively to the selling price of his goods is the high road to fortune. The minimum of food, fuel, clothing and shelter required to sustain life in a given climate being, however, inelastic, and the rate of supply of food from a given countryside being limited by the seasonal time factor and only capable of increase by improved methods of culture in

## THE RISE AND FALL OF INDUSTRIALISM

a – constantly diminishing – arithmetical progression, the prices of food relative to goods, put on the market at a rate increased geometrically by reducing the time cycle of manufacture, must constantly rise. Thus the natural tendency is for the wages bill to rise and this further encourages mechanization. Unless the market can be kept constantly expanding – which, of course, becomes progressively more difficult – this must mean unemployment and consequent misery only alleviable if new industries can be established capable of absorbing the displaced workers.

This, the stock remedy of the classical economists, presupposes an adaptability in the worker only possible if practised skill is discounted and labour is reduced to a dead level of unspecialized machine-minding. The natural consequence of this must be a tendency to equalization of wages at the lowest possible level. In the later stages, such as we see today, technical skill comes to mean simply skill in designing and maintaining the machines – rendered ever more and more “fool proof” – and even this is discounted by reducing the demand for it as the processes of machine building become themselves more and more mechanical. The “plums” of modern industrialism are to be sought in the “sales” and advertizing, rather than in the technical producing departments. To find a “Captain of Industry” who could take charge of the work in one of his own factories is very much the exception.

All this operates against the agriculturist; even against the agricultural landlord. Its effects are, for reasons already touched upon, masked at the outset by the apparent stimulus of increased demand for agricultural produce to feed the industrial towns. This enables the landlords to gain a higher rent and – to some extent – the agricultural tenants to get a better return. The latter is, however, very soon swallowed up by the former in a community which has been developed on the English lines of big estates let out at competitive rents; the system which is the fruit of the commercialising of land-holding.

This rack-renting is also helped by the growth of the idea of “investment.” The system of working on borrowed capital, originating in the mercantile devices for increasing rapidity of turnover,

is elaborated during the growth of industrialism. To it we owe our modern organization of "companies," originally simply one of extended "sleeping partnerships," but now, since the introduction of "limited liability," really only the lending of money at interest – whether fixed or speculative – and often pure gambling. And from it arises the idea that "money makes money"; that the old distinction between investment in a fruitful thing, such as land or the assistance of a skilled workman, which gives a title to a share in the produce, and a mere unproductive loan, where there is no produce to share, is no longer of force. The economists, writing in the days of rapid industrial expansion and increasing opportunities for productive investment, evolved the idea of an average "profit of stock," a standard rate of interest inherent in investment as such. The money-minded landlord, bent on maintaining his position in competition with the industrialist, came to look on his land as subject to the same rules and therefore as justly yielding to him, "profits of stock," equal to those from other investments.

This is the point of view that leads to the landlord's final overthrow. The seasonal "simple interest" return from land must, as the speeding-up process continues, lag ever further behind the cyclic "compound interest" return from trade or manufacture. Under the English system, too, the tenant must, equally with the landlord, be regarded as an "investor."

Indeed, both of them, the landlord as mortgagor, the tenant as a borrower of capital, are frequently paying interest at commercial rates. All the necessary expenses, taxes, etc. incidental to the position of both of them are also fixed on similar lines. What, in an industrial community, was in any case an "inadequate" return on the investment is thus very easily converted into a dead loss. While the landlord is held up to public opprobrium as a rack-renter he is often getting less return on the cost of his land, or even of the improvements he has effected on it, than he could have got by investment in Government loans, to say nothing of successful industrial stocks. On the other hand the industrialists cry ever louder at the price that must be charged for foodstuffs if the tenant is making a living at all. For if wages are to be increased *pari-passu* with the rise in foodstuffs the

whole benefit of the "compound interest" cycle is transferred to the agricultural interest and industrialism ceases to pay.

The *town* landlord, levying a direct toll on industrialism, has, to a considerable extent, been able thus to divert its profits into his own pockets. The attempt of the agricultural squires to do so led quite early to the anti-Corn Law agitation. This, together with the whole "Free Trade" system designed to make a "world fit for hucksters to live in," was successful owing to the enfranchisement of the "business" middle class and the threat of the deluded populace, exasperated by the starvation and misery brought about by the industrial revolution, but whose demands for redress were skilfully diverted on to a wrong scent. It is to be noted that all the free trade leaders, Cobden,<sup>4</sup> Bright,<sup>5</sup> Peel,<sup>6</sup> etc., were cotton magnates.

The idea of England as "the workshop of the world" necessarily involves the idea of the ruin of home agriculture. For the ultimate idea is to live by exporting manufactures and taking payment in raw materials and food. One sometimes hears politicians talk as if it were possible to live on an export trade while confining imports to raw materials, or, at any rate, only importing, in the finished state, those things which are unproducible in our own country. This is a fallacy. It is obvious that you cannot balance an export of, e.g., finished cottons against the price you pay for the raw materials. If you try to do this you will have no margin to live on. If the margin is taken in things you cannot produce at home these are necessarily inessentials – luxuries. It is true that many such things, as tea, coffee, cocoa, oranges, currants, pepper, tobacco, etc., have come to be almost necessities. We shall have to deal later with some aspects of this "raising of the standard of life." The present point is that these inessential "fungibles" and others of a more luxurious nature, e.g., wines, silks and the rarer spices, cannot, in the long run, form the staple of the marginal import after paying for raw materials. For the "cost of living" which determines the minimum wages bill must chiefly depend on the staple foods of the people, *which have become such simply because they are locally produced.*

At the outset the home agriculturists were not ruined by the free import of food. This arose from two causes, the operation of

which it is constantly the object of the industrialists to counteract; distance and the sparseness of population in distant "undeveloped" countries. To quicken his turnover by speeding up transport and communication – as by the telegraph, wireless, etc. – is obviously vital to the competitive trader, dependent on a constant expansion of markets necessary to him if there is to be any profit in his increased output. For if markets do not expand there will be an inevitable glut as machino-facture develops. Thus there is a constant pressure outwards from the machino-facturing centre – originally in England – into the hitherto purely "peasant" (self-sufficient) countries, by opening new quick transport thereto, and also into the fertile wilderness, by settling "surplus" population displaced from or bred of the crowding in the industrial regions. When a certain point is reached the cheapness of production of foodstuffs on these virgin soils more than counterbalances the ever reduced cost of transport and the older country can no longer compete with them because its soil has to be farmed in accordance with the basic law of permanent husbandry; that the stock, including the human population, must feed back to the soil, by manuring, what is taken from it in the crops. This is helped, of course, by the English rent system, whereby there are two classes of capitalists, landlords and tenants, as well as a class of proletarian labourers, seeking to live from the sale of farm produce. Whereas the settler in the backwoods or the prairie is normally playing a "lone hand."

The factor of distance did, however, enable British agriculture to keep something like its old position for a generation after the repeal of the Corn Laws. It fell in the "eighties," after the opening of the great American transcontinental railways. Since then its decline – apart from the transitory flare up of the War – has been practically continuous. There was a short rally after 1900, due mainly to the, as yet, incomplete mechanization of the prairie farming. Harvesting expenses there were kept up by the very high wages that had to be paid owing to the sparseness of population. The "lone" farmer of the "Golden West," – as it was customary then to call it – could seed much more land than he could harvest with his own family or permanent hired help. This has been increasingly counterbalanced by the

## THE RISE AND FALL OF INDUSTRIALISM

substitution of the machine for the man in agriculture as in manufacture. The mechanization of agriculture, with its seasonal time limits, is *entirely* labour substituting or, as it reaches countries where labour exists in adequate supply, labour displacing. It was evolved on the prairies and has thence been forced, in a desperate effort to make home farming pay, on the already depopulated countryside, driving a greater proportion of our people than ever into the industrial towns.

Now the fertility of the prairies and other virgin soils is not inexhaustible. Sooner or later a proper rotation and feeding back of fertility becomes necessary. So long as new virgin soils are available this simply leads to the treatment of the older, worked out, soils on the same lines as exhausted mines. They are abandoned. There are great tracts of such land in the Middle West of America today – to say nothing of the ruined agriculture of New England, which has suffered similarly to that of Great Britain. The ultimate end of expanding industrialism is thus the progressive devastation of the fruitful earth. It is a system of living on capital, an attempt to reap where one has not sown, to satisfy the “greed for gain which knows no limit and tends to infinity.” As such it is doomed to collapse throughout the world. But at this point it is necessary again to emphasize that this is not the fruit of scientific research, or added powers over nature, but of the spirit of avarice that has guided the practical application of them in the social order in which we live. Man is not being destroyed by machines but by the base folly of men which has distorted machines into engines for the destruction of their fellows.

We are, however, as yet some way from this general collapse. The present world depression is characterized by an approach to the Gilbertian situation of general starvation because it “doesn’t pay to grow wheat” – or other foodstuffs. This position of general glut is due to another aspect of the infinite greed for gain. It has tended, in the past few years, to confuse the general mind as to the real issue of industrialism. The cause of it is, of course, the piling up of interest-bearing debt. Of the details of this process, chiefly due to the insane idea that one can “eat one’s cake and have it” by financing the waste of material in a great war out of loans, and that nobody will have eventually to become poorer by such destruction, we cannot

here treat. But even if the slate were wiped clean – as is being done gradually – the problem of industrialism would not be solved. The technical equipment and misdirected productive organization of the modern world would remain. Only the control of it would pass to a considerable extent into other – but not into wiser – hands.

But the very system of trying to make one's country the "workshop of the world," and the undue "territorial division of labour" brought about by the dominance of the commercial ideals of living by exchange and multiplying exchanges by general speeding up, leads to a logical collapse before the whole world has been exploited. This is due to the interaction of the facts of the relative importance of organic and inorganic products to human subsistence and the usurious profits obtainable from the attempt to live on "capital."

It is a general law of nature that the animal kingdom lives upon the vegetable, either directly or at one remove as beasts of prey. This means that the supply of animal – and so, of course, of human – food depends on the growth of vegetation and therefore on the rotation of the seasons. If we pass from food, a pure fungible, to the next requirements of clothing and fuel, we find that they too are practically entirely organic products. Further, clothing, which is not a pure fungible, requires more elaborate preparation than either food or fuel and has a limited life, whereas buildings, which provide the fourth essential of shelter, requires even more and last proportionately longer. Indeed, insofar as they are made with greater difficulty out of inorganic stone or brick, they become, compared with the more easily worked organic reeds, timber, etc., practically permanent.

This general rule of the progressive indispensability and "fungibility" of commodities in human life as we pass from the inorganic to the organic, and of the greater elaboration and permanence as we pass back from the essential and fungible organic to the less essential inorganic and non-fungible, seems to run through the whole of human life. There is not space here to elaborate it. But the reader can easily follow it out for himself and must recognize its general truth if he keeps in mind the vital distinction between use and consumption and the invariable subordination of the former to



the latter. A critic once denied that the first requirement of a man on a desert island was food. He contended that he first wanted a knife to cut it with! This was due to his inability to recognize this distinction. For the knife's *use* is subordinate to the food's *consumption* and in its absence a starving man would generally find means to do without it. If he could not he would still die of *starvation*, not of *knifelessness*.

But this thinking in terms of the inessential usable is at least as vital as the essential consumable is a product of the mercio-industrial world in which the critic had lived. It pervades much of the nineteenth century economic writings, and perhaps even more of those of today. One hears of the "agricultural industry" as if it had exactly the same importance as the "gramophone industry" to human welfare. When this state of mind exists it leads inevitably to the fostering of the inessential industries at the expense of the more essential, of, e.g., the manufacture of wireless sets as a substitute for weaving, just as, in an earlier age, manufacture generally was fostered at the expense of agriculture.

The materials of industries become progressively less and less crop products dependent on the rigid seasonal time factor, as the industries themselves produce less and less essential things. They are, therefore, more and more susceptible of the speeding up which goes with the exploitation and waste of exhaustible natural resources, minerals and so forth, instead of the constantly, but seasonally, renewed fertility of properly worked land. Thus these industries, so soon as a demand for their products can be created, tend to pay better than the older staples. But they will very soon glut their market unless there is an assimilation of the inorganic non-fungible to the organic fungible. Hence the tendency as such things as bicycles or motor cars are popularized is to an ever-progressive change of fashion – "new season's" models are the feature of every motor show, etc. – and the cheap production of articles designed to wear out quickly so as to keep up a constant demand for renewal. No motor cars are made today which have the slightest chance of giving the service of, e.g., the old 5hp De Dion.<sup>7</sup> The whole policy is one of waste in order to "keep things going" by an ever-increasing quantity production at the expense of quality.

This cheap shoddy manufacture of the inessential made as nearly as possible not only an essential – by advertizing and organizing life on lines that compel its use – but more and more a mere fungible, is the lifeblood of later industrialism such as we see today. It naturally tends increasingly to discount personal skill in the ordinary workers by substituting the mass produced rubbish for the craftsman's lasting work. In so doing it hastens the inevitable overthrow of the "workshop of the world" by putting, e.g., the raw Japanese coolie on a level with the British operative, so that the "foreign competition", which was at one time resistible by the more or less deserved reputation of British goods for quality, becomes irresistible.

Foreign competition grows naturally in closer proximity to the foreign market, so that it has always an advantage on the score of distance. Secondly, the newer industrial areas begin naturally to produce local staples rather than the inessentials and for these they are inevitably better placed in the matter of raw material. Thirdly, they are able to profit by the experience gained in the older factories and to start unhampered by obsolescent plant and the deadweight of old debt, clogging capital accounts and demanding interest. Fourthly, they command labour whose standard of life has not been raised by the earlier spate of rubbish.

Even the home market will never – under the dominance of the "Lords of Exchange" – be allowed effective protection. This is because the foreign competitor is largely set going by the investment of the surplus capital of the already industrialized country. This surplus capital really represents a paper debt from the *real* capital of the country – the land, plant, skill and "goodwill" – to the commercial overlords; financiers and the *rentier* class. This debt is offset by the productive section of manufacturers of such things as railways, machinery, etc. – the "toolmakers" in effect – making the necessary equipment for export without any real payment, the financiers looking to a return by the subsequent import of the products made with the exported tools *without any corresponding export*, by way of "dividends" on their investment. Hence we arrive at the position of the "unfavourable balance of trade," which the old classical economists were so fond of assuring us was really a sign of growing prosperity.

## THE RISE AND FALL OF INDUSTRIALISM

This balance must be paid mainly in fungibles – chiefly food – because these are the natural products of the previously undeveloped countries and also, and more especially, because only non-fungibles, as railways, machinery, etc., whose use is subservient to the production of fungibles, can afford permanent “security” for the investments in the foreign countries. (On the same principle a pawn-broker cannot lend money on the security of the porridge in a bowl though he can on that of the empty bowl). Thus no modern English government, so long as the present rule by and in the interest of the commercial-minded is maintained, dare do more than *talk* about any real protection for *primary* home products. While on the other hand a good deal has already been done, and more may be expected, in the direction of fostering the inessential industries which tend to waste natural resources, such as gramophones, wireless sets and all the thousand and one “knick-knacks” which fill the modern home and give a false impression of a “high standard of living” amongst people who do not even know what good food tastes like or how good clothes should wear.

Thus, in the later stages, on which this country has now entered, *industrial production tends ever to become more and more of the mere rubbishy trimmings of life*. As one comes to rely on the exchange of these with foreign countries for one’s vital needs, so one becomes of less and less real importance in the scheme of world economics. In each succeeding world depression one therefore tends to suffer first, because one’s goods are the first things impoverished people dispense with, and to recover last because they are the last luxuries an enriched community adds to the amenities of its life.

It is quite true that the “untutored savage” frequently buys a Ford before he rigs himself out in a suit of clothes. But both the Ford and the clothes are to him simply luxuries. When he has been taught to regard clothes as a necessity – which is generally the very first step taken in “civilizing” him – he acquires the same ideas of their relative importance in the scheme of things as his instructor. His “standard of life has been raised” and by that very process he has been made into a potential customer for more knick-knacks when he can afford them, but a potential and more powerful competitor in

the realm of primary things which he feels now he must have and so learns to make for himself. As this "raising of the standard of life" – which, materially, generally means simply an assimilation of it to that of the commercialists – spreads throughout the world it automatically sounds the doom of the original "workshop of the world."

An increasing number of the states of the world are beginning to perceive, more or less clearly, the dangers of this international dominance of the financiers through excessive commercialism. A considerable step has also been taken, since the opening of the present century, in the direction of decentralizing political governments in Europe on the true lines of nationality and national culture, as against the older Imperialism and the principle of conquering subject races. The importance of this tendency has not been recognized in England. That it is a definite decentralizing movement has been masked by the futile paper internationalism of such things as the now moribund League of Nations, the interminable succession of "Conferences," etc., ever barren of result and the sickly bleating of ineffective sentimental "pacifists," all deftly woven into the scheme of the international financial interests. But a mere glance at the map of Europe of 1900 and today will show its reality. Up to the War there were four sovereigns in Europe claiming the title of "Emperor." Today there is one – our own King – and he takes his title from an Asiatic dominion. *Nominally* decentralization has even taken place in the Soviet Union, apart from the new countries formed from fragments of the old Russian Empire. Actually, of course, this is held together by a highly centralized authority in Moscow, wielding the weapon of irresistible military power. But the thirty or forty republics within the Soviet Union are already organized on paper and the inevitable end, as the hopeless economic and – more obvious still to Catholic eyes – spiritual unsoundness of Communism takes effect, must be a breakdown that will leave them really independent.

As to the other great living political force, Fascism, that is avowedly a nationalist movement. That it demands national solidarity, as in Germany the fusion of the various hitherto partly autonomous states, again masks the essentially decentralizing tendency. But that tendency is at work throughout the world and it spells the end of

the commercialist era and necessitates a return in all countries to the principle of putting primary production back into its right place in the social organism.

This is a terrible prospect for England as she is today. For, quite apart from her dependence on foreign trade for the primary things and the rapidly dwindling importance of what she has to export, the whole *method* of English production is the fruit of the false ideal of commercialism, the ideal of speeding up and mechanization as ends in themselves and of dispensing with the labourer wherever possible. So that even a "back to the land" movement is in danger of being turned into a mere attempt to produce more home grown food by the application of "up to date" mechanical methods on the land. These methods mean the employment of a smaller and not a larger proportion of our manpower in primary production.

If we do this we have not really begun to solve the problem. For even supposing that our present agricultural population – say, making all allowances for subsidiary occupations, some ten percent of the whole – could, by mechanized working, feed the rest, they could not provide those others with a market for their inessential products unless they received an enormously disproportionate share of the national purchasing power. For in the long run the "national income" on which everyone must live, is a *crop* income limited by the seasonal time factor.

It is on this rock that the various "new economist" systems – the proposals of the "school of plenty" – designed to raise national purchasing power by schemes of "national dividends," raising wages all round and so on, really split. There is no space to consider them here, except to remark that the one amongst them that seems to have got nearest the truth is the one that has commanded the least public attention – that of Professor Soddy.<sup>8</sup> But if agriculture were to be made so lucrative as any self-sufficient system in a mechanized world must make it, then another problem, the exact antithesis of what we have seen, must arise. The problem of rural exploitation of the towns, the success of the attempt which failed in the early nineteenth century of the "simple interest" producers to reap the benefit of the "compound interest" production of others.

This will not come about; because the unemployment and destitution in the towns that must accompany any serious advance along the lines leading to it must precipitate political revolution and chaos in which the whole of our civilization would probably perish. What is necessary is to find a balance of population living by the primary “simple interest” production as against the classes of secondary “compound interest” production, and the third class of the “culture builders” not materially productive at all. This last class has been commercialized so badly in the recent past that its existence as an economic factor tends to be ignored.

What the proper proportions of these classes may prove to be in any community at any stage of culture or scientific development is not a matter for rigid definition. If the principles are grasped the practice will work itself out. But that there are these three classes to be considered and legislated for and to be mutually protected and prevented from upsetting the economic balance by overreaching one another must be recognized.

It is because it is important at the present crisis to increase as much as possible the numbers, and not merely the output, of the “simple interest” producers in England that we stand for the discouragement of the large mechanized farm. Of the application of similar principles to the factory I do not here speak. In industry – where we have “compound interest” production – the problem is more complex and, in many respects, less urgent. But in agriculture it is quite clear that we must immediately create a trend, not merely “back to the land,” but “back to the hand.” Where the balance will be found, even here, is not a matter for dogmatism. Obviously we shall stop far short of the primitive cave man, scratching the earth with a pointed stick. He could never support a real culture. Equally obviously we cannot make a great community permanently free and happy if it is dependent for its vital needs on half a dozen men who, because they control the half-dozen machines that tear up a whole depopulated countryside, can dictate its every activity by the threat of starvation. This is, however, the state of things towards which mechanization tends today. The men not necessarily being the actual “farmers,” but possibly “capitalists” or a “public body.”

## THE RISE AND FALL OF INDUSTRIALISM

*Balance* is the secret of human organization. The equilibrium is ever unstable and it is the function of the publicist to shift the weights as needed to preserve it. The dominance of the commercial idea has upset it. We of the Land Movement have perceived that one vital thing required to restore it is the shift of more men into the countryside and the prevention of their being there “eaten” by machines as their forerunners of whom Blessed Thomas More wrote were “eaten” by sheep.



*George Maxwell*

## HAROLD ROBBINS (b. 1888)

Harold Robbins was involved in the Distributist movement from his earliest years. He was attached to the “New Witness League” in Birmingham from 1918 to 1921, and was the Chairman of the Birmingham Branch of the Distributist League from 1926 to 1933. He was chiefly instrumental in founding, with Mgr. Dey, the Midlands Catholic Land Association, and was its Honorary Secretary during the years that it was active, 1931 to 1936. He also edited the journal of the English Catholic Land Associations, *The Cross and the Plough*, from 1934 to 1946. During the relevant period, he was also a contributor to *G.K.’s Weekly*.

He co-authored with K.L. Kenrick what came to be known as “the Birmingham Scheme,” a pamphlet entitled *Unemployment: A Distributist Solution*; his friendship with Kenrick spanned many years. In 1946 he wrote a short biography of GKC dedicated to Kenrick and entitled *The Last of the Realists*, though it was not published until 1948, and then only serialized in the *Weekly Review* because of wartime restrictions on paper.

Robbins wrote extensively; his better-known works include *The Sun of Justice: An Essay on the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church*, published in 1934 by Heath Cranton, Ltd., of London, and *An Examination of Eugenics*, published by Burns, Oates and Washbourne, Ltd., of London, in 1930. The American Distributist Dorothy Day (1897–1980) noted in a 1954 issue of her paper, *The Catholic Worker*, that Robbins’s *Sun of Justice* “contains the best thinking ever done on Distributism.”



CHAPTER III  
The Line of Approach

*by H. Robbins*



THE CATHOLIC LAND MOVEMENT HAS TAKEN FORM and force in face of the great evils of unemployment. It would be entirely a mistake to suppose that unemployment is its origin, still less its sole justification, for unemployment is itself only a symptom of a deeper-seated social disease.

The problems confronting civilization are such an intricate tangle that almost any chance end of thread will lead the investigator immediately towards the central Gordian Knot. The moralist disturbed by the Cinema finds himself tackling the modern passivity of mind, and the real absence of true social life from our urban aggregations. The supporter of the Pedestrians' Association must needs form views on the obstinacy of vested interests, and the bitter controversies on mechanization. This brief essay cannot be a catalogue of the chance ends now being grasped, with varying degrees of firmness and courage, by men of goodwill in all the camps, but it seems certain that all the more important of these ends, and certainly the more vital of them, lead sooner or later to that fact of industrial urbanization which is the chief mark of our time.

The tumult and the shouting are centred in the great urban areas of the world, for where a rural area is vitally affected, it is one which came into being to serve, by way of an inverted industrialism, the great new aggregations which are the raw material of our subject.

The problem of industrial urbanization may be stated in many ways. It includes moral, political, economic and social factors,

which will arise in their place. But since the Land Movement is radical, we may begin with the factor of Life itself, and point out that the fundamental problem of urbanization is biological.

It may be, although the evidence tends all the other way, that man will ultimately be capable of adapting himself over a series of generations to life in great urban areas of the modern type. Certainly it would be unwise to deny the possibility of it. But it would be unwise still to await this consummation. The horse starves while that stone crop grows. Practically all authorities are agreed that up to the present an urban environment is a strain on the nature of man – a strain only accidentally connected with problems of sanitation. His history is of life under rural conditions, tempered, and even assisted, by cities of modest size and easy access to the countryside. The exceptions in history are few and not encouraging. Babylon, Antioch and Carthage are not prototypes on which to dwell. Urban life as we know it is the fruit of a mere century and a half of the history of the world.

This strain – this lack of happiness in the environment – is as obscure in its causes as it is unmistakable in its effects. It goes below the life of reason, deep into that of instinct and self-preservation. It seems quite certainly to underlie much of the stress and turmoil of modern life, and even to transcend those enormous moral and social injustices which threaten to destroy us.

“The deadly effect of urbanization,” says one authority, “possesses a profound biological significance.... There is no other species which exhibits the same keen desire to escape at every opportunity from its customary habitat as town-dwelling man.” (Brend: *Health and The State*, pp. 148–150).

I mention this point, not because it is necessary to find any deeper motive than reason for the unhappiness felt by men and women who are subjected to speed and noise out of harmony with their nature, but because there seems every reason to suppose that a silent city would not solve the problem. Man has an affinity for reality, and the great modern cities can never be made real. The elements of life – the cleansing earth, the seasons, the contact with primary things – are necessary to sanity. Man is the master, but he is sane in proportion as he sees, touches and uses them. It seems clear that the

urban veils were not in the Divine eye. "I have lifted up my eyes to the hills, whence cometh my help."

If these considerations are valid, we should expect to find that man's primary function of self-reproduction would suffer from urbanization. And this is generally agreed to be the case. The fact has not hitherto been susceptible of direct statistical proof, on account of the constant rural infiltrations of the past century. But in England at any rate the exhaustion of the countrysides has reached a point where fresh infiltrations of reproductive vigour are unlikely. I do not overlook the feverish scale of reproduction which accompanied early industrialism. That is an aspect of the self-sterilization of industrialism which is dealt with elsewhere. But facts of this kind are so enormous as to command general assent; the third generation of a Londoner is agreed to be a rarity, and the fourth almost unknown. Our "survival rate" is already down to eighty percent.

Other elements in the problem may be indicated very briefly. The *moral* problems of urbanization may be taken to centre round the failure of modern cities to provide the protection and support of real communities. Mr. Chesterton (and Peabody in America before him) has often drawn attention to the really nomadic quality of the life of the poor in our great towns. It is true that as King Alfred said, Fate is a word that has no meaning for Christian men, but the limit of what the Church will tolerate is the limit of endurance of the average man, and the destruction of those kindly social safeguards which go with a small community is not the least of the sins of industrialism, despite the impressive but impersonal machinery of social relief. Already an enormous bureaucracy, involving a serious invasion of human liberty, is necessary to patch up the dying social organism. The incidence of this invasion rises yearly. Ten years ago, only the very poor were subjected to it. It now affects not only the artisan class but even the lower middle classes. The Eugenics Society may have overplayed its hand, but with the example of Fascist Germany before us, we cannot be confident of immunity from even worse forms of social tyranny.

The *political* aspect cannot properly be discussed here, but it is a commonplace that true democracy flourishes in small communities

and dies in large ones. The absence of a sense of real self-government is a constant irritant. Democracy is being tried for its life all over the world. Its acquittal and rehabilitation may well need the testimony of the smallest of human institutions – the family and the village.

The *economic and social* strains have complex origins which can only be touched upon here. But they arise most surely from the violent withdrawal of the balance-wheel of diffused property. The natural right of man to Private Property is the very foundation of Catholic Social Teaching, and property in land is its most complete and classic case. It may be suggested that the Church has attached to property this primary social significance because it involves freedom from the domination of other human wills. Such dominations are the mark of our time. They will be destroyed only by a wide diffusion of private property, such as includes a real physical diffusion of families on and about the land.

A return to the land, for this reason alone, is dictated to any radical Catholic reform as its first step.

\*\*\*\*\*

The problem, then, is acute in most civilized countries. Everywhere it is a problem of industrial urbanization, but it is most acute in the English-speaking countries of Great Britain and the United States of America. And by a strange mischance, it is, on the whole, in these two countries alone that the main strength of the Catholic Body is concentrated in the towns. Elsewhere the real strength of the Church is in the countrysides – in that spiritual aristocracy of a Catholic Peasantry to which many writers have paid their tribute. But in England, Scotland, Wales and the United States, the urban problem is also the problem of the Church.

In Great Britain the relentless pressure of the Reformers and the Rich destroyed the Faith in the countryside within a few generations, except in those districts succoured and protected by noble and landed recusants. The two essentials – concealment, and numbers sufficient for the support of a priest, could as a rule be found only in the cities, and mainly in London. At a later date, the new industrial

towns – usually unincorporated boroughs outside the scope of the Test Acts,<sup>9</sup> afforded a similar precarious protection to Catholics and Dissenters<sup>10</sup> alike. During the nineteenth century, two events greatly increased the Catholic population of Great Britain. They were the Oxford Movement conversions, and the immigration following the Irish Famine. The need for the Sacraments and the need for livelihood alike drove both classes to the urban districts, where Mass was available, and where a growing Industrialism welcomed new recruits – or new victims.

Great Britain is the most urbanized State in the world. Eighty percent of its population dwells in towns. But there is strong statistical reason for supposing that up to *ninety-five percent* of the Catholic Body is urban. The paucity of rural parishes is so much within the knowledge of Catholics as to need no statistical support.

In the United States, the urban and rural populations are roughly equal, but the Catholic Body is stated to be *eighty percent urban*. The reasons are somewhat similar to those in this country. The Catholic immigrants never saw the fields of promise. They remained in the new industrial towns, partly because the newcomers, usually destitute, had to take the first work that offered, partly because there were few rural parishes, and partly, perhaps, because no vision saw the magnificent chance of a Catholic Continent that was being wasted. Maryland had no successors. In both countries, the urbanization of millions of trained rural workers was a disaster of the first magnitude. It is for us, the heirs of that colossal blunder, to put it right. The secular evil of urbanization has broken into the running sore of unemployment – the denial – not of food, but of participation in the common weal. It is the denial of manhood to men. It is that which gives its acutest urgency to the problem.

The situation confronting men and women who love their country, whether they are Catholic or not, has been stated formally elsewhere in these pages. It may be repeated here, by way of emphasis, in its stark simplicity. British urbanization is the result of the revolution which declared this sceptred isle, this blessed plot, to be the Workshop of the World. Some fifteen out of every sixteen of the working citizens therefore engaged in industrial pursuits, mainly for

the export trade. There are now at least four Workshops of the World in active commission, and the problem is one of simple arithmetic, which politicians alone seem unable to work out for themselves. Moreover, in nearly every State, the localizing principle in industry has acquired irresistible force.

Ultimately, there are only two ways by which man may gain a livelihood. He can *make* things or *grow* things. And since it is evident that a large proportion of the citizens will never again be required to make things, it follows that they must grow things, or rot in that idleness which is the dream of fools.

It is well to make it clear that the problem is unprecedented in history. There is no record of any large community so divorced from the land that millions of its citizens were totally ignorant, physically and mentally, of how to grow the food they required to sustain life.

It is true that there exist, in fair numbers, men and women brought up on the land and driven to the towns by the recent rural decay, who would probably take any reasonable chance of going back. There are, at any rate, enough of them to make a respectable start. But so excessively urbanized is the Catholic Body that even this poor comfort is denied it. In Great Britain, the land-wise urban Catholic does not exist.

It is therefore clear that a system of training is the first essential to the Catholic Land Movement, and that this approach is not of choice, but is dictated by the nature of the case.

\*\*\*\*\*

It may be thought that this circumstance puts us into a position where it would be presumptuous to act as exemplars and pioneers to the country in a return to the land. Happily there are countervailing advantages.

It is not in any spirit of boastfulness that I claim for Catholics that they grasp the essentials of a position more readily than the general body of citizens. Whether, in the present case, it is due to the Catholic habit of referring to first principles, or whether it is merely an effect of the historical fact that they are less responsible for industrialism than their fellow citizens, we need not stop to discuss. But

it is certainly the fact that the need for a radical Land Movement in England and Scotland, as distinct from the occupational benefits of allotments, has received far more attention from Catholics and the Catholic Press than from any other group. This is the first Catholic advantage, that the need is realized, and that the men and women, in surprisingly large numbers, are available and willing.

Many things have modified and limited the success of "Smallholdings" in modern times. In some cases they have been placed in very small groups amidst countrysides organized for large farming, where the sympathies of both neighbours and authorities might easily have been deeper. Elsewhere, large groups of such Holdings have suffered from an inability to develop into real social communities, and this failure lies at the root of the problem. Where Government action is involved, any religious basis is, not so much disapproved, as unthought of. Nevertheless it is the conviction of the Catholic Land Movement that the religious cement is indispensable to the rapid formation of a new and necessarily "artificial" community. And whatever social defects may be charged upon Catholics by their countrymen, it cannot be denied that they know how to form a real community. Every Catholic village has God for its centre. The Blessed Sacrament will make a Nazareth of every group. It is doubtless difficult for non-Catholics to appreciate the practical and vital importance of this point. Catholics will be aware of its importance – and of its adequacy.

Recently I had occasion to point out that while Catholics claim the superiority of Roman Cement as a maker of communities, they would welcome heartily any attempts by other religious bodies to utilize the power of religion in this agony of our country. It is somewhat surprising, but perhaps explained by the "secular" modern conventions, that it has not hitherto been tried. But (if I may quote from that statement), "There seems no reason why a Catholic village of Arcadia should not live happily alongside an Anglican or Methodist Auburn. The worst that could happen would be an Annual Bother, on November the fifth or some equally suitable anniversary. That would at least be better than a whole year of fireworks, and no food for free men."

The prime difficulties are therefore mental and spiritual, to be overcome mentally and spiritually.

This is a convenient opportunity for referring to two essential features in the *organization* of the Line of Approach. From its origins the Catholic Land Movement has placed itself under the direction of the Catholic Bishops. Catholics will appreciate that this is in any case a vital necessity to a movement which claims to be Catholic Action in its strictest sense, especially when the work itself is without precedent.

Secondly, the watchword of the Movement is, and must remain, *Decentralization*. It is the official policy to work for a separate and autonomous Association in every Diocese. The Associations are linked for propaganda and mutual help. They are subject to no central control which might ossify the living work. Babylon cannot be dispersed by Babylon, Ltd. A diffusion must be diffused.

The formation of communities has also economic and social aspects, dealt with at length elsewhere. But it must be said here that the chief economic difficulty is that of marketing, and this the Catholic Land Movement proposes to solve in three ways.

First, and most important, by rejecting the industrializing developments of land cultivation which are being thrust upon farmers on all hands. They will ultimately involve the land in the difficulties which now afflict Industry. The Pig and Milk Industry destroys itself in advance. The Catholic Land Movement proposes *Subsistence Farming* as the first remedy. This does not mean, as its enemies assume, that the farmer lives on his farm as on a desert island, and sells nothing. Rates and Taxes alone would make this impracticable. Subsistence Farming means that the farmer grows the greatest practicable variety of crops, with a view to feeding first himself and his family. He sells his *surplus*, not his *substance*. For the farmer, on the whole, sells wholesale and buys retail. On the economic side alone, any practical diminution of this kind of traffic cannot fail to be a net gain to him.

Secondly, the modern farmer suffers from the almost complete absence of *local* markets. No one lives on his doorstep, to take a proportion of his milk, meat and wheat. We propose to encourage the formation, not of groups of holdings alone, but of fully rounded social



and economic communities, to provide reciprocal local markets, and thus dispose to advantage of a further portion of the produce.

On the social aspect of this I need not dwell. It is the social, even more than the economic decline of the English countrysides, that has made the rural stagnation assume its recent proportions.

Finally, free and independent men grouped in neighbourly wise will always co-operate. Rack-rented tenants in our sparse countrysides will not.† Co-operation is the approved expedient for any produce which cannot be consumed locally. I need not dwell on its capacity to complete the solving of that "Marketing Problem," which exercises the minds of so many earnest men. The Catholic insistence on the Family as the social and economic unit is not the least of its qualifications, but there is no need to dwell upon that here.

Such, in briefest outline, is the Catholic equipment for the task of heading a return to the Land.

\*\*\*\*\*

It has already been pointed out that a training of townsfolk for the land is *dictated* by the unprecedented nature of the problem. The simple and obvious course of this would have been to train families. But unhappily this would also have been expensive. The Land Associations suffered therefore a further dictation. Their poverty restricted them in the first stage to the training of single men.

But at this point comes in a further consideration. It is not only necessary to train townsfolk for the land. It is necessary to demonstrate, to the Government and the citizens, the possibility of success in such training.

Behind every doubt or denial of a return to the Land is the suggestion that it cannot be done. Nor, at first sight, is that suggestion unreasonable. It never *has* been done. No man who believes in God can deny assent to the proposition that if a thing *ought* to be done, it *can* be done, and God knows the duty to do it is now instant. But it does not follow that a given group of individuals can do it, or

---

† That great authority, the late Sir H. Rider Haggard, pointed out this fact many years ago. It remains without its meed of attention as an explanation of the British reluctance to co-operate.

that the methods of the Land Movement are so demonstrably right as to command success. It has therefore been tacitly agreed by the promoters of the Catholic Land Movement that their claims stood or fell by the results of their scheme of training. Some impatience has been shown in certain quarters at the insistence of the Associations on the charitable nature of this work. But no other basis is possible. Personal conviction in the borrower is not good security for a business loan – either in business or in morals. We are trying to do something which has never been tried before in history. We are bound in conscience to prove it possible before making any other than a charitable claim for its support. There must be an inevitable delay between the first and the second stages of our work.

The present stage, that of training, is therefore *crucial*. It is already possible to say that it has succeeded beyond the wildest hopes of its promoters. Within a year or so (it is one of the irritations that nobody knows how long training *ought* to take) we should be in a position to demonstrate to the Government and the citizens alike, that the unprecedented has happened. That land-trained townsmen are waiting for land. It is clear that when that day dawns, the whole basis of our appeal will change. It will become, not so much a matter of charity, to which Governments are not prone, as one of justice. And justice is much more difficult to cut in public. Not only so, we can if necessary appeal with confidence, on a business basis to businessmen. Expediency herself, that genial but amoral soul, will fight for us. It is not too much to say that once the possibility has been *demonstrated*, the Land Movement will become, not only the just and the expedient, but the *necessary* policy for this country.

\*\*\*\*\*

It would clearly be unwise, when so much of the ground is new, to attempt an over-elaboration of our further proposals. Certain lines are of obligation – Subsistence Farming – Families – Communities – Co-operation. But details must wait upon events – and upon our mistakes. “Smallholdings” in this country have suffered much from the fact that they have hitherto been excrescences on the

national farming system. No Government Institute caters for them formally, no experts regard them as the norm. There is a fatal disposition to see them only as means of producing poultry and tomatoes, while real farmers grow wheat and beef. It must go, but it is not for us to lead experience by the nose in the dark. It is enough to say that the technique of present farming in this country still awaits, not only its modern Cobbett<sup>11</sup> but its modern Turnip Townsend.<sup>12</sup> The standards, both of cultivation and of stock, are those proper to the large farm, and smallholdings are conceived as specialized, and external to the main system. There is room for specialized holdings. There is more room still for the small all-round peasant farm, and until a technique of suitable methods and suitable stock has been seriously tackled, peasant farming in this country will continue to suffer under serious disadvantage.

Of great interest is a scheme drawn up in 1928 by the Birmingham Branch of the Distributist League, and included by permission as an appendix to this volume.<sup>13</sup> It seems to have won the general assent of the Associations as a working basis, and is reprinted here for that reason, but beyond it the Associations have not gone. Nevertheless, certain general lines of development suggest themselves.

There are people who decry the Land Movement, because "this country could not feed herself." The criticism in any case overlooks the fact that half a loaf is better than no bread, and it is no part of the Movement to prove a whole loaf. But such critics unconsciously assume that this country will remain what she is – the greatest wilderness of grass in Europe, suffering, in the fine phrase of one distinguished authority, from "Green Paralysis." It is safe to say that any Land Movement in England must envisage the drastic reduction of the grassland area, and a reversion to arable farming for both crops and the feed of stock. The authorities (notably Sir Daniel Hall<sup>14</sup> and Mr. Christopher Turnor<sup>15</sup>) state that at least three times as much food is produced from arable land as from the same land in grass. The general assumption that grassland is grassland because it is unsuitable for arable farming has no basis in fact. Apart from water meadows, water-logging, and a few exceptional cases, "if it is good

grass land, it will make the better arable land." (Sir Daniel Hall's *Agriculture after the War*, p. 86.)

It is not too much to say that in this sense, the food-producing area of Great Britain could be doubled if not trebled, and much more than trebled in its capacity to support a new peasantry. Nor would this involve any real hardship to the present establishment of farmers, except to the large ranch and industrialized farms which would presumably be the first to be diverted to real husbandry.

But great as are the possibilities of an intensive extension by reversion to arable farming, they are probably surpassed by the possibilities of *Reclamation* of various types. The achievements of Denmark, Germany, Holland and Italy in land-reclamation are barely appreciated, and have certainly never been emulated, in this country. Marsh, Fen, Heath, Upland and the open Sea, have been reclaimed for tillage at very moderate cost.† The possibilities are indefinite because they have never been assessed, but at one end of the scale there is much lowland heath in England, the reclamation of which would be child's play to the Danes. At the other, if the Dutch can successfully reclaim the Zuyder Zee, there seems no adequate reason why the English should not reclaim the Wash. That, however, is for future generations. It will afford full scope to this one to see that all the tillable land in this country is tilled by free men.

\*\*\*\*\*

But it remains that space in this country is limited, and the population high. The problem therefore is to ascertain the smallest average acreage on which a family can subsist in full independence and reasonable comfort. Subject to the general considerations outlined in the scheme already mentioned, that average is at present unknown. But the problem itself dictates a principle to which insufficient attention is being paid. *The new peasant farming must not be mechanized.* Opponents of this principle have invented (and demolished) arguments of their own for it which, to the Land Movement at least, have the charm of complete novelty.

---

† Consult, for extremely interesting facts and figures, Sir. H. Rider Haggard's *Rural Denmark and its Lessons*: Sir Daniel Hall's *Agriculture after the War*.

It is not for me in this place to elaborate the effect of mechanization on the mind and spirit of man. It is of the highest importance, but it cannot detain us now. More to the purpose of the present section is the fact that agricultural machinery cannot be individually owned by a small farmer, or even by a small group of them, and a fully mechanized small farm could not, therefore, be even approximately independent. The full implications of this again would take us too far afield. For our present purpose, the chief and inescapable reason against agricultural mechanization rests upon one obvious but neglected fact. There is a radical difference between the effect of mechanization in Industry, and mechanization on the Land. I know of many and various objections to mechanization of any sort, but at least (provided the leather is available) one man with a machine can make a hundred times as many boots as a man without it. Or it may be fifty thousand times. It does not matter, except to the man.

*But no machine has ever been invented that will enable a man to increase the yield of crops from a given acreage.* Machinery on the land has only one function. It enables a given acreage to be cultivated by fewer men, or (what is the same thing) it enables the same number of men to cultivate a larger acreage. The yield per acre, given the standard of husbandry possible with the traditional European implements, is *constant*. It may even *fall* with mechanization, a point on which some interesting figures have been given recently by Sir John Russell<sup>16</sup> in *The Farm and the Nation*. But that is incidental. The point is this. If our proposal is to put a maximum number of families on the land of this country, that proposal is not compatible with mechanized farming. I am assuming that my readers do not accept as practicable the notion that the farmers of a district will infest a Grand Stand to applaud the Combine Harvester doing its stuff.

Proofs need not be multiplied. In the *Sunday Dispatch* of October 15, 1933, is an enthusiastic article about six young men who are "succeeding" with fully mechanized farming in Norfolk. But these six young men are taking 1,100 acres on which to succeed. They employ no labour whatever, and the only beast on the farm is a cat. Three men per square mile may put money in somebody's pocket. It will not solve the problems of England.

I shall be told, I fear, that a plough is a machine. One always is. I should call it a tool, but to argue on such a point is to darken counsel. Every man decides for himself where tools end and machines begin. The margin of tolerance among intelligent men is probably no greater than exists in any concrete application of principles. Two Confessors are seldom mechanically unanimous on particular cases, but we do not question the validity of Moral Theology on that account.

In this, as in other respects, the Land Movement is realist. It rejects fashion; it rejects that denial of free will which is involved in the dogma of inevitable progress. It will put back the clock as far as may be necessary to ensure the happiness and integrity of man. When noon is Angelus-time the clock is right. It is pertinent to draw attention here to the enormous implications of the modern insistence on price as the vital factor. We must not grow wheat, because it can be grown cheaper under mechanized conditions in America. Kropotkin<sup>17</sup> showed fairly conclusively, many years ago, that the difference was entirely due to the relatively high Rent, Rates and Taxes in England. But even leaving that aside, it is not appreciated how far the argument takes us. There is talk in Russia of ploughing furrows with twenty-share tractors, a thousand miles long. One of these days it will be done, and if we adhere to price cheapness, what remains of our civilization will thereupon come to an end. The Land Movement prefers to say that it is fundamentally ridiculous for wheat to be grown on the other side of the world, to be transported across it, and then to be *cheaper* than wheat grown by a small farmer in the field at his own door. The necessary adjustments ought to have been made yesterday. They will *have* to be made tomorrow.

\*\*\*\*\*

If little has been said in this chapter of the horrors of unemployment, it is not because the Land Movement fails to see them for what they are. It is because unemployment is an effect and not a cause. It is possible to deal with its evils by palliation or by remedy. Much edifying charity has been and is being lavished on palliation. But it is

## THE LINE OF APPROACH

strictly true that by the very terms of the problem, a return to the land (with the consequent secondary measures) is the only *remedy*. And except by the Catholic Body it has not hitherto been tried or even seriously advanced. Yet for millions of the dispossessed victims of Industrialism, the land offers the sole hope of integral livelihood. The Land Movement is not a revolt, it is a revolution. Its leaders claim that on account of its unique possibilities it deserves the support of all men of goodwill. And in particular it deserves well of the State.

Where there is no vision, the people perish, and the fact that on the industrial scale our foreign markets have gone forever, is of such terrifying simplicity as to stun the mind. It might be more generally grasped if it were less simple. As it is, every minor check to the ebbing tide – and there will be many such – is hailed as the flood of fortune.

But for that to happen Industrialism would have to be still a monopoly. Monopoly in Industry is dead – *Jam foetet*<sup>18</sup> – and the future of the English is on the land.



*Old Brown's Farm*

Training farm in Buckinghamshire, England, obtained in 1932 by the South of England Catholic Land Association, and operated under the direction of Bryan Keating, with the patronage of Francis Cardinal Bourne (1861–1935), Archbishop of Westminster (1903–1935).

## REV. DR. JOHN MCQUILLAN

The few readily available records dealing with Dr. McQuillan's life and work provide the following limited information. He effectively pioneered the idea and the establishment of the Catholic Land Movement. Already a prominent Distributist in Glasgow, Scotland, he established the first of the Catholic Land Associations – the Scottish Catholic Land Association – in 1929. Additionally, he edited *Land for the People*, the quarterly organ of the Scottish Catholic Land Association, from its inception in January, 1930. The following year the journal became the organ of the entire Catholic Land Movement, which by that time comprised six different Associations. In 1934 the Scottish Association desired – though McQuillan did not – to make *Land for the People* again an organ of the Scottish Association only, providentially giving rise to the *Cross and the Plough* which was founded as the journal of the Catholic Land Associations of England and Wales, and edited by Harold Robbins. McQuillan suffered great ill-health towards the end of his life, yet without his energetic work, according to Robbins, nothing would have arisen.



CHAPTER IV  
Training for the Land

*by the Rev. John McQuillan, D.D.*



IN THE INITIAL STAGES OF THE CATHOLIC LAND Movement it was found impossible to achieve immediately the ideal of its promoters, namely, to settle families on the land. There was no capital. It was therefore necessary to begin further back in a manner more in keeping with the prevailing poverty, and to take unmarried men who could be maintained more cheaply.

It was also discovered that those who were willing to take up farming were ignorant of nearly everything connected with agriculture. It was therefore necessary to begin by training them in farming.

The proper way would have been to put them in a farmer's household. But since there are very few Catholic farmers in any diocese in this country, no other method was left except bringing them together on one farm, taken over specially for this purpose.

This is what is actually being done by three of the Catholic Land Associations of Great Britain. They have opened four training centres for unmarried men. They never said, nor did they ever maintain in principle, that this was the best way or the only way to set the Catholic Land Movement really moving. It was the actual circumstances of the case, as briefly outlined above, which compelled each Association separately to follow the same practice.

Though the necessity of training the men was grasped at the beginning, it has been seen more clearly as the result of experience. It would be disastrous to give a farm to a person who does not know how to use it. When one comes to consider the knowledge and ability

and practice which are necessary for the making of a farmer, one is almost deterred by the enormity of the task. It is only the townsman who is of the opinion that farmers as a class are unintelligent, uneducated, ignorant. The truth is that there is no trade or craft which requires greater preparation or acumen. The number of tasks to be learned before one can be a tolerably efficient farmer is incredible. Let them be set down here as they come to one's mind.

The land itself may first of all be considered; the draining of the land, the fencing of the fields, the ploughing, harrowing, cultivating, manuring, sowing by hand or by instrument and the different methods of sowing according to what is to be sown, demand greater training than any city job.

When harvest time comes, there is the reaping, binding, stooking, stack-building, the pitting of the various farm products or their threshing.

An intimate knowledge of the nature of the soil, attention to the local climate, a knowledge of what cereal suits one's particular neighbourhood most, must all be learned before one can farm with success.

When one comes to consider the farm animals, the list increases in such a way as to make one almost despair of learning the whole craft in one lifetime. There is the grooming, feeding, housing and bedding of each different kind of animal. The usual ailments of each species and their respective cure must be known. The lambing, calving, foaling and the knowledge of the breeding of the other animals, pigs, poultry and so forth, must be acquired by each farmer.

The milking of the cows, the making of butter and cheese, the preparation of the special food stuffs for each kind of animal all enter into the list of the necessary requisites.

The planting of household vegetables and common fruits demands further knowledge and further experience.

To know how to do one's ordinary farm repairs, manifold in their number, is a necessary equipment of the time-honoured farmer.

The one who is in training must be taught to look ahead, and decide well in advance what will be the succession of crops in this or that field for several years to come. He must also be shown how to plan out each day's work according to the weather and the season.

## TRAINING FOR THE LAND

The number of occupations on a farm is appalling, though their diversity is pleasing and makes impossible that monotony of farm life which only the outsider claims to see.

The result of the short experience we have had in training young men is our conviction that only a man could be a farmer. Unintelligent, ignorant, half-educated, careless folk can do most jobs in a town. They would be failures on a farm. The object of the training of the young persons by the various Catholic Land Associations is to make them men.

Though one has a right to expect that the moral character of the trainees who are accepted is already formed, nevertheless their training in farming, in the companionship of Catholics, and with a Catholic atmosphere in the Centre, will certainly make up for any deficiency that may exist. But their training in real manliness is a necessary part of their training to be farmers.

They must be untaught all the evils which are freely preached as virtues to a working man in the town. They must be shown that the natural happiness of man consists in work; they must be trained to love work as their chief job in life. They are to be taught that life on the land is the normal mode of life for human beings, and, without acquiring any thoughts of pride or vanity, they are to be encouraged not to lower themselves from the conditions of life which they have accepted on a farm, so as to succumb to the allurements of a less laborious existence. "He that putteth his hands to the plough, let him not turn back."

The Catholic Land Associations are preaching something which to many appears to be new, but is in reality an old thing; it is the old philosophy of life, and this too the trainees must learn. The leaders of the Catholic Land Movement maintain that a farmer should think first of feeding his own household from the farm, and only secondarily of selling the farm produce. For many reasons, which no doubt are explained elsewhere in this book, they contend that in the cultivation of the land, in the growing of this rather than that plant, in the keeping of this rather than that animal, the farmer should have his eye all the time on his own fireside. They preach what they call "subsistence farming," that is, planning of the farm so as primarily to support those who are working on it, directly from

the labour of their hands; and since the normal farm will be a family farm, to support the farmer's family and household, leaving only the surplus to be sold.

The training-centre should therefore be managed as far as possible as a model family-subsistence-farm where the trainees will learn in actual practice far better than lectures could tell them how they one day should run their own farms. It is to be hoped that they will see with their own eyes how, economically and otherwise, this is the wisest way of managing a farm. When they are convinced of its efficiency, they will be well guarded against the danger of imitating the "market farm" of those who are gambling on the market with their farm produce for money, who are losing in the gamble, and who are uttering the insipient cry: farming doesn't pay.

As a further result of the little experience one has had, one has to state the unpleasant fact that from amongst the many trainees who come to the Centres, though they can all learn farm work quite easily, there will be few who can be depended upon to manage farms of their own. One fervently hopes that this is a gross error, but the facts are pointing in that direction. The product of compulsory education can work under a master or in a group; he is rare who can work on his own. Whether it be rising in the morning, or looking for useful work in the spare hour, or seeking to know the why and wherefore of a given piece of work, or the thinking out for himself of how a particular job might be bettered, or the planning of a given task unaided, there is nearly always the difficulty or the impossibility of finding the successful man one hoped for. Time may cure this; the difficulty may be overcome with great patience; but one must state it, for it is there. The obvious way out is to experiment on each trainee in turn and try him out on his own in some small way. If he succeeds, give him a bigger job; if he fails, take him back to the herd. When outsiders ask how many trainees have until now been settled on the land by the Catholic Land Associations, in the two or three years of their existence, they know not what they ask.

Since the ultimate object to be achieved is the settling of families on the land, and a necessary factor in the family is the wife and mother, it follows that there must be also a training of our young

## TRAINING FOR THE LAND

women. This has been fully discussed in different newspapers, but one can do no more than briefly admit its necessity since there has not been the opportunity of testing it by actual experience.

Since the land movement is Catholic, it is necessary to educate the trainees as Catholics too, but this is too big a problem to explain fully in this short article. One can merely recapitulate the various points which are presently being put before those who are in training: to work always from a supernatural motive; to learn to know the goodness and grandeur of God from His generous and magnificent work in the yearly provision of our food and clothing; to see the connection between the Propagation of the Faith in their native land and the settling of Catholic farmers in every valley thereof; to seek to begin their daily tasks by attendance at daily Mass; to acquire a greater dignity in their prayers by understanding and taking part in the Liturgy and becoming familiar with all the events of the Liturgical Year.

Enough has now been written to show that the great aim of training is to begin at the very beginning, naturally and supernaturally, and reconstruct Catholic life step by step.



*Fr. John McQuillan, from a Catholic Times photo*

FR. VINCENT MCNABB, O.P. (1868–1943)

Much could be said about McNabb; suffice it to recall a footnote given by Fr. Brocard Sewell in his *G.K.'s Weekly: An Appraisal*: Fr. Vincent McNabb, Dominican. Close friend of Belloc and Chesterton, Eric Gill, John Gray, and the poet Michael Field. Successively Prior at Leicester, Woodchester, and Hawkesyard. Latterly sub-prior at St. Dominic's, London, NW5. A noted preacher and retreat conductor, and open-air speaker in London's Hyde Park, Whitechapel, and Parliament Hill Fields. Hebraist and Scripture scholar. A leading Distributist. Poet and essayist. Author of *The Wayside*, *The Church and the Land*, *Nazareth or Social Chaos*, *St. John Fisher*, etc.

Following Fr. McNabb's death, the editor of the English Dominican journal *Blackfriars* referred to him as "one who in modern times and in England most closely approached the life and ideal of the founder of the Order of Preachers."

Of the Catholic Land Movement, Fr. McNabb wrote in 1932, "the challenge of [the] inspired words of Holy Scripture and [the] authoritative words of a Papal Encyclical has led the Catholics of these Islands to begin a Movement out of the towns and back to the country."

CHAPTER V  
The Family

*by the Very Rev. Vincent McNabb, O.P., S.T.M.*

“And He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject unto them.”

—Lk. ii. 51.

“No human law can abolish the original and natural 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.’ (Gen. i, 28.)

“Hence we have the Family:—the Society of a man’s home; a Society limited indeed in numbers but no less a true Society – anterior to every kind of State or Nation – invested with rights of its own, totally independent of the civil community.”

—Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*.



THE FAMILY, LIKE THE CHURCH, IS A DIVINE institution. These two institutions agree in being divine; and differ in that the Family is a natural institution, and the Church is supernatural. Since the coming of Jesus Christ the Family might almost be said to be not only a divine but a supernatural institution. As if in gratitude to the Family for having given Him a welcome He raised to the dignity of the supernatural, the plighted love that unites husband and wife – father and mother.

\*\*\*\*\*

To value the dignity of this divine character of the Society which we call the Family, we must contrast it with the other great natu-

ral Society called, according to its various forms, by various names:—Kingdom, Democracy, State, Nation, Commonwealth, etc.

As the Family and the Church have a certain agreement (divine institution) and a certain difference (natural and supernatural institution), so, too, the Society called the Family has certain agreements with, and certain differences from the State.

The Family, like the State, comes into existence by virtue of a divine natural inclination. God who created all mankind to His own likeness created it male and female. Between mankind there is a certain natural love, or inclination which tends to share a common life. This natural inclination of man to join his fellow man in a common life has made the Church's theologians accept the old Greek axiom: "Man is by nature a social animal."

Akin to this natural, society-seeking inclination of man for his fellow man is the natural, society-seeking inclination of the man for the woman.

But if the Family, like the State, results from a divinely given inclination it differs from the State (and agrees with the Church) in having not only a divine inclination, but a divine constitution. Every informed Catholic knows that it was not a group of Christ-minded early Christians who settled the constitution of the Church; it was Jesus Christ the eternal and infinite Son of God. What Jesus settled is therefore divinely settled. That the Church should consist of a laity and a priesthood and that this priesthood should consist of Bishops and priests under the headship of one Bishop is the divine, unchangeable constitution of the Church.

So too that the Family, as such, should consist of parents and children and that the physical and moral functions of father and mother should be what they are seen to be is the divine unchangeable constitution of the Family.

It is otherwise with the State. Although a divinely given instinct leads man to fellowship with his fellow man, the form of that fellowship is not divinely given. Thus there may be social units composed of all who have a common language; as, for example in Denmark. But the Danish nation is not a divine institution. Again there may be nations that are one because of certain natural features, a river, a range of mountains, the sea, as Italy. But the Italian King-



## THE FAMILY

dom is not a divine institution. So little are these lingual, racial, or geographical causes an effect of a divine institution that it may even be questioned whether a large lingual, racial or geographical unit is not a contradiction of the divine beatitude: "Blessed are the poor"; and therefore an undue extension of the divinely given instinct for fellowship of man with man. This train of reasoning seems all the more probable by the fact that it is chiefly in these great imperial societies that the family is now most threatened. The lesser social units, as such, seem more naturally inclined and suited to foster the family.

\*\*\*\*\*

The divinely organized character of the family may again be seen by realizing that the political form of the State is nowise a divine institution. There is a divine right of authority as such, but there is no divine right of kings, otherwise the United States would be the work of the devil – nor is there a divine right of Republics or the Pope could not praise the action of Fascist Italy; nor is there a divine right of an oligarchy or King St. Louis would be elsewhere than in the company of the Saints.

The political form of a nation is, then, not settled by the order of God, but by the explicit or implicit will of the nation.

But the form of the family is not settled by the will of any member of the family – nor by the father, or mother, or child. It is by the will and institution of God that the family is organized *first* in its physical side and *secondly* in its social and moral side. It needs no saying that it is by the ordination of God that woman is the child-bearer and child-rearer. It is by the institution of God that the father who has not the physical possibility of these necessary acts has the moral necessity of being the bread-winner and the defender and therefore the leader or visible head of the family – not of course in everything; but only – in its family life.

What then is to be expected of a social policy that either explicitly or implicitly denies, but very effectively destroys this divine institution? The chaos or desert may be long a-coming but nothing can stay its coming.

\*\*\*\*\*

## FLEE TO THE FIELDS

### Function of the Family

The divine organization of the family might be deduced from the wide sweep and value of its activities. Like the highest divine creations, the family is simple in structure, but manifold in function. Indeed to the modern complexity of mind the simplicity of the family seems to fit it only for destruction,<sup>†</sup> yet we, with minds of the machine age, ought to recollect the general rule that “the more complicated the structure of a machine the more specialized the function.”

But the family has so many functions and these of such social worth and even of such social necessity, that we can refer only to a few, viz:—The Family is the unit of organization – by the unit of production and the unit of education.

### The Unit and Organization

Not the individual and not any human group organization, but only the divinely organized family is the unit of the human Society or State.

The State, which springs from a divinely given instinct to man, is naturally meant for a permanent existence. Lesser groupings of men are rarely for more than a passing existence. But as long as man is man with his instinct for fellowship the society called the State will last. But it is only by the family that it lasts; because only by the rearing of children does it last, and the family is divinely organized for the rearing of children. Where the family does not exist, its place is taken by what is practically promiscuity. But promiscuity is the gradual elimination of the child.

In the organization of the State almost every part can be removed or replaced by a substitute. But in organizing the State there is no substitute for the family.

---

<sup>†</sup> The present writer will never forget an incident in a discussion he had with a prominent Communist in the School of Economics. At question time a woman of university education indignantly asked how anyone of intelligence could look on the family as anything but an outworn social institution.

## THE FAMILY

Confirmation of this may be found in the action of the Incarnate Son of God. Although this Son of the Virgin Mary instituted the life of vowed virginity so far was He from destroying family life that He restored it to its primitive state of an indissoluble bond of love between one man and one woman, not in their own interests mainly, but in the interests of the children of their love.

The life of vowed virginity is nowise a unit in the supernatural organization, as the family is the unit in the natural order. Even after the institution of vowed virginity, family life still remains, as God made it, the indispensable duty and unit of human society.

### Unit of Production

All this leads us to expect, what indeed we see, that the family is the unit of primary essential production. It stands to reason that the land unit is the only self-subsisting unit. But it stands to experience that the land unit is the family unit.

The family is by divine institution a co-operative group. But the more we get back to the primaries of social being the greater the need and opportunity of co-operation.

A most significant and unexpected confirmation of this was furnished by an official report on women in Agriculture.† We cull a few of the more significant findings: "The women in the country homes are partners in a very special sense. The intimate association of these women with their men folk in the industry, specially noticeable in the case of the farmer and smallholder, but also obtaining with the agricultural worker (who frequently has his wife's assistance with a garden, poultry, etc.), is not normally found in industries other than agriculture, of which it is an essential and characteristic feature (p. 10).

"They" (women) "are in a position to be either a drag on, or a spur to agricultural development" (*ibid*).

"Attention may be drawn to the women's part in the rural exodus.... There is no doubt that a most potent factor in driving the

---

† Report of a Sub. Committee of the Inter-Departmental Committee of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Board of Education, 1928. *The Practical Education of Women for Rural Life*.

men city-wards has been the discontent of the women.... The migration to the towns will continue till ways and means are discovered of enabling the women to find life on the land more remunerative and satisfying (p. 12).

"Smallholders...are largely dependent on the assistance of wives and daughters for the working of the holding as well as of the house. Agricultural depression is leading a number of occupiers of the medium-sized farms to utilize family labour to the fullest extent."

Our space forbids lengthy commentary on these weighty words. We can best express their truth by saying, "The farm is the unit of production; and the family is the unit of the farm."<sup>†</sup>

### Unit of Education

Everything we have said about the family may have already convinced us that the family is the unit of education. In the family alone can the highest education be normally given. What we usually call education would be more accurately called "schooling," or "school teaching," or again that old expressive word, "book-learning." Perhaps it is Protestantism, with its worship of the *Book*, that bewildered the modern mind into mistaking education for something the human mind derives from printed matter.

Education is essentially a preparation for life. Now as there are two lives, the temporal and the eternal; and as the temporal is by divine institution meant to be a preparation for the eternal, it will follow that any true education for the eternal life will also be a preparation for the temporal life; and any true preparation for the temporal life will be a preparation for the eternal life.

Even the intellectual training of the family has no equal as a preparation, the normal family of several boys and girls gives the child's intelligence the chance of growing normally and healthily. Those of us who have been privileged to belong to that primary and best of universities – a large family – look back from old age to child-

---

<sup>†</sup> We shall not be condemned of a jest when we find the vital statistics of town and country proving that the country homestead is the unit not only of Production but of Re-production.

## THE FAMILY

hood with a sense of wonder at all the intellectual helps the family afforded – from the efficient assistance given in the drawing of maps to the stimulus of intellectual discussion *de omni scibili et quibusdam aliis*.<sup>19</sup> *Deo gratias!*

But not even the best of ecclesiastical institutions give the moral, as distinct from the intellectual preparation given by the divine institution of the family. Even the vowed and communal life of the cloister does not give this preparation. Indeed this vowed communal life can never be more than a supplement of the family. But the family is such a preparation for the cloistered communal life that, as has been said, “large families are noviciates for noviciates.”†

Man’s essential relations are firstly to things beneath him, and secondly the persons about him (especially the relation between the sexes) and thirdly to persons above him. The proper adjustment of these relations requires the three moral qualities or virtues of poverty, chastity and obedience. These three virtues are demanded not merely by the perfect individual but by the perfect State or Commonwealth. But it will be seen that for education or training in these architectonic virtues no institution is the equal of the Family.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Dangers to the Family

The three relations may enable us to group under three heads the dangers to the normal family. The first of these dangers growing out of a wrong relation to things, may be called the Danger of Industrialism. By Industrialism we here mean an organization of society based mainly on machine – and – factory work; in contrast with an organization mainly based on hand – and home work. It would seem to be self-evident that an organization of society in which the man’s work is in one place and his home and family in another place is a danger to home life and family life.‡

---

† Eugenists whom inaccurate or inadequate statistics stampede into a dread of large families should lull their dread. Psychologically speaking the large family tends to stimulate and foster chastity. For this reason it is quite common, as it was in Ireland, to witness a high birth rate and a low increase in population.

‡The young wife of a country doctor was asked by some other young wives (*cont’d*)

The second danger arises from the sentimental as distinct from the rational and ethical view of divorce. We have reached a legal state when the fate of children can be decided by the existent sentiment between their father and their mother. Our divorce laws, although not considered wide enough are sufficiently wide to be governed by the principle, that "it is immoral for a man and woman to remain together when they have ceased to love each other." This principle largely initiated here in the West has been carried out with characteristic consistency in Soviet Russia.

The third danger to family life springs from the modern rejection of obedience to authority. This rejection begins by disobedience to the authority of God. But as all lawful authority is, as such, of divine right, the rejection of divine authority tends to dissolve the claims and rights of all authority. In this welter of might without right such fundamental rights as that of the parent and the family tend to be set aside as belated or suppressed as harmful.

The present writer, for whom the threatened social avalanche is a matter not only of deep concern, but also of self-accusation, may here be allowed to express his growing conviction. On the one hand he finds himself in sincere sympathy with even the most fanatical of the well intentioned men whose pity for the poor and down-trodden is leading them to take action. Yet, on the other hand, he finds himself convinced that the action they are taking is as ill-aimed as it is well-intended. As a rule, to which he has not yet found an exception these social reformers base all their plans of reform on larger, and still larger social unities or units. The great schools, the thronging universities, the multiple stores, the huge cities, the almost worldwide Empires, States, Republics are looked upon as the most efficient units of organization.

But is there nothing to be said for the opposite opinion? Is the largest organization, or organism, necessarily the best? Is size goodness? Is quantity quality? To these questions the answer seems clear. But these clearly answered questions leave unanswered the further question why men of intelligence and goodwill overlook the answer. Yet failure to see the fallacy of identifying quantity with quality will

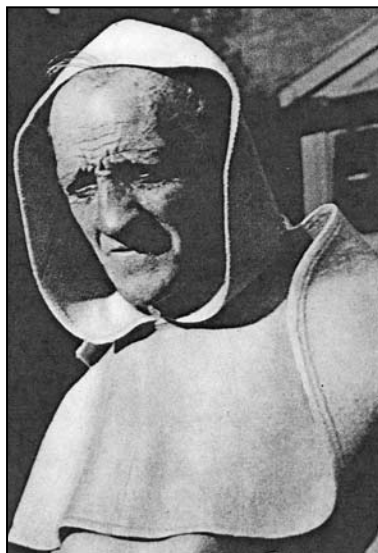
---

of city magnates: "Don't you find it rather a bore to have your husband at home seven days a week? We find it quite enough to have him for the weekend."

## THE FAMILY

lead our economists and statesmen still further into the quick sands. Every attempt to lift their feet will mean a further sinking. Whilst mass production is looked upon as the one thing perfect in education, economics, statecraft, the family as a unit will tend to be classified almost as an encumbrance. Even the best wills in the world will find themselves driven further and further back until, not the divinely organized family, but the single individual, the HAND will become the human unit.

The present writer's years of life can now be so few, at most, that the only reason for stating an opinion is that he thinks it true, and its opposite opinion not only untrue but harmful. With a clearness akin to intuition he sees that for the purposes of social survival the large, widespread, mass-moulded is not as efficient as the smaller organization. It is not sand in great heaps, but sand in lowly sandbags that is a unit of defence. It is not hemp in great masses but twists and twines of hemp that are wrought into a mooring cable. And therefore from Jerusalem, or the Palazzo Venezia, or Paris, or London, or New York, men need never hope to see the social salvation that can come only from Nazareth.



Fr. Vincent McNabb

APPENDIX  
Declaration  
*by*  
the Archbishops and Bishops of England and Wales  
on the Subject of Education†

*Principles to be remembered:*

1. It is no part of the *normal* function of the State to *teach*.
2. The State is entitled to see that citizens receive due education sufficient to enable them to discharge the duties of citizenship in its various degrees.
3. The State ought, therefore, to encourage every form of sound educational endeavour, and may take means to safeguard the efficiency of education.
4. To parents whose economic means are insufficient to pay for the education of their children, it is the duty of the State to furnish the necessary means, providing them from the common funds arising out of the taxation of the whole community. But in so doing the State must not interfere with parental responsibility, nor hamper the reasonable liberty of parents in their choice of a school for their children. Above all, where the people are not all of one creed, there must be no differentiation on the ground of religion.
5. Where there is need of greater school accommodation the State may, in default of other agencies,

---

† As this Declaration expresses the traditional attitude of the Holy See towards the Family, its authoritativeness is not to be accounted as merely that of an individual Hierarchy.—V. McN.



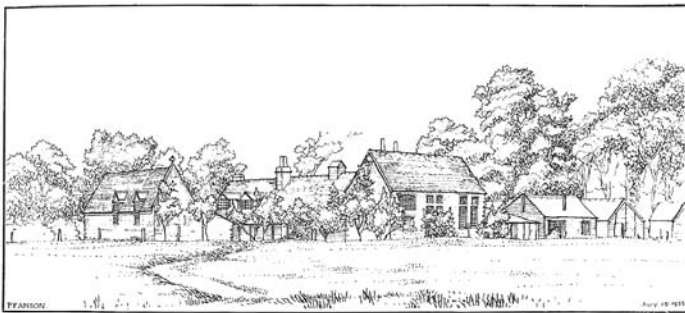
## THE FAMILY

intervene to supply it; but it may do so only “in default of, and in substitution for, and to the extent of, the responsibility of the parents” of the children who need this accommodation.

6. The teacher is always acting in *loco parentis*, never in *loco civitatis*, though the State to safeguard its citizenship may take reasonable care to see that teachers are efficient.

7. Thus a teacher never is and never can be a civil servant, and should never regard himself or allow himself to be so regarded. Whatever authority he may possess to teach and control children, and to claim their respect and obedience, comes to him from God through the parents, and not through the State, except insofar as the State is acting on behalf of the parents.

*Low Week, 1929.*



*The Guild Chapel and Workshops*  
A 1935 pen and ink drawing of Ditchling by Peter Anson

### CAPTAIN REGINALD JEBB (1884–1977)

Reginald Jebb married Eleanor Belloc and was thus Hilaire Belloc's son-in-law. Jebb was a committed Distributist, and he, along with Hilary Pepler – the founder of St. Dominic's Press in the Ditchling community – bought *G.K.'s Weekly* in 1936, following the death of G.K. Chesterton. The paper was renamed *The Weekly Review*, and Jebb edited it for almost ten years. With his wife he penned the 1956 work *A Testimony to Hilaire Belloc*, which was published by Methuen and Company of London.

CHAPTER VI  
The Community

*by Captain Reginald Jebb, M.A., M.C.*



IT IS ALWAYS DIFFICULT TO FIND A NAME FOR something which has ceased to exist, and whose old name lingers on bearing a very different meaning. The subject of the present chapter is a case in point. The modern use of the word, "village," bears little or no resemblance to what was known as a "village" in medieval times. Even on the surface the differences are striking enough, but beneath the surface all resemblance ceases: the life and heart of the earlier thing have gone. The name that heads this chapter, and which must serve to describe the culmination of the practical side of the Catholic Land Movement, is open to the objection that it suggests cranks, or at all events a collection of people of unusual tastes. That is a pity; for the organism to which the name, "Community," is here given is the very opposite of anything bearing any such connotation. As will transpire, it stands for the natural as opposed to the artificial, to life as opposed to convention. It is not a new idea evolved by a few theorists, but a lost social norm that must be recaptured if we are to live.

And yet, as things are, a *revirement d'idées*<sup>20</sup> is necessary. For three hundred years and more the principle of a social arrangement that has its origin in the needs of the individual citizen and his family has been discarded. No doubt such a principle has never been perfectly achieved; but it was inherent in the Middle Ages, as it must be in any really Catholic country.

The change that took place as a result of the Reformation was in the main a shifting of the centre of gravity from an ethical to an economic basis: a change which necessarily had the result of making economics unsound as well as ethics. Since then we have come to think in the terms of an economic State and an economic inter-relation of States. This has been successful in producing an increase in world wealth, but

has proved fatal by reason of the fact that it leaves the accumulation of wealth in the hands of the few. It has created a proletariat.

During the last hundred and fifty years developments have been rapid in this country. First came the ousting of the peasant, then of the village craftsman. Thus the destruction of the village itself. As a result of this the majority of men became dependent upon a wage for the necessities of life. After a period of high prosperity for the masters of industry, the chill grip of world competition began to be felt, and the trend towards a stricter concentration of wealth in a few hands became more and more accentuated. There was amalgamation of firms, which sometimes developed into monopoly. This, combined with a progressive perfecting of machinery, produced a huge increase in unemployment in the dependent proletariat; and State measures had to be adopted for dealing with it. We have now reached a point where these violent palliatives are failing to ward off social chaos. The logical result is some form of State Socialism. The populace are ripe for it; but it is the negation of liberty and indeed of the whole human personality. Psychologically it is impossible in the long run. The other solution is voluntary communities of free owners. This is psychologically, as well as economically, sound.

It is the essence of the Catholic Land Movement to readjust the social centre of gravity by building up a State that has its foundations in the family and home of the individual citizen. To proceed with such a task, it must be admitted, is like changing boats at the height of a storm. It certainly involves danger; but the danger of leaving things as they are, or of crystallizing them in State Socialism, is far greater. For the man who desires freedom the attempt is a necessity. It is clear that under present conditions procedure must be slow and patient; but it must be complete. A compromise may well be as fatal as inaction. The man and his farm are not enough. The Community is imperative. This does not of course preclude sporadic increase of small ownership wherever possible; as for example the single craftsman in accidentally favourable circumstances, or the small shopkeeper, or the family farm with a fairly stable market for its surplus. Such scattered efforts can and should go on concurrently with the formation of Communities.

In proceeding to describe the task to be undertaken, it becomes necessary to distinguish between what I shall call the Transitional Community – that is, the first emergence of the idea

## THE COMMUNITY

in practical form from the surrounding swamp of Capitalism – and the Normal or Permanent Community, which is to take the place of Capitalism, when the latter has finally disappeared.

First, then, the Transitional Community. The building up of this will clearly be heroic, and, in its initial stages, must be assisted by charitable subsidy. For it is something opposed to the whole trend of society as at present constituted. It must persuade through the results of a rigorous, perhaps even an unnatural simplicity. It implies, to begin with, a sufficiency of land (freehold, if possible) to support a population determined to provide for themselves the primary necessities of life, and to be content with little more than this. It implies, too, men and women sufficiently trained in the various sides of farming, and in all crafts necessary to subsistence. And lastly there must be some lessening of the present excessive burden of rates and taxes. This might possibly be done in one or both of two ways: first, by making the community a rural district unit, in which position it could reduce rates to a minimum; and secondly by charging income tax only on income obtained from outside its boundaries. The latter arrangement could of course only be made with approval of the government of the country.

The creation of such a transitional community must therefore depend upon, and be the outcome of, the present Catholic Land Movement, including, as it does, all necessary instruction in crafts. It would be dependent for its success not only on the charitable response of those convinced of the rightness, indeed the inevitability, of the philosophy that this book emphasizes; but also, even more, upon the conviction of its truth, and the rigorous application of its principles, by the individual members of the first pioneer communities.

It may be suggested that it would be possible to form communities by linking up existing farmers, craftsmen, etc. The difficulties of doing this are twofold: the one psychological, the other territorial. For, on the one hand, the habit of mind required for such an undertaking has almost disappeared in England, and can generally only be inculcated through example; and, on the other, it would be exceptional to find all the necessary units of such a community, in one district. Such linking up would ordinarily be the second process in the construction of a society based upon communities or districts mainly supplying their own local needs. It would be an intermediate stage between the transitional and the normal community.

It would be foolish to gloss over or belittle the difficulties of the undertaking here proposed. A false habit of mind is not easily overcome. The practical introduction of sound principles into a State in which a false philosophy of life is engrained must be a matter of time and continued effort. But it is important to observe that the difficulties come from outside, and not from the nature of the proposal itself. Parliament, or whatever form of governmental control exists must be invoked, but the *fait accompli* of a few self-subsistent communities will be the best lever of legislation.

Real success can only begin when the powerful vested interests – notably the financial and industrial combines – are held in check by the government, and are themselves broken up into small units that serve a locality, instead of converting its members into a nomad proletariat. That will be the crux of the struggle. For it is such vested interests that alone benefit from present conditions. The mass of the population, though fatally harmed by these conditions, have yet grown to take them for granted, and have regulated their lives in accordance with them. Consequently they will only slowly come to see the trap they are in.

No present-day government can be expected to assist actively in the project, which is a reversal of a way of thought prevalent for more than three hundred years. Nor would the attempt to create a political party pledged to carry it out be likely to be successful. The conservative instincts of Parliament are too strong. But it may be possible to get sufficient concessions to make a beginning, through private members' bills and other similar ways. On the other hand, success achieved even under conditions of the most rigorous simplicity is almost certain to attract imitators, especially in a time like the present of abnormal economic pressure for the majority of people. In addition to this, we must believe that the inherent sense of freedom in man must have weight in the long run in refusing to allow him to remain satisfied with a measure of material security as a substitute for it.

It is naturally impossible to prophesy the course likely to be taken by a movement, of which we have attempted to sketch the beginnings. There may be no course to trace. If there is, it is almost certain that it will not be smooth or uninterrupted. The progress made will depend upon the opportunities presented by the general social conditions, and upon the determination and single-mindedness of the pioneers. But most of all will the experiment prove likely

## THE COMMUNITY

to succeed, if the participants in it are bound together by the strong religious ties of the Faith. Without this, the guiding principles of freedom and right living will almost certainly become blurred in the early days of trial and hardship.

So much for the beginnings. I will now pass on to the second part of the subject – what I have called the Normal Community.

An attempt to outline the Normal Community is beset with pitfalls of opposite kinds. First, there is the danger of giving a picture of a merely imaginary utopia; and secondly of slavishly copying the framework of the Middle Ages. Both of these errors must be avoided. There is indeed a third difficulty. It is this: of its nature a social State that takes its form from the multiple needs of individual free citizens, with the family as unit, will grow in unexpected and irregular ways. Should we describe too minutely its formation and the interdependence of its parts, we should be making the very mistake which it is the purpose of the whole Land Movement to eradicate: that is, we should be attempting to impose an academic plan upon a passive population. This evidently does not mean that there should be no clearly defined principles, but rather that the organism growing in accordance with these principles should be allowed to spring freely from the family as its root.

The family is a natural – one might say, inevitable – extension of the individual. It becomes immediately apparent for two reasons that there must be a further extension. The family of itself cannot support life, except in the most rudimentary form: alone, it would be deprived of life's natural amenities. Furthermore, social life outside the limits of the family is a requisite for man. This extension will be the Community. For the Community is not merely a wedge to split Capitalism, but an essential element of a sound social system.

It will take different forms according to conditions. The peasant community, with which this chapter is mainly concerned and which is primary in the healthy existence of any State, would naturally assume the form of a village or group of villages with outlying farms, in close touch with a market town. In local jurisdiction and management it would be in a large measure independent. Its everyday needs would be supplied by itself, thus eliminating unnecessary and wasteful transport. It would probably provide its own schools, banks, doctors and nurses; certainly, its churches, its market, its specialists, its craftsmen, and its amusements. It would almost certainly

have some council, appointed by itself, to regulate local affairs, solve local difficulties, and act as a mouth-piece when necessary for the community as a whole. It would, in a word, have a distinct life of its own, though not one divorced from, much less hostile to, its surroundings and its country.

The present task of the farmer, which is to provide food for the enormous modern cities, which are themselves powerless to supply their own needs, would change in proportion as the cities become smaller and more adapted to local needs, instead of being, as they are now, the unwieldy factories of goods for which markets must be found by hook or by crook all the world over. Thus the Community, that the Catholic Land Movement envisages, would be something quite different in character, constitution, and aims from the modern village. For the latter is a mere adjunct to the city and has little or no local significance. Indeed its very nature is urban: a town mind planted in the country. Its livelihood depends upon the money surplus (if any) derived from prices over which it has no control. The former, on the other hand, would provide for itself first; and those products which it sold outside would be subject to prices agreed upon from time to time by free, property-owning citizens.

The main uses to which machinery has been put in modern times, and the vast growth and organization of present-day transport, would become less and less necessary owing to the re-emergence of craftsmanship and the local consumption of primary commodities. Nor would the communities remain isolated divisions of a disintegrated State. They would extend again in their turn into groups and areas, which would eventually coalesce, through forms of representation controlled from below, until they became united to form an important part of the government of the whole country. Concurrently with this would arise a hierarchy of guilds and societies connected with the various crafts, professions, and trades, which go to make up the material needs of a nation. They too, doubtless, would take their share in government.

In the case of necessarily large concerns, such as the Post Office, etc., ownership could still be widely distributed, and the owners could well be constituted, much as the craftsmen, in guilds. Or else the State could take charge of them. A great many present-day large concerns could with advantage be split up into smaller components, owned by single men or small groups. Thus the com-



## THE COMMUNITY

munity idea could inform many undertakings, which at the present time are in the hands of combines. It would indeed be the pattern for the country as a whole. For the latter would be a unit self-contained as far as possible, but ready to do an exchange trade with other countries, and take its part as a free agent in any discussions, federations, agreements, etc., with them.

Obviously, it is impossible and, as I have said, it is inimical to our conception of a State built up from foundations consisting of families and individuals, to draw a detailed picture of the constitution of such a State. But there are certain commonly expressed misgivings as to the practical working of any such theoretical conception. A few of these may be noticed here. But first let me insist once again that what we are advocating in this book is no untested, imaginative experiment, as the Communist State, in spite of Russia, still is. Medieval England was guided by these principles; and not much more than a hundred and fifty years ago there still existed the greater part of the material results of its philosophy, though the philosophy itself had been abandoned. France, too, at the present time, and many other European States are largely characterized by the same habit of mind, and still possess a peasantry and a significant number of small owners of property. If in such countries the community idea is not carried through to its natural and logical end – the State; yet one cannot fail to observe the strength and independence engendered by this substratum of community life; and how often a government, divorced from this solid social basis, is brought to book and made to bow to the strongly expressed public opinion of the people.

This said, let us examine a few of the criticisms which are commonly levelled against the principles we are defending, of which the community is the practical embodiment.

It is often said that any such division of property would be fatal to the raising of large sums of money, either for the protection of the country as a whole, or for the carrying through of large public works necessary to its cultural advancement. Such a criticism is not without truth. Power resides largely in property: diffused property therefore implies to some extent diffused power. An army for instance could be much more quickly equipped, trained, and provisioned under a system where the control of wealth is concentrated in a few hands. But two things can be said in reply: first, that large national expenditure – even on armies – is not necessarily a good;

for the decentralization of many things, which are now only to be found concentrated in large State or otherwise monopolistic concerns, is certainly one of the safeguards of individual freedom. And, secondly, that where such extensive concerns appear necessary to the country there is no reason why they should not be either a permanent, though controlled, activity of the State we are envisaging; or, better, themselves be constituted on the community or co-operative pattern. The only defect in the latter plan being perhaps a comparative lack of speed in bringing them into being.

Another criticism levelled against the State based upon the community and the guild is the impossibility of its permanence. Given human nature, it is argued, things will soon revert to the present grossly unequal distribution of property. Again two replies can be made. First, that this, as a matter of historical fact, did not happen in medieval England until the laws against usury and excessive profits were deliberately discarded, as the result of a change of philosophical outlook. The dissolution of the monasteries was the definite break with tradition which produced a plutocracy, or artificially imposed economic tyranny expressing itself in terms of small groups of large landlords. And second, the loss in more recent years of the steadying influence of a peasantry and the use of common land, which is a feature of communities, has led Englishmen to think that the poor are necessarily at the mercy of the rich. Legislation for the last hundred and fifty years has all, except in cases of relief, been in the interests of the wealthy; but once grant the freedom that comes with highly distributed property, and no such tendency would exist. The influence of the community and the guild would prove stronger than that of individual wealthy citizens.

Those critics who champion the present capitalistic muddle on the grounds of the cheapness of its products, as compared with those of small owners, are falling into the modern fallacy of thinking in terms of money, and not of things. Where the rule is ownership of the means of production, money values that is, prices – are of secondary importance. Further, whereas prices are now out of the control of those whom they immediately concern, and are at the mercy of world-wide gambling and the greed of a few monopolists; in a country, ordered in land communities and guilds of free owners, the just price can be ascertained and enforced with a minimum of difficulty. So

## THE COMMUNITY

that prices, while being less vital than they are now, will at the same time be far more methodically adjusted to the needs of the people.

The question of efficiency is also sometimes raised. Though how anyone can consider the present disorder efficient it is difficult to imagine. Perhaps it is because the very complication of finance and big business requires a power of organization quite out of proportion to any benefit conferred; and thus, the actual fact that men are found to control it at all incites admiration. But if men can control a thing so unwieldy and with such endless ramifications, much more will they be able to manage the simpler thing efficiently.

Occasionally an objection is raised, which may be expressed in some such way as this: "Anything that may appear attractive in your community depends, not upon the soundness of the system you recommend, but upon your unwarranted assumption of an improvement in human nature. Men will be equally selfish, malicious, quarrelsome, dishonest and the rest of it under any system of property. And these faults will always produce the same results." The argument is false. Granting – though we are actually far from admitting that man's character remains the same under all conditions; the point is that, in a community, the effects of men's vices will, first, be localized, and, secondly, neutralized by the fact that all men are on the same footing. There will still be the wealthier and the poorer; but not the controlling class and the controlled: all will be free. Wrong may injure, but it will no longer oppress.

But in reality these criticisms and others of the same kind do not account for the opposition to the community idea prevalent in the mind of the average Englishman of today.

The real fact is that most wage earners have become so divorced from the responsibilities and the processes of thought inherent in free owners, that the wage they receive bears no relation in their minds to things produced or value given. They do not look beyond it, but only press for it to be made adequate to their needs. What it represents, where it comes from, how it is produced, what rights they have to it or to a larger one, they do not enquire. They start from the cash paid as from an incontestable metaphysical truth, and base all their personal economic assumptions upon that. It is true they realize that they cannot devour a pound note, or make it into a suit of clothes; but it is equally true that most of them cannot conceive

of food or clothing except as the result of a money transaction. Thus the idea of a community largely self-subsistent appears to their minds as something unpractical – almost unnatural.

This conception is developed by other activities of the life to which they are accustomed. The relaxations of leisure are for them things paid for and passively enjoyed. They are surrounded with cheap forms of amusement, most of which are centrally controlled by rich monopolies, and scattered over the country as speculative ventures, with the object of further enriching their owners. Sixpennyworths of fictitious luxury have not yet only debauched the tastes of millions of people, but actually made it appear to them impossible for amusement to be contrived without an expensive machinery provided by others. Thus, as well as seeming unnatural, the community strikes them as dull and uninviting, since it would not contain the amusements to which they are accustomed.

Unnatural modes of life have become so habitual, that what is natural appears outlandish and dull.

One might perhaps compare the outlook of the average man under decaying capitalistic conditions, to a drug addict. He is not willing to give up his drug – indeed the idea appalls him – though he can point to no natural or real advantages that it brings him. The notion of supporting life on food, drink, work, rest, and amusement – the natural, indeed the necessary, concomitants of life – fills him with ennui, if not disgust. He craves for his drug because he has grown used to it, and he cannot picture existence without its stimulant. And though he knows that it is slowly killing him; he prefers such degeneration and death to a life of reality and vigour. For he has forgotten the taste of these things.

Two points, then, must be set out clearly as regards the community: first, that it is the natural mode of life; and secondly, that what is natural to man must be reasonable and beneficial to him.

The community, or true village, supplies all those ingredients of life that our present mode of existence lacks: it lacks many things, which we have come to look upon as necessities. Of these two opposites, which conforms most closely to the nature of man?

In the community, we may note as characteristic, the family unit, living in a house that it owns and usually upon land that it owns. Hence a tendency to permanence in home life and to a minimum of migration. Secondly, a local life actively social, and having its roots,

## THE COMMUNITY

not primarily in the leisure, but in the work of the members of the community. Thirdly, common interests and common responsibilities, exemplified by such institutions as village councils, guilds, local banks, schools, etc., which postulate the close acquaintance of men with their fellow men, both for the assistance of the unfortunate, the training of the young, and the administration of local justice. Further, the absence of large accumulations of wealth on the one hand or of destitution on the other; but at the same time variation in the amount of property and wealth possessed by individuals. A minimum of transport both of men and goods, particularly transport over long distances. Again (what is notably absent in the present-day way of life) a territorial and social foundation upon which to build up the State. And, lastly, a mind habituated to think in terms of things and complete processes rather than of tokens and disconnected actions, and thus one in touch with the realities of life, and freed from constraints imposed from without.

If such things are characteristic of the community, can it be reasonably maintained that the life it engenders is not more natural than the present ordering of things? By nature the human being desires to own and to control what he owns; he desires to create and enjoy his creation; he desires an anchorage even in this world; he desires company and detests enforced loneliness; he loathes official interference; he possesses freewill and is constrained if he cannot exercise it. To all these preferences the community gives free play: the present capitalist régime denies them.

But is the natural also the reasonable? If not, why is it that those who are fortunate enough to be in a position to put their natural desires into effect invariably do so? They must surely consider them reasonable. They may abuse their freedom through excess, but they certainly do not use it to abandon what is natural to man.

But for the Catholic the answer is clear. He knows that *super-natural* grace, working through the natural qualities of man, alone bring him safely to his final home. But he knows, too, that natural qualities, as well as supernatural grace, are the gifts of Almighty God – the former, as it were, the receptacle of the latter. Sin, with its endless train of disorganization and unhappiness, is the negation of the one and the refusal of the other. Both are necessary to the full life of man upon the earth.

### MGR. JAMES DEY (1869–1946)

Harold Robbins, in *G.K. Chesterton: The Last of the Realists*, calls Mgr. Dey “the greatest figure thrown up in England by the Land Movement.” Ordained in 1894 and commissioned as an Army Chaplain in 1903, Dey served in various posts with the British Armed Forces over the course of twenty-six years. In 1928 he was made a Domestic Prelate; the following year he was appointed Rector of Oscott College, a seminary founded in 1794 for the training of priests for England and Wales, and which was a symbol, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, of the renewal of English Catholic life. Thanks to his position as Rector of the College, all the major conferences of the Catholic Land Movement between 1930 and 1935 were held at Oscott. He was instrumental in setting up the Midlands Catholic Land Association, of which he was the first president (Harold Robbins was secretary, and addressed the Oscott students from time to time). Dey was a Distributist from his earliest years, and thus he did all he could to promote the Movement among the Catholic clergy. In 1935 he was made Bishop of Sebastopolis and Ordinary to His Majesty’s Armed Forces.

CHAPTER VII  
The Church and the Land

*by the Right Rev. Monsignor J. Dey, D.S.O., Rector of Oscott College*



HERE ARE TWO CHARACTERS AMONG CHAUCER'S<sup>21</sup> Canterbury Pilgrims that appear to be specially dear to their creator. He displays a peculiar loving reverence in his representation of them. In tracing their features, he breaks away entirely from his ordinary manner. There is no humour in their picture; no suggestion of caricature; no malicious distortion of any feature; no exaggeration of any weakness; no undue emphasis of shadow; never even an impish twist or turn of a line to move laughter in the beholder. These two are painted in all justice, sincerity and truth. They are portraits of the Peasant and of the Village Priest. It would seem almost as though that consummate artist, when he came to add these two to the national gallery of the Englishmen and women of his age, said thus to himself: "Here come the two who stand for the really great things of life, the very marrow and essence. There is no place here for laughter or scorn. There is nothing incongruous in the lives of these two, nothing that may justify a little ribaldry. All is primary, simple and sincere." And so he put his very heart into making the likeness of them.

And he makes them blood brothers. There is a strong family resemblance in the drawing; one can recognize like qualities in each. The picture of the parish priest, the Poor Parson of the Town, is known to everybody; that of the Ploughman Brother may not be so familiar. It suits my present purpose to reproduce the lines of it in modern speech.

"...a real worker, a good man was he  
Living in peace and perfect charity,

## FLEE TO THE FIELDS

God loved he best, with all his heart  
At all time, were it gain or smart,  
And then his neighbour, as he did himself.  
He would thresh and also ditch and delve  
For Christ's sake, for every poor wight  
And ask no hire if it lay in his might."

It is a very striking fact that a humorist, such as Chaucer was, in writing such a comedy of men and manners, such as is, in most part, the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*, should lay aside his usual, and here, natural manner of treatment and write of the Parson and the Ploughman as he does. He was a townsman, born and bred, a Londoner in fact and one who at various periods of his life, was engaged in some lesser diplomatic work abroad for the King. A man of such a breeding does not as a rule, feel sympathetic to the simplicity of country life. His attitude is rather one of condescension, bred of a sense of superiority. Nor is it likely that, in describing these two he was drawing a picture of men whom he had met; such lowly country folk would never have come within the orbit of his experience. Chaucer's Ploughman and Priest must be considered as common types of their class, types so common as to be easily recognized by the experience of the people for whom he wrote, the English people of the fourteenth century.

This estimate of them invests them with a very special value for our purpose. If they be held as representative of the quality of the English peasantry of the fourteenth century, we know what manner of men were their descendants of the sixteenth century, the time when the Catholic peasantry of England received its death-blow. Change comes very slowly into the life of the countryside. Nothing short of a national upheaval can disturb the even current of its existence. Its interests and its sense of values remain unchanged year by year. The land and the church make up the fullness of its daily occupation. I am speaking particularly of the peasantry of the Middle Ages, but what I say is true in a degree of all peasantries in all times and countries. In the very effort of earning his daily bread, the worker on the land is brought more directly in touch with the Providence of God than is any craftsman, no matter whether he works in wood or iron,



## THE CHURCH AND THE LAND

in silk or wool. The temple of God is the only outstanding building in the village and the priest the only man who has learning. There is also a stronger cleaving to tradition, a love of the old things because of their age, a distrust of all "new-fangled" notions. The Church had experience of this, when first she began to convert the world. The old heathen faiths so clung to the "pagi" or villages years after the towns had accepted the Gospel, that men called all obstinate heathens by the name of "pagans."

When the great religious upheaval came in England, the new faith was opposed most obstinately in the country districts. There were peasant risings during the last days of Henry VIII against the spoliation of the monasteries, and in Edward VI's reign and during the early years of Elizabeth in defence of the Mass. They were ineffective, for during the two preceding centuries, the English countryside had been drained of its strength by the Black Death, the French Wars, the Wars of the Roses and the land policy of the Tudors. Had England only had enough of Chaucer's Ploughmen and Parsons, there would never have been a change in the national faith.

To come closer to our own times, when the practice of the Old Faith was forbidden by the Penal Laws, it was chiefly in the country districts that the old religious observances were preserved. In quiet houses away from the main roads, where the squire was staunch to the faith of his ancestors, the men and women on his land met under the threat of imprisonment and death, to be present at the offering of the Mass. In this way for over one hundred years the Catholic faith was kept alive in the English countryside till the return of better days. Thus when Catholic bishops were again allowed by law to minister publicly to their poor and scattered flocks, they found a large proportion of them in the countryside, gathered in tiny rural communities round the Catholic landed gentry who had remained faithful.

Thus at the time of the Catholic Emancipation, outside London and a few other of the big towns, the Catholic population of England was largely a rural population. However shortly after this date, two important events occurred which made a marked change in the nature of the Catholic body. These events were the Industrial Revolution and the great famine in Ireland in 1847.

Amongst other evils, the Industrial Revolution was responsible for drawing thousands from the countryside to work in the mills and factories in the towns. In the general depopulation of the rural areas, the number of the Catholics in the countryside also fell, for they were naturally subject to the same economic influences. In Ireland, the effect of the terrible failure of the potato crop about 1847 was to drive thousands of starving Irishmen and Irish women out of their own unfortunate country to seek a living elsewhere. Many of them came to England, flocked to the towns to get work in the mills and factories as the English countrymen were doing. Hence from these two causes operating together, there was, about the middle of last century, a violent and somewhat extensive urbanization of the small Catholic flock in this country. The Bishops were called upon to provide at once, churches and schools in the towns for this shifted Catholic population with its strong Irish element. Their Lordships had to engage in an extensive and intensive quest for money, for though rich in faith, the new recruits to Catholicism were poor in worldly goods. (A curious and somewhat unfortunate misapprehension has arisen in the minds of the uneducated Englishman, as a result of this immigration. One hears our Catholic faith spoken of as the "Irishmen's religion!" So little do the general public know of their own history and of the gallant stand for one hundred years of the English Recusants).

Towns still continue to grow in size and to spread out and the English Bishops are still daily seeking money to satisfy the spiritual needs of these sprawling monsters, ever building churches and schools for their somewhat cosmopolitan flocks. (I suppose that a Catholic town parish in England would be composed at the present day, normally of about fifty percent Irish or of Irish descent, thirty percent English and the rest, Scots, Welsh, German, French and Italian in descent). The Catholic country missions are practically exclusively of English descent and they appear very rarely before the notice of the public in the Catholic press. As ecclesiastical foundations, they are firmly established and equipped with the necessities of Catholic worship, so there is no need for them to beg. They have their church and school, long since paid for and the population of the

countryside does not grow. They are quite capable of “carrying on” till the needs of the towns are fully met. As a rule, they do not enjoy the services of a vigorous apostle as pastor, because there is much more need of such ones in the busy centres of population. The church and school in many instances may be a little mean and somewhat poorly equipped but there is nothing mean or poor about the faith of the congregation. That is vigorous enough, for it is the faith of the English countryside which has survived the blast of persecution, and it is not likely to be withered by the cold wind of a neglect that is more apparent than real. It is as simple as it is strong, holding fast to the things that matter and needing only the essential things of the faith for its sustenance. It thrives on the Mass and the Sacraments of the Church and does not feel the need of Confraternity or Sodality, Mission or Retreat, to infuse periodically new vitality into its veins.

From time to time the question of Leakage in Church membership crops up in the Catholic press and various explanations are offered that profess to account for it. As regards the town parishes, it is stated that the practices of religion are frequently so closely associated with the discipline of the school, that they become confused with it in the minds of the Catholic child and when he is of an age to leave school, he thinks he is also old enough to leave Church, and frequently does so. The opposite influence seems to be operative in the country. Here it is not a question of too much religion, but too little. Catholics cease to follow the practices of their faith in the country because the necessary facilities for so doing are absent. If these be really the causes of the shrinkage of our numbers, the cure seems obvious – though one is not so foolish as to state it wholly. But in the case of the country leakage, it could be applied by moving some Catholics out of the town into the country and sending their priest with them.

This proposal is not so fantastic as it may at first sight appear. It is admirably suited to meet the special needs of the present time. Without entering into the economic reasons for relieving the congestion of population in the towns – they are dealt with elsewhere in this book – there are definite religious advantages for shifting some of the Catholic population into the country. Here are some of them.

The first reason is to secure the better spreading of the faith. We have seen that Catholics are very few and very scattered in the country districts of England. There are vast areas, especially in the Eastern counties and in Devon, Somerset, Cornwall and Wales without a Catholic church or a resident priest. There must be thousands of Englishmen who are as ignorant of the appearance of a Catholic priest as the natives of Central Africa. In fact the African is better off in this respect, for the well organized efforts of the Foreign Missionary Societies are striving to relieve him of this disability, whereas there is no equivalent organization to help the rural Englishman. The Bishops are doing all in their power to secure that the unfortunate Catholics in these areas shall have at least periodical access to the Sacraments – and more than this they cannot do. Sporadic efforts are made from time to time, by travelling secular clergy to preach the Catholic faith and supply the Mass in some of these barren spots, but the problem is too big to be solved by such inadequate means. Nothing short of the settlement of a Catholic community in the midst of them will move some areas of rural England to a serious consideration of the Catholic faith.

The second reason why Catholics should be got into the country is an economic one and so may be considered less worthy of consideration than the preceding. We Catholics in this country as a religious body have rather more than the average of poor people among our parishioners. Whether this be true absolutely or not, it is pretty certainly true if we reckon as members of a church those who actually attend the services and contribute to the support of the Church. As a religious body then, we are more heavily hit financially by the depression of industry than any other denomination. No one can safely say what will be the final issue of the present upset and unrest in the industrial world. Many sane men who speak with knowledge, profess to see signs now apparent of the utter failure of the whole capitalist system and assert that there can be no hope of a real recovery, until the whole world shall suffer a change of heart. One can estimate how long that will take to come to pass. A general crash is more likely to happen, than a recovery under these conditions and should such a catastrophe come about, it will fall most heavily

on the weakest and those especially who depend on industry for an existence. Before such a doom comes upon us, it is surely wise to try and get some of our people out of the danger zone. If they remain, they will lose either life or liberty, for the State will only support them on conditions that will entail absolute surrender to state regulations.

This last argument may seem to many wildly alarmist and quite contrary to the latest indications which profess to show a steady improvement in trade. In the genuine hope that this indication is correct and that the improvement will last and be wide enough to cover all industry, I do not press it. I prefer to pass on to the other reasons why Catholics should move into the country from the towns, reasons based on political and moral dangers.

The political danger may be summed up in one word – Russia. Here we have a mighty world power, frankly devoted to the overthrow of all religion in the world, as the ideal of its existence. Ten years ago, this menace was not held to be very serious, as men comfortably thought that the godless government which drew up that programme, would soon crash through economic weakness. Then the strong natural religious spirit of the mass of the Russian people would soon repair what damage had been done. This forecast has unfortunately not yet come to pass and all present indications point in the other direction. The haters of God are still in power, getting more firmly established day by day and winning the friendship of alleged Christian governments by economic bribery. They have not changed their beliefs, though they may be more circumspect in their professions of them. They have found that it does not make business easy to be so blatantly atheistic. Within the last ten years we have seen anti-religious outbreaks in countries professedly Catholic and we know that what success they have won is due in some measure to Russian help. This influence works mainly in the towns, among the dissatisfied industrial workers and it affects men of all religious beliefs, Catholics included. At the present moment it may not have influenced our people very greatly, but it is powerful and persevering and there is a diabolical energy and cunning directing it. How long the resistance of the Catholic faith in many will be strong enough to repel it, who can say? If that faith be weakened in the subject, by starvation or

loss of liberty or any other disintegrating force, it may sooner or later collapse and Catholic England may see her sons destroying churches and schools as Catholic Spain did a short while ago.

The moral danger is just that which history tells us has always threatened the Christian life of the Church, when her followers are living in ultra-civilized pagan surroundings. It is the danger which 1,500 years ago, in Egypt brought about the establishment of the monastic life. There is no need to dwell in detail on the various features of everyday town life which make it difficult for those who dwell in the midst of them, to follow faithfully the precepts of the Christian life. A man encounters them at every turn – in his business, in social intercourse, in his reading, in his recreation. Many are strong enough to overcome them and to direct their lives on true Christian principles. But there are many others who cannot stand the strain and will certainly go under unless they can move into another kind of living where the temptations are not so many nor so pressing. In the modern city, “the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life” are rampant.

I do not for a moment maintain that life on the land is an earthly Paradise, but it is physically, economically and morally a safer place to live in than the town. For instance, you will rarely find an atheist or a communist among the men who work and own the land. The Providence of God stares the countryman in the face at every moment of his day’s work. The townsman gazes rather on the ingenuity of man, and exaggerates his power. The countryman deals directly with Nature which is the external manifestation of God the Creator, and all the wonderful processes of creation, birth, development, maturity and decay, then rebirth and renewal of the series. The townsman deals with what is often only remotely a product of nature, and that in one fixed state of being, and over and over again, with the same product in the same state, so that its *coming into being* has no interest for him. Seeing God daily at close view, in the fresh work of His hands, breeds in the peasant an instinctive reverence for his task. By his daily occupation, he is apt for religion. The revolving year, with its seasonal variety of tasks in regular order make him conservative in mind. What has been, will be again. He clings to the old things, religious beliefs among them, for they are justified by his

daily experience and have been held by his fathers and their fathers before them. He is extremely unpromising material to make into an atheist or a communist.

Life moves slowly in the country and is free from noise and excitement. It exhibits an infinite variety that can never stale and though it may make a man healthily tired, it does not fret his nerves to shreds or thoroughly drain his strength. He can seek recreation without demanding excitement, for his work does not make him jaded, like the dull monotony of many occupations in the town. He is not thrilled by cunning representations of what are called the problems of sex, for Nature's processes are daily before his eyes and so are capable of little meretricious attraction.

To sum up my argument, life in the country when judged by religious and moral standards being safer and saner in itself than life in a town, ought to be made possible for more Catholics than those who follow it at the present time. I have tried to show, moreover that it would be advantageous to the Catholic Church herself, as an institution, to be stronger in the rural districts of England.

A policy which is at the same time good for both the individuals of any community and for the community itself, ought to be possible of accomplishment by the members of that community, if they have the interests of their association really at heart. How may the greater ruralization of Catholics in England be brought about?

This is a business which the Catholic laymen of England might very well take in hand. It is not fair to ask the chief pastors of the Church to undertake any other responsibility. The Bishop of every English diocese has already as much as any one man should be asked to shoulder in bearing what St. Paul calls, "the daily instance, my solicitude for all the churches." The united Catholic laity if they would allow themselves to be interested in the future of the Church in this country, may soon have an opportunity of making that interest into a practical scheme for the betterment of their less fortunate fellow Catholics. There are signs that after long last, the country's government is likely to introduce some measure dealing with the land as a remedy for unemployment. If the Catholic lay associations, of which there are several, would show concern about the proposals, they might by their united action effect that any scheme put forward,

should be on sound lines and likely to be of real benefit to the needy and not merely a vote-catching device or a further state aggression on the liberty of the individual. If however the government does not really propose to take any steps in this direction but prefers to maintain its aloofness from any land policy, then it devolves on the Catholic laymen who have it in their power, to do something themselves to help their co-religionists.

The rewards for such a good work would not be necessarily exclusively spiritual. (I add this to encourage those Catholics of means who find they cannot react promptly to motives purely spiritual). Land is always a safe investment and land in England was never so cheap as it is today. There should be little trouble in getting possession of a suitable estate, and thereafter all the business of settling Catholics on it in smallholdings will be efficiently carried out by organizations already in existence for that purpose, established under the authority of the Hierarchy. Trained men only, who are practising Catholics, will be accepted as settlers and established in small communities, each community, where necessary, having its own church and school and priest and the necessary craftsmen to make the village life complete. Though land in cultivation will never pay any exorbitant return in money, it will guarantee an interest on capital expended as large as a Catholic, who directs even his business life according to his religious beliefs, should be willing to accept. And throughout, it remains a safe investment.

Moreover, and this should appeal to the very wealthy, by the policy of settling men of sound Catholic moral principles on the land, one is strengthening the forces of law and order in the country. A body of men, with a reverence for established authority, honest, straight dealing, and contented with their own conditions of life, is a bulwark any country should be happy to possess in these days of class enmity and social unrest.

There are, however, higher motives for helping the settlement of Catholics on the land which can reasonably be expected to have weight with conscientious Catholics. As for instance: What a noble investment of money it would be to try to undo the work of the Tudors and re-establish in England a Catholic land-owning peasantry, living a full Catholic life, with the village church in



## THE CHURCH AND THE LAND

their midst, and the Blessed Sacrament the centre of all activities. England was once full of these small communities. One only, as far as I know, remains. It is a glory in itself and an inspiration to all who know it. What satisfaction can be derived from any successful deal in "Kaffirs," or a sudden rise in Brewery or Gramophone or Patent Pill shares, compared to the thrill a benefactor would feel when he attended the Mass of Thanksgiving for the Harvest in the village sanctuary he had brought into being. Wheat and roots, poultry and sheep and cattle are stocks worth more than any Stock scrip on the Exchange, and Catholic men and women and children in Catholic homes are the most valuable of all gilt-edged securities, at least according to the reckoning of eternity. If the laity of England would try to reintroduce into England, modern copies of Chaucer's fourteenth century Ploughman, I feel certain the Bishops would undertake to match him with the Poor Priest. By these two, the Leakage of the Church could be effectively stopped.



*Reginald Jebb, at Hawkesyard Priory, Staffordshire, England, ca. 1933,  
with his son Philip (1927–1995) and his father-in-law, Hilaire Belloc (1870–1953)*

## KENRICK LLOYD KENRICK

K.L. Kenrick was a Welsh schoolmaster, who taught in Birmingham. He served as Honorary Secretary of the Birmingham Branch of the Distributist League, of which Robbins was Chairman, and with him he drafted the critically important pamphlet, *Unemployment: A Distributist Solution*, which ultimately became known as the “Birmingham Scheme.” It was a visionary and practical document, explaining how the massive unemployment of the Thirties could be resolved by the training and settlement of unemployed folk on the land as smallholders. Kenrick was a regular contributor to *G.K.’s Weekly*, and was, according to Fr. Brocard Sewell, held in “very high regard” by Chesterton. The works he produced for the Distributist League include *What is Distributism?* which was published in 1926 by the Distributist League in London in a pamphlet which included G.K. Chesterton’s *The Purpose of the League*; and *The War on the Weak*, published in 1930. The latter was central to the League’s anti-eugenics campaign. In 1958 the Birmingham Natural History and Philosophical Society published a short work Kenrick wrote for the centenary of the Society, subtitled “The Records of the Society and the Story They Tell.” He lived until the late 1970s or early 1980s.

CHAPTER VIII  
The Case for the Peasant

by K.L. Kenrick, M.A.



THE DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF MODERN CIVILIZED life may be regarded as the product of three revolutions – the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution and the Scientific Revolution. The French nation took the purely academic words Liberty, Equality and Fraternity; and, by means of the guillotine, imposed them upon a hostile world as political obligations. A century of mechanical invention changed a world in which men lived as a whole on the produce of their own labour into a world in which they live on the produce of the labour of each other. Certain investigations in the sciences of Biology and Geology have led men to the belief that human history is subject to a law of inevitable progress from the worse to the better. Modern civilized life may, therefore, be said to be a pattern woven from the three strands of liberty, trade and progress; and, although that pattern extends in a wide belt across the whole earth from extreme East to extreme West, and embraces a third of the human race, it is interesting to observe that, of the three revolutionary events which have brought it into existence, two are English and one is French. If Rousseau's<sup>22</sup> *Social Contract* may be regarded as the classical manifesto of the French Revolution; equally may Adam Smith's<sup>23</sup> *Wealth of Nations* be regarded as the manifesto of the Industrial Revolution; and Darwin's<sup>24</sup> *Origin of Species* as that of the Scientific Revolution. No other country can lay claim to a revolutionary event or a revolutionary idea of such far-reaching effect on the modern world as these three.

To any survey of recent history, as to any attempt to arrive at solutions of present-day problems, an agreement as to the meaning of

the watchwords of the French Revolution, is of the first relevance. The liberty which implies the absence of all restraint and of all submission, is but an abstract figment which need not further be discussed. In war, the discipline of rank is a necessity; and its most extreme manifestations are universally regarded as altogether admirable and heroic. But in peace it is just as universally recognized that there can be restrictions and ordinances which are unnecessary, and which encourage the development of all that is evil, and militate against the development of all that is good. Their affliction is regarded as the act of a tyrant, and their acceptance as the act of a craven. The most notable example is the institution called slavery. But to this negative significance we are compelled to attach a more positive extension of meaning. The belief in liberty is not merely a demand that men shall be delivered from slavery; it is also the demand that they shall claim the power to remould their world to their own desire. From the vocabulary of the lawyer, it passes to the vocabulary of the poet. An idea begotten in a lawyer's office becomes in its turn the parent of a new world – the world of Romantic Literature. A society which says that henceforth innocent men shall not be loaded with heavy chains or confined in loathsome dungeons, becomes suddenly in the imagination of the poet on that account a Society shot with every rainbow hue of joy and happiness.

A thrill as authentic, albeit more homely, finds its source in the discovery that all men are equal; and the logic of equality is simpler of demonstration than the logic of liberty. For the denial of Equality implies the possibility of a rigorous scientific comparison of the absolute value of any two given individuals. Who will undertake the exhaustive examination which such a comparison calls for? Who will assign a numerical value to a good set of teeth in comparison with a good pair of eyes? Or who will decide whether the virtue of industry is of greater or of less value than the virtue of temperance? Whether it is greater, to command or to obey? Napoleon, Caesar, Hannibal,<sup>25</sup> Alexander<sup>26</sup> – were they successes or were they failures? Was their existence a blessing or a curse to humanity? It is true that a slave market may give a price to a slave, and that an army doctor may be called upon to make a decision as to a man's fitness for military

training. But neither the slave nor the soldier is the whole man – and the doctrine of equality is content with nothing less than the whole man. The court of law which gives more time and patience to the trial of the rich man than to that of the poor man; the young Automedon who knocks a man down on the Appian Way, and drives on saying that his victim is “only a slave”; the eugenist who demands that some men shall be forbidden to have children; all these can be brought to book only on the ground that they are violating the principle of equality. The community cannot afford, with impunity, to despise or neglect or oppress any of its members on the ground of their presumed inferiority to the rest of their fellows.

While the French people were transforming political society by their insistence on Liberty and Equality, the English people were transforming economic society by their discovery of the steam engine. Up to that time, the majority of men had lived by the direct application of their labour to land and raw material in their own immediate neighbourhood, in their own immediate possession, and under their own immediate control. They were now to live by the exchange of the commodities which they could produce more easily than others for the commodities which others could produce more easily than they. So it comes about that the Englishman of today consumes but a part of all he produces, and produces but a part of all he consumes. Trade, as the normal occupation of all men, is the creation of the Industrial Revolution of England. Either in spite of, or because of, the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, the history of the first half of the nineteenth century is the story of the attempt to combine French freedom and English trade in a unity called Free Trade. The purpose of Trade was wealth; as slavery was the creature and creator of poverty, so wealth was the creature and creator of Liberty. All restrictions and restraints came to be regarded as restrictions and restraints upon trade alone.

By the end of this period, the consummation of the development was in sight. There was gradually being formed a vast pool or world market; into which flowed all the produce of the economic activity of the civilized world. The amount of that produce which was being used or consumed at or near its point of origin was being

reduced to almost negligible dimensions. The demand for transport became almost insatiable; and the investment of capital in transport became the popular form of investment among even the most timid investors of three generations. To contemporary observers, it seemed as if mankind had suddenly burst from an age-old prison; and, by that very act, had become wealthy beyond the dreams of avarice.

Even so, there were not wanting critics who pointed out that the new wealth was not being distributed among the mass of the population with anything like the speed at which it was being produced; and that the methods of production were creating forms of wretchedness and squalor hitherto unknown. The origin of those feelings of humanity which impelled philanthropists to declare that in the employment of children in factories for long hours, liberty had reached the limit of licence, need not here be discussed. But it was at this point that the synthesis of liberty and trade was discovered to be not quite as perfect a harmony as had been imagined; and trade was again compelled to submit to some new regulations analogous in many respects to those regulations from which it had shaken free only so recently. It was destined, however, to receive something more than mere compensation, from the fresh and powerful impulse given to it by the theory of human progress quickly formulated by popular philosophers from the Darwinian explanation of the origin of the species. If there were such a thing as an ever upward, ever onward, irresistible march of human affairs; then no criticism of such an obviously gigantic stride as the Industrial Revolution could have any fundamental validity. Men who had halted previously now hesitated no longer to throw their weight into the cause of mechanical invention and scientific discovery. The extension of industry and trade became almost synonymous with the extension of enlightenment, culture, emancipation and civilization; and the world of commerce began to enrol in its ranks men to whom the mere desire of wealth would have made a weaker appeal. It was this period which witnessed the all but complete disappearance of the old aristocratic feeling against "trade."

The story thus briefly summarized has been told over and over again; and may be accepted on the whole as a faithful transcript of what actually took place in the nineteenth century. But it is not the

## THE CASE FOR THE PEASANT

whole story. Although it is a story that moves in the realm of ideas, it is but an imperfect narrative. For it was in the world of matter and brute force, and not in the realm of ideas, that the system which had proceeded so triumphantly through the nineteenth century met its Nemesis in the twentieth.

It is tempting to compare the economic power acquired by the great manufacturing trades of the nineteenth century with the economic power of the builders of the pyramids or the lords of feudal estates. But there is an important difference which makes the comparison a delusion. The power of a Pharaoh was limited by the number of his slaves; and the power of the medieval baron, by the number of his serfs. Almost the only capital needed by the one and the other was food and clothing for human bodies. Whatever ingenious devices were at the disposal of the builders of the pyramids, it is true to say that the actual mechanical power they possessed was strictly proportional to the number of their slaves. The power of a feudal lord was, in the same way, strictly proportional to the acreage of his lands; for a certain area of land could support only a limited number of serfs. But there were no such limits to the power of a manufacturing leader in the age of coal and steam. If the slaves of a Pharaoh depended upon his whim for their bare existence, he in his turn depended upon their flesh and blood, their muscle and brawn, for the maintenance of his power. Their life and health were of greater concern to him than his to them. This dependence of ambition upon manpower was the limit of economic dominion right up to the Industrial Revolution. It is what people still have in mind when they speak of the reciprocal interests of Capital and Labour. Such reciprocal interests no longer exist. It is true that Labour still depends upon Capital; but Capital no longer depends upon Labour. The manufacturer now invests his money, not in men, but in machinery. A small amount of machinery now establishes him in wealth beyond what formerly a large number of men could do. From a world in which the poor were as necessary to the rich as the rich to the poor, we have been brought into a world in which the rich are still necessary to the poor; but not the poor to the rich. A few men can raise from the earth coal to do the work of several times their own

number. The production of a ton of steel requires today only one fifth of the human labour necessary for the same purpose, even in the year 1900. Machinery has given the owners of property power which they never previously possessed – the power of becoming independent of those who own nothing.

Even under the worst forms of oppression, the owner of considerable wealth in times past had at least this value – he could give employment and could pay wages. Today, he has not even that value. The only way in which he can now give employment is by giving his wealth away. The man who, today, spends his money on men instead of on machinery, will very soon have none to spend. He is far more secure in paying men to remain idle.

The number and variety of goods and services needed to ensure a life of modest comfort is not so large as would at first sight appear. Throughout history, man's needs have been satisfied by skill and dexterity in the application of a few primitive tools to raw materials of every kind. To Adam Smith appeared the vision of the vastly increased productivity which could result from the ingenious invention of special tools and special methods for the performance of specific tasks. His vision was adopted almost at once as an altogether desirable economic ideal. With its realization there grew up, almost automatically, the organization of exchange and barter necessary to ensure that everyone was supplied with all he needed. The recording and accountancy of debit and credit appeared also to keep step with the tremendous growth, in volume and complexity, of trade and commerce. With the acceptance by other nations of this programme, it came to pass that not only individuals and small communities, but even whole populations, became dependent upon each other for their supply of the necessities of life. It was not until the disasters of the twentieth century that the discovery was made that too big a strain had been put upon accounting finance; and that its supposedly accurate records were but a mountainous tangle that nobody could unravel. The same disaster brought about the revelation that the inter-dependence of nations, so far from being a manifestation of the brotherhood of peoples, merely meant that a flood or a religious crusade in one country might be responsible for a famine or a revolu-



tion in another; or that an economic accident in one part of the globe might plunge the whole world into ruin.

Most of the world's present distress seems to centre round the demand for stability of prices. In most products, prices are dictated by a world market. The assumption is that all commodities flow continuously into a vast pool which just as continuously flows out to supply the needs of the world. The smooth and successful working of this method of disposing of produce and supplying needs depends upon the maintenance of an equilibrium between the rate of inflow and the rate of outflow. If, for any obscure reason, the rate of outflow exceeds the rate of inflow, prices go up, because of scarcity. In the last resort, the people against whom prices rise are the people who have produced the goods at their previous cost. They find this a grievance; and show their resentment in national strikes, which are economic disasters of the first magnitude, because they create still greater scarcity. If, again, the rate of outflow falls below the rate of inflow, prices go down; producers are compelled to increase their production in order to make the same total profit as before the fall; the market becomes full up; and the production has to cease. The final result is the still greater disaster of widespread unemployment. It used to be argued that these two processes were mutually counter-acting; and that the whole system was automatically self-adjusting. High prices and low prices would each work its own cure; and, over a long term of years, prices would show a remarkable stability. It was further supposed that, with the growth of speedy communications with all parts of the world, incipient fluctuations in prices would be detected and dealt with, before they had worked any serious damage. These plausible anticipations have all been falsified. Not only are daily and weekly changes of price more violent and inexplicable than ever before; but large-scale booms and slumps show an altogether intolerable increase in severity and duration. The present depression has lasted for nearly half a generation; and may bring about the moral degradation of a whole one.

There can hardly be any doubt that the chief cause of the evil is the magnitude of the operations, both manufacturing and commercial, involved under the control of few individuals. Vast material

resources are mobilized under one man or a small group of men; and an error of judgement, an over-estimate or an under-estimate, has nothing whatever to counteract it; and has far-reaching repercussions. It is no matter of surprise that an increasing number of small nations have decided that the conception of a world market is both a disappointment and a delusion; and are making strenuous efforts to nullify its effect by a policy of economic nationalism.

The pre-eminence of the nineteenth century was its claim to have discovered a magic road to untold material prosperity for the whole human race – a talisman which would open the gates, not merely to reveal, but to make easily accessible, the infinite resources of which the earth itself was a storehouse. It is the purpose of the examination and analysis here being made to show that, in our own day, that discovery has proved to be something more than a disappointment. It has, in truth, proved to be a veritable gift of Midas.<sup>27</sup> The more ingenious, elaborate and magnificent our means of production, the more susceptible they are of disturbance, dislocation and disaster. Their smooth and successful working demands a set of conditions which occurs at more and more infrequent intervals. We resemble Midas in that our wealth is produced by methods which might have been expressly devised to prevent its distribution for consumption.

It is unnecessary to add to the evidence a description of the special predicament of England. Her position as an importer of food and raw material, to be paid for in exports of coal and manufactured articles, is sufficiently well known and appreciated. The policy of economic nationalism will hit her harder than any other country; and yet, the only alternative at which she will look for any length of time is the restoration of that commerce across frontiers which is always most active when it is on the brink of chaos. Can she ever be induced to look elsewhere for her daily bread?

The practical leaders imbued with the industrial tradition and also the doctrinaire reformers who argue from first principles, alike conceive that we are being irresistibly impelled towards larger and more elaborate organization. There is an agreement among all whose speculations are attracted in this direction, that there can be

## THE CASE FOR THE PEASANT

no final satisfaction until the whole world is under a single economic dictator. What a world that would be! Stagnation supreme, as well as bondage supreme! For every disturbance of the world's economic peace must be traced in the last resort to liberty and progress. And to what end are we asked to make such a sacrifice? To ensure that nothing shall escape from a grand and final catastrophe. For a universal economic order will have arrived at its climax of efficiency only when the slightest shock can send it toppling into chaos. Sooner or later the world harvests will fail to be reaped – because the department concerned has forgotten to provide lubricating oil for the machinery; or has supplied the wrong grade! The greatest danger which awaits the world of today is the danger of submitting to be mobilized under one economic command.

Such, in brief, is the case for the peasant – the man who can supply his own needs from his own acres; without waiting for advice or instruction from engineer, economist, financier or politician. He is independent of money, trade and machinery. He is not obliged to buy or sell. He is not obliged to organize.

There is a biological theory that the primitive forms of life are immortal, and that complexity is the messenger of death. Whether or not the supposition is true in biology it is certainly true in economics. Pyramids and palaces perish, but the peasant and his plough persists for ever. The newest of all new things is the upturned furrow waiting to receive the seed. It spells the life of the future. It may be only a coincidence that the spade of the archaeologist, which now spells out the life of the past, so frequently waits upon the ploughshare of the peasant.

Even within the limits of the modern trinity of liberty, trade and progress, the case for the peasant is unanswerable. The only true freedom is the freedom of the peasant. The only law he has to obey is the law of nature. He has not to wait for permission or instruction from anyone before he begins to work. No pace is set for him by a machine or a system. No methods of work are dictated to him by a manager or a foreman. No hours of labour are prescribed for him by timekeeper or trades union. He has not the constant fear of dismissal before his eyes. He has not to submit to indignity and insult in order to hold down his job. He cannot be thrown upon the streets for inef-

ficiency. He may please himself whether he does or does not combine with his fellow men in co-operation for a particular purpose.

One of the forms which the belief in liberty has lately taken is the demand for what is called "economic emancipation." It has been felt that the workers in a large industrial concern ought to own and manage the concern themselves. Whether such a mode of ownership and management could be made a success need not here be discussed. What is certain is that it would be a failure if the workers were not prepared to submit to exactly the same discipline, and exactly the same irksome restraints and restrictions as at present. There is no development for liberty in that direction. Once more, the pattern of "economic emancipation" and "democratic control of industry," is the peasant.

A further demand which is the outcome of the desire for liberty is the demand for the "economic independence of women." The wife and mother of today feels that she is a mere parasite upon the husband and father, as indeed she is, because she makes no real contribution to the economic life of the family. Nearly everything needed in the home is made in the factory and bought from the shop already for immediate use and consumption. An Irishman might say that the "mutual dependence" of husband and wife is all on one side. The impact of this conviction on many women is such as to make them feel either that they are a mere toy or else an intolerable burden. Hence the demand for "economic independence," and the eagerness of women to enter the labour market, and to drive men out of employment by working for lower wages. The use of machinery in so many occupations makes the superior strength of men of no advantage in his competition with women. More frequently it is a direct handicap.

In peasant economy there is no cry for the "economic emancipation of women," because she is already emancipated. She is the free and equal partner of her husband. In the peasant household the work of the woman is as fundamental a necessity as that of the man. Peasant economy affords countless instances where the man has proved a useless tool and the situation has been saved by the woman. In the industrial family the man is the sole breadwinner. His breakdown

is the end of all things. In the peasant family the work can continue even when the man collapses.

It is necessary to point out this intimate connection between liberty and the family. It is only when father, mother and children can be sold away from each other that liberty is finally lost. So long as the family bond remains respected, freedom still rules even under the grossest abuses. During the years 1910 to 1925 the demand for the economic independence of women took the form of a powerful agitation for the State endowment of motherhood. Indeed at one period it seemed as though the State was preparing to take all responsibility for women and children while industry claimed the men. This would have meant a cleavage of the whole of English family life from top to bottom, and would have been the most serious, because the most subtle blow to liberty that could be conceived. Industrial life is as much a disadvantage to family life as family life is a hindrance to the full development of industry. Once again, the peasant is a symbol of liberty in that he stands by family life, because it is an advantage to him.

The most important part of trade is the exchange of food and raw material for finished goods. It flourishes best when there is an equivalent amount of each on the market. Trade suffers equally from a glut of primary products and from a glut of finished goods. The peasant as a rule is responsible for the production of food and raw materials. In the last decade this production has been somewhat taken out of the hands of the peasant and put in the hands of industrial engineers, with the results that trade, so far from increasing, has actually decreased. Large quantities of the food and raw materials produced by engineering methods have had to be destroyed. A million acres of land farmed by peasants is a much better market for industrial products than the same acreage farmed by engineers.

It may not be thought so easy a matter to prove that the peasant is the only true foundation of real progress. Writing of the decline of Imperial Rome, a recent historian says, that "though estates were large and great tracts of land were owned by members of the new imperial aristocracy, yet agriculture was based" once more on "the tilling of the soil by small cultivators, either owners or tenants." The economic life of the State as a whole and of the ruling classes in the

empire and in the towns was based upon the cultivator. "Each holding aimed at producing all that is needed without recourse to others. The coinage grew less important in the life of the smallholder, or the great landlord, or the State itself. If not in trade, yet in dealings between owner and cultivator, or between cultivator, owner and the State, payments were almost inevitably made in kind." Rome had refused to listen to the Gracchi and to re-establish the flourishing peasant agriculture of the days of her greatness, and her people were only forced on to the soil in the days of her decay and destitution. What the author does not say is that this body of cultivators, painfully brought into existence with every circumstance of disadvantage, remained the foundation of European culture for fifteen hundred years, and was the ultimate source from which that culture drew all its wealth. The peasant is the only source of culture which cannot be exhausted. And there is good reason for it. A culture which is not being perpetually revived by intimate contact and incessant conflict with nature and reality is already dead. It is true that the coal miner and the iron worker and the electrical engineer and even the stock-broker are in constant contact with nature — but only with a part. The merit of the peasant is that his contact is with the whole of nature at once. He cannot afford to forget nature for an instant. The culture of any community is but the accumulation, throughout the ages, of all its attempts to express, in various media and at varying degrees of remoteness, the daily visions and the daily experiences of its country population. The cultivation of the soil is not only life for the body; it is life for the soul also.

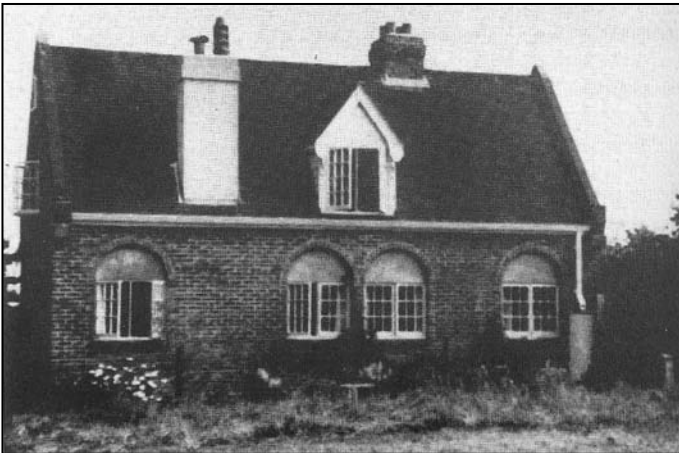
A statement of the case for the peasant may fitly conclude with an astonishing reflection upon two contrasted activities of the modern world. The social reformer devotes himself to the propagation of ideas which shall result in the creation of a type of citizen removed as far as possible from the peasant type. He regards civilization and progress as something which conveys man as far as possible from contact with nature and reality. He looks at the sun, moon and stars; the blue sky and the green grass; mountains, rivers and seas; he listens to the song of birds and the murmur of waters; and after his survey he says, "All this is just what we do not want."

## THE CASE FOR THE PEASANT

He devises a system of education, the object of which is to bring people up to believe that the real world is not the natural world, but a world composed of newspapers, cinemas, motor cars, gramophones and factories.

On the other hand, the American millionaire, who may presumably be regarded as having sated himself with all the experiences which factories, newspapers and motor cars can give him, finds that the best and greatest use he can make of his wealth is to come to Europe to see, hear, feel and taste the genuine life of the peasant. He spends his energy hunting for the obscure spots where that life is still unspoilt. And he spends his money on its products, taking back to his own country material objects which he knows, in his heart of hearts, exceed in true value all the products of all the factories of his own country.

For how much longer will the world persist in treating with neglect and contempt that which is the source of all its life, all its liberty, and all its beauty?



*The house George Maxwell built for himself at Ditchling*

### GEORGE MAXWELL (1890–1957)

George Maxwell was a Catholic layman and Third Order Dominican who was very knowledgeable in Thomistic theology. He was induced to join the Ditchling community in 1922 by Fr. Vincent McNabb. Maxwell was a handy man, skilled as a carpenter, wheelwright, and loom-builder. When he came to Ditchling, he became a member of the Guild of St. Joseph and St. Dominic, established by Eric Gill and Hilary Pepler, and built the carpenter's shop, which provided furniture and other objects for the community. During the 1930s he built his first loom, and in the aftermath of WWII he expanded this craft immensely, supplying art schools and workshops throughout England with looms. A good friend of Harold Robbins, whom he had known since 1919, he lived the Distributist ideal, working in his company while managing the land and livestock on his smallholding. He died in 1957, leaving his son, John, to continue the shop.



## CHAPTER IX

# The Reconstruction of the Crafts

*by George Maxwell*



SECONDD ONLY IN IMPORTANCE TO THE REVIVAL OF Agriculture is the restoration of the Crafts to their right place in the economy of the nation. It may be said that this restoration is an integral part of such revival, for the primary crafts are essential to the farmer unless he is to be dependent on that system of production which has largely been the cause of his ruin. The marriage which has existed from time immemorial between agriculture and the primary crafts (the builder, the blacksmith, the weaver) has been replaced in the economy of the nation by an alliance between commercialism and industrialism. These having no life-blood of their own, have drawn their sustenance from the farmer and craftsman, leaving him in a condition almost beyond recovery.

To state the causes of the decline of craftsmanship is to indicate the conditions for its restoration. If an undue part of this chapter is devoted to such an analysis, it is for this reason. Definite proposals, however, will be found in their place.

### 1

There is no need to dwell at length on the great part which the crafts have played in the life and culture of England in the past. It would be difficult to over-estimate the value of the medieval guilds in this connection. Their suppression, the confiscation of their lands and funds, was a blow from which the craftsman has never recovered. He was still able to carry on his craft, he had not yet been threatened by the commercial mass production which had, a few years before, threatened the existence of many farm workers by the putting down to pasture of vast tracts confined to sheep-rearing, and

which called forth Sir Thomas More's famous phrase, "Sheep are eating M en." Nevertheless, the mental and spiritual outlook which could view this change with complacency and favour was to have its effect on the craftsman. It appears almost an axiom that any interference with agriculture must affect the craftsman. The idea behind labour, the conception of its proper end and function, of what it was meant to be in the life of man, was changing. Up to now there had been no self-conscious idea of art, beauty and culture – what are now called the Higher Things. Insofar as there was any idea at all, these things were accepted together with the pleasure which all creative work can give, as the natural and inevitable reward of labour. The nation's workmen unconsciously articulated, each in their own sphere and medium, the thoughts, emotions, and aspirations of their fellow citizens. There was no notion that "Higher Things" could be made a subject of separate study, of expert knowledge and connoisseurship. Their view of labour and of life, based on centuries of religious teaching and practice, protected them from such affectation.

Whether or not it would have been possible, had the guilds survived, for them to have resisted the changing outlook, it is impossible to say; but the religious revolt and the rapid rise of commercialism occurring at this time, united to alter all basic principles. And it is to the everlasting glory of the religious tradition on which the crafts are based, that deprived of their natural protector, the Church, they carried on almost unharmed in principle, despite the fact that the craftsman himself had been reduced in most cases from a condition of comparative affluence to almost destitution, up to and even after the beginning of the "Industrial Revolution." In fact they live still though confined to comparatively few craftsmen in England. These principles must survive because they conform to the nature of man, and if the worker of England – if England herself – wishes to regain her former real prosperity these principles must replace those on which modern society is based. The principles which brought about "the golden age of the English labourer" were deliberately rejected. Thorold Rogers<sup>28</sup> could say of that rejection, "From 1563 to 1824 a conspiracy, concocted by law and carried out by parties interested in its success, was entered into to cheat the English workman of his wages, to tie him to the soil, to deprive him of hope, and to degrade him into irremediable poverty." The principles so rejected,

and now to be re-enthroned, are those of the Catholic Faith, and may be stated as follows.

Man is an organic whole, soul and body, a unity of the rational and animal, and all his actions must conform to this unity. There must be correspondence between what happens on the one plane to what happens on the other. As with the individual so with Society. The nature of man, his function, the reason for his existence, was to love and worship God. Insofar as he conforms to his nature so he will be happy. *The means whereby he conforms to his nature is by work.*

To Christianity work is sacred. Even before the Fall our First Parents, starting at that point of perfection which would otherwise have been their goal, were called upon to labour with those wonderful gifts of soul and body, lost at the Fall, for an end more perfect than that of ordinary human perfection. Labour is the law of life. "And I have found that nothing is better than for a man to rejoice in his work, and that this is his portion. For who shall bring him to know the things that shall be after him." (Eccles. iii. 22.)

It is not suggested that the workman of the pre-industrial era held these principles any more self-consciously than the present-day factory hand holds "the sack" or "the dole" as an integral part of his life. They were part and parcel of social life. The effects of them on his work can be judged by the magnificent Churches, Cathedrals, the Sculpture, Metal Work and the vast treasure of work still remaining from those days. The commonest article of everyday use possessed *vitality*, and retained it even up to the time of the industrial revolution.

The destruction of his centre of spiritual unity, the decline of religious principles, the great increase of the commercial mind, and the changed outlook which these things entailed left the worker in a sorry state, but it was left to the industrial revolution, made possible by the loss of spiritual principle and the invention of the steam engine, to complete his ruin. There is no need to recall here the brutality by which this revolution was accompanied. It was an essential part of its accomplishment, for men still realized they had souls and it was necessary that these be quietened either by bribery or ruthlessness. The latter was the method generally adopted. The great progress of physical science at this time, together with a similar growth of mechanical invention, placed England in the position of being "the workshop of the world." Everything was changed. Gone

was the idea that man, that life, that society was an organic whole. Man, religion, society, science – all things – were being dissected, placed in watertight compartments, and made to serve the end of commercial industrialism. The effect on the worker may be seen today, even after the worst of the physical evils have been deodorized to prevent the whole thing being poisoned by its own stench. The work of the industrial system is something to be avoided if possible. The “hands,” as they are termed, are called upon for the most part to perform labour which is devoid of any intellectual satisfaction. The work is mainly mechanical and exercises physical dexterity only. Although in many cases an extraordinary quickness of hands is seen, little or no intelligence is called for, and it may be said that they are helpless except at their own job. Work is regarded as an unmixed evil, even a degradation, to be avoided if possible. Some Christians even, lacking an understanding of the nature of the Fall, have regarded work as being the curse imposed by God as the punishment for sin. Men detest their work, and quarrels between them and their masters are of frequent occurrence, particularly when trade is booming. Strikes and lock-outs, chiefly concerned with rates of pay or shorter hours, are a feature of industrial life. The character of their labour being such as can give no satisfaction in itself, every effort is made to reduce the amount of it. In this they do but follow their masters in their particular sphere. Led by their teacher in another watertight compartment – the political Economist – they “Buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest.” It is natural that the worker should seek an increase of wages and shorter hours. There is no longer any relationship between their work and themselves, other than that of its being a marketable commodity, to be governed by the same laws as govern other commodities. Such work is a curse and the only hope of the worker, of the country, is that the periodical revolt for higher wages and shorter hours will be diverted into what should be its real end, a demand for a return to the right ordering of work in accordance with the nature of man. The greatest of all dangers is that men shall accept this state of things and consent to their complete degradation, for the spiritual outlook was crushed out in the early days of the revolution. The great strides made in the perfecting of the system, the enormous extension of the use of machinery and the greater efficiency of the same, the blind acceptance of the system by the people generally as being inevitable, and greatest of all, the

physical comforts made possible at the price of his soul, all combine to make it very difficult for the workman to visualize a state of things more in accordance with the dignity of labour.

However, England is no longer the workshop of the world and the "markets" having failed to a large extent, the question is being raised in quite unexpected quarters as to whether the system is altogether what it pretends to be. Whether it is possible for it to do what it is was supposed to do. There has arisen, even among scientists, a question as to the use of machinery, a question of concern among craftsmen at the first inception. The ethics of commerce, the foundations of Society itself, are being questioned, and therefore it is essential if one is not to be mentally swamped by the welter of conflicting views, to have one's own principles clear.

The papal encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno* are indispensable in this particular, as surveying the whole social order. Of the things which directly concern the worker as such, trading or commerce and mechanization appear most prominent. The ethics of trade are receiving some attention today. The words of St. Thomas Aquinas are very pertinent even after some centuries and there can be no question but that they still retain their validity. "Again, if the citizens give themselves to trading, a way is opened to many vices. Since the desire of trading tends especially to gain; therefore through the use of trading avarice is enkindled in the hearts of the citizens; the result being that in the city all things will have their price; mutual trust will be at an end, doors will be opened to fraud, the common good will be despised, private good will be sought, zeal for virtue will wither because the honour of virtue will be given to all. Hence in such a city the civic life will be corrupted" (*De Regimine Principum*, Ch. III).<sup>29</sup>

Closer to our time, and with all the "greatness" of our commercial system before him, that learned jurist Sir Henry Sumner Maine, K.C.S.I., LL.D, writes, "What is the real origin of the feeling that it is not creditable to drive a hard bargain with a near relative or a friend? ...*men united in natural groups, do not deal with one another on principles of trade.* The general proposition which is the basis of Political Economy, made its first approach to truth under the only circumstances which admitted men meeting at arms length, not as members of the same group but as strangers.... Everything which has helped to convert society into a collection of individuals from

being an assemblage of families has helped to add to the truth of the assertion made of human nature by the Political Economists." (*Village Communities*, Sec. VI, 1872. Italics mine.) These statements of so eminent an authority point the necessity for a complete reversal of the existing system if the natural group, the family, is to be preserved.

2

Coming next in order of time and importance is the problem of machinery, or rather man's use of machinery in the performance of his labour. Much controversy has taken place on this matter, but seldom has the application of the fundamental Christian principles governing labour been the test of the issue. It has been funk'd because of the very greatness of the issue, and the variety of the interests behind it. Mr. Chesterton in one of his essays has said, "If one starts to talk about liberty, some solemn fool or other gets up and talks about licence." A similar thing may be said when one begins to question the use of machinery. Some "eminently practical" man gets up and talks about Manicheism. That machinery in itself is not evil is not an explanation of its good nor of its purpose. That machinery is the fruit of man's use of the intelligence which God has given him does not in any way prove its worth. The same intelligence was used to produce contraceptives. Skirting round and shirking the problem will not do. The matter must be dealt with from the standpoint of what *man* is in himself and its effect on him. Man is a rational animal, an organic unity of soul and body whose nature and purpose in life is to serve God. Any attempt to separate or destroy this unity in practice is a violation of his nature. *But the whole aim and end of machinery, insofar as man's labour is concerned, is to eliminate the centre of his organic nature, the soul.* The intellect is only of value insofar as the machine is imperfect. The perfect machine is FOOL-PROOF. That is, only a fool is necessary for its operation. Let there be no misunderstanding about this. Although there are machines which demand a certain call for intelligence in their operation, the idea of eventual elimination is there. It awaits only the solving of an engineering problem, or perhaps at the moment it would not be "economic." The more perfect the organization of the system, *the more the labourer's will is compelled*; for he is a landless man, and the holding of any property such as would enable him to resist its domination, even if he had any, becomes more

and more impossible. "*This power becomes particularly irresistible when exercised by those who, because they hold and control money, are able also to govern credit and determine its allotment, for that reason supplying, so to speak, the life blood of the entire economic body, and grasping, as it were in their hands the very soul of production, so that no one dare breathe against their will.*" (*Quadragesimo Anno*, 106.) The freedom left to him is that of a man "with a dagger at his throat." Submit or starve. The dole is only for those who submit.

It is frequently asserted in the defence of machinery that man is a tool-using animal, and that the machine is only an extension of the tool. This is clearly a misconception. A tool is an instrument used by man for the more intelligent performance of his labour. The word "economical" may be substituted for "intelligent" if the word is used in its strict sense, implying government, regulation and management. A tool enables a man to control his work in accordance with his desires, and demands the use of intelligence. It is, as it were, the physical agent of his intelligence. The machine may be an extension of the hand, using the word in a purely physical sense, but its object is eventually to do away with the intelligence, which is an integral part of man's use of the tool, and eventually, also in practice, as we see today, to do away with the "hand" as well. It has also been said that even the machines which are fool proof call for some use of the intelligence even though it be a minimum. Yes! The intelligence of a dog leading a blind man. Is this all that is asked from him who is "a little lower than the angels?"

The ill-effect on those engaged in this unnatural labour cannot be over-estimated. The elimination of the soul in labour has thrown men back upon their animal nature. Deprived of spiritual or emotional satisfaction in their work, is it any wonder they seek this satisfaction in the gratification of their lower appetites, the stimulant of these ever needing to be stronger and stronger? Hence the prevalence of sensational literature, films, and plays of the lowest type, these being necessary to replace the stimulant of the spirit which they have lost. Well-meaning but misguided people hope to replace the spirit by an intensification of the system which has robbed them of it, with the idea that greater leisure is the only thing needed for the "Higher Things," not seeing that the "Higher Things" are contained in all labour directed to its right end, and that if the spiritual centre of labour is eliminated then the "Higher Things" cannot

exist. Such an aim is only another form of "First obtain a competence and then become virtuous."

However this is only one of the things hoped for or promised by the advocates of mechanization, and they point to the advantages which the system has already given us. If these are analysed it will be found that they are mainly expedients for the satisfaction of the animal nature alone, or inefficient substitutes endeavouring to satisfy his intellectual nature. The rest are merely essential for the carrying on of the system.

On these latter it is true to say that the greater portion of industrial labour is engaged. Any apparent advantage gained by the majority of the people from such things as telephones, motors or wireless, is to a large extent incidental, their chief function being to keep the system going, and the manhood of the country together with its natural resources are being wasted more and more wantonly as competition with other countries becomes more and more keen in the interests of a few.

Probably one of the greatest superstitions with regard to machinery is that it has eliminated drudgery. It would be truer to say it has created it. If drudgery means anything at all it means labour without its intellectual complement, and that is what mechanized labour essentially is. It has produced that type of mentality which is associated with the herd, unthinking, the mass mind. What should be said in this connection is that by means of mechanization it is possible to avoid the physical discipline of labour by imposing it on the mechanics.

An example of how mechanization has drawn the life blood from the crafts and ultimately kills them may be seen today in the working of "wireless." The music of wireless being concentrated on what the public wants, or what the "experts" think they ought to want, the ability to broadcast this wholesale has reduced the necessity for employing great numbers of public performers. As the thing extends and becomes more a part of the life of the people, so the power of the thing increases, and the performers engaged by the wireless organizations become more and more in the power of the organizations. Wireless is, indeed, a good instance of the destructive effect of concentration, and mass production. The brilliant executants of yesterday were the cream of an indefinitely large number who started to learn. When there are only six musical jobs in England no one will start to learn. Certainly thousands will not start to



learn. The parallel holds. An apparent blaze of brilliance is followed by practical extinction.

How then, as Society is at present based on commerce and industrialism, is the restoration of the crafts possible?

The first and most important thing is to have a working knowledge that God really does exist, and that He desires our love and worship, and that the practise of these two things is the only means by which happiness is attainable. That work is the means by which men worship and that their love is expressed by the willingness and faithful performance of their work in accordance with its nature. Not until this is realized can work be truly good. Whenever and wherever the crafts have attained their greatest excellence there has always been manifested in the external order of society a religious ideal.

Secondly it is essential that the difference between one kind of work and another shall be understood. One kind may be a perpetual source of happiness and another a constant irritation. When a man has the intellectual habit of directing all his work to his last end, there is also a sense in which his work may be an end in itself; done for its own sake, because he loves it. Where these two things are combined then his work reaches to its highest expression, bringing with it contentment and pleasure to himself, and vitality to his work. Where these are absent, and his work is merely a means to an end, such as is the common lot of the workman today, then it is unsatisfying, and when the end sought is pecuniary gain as its primary object then it brings in its train in the social order a state of things similar to that which avarice brings in the moral order. Means "tend to infinity," what is called the creation of necessities. True, the payment for work is important, but if its only purpose is a means to other means none of which can be regarded as ends in themselves then there can be no satisfaction in life. Fraud, ugliness and deadness are the marks of this labour. Undoubtedly a reaction against this state of things has begun, and in this the hope of the craftsman lies. Not only is this observable among a portion of the public but in the Church itself, the greatest of all patrons of the crafts. The Liturgical Revival is a hopeful sign for if it is to be logical, then in its course the whole fabric and furnishing of churches must come under its activity. We may then hope to see the various expedients which have been adopted replaced by work more appropriate to Divine Worship.

## FLY TO THE FIELDS

It is a curious fact that much more attention has of late years been paid by the general public to the restoration and products of the crafts, than to the restoration of the peasant. Much of this attention has, unfortunately, been of an "arty" nature, without much regard for the deeper issues involved, but even so, it is pleasant to record this attention as a happy augury of the future.

Of the public bodies which are working in this direction, very honourable mention must be made of the Rural Industries Bureau, a semi-official body working under the Ministry of Agriculture. This body has done good work in the revival of the crafts, particularly in rural districts, and a number of crafts almost extinct owe their revival to it. Unfortunately there is a tendency here to encourage commercialism. This is perhaps natural today but as the public reaction increases the craftsman will be able to protect himself against it.

Supporters of the Movement who are inclined to be daunted by the difficulties of the task, and by the impossibility of drawing up precise plans, should remember that, as with the land, we must begin from the bottom, and for the same reasons. A civilization in which men and women worship God in their work will be a *new* civilization, and no civilization was ever built in a day. All that *we* can offer is the beginning of a new social order. And if, as we hope and believe, it is God who has laid the foundations, He will in His good time, raise the walls and make all good with the Keystone of the Arch.

To put a craftsman in a house on an acre of land, provide an average set of tools, together with raw material for the carrying on of his craft, and subsistence for six months, would cost about £620 made up as follows:

|                          |     |
|--------------------------|-----|
|                          | £   |
| Land.....                | 30  |
| House.....               | 400 |
| Workshop.....            | 100 |
| Tools and Materials..... | 50  |
| Subsistence.....         | 40  |

It will have transpired already in these pages that the aim of the Catholic Land Movement is subsistence farming in village

## THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE CRAFTS

communities. The first need, which is alone absorbing all the present energy of the Movement, is to prove it possible to train the townsman for the Land. It will shortly become equally necessary to prove it possible to train townsmen for the crafts, for the Christian and Rural civilization to which we look forward demands this balance.

There is a definite sense in which the problem solves itself, for a number of the crafts linger still in the towns, if only in the rudimentary form of hobbies. It will be the business of the movement, once the first real settlement is begun, to seek out these lingering craftsmen and bring them to the land. It may well be that at first such men will lack the expert touch, but since both they and the farmers will be finishing their education together, that is not too serious a matter. However, the many excellent "courses" now popular in towns afford a ready means of acquiring some of the technique, if not the Catholic spirit, of craftsmanship. Further details will necessarily wait upon events, but it seems likely that the pioneers will have to act, in the early stages, in several capacities. Certain crafts associate themselves almost naturally – the builder with the bricklayer, the blacksmith with the wheelwright, the weaver with the tailor, the saddler with the cobbler, the carpenter with the glazier.

Others are not so obviously akin. It is more difficult to add to the crafts of the miller, the potter or the printer. But the first of these men will be pioneers, and pioneers are of necessity adaptable.

It seems highly desirable, and especially so in the earlier stages where a full living may not be available, that every craftsman should own and cultivate a plot of land. An acre, from which to feed a goat and pig, and supply vegetables for the table, is an obvious precaution.

Wherever the return can be made in groups the difficulties are not nearly so great, and the fears which possess the potential members of a group, the sacrifices which each is called upon to make, are overcome and more than compensated for when goodwill, intelligence, and mutual aid and trust are brought to bear in their daily lives. Immediately and ultimately these are the people on whom rests the restoration of the crafts. As and when these groups grow in strength and number so it will be possible to recruit trained craftsmen as economy demands, releasing from their dependence on rich men, like-minded craftsmen.

### FR. HENRY EDWARD GEORGE ROPE (1880–1978)

Fr. Rope was a priest, scholar, and Distributist who strongly supported the ideals and practice of the Catholic Land Movement. He converted to Catholicism in 1907, and in 1911 was admitted to Beda College, Rome, established for converts wishing to study for the priesthood. He was ordained in the Lateran Basilica in February of 1915. Fr. Rope served as a parish priest for 22 years in areas such as Cheshire and Shropshire, until being named archivist at the Venerabile, the English seminary in Rome. Rope was a true scholar who was conversant in a dozen languages and continued to contribute quotations to the *Oxford English Dictionary* and its Supplements up until his death. He wrote extensively for *G.K.'s Weekly*, *The Weekly Review*, the *Dublin Review*, and the *Catholic World*; and he wrote 10 books, among which are *Forgotten England and Other Musings*, published in 1931 by Heath Cranton, Ltd., of London; *Pugin*, published in 1935 by St. Dominic's Press, of Ditchling; *Fisher and More*, published in 1935 by A. Ouseley, Ltd., of London; and *Benedict XV, the Pope of Peace*, published in 1941 by J. Gifford, Ltd., of London. Fr. Rope possessed a powerful devotion to St. Pius X, even before his conversion to the Faith.

CHAPTER X  
Looking Before and After

*by the Rev. H.E.G. Rope, M.A.*

*"Antiquam exquirite matrem."*<sup>30</sup>

—Virgil



THE ORIGINS, HISTORY AND AIMS OF THE CATHOLIC Land Movement will be clear to every reader of the foregoing chapters. That movement, it has been shown, is not arbitrary but necessary, indeed a matter of life and death for England, for civilization, for humanity. So far from being a freakish or new departure, it is a return to ordinary human living, such as Mr. Belloc hoped for in his supplement to Lingard<sup>31</sup> nineteen years ago. Instead of Utopia we desire an English England, based, as every right human polity ever has been, upon agriculture and the primary crafts. As Christians our ideal is an England of free citizens, with owners and handicraftsmen forming the great bulk of the population, the former in a large majority, and no more of the trading element than is necessary to the nation's well-being. To put it in a nutshell, we hold that Brittany or provincial France or Rhineland Germany or Basqueland represent normal and right human life, and Birmingham, or Belfast, or Berlin, or Chicago an abnormal and perilous departure from it.†

In all this surely there is nothing eccentric, nothing extravagant. Indeed a large number of those who are neither Catholics nor members of any Land Association already agree with us in principle. Within the last four years, and especially within the last two and a half, there has been a revolution in educated opinion, and indu-

---

† To go beyond Christendom one might add, say Persia, India and China.

strialism that before 1929 had not many influential opponents has now but few disinterested defenders. In fact, we may say that almost all but those who find a most selfish advantage in it, today regret industrialism as a false step (although, some would add, an irretrievable one). What was axiomatic in 1925 had become a portent in 1929. Even in the daily journals emerges the voice of disillusionment, and further, from the very heart of "big business" came counsels of return to the farm and the homestead. The name of Henry Ford will leap to mind.

But many who unconsciously shared in general our principles have held aloof from a movement so carefully misreported to them as odd, unbalanced, "arty and crafty," and what not. We trust that the foregoing pages have undeceived all of goodwill in this regard, and if any remain prejudiced we invite them to visit the training farms and judge for themselves. The men of the Catholic Land Movement are doing their utmost in that work of real reconstruction which they wholly believe to be vital not merely to England's welfare but to her very life.† It has fallen to the Catholic Land Movement to be the pioneers of the Exodus from that urban slough of despond which appalls every right-minded person. The state of things they desire is, after all, that which Napoleon laid down as the groundwork of any healthy state. "Agriculture is the soul, the foundation of the kingdom; industry ministers to the comfort and happiness of the kingdom, foreign trade ought to be the servant of agriculture and home industry. These last ought never to be subordinated to trade." Their principles have special reference to England because "it was in England that the industrial system arose. It was in England that all its traditions and habits were formed; and because the England in which it arose was already a capitalist England, modern Industrialism, wherever you see it at work today, having spread from England, has proceeded upon the capitalist model" (Belloc, *The Servile State*, 1913, p. 69). A kindred movement has achieved great things in the USA; another (*Muinníir na tíre*) has begun in Ireland,‡ anticipated, however, on a small scale in 1915–19.

---

† The servile state *existence* which Big Business, Bankerdom and Officialdom strive to rivet upon us would be a thorough break with historic England.

‡ "It is high time that rural orphanages, reformatories and even penitentiaries

In Germany the least questionable part of the Dictator's plans is the restoration of the home and the homestead, of husbandry and handicrafts. In Italy peasant agriculture is a main principle, there, however, accompanied and imperilled by a contradictory zeal for mechanization, which has been all too lightly passed over.† In England the movement has been specially open to travesty and misconception because of the persistent anti-Catholic tradition, and the almost complete monopoly of the organs of publicity and the legislation machine by the beneficiaries of that tradition. Of Catholic culture, be it remembered, an owning peasantry is an actual part. Let me not be misunderstood. The Catholic Church is for the victims of the machine as much as for the rest of mankind, but the civilization that takes form under her principles and influence has ever been that which for want of a better name we call distributive,‡ and Mr. Lunn<sup>32</sup> is well warranted in saying that "peasant proprietorship is strong where Catholic tradition is strong, and declines with the decline of Catholicism" (*Now I See*, p. 58).

In these chapters the story of England's descent to her present perilous plight has been fully told and its consequences have been pointed out. The extreme perils of urbanism (on which Mussolini has also many times insisted) have been rightly dwelt on. The family has been vindicated as the unit of society and of organization, the unit of production, and the unit of education. The gradual destruction of the normal, and especially the true village community,\* and the ways

---

organized with a view to rural and agricultural training be started in Ireland. How practical such a scheme is, and how easily it could be made to succeed, have been demonstrated by the success with which a small farm of about thirty acres at Killester, County Dublin, was reclaimed and worked at a good profit, during the European War by women from the slums of Dublin under the charge of a stewardess. The women gladly came out from the city every morning for work. The influence of open-air work and country life upon these poor women was most salutary. The work, which had been undertaken in 1915, as a temporary expedient under the auspices of a war-relief committee, was discontinued about the year 1919." (Fr. E. Cahill, S.J., *The Framework of a Christian State*, 1932, p. 428.)

† "I think I can say without hesitation that I have mechanized Italy on the farm." Mussolini in the *Morning Post*, 14<sup>th</sup> November, 1933.

‡ May some genius hit upon a happier name for this normal thing!

\*In England obsolete or a rare survival indeed, most villages being now mere parasites upon the unnatural industrial camps.

and means of its gradual restoration have been lucidly set forth, and objections answered. Through all the chapters runs the connecting principle that only the bond of a common Faith, can hold together a society of free citizens.† Granted the existence of a Divine Revelation that Faith must necessarily be the authentic revealed one, and those who reject the Christian revelation, as well as those who deny the Catholic Church to be its authentic and only authorized exponent, may be courteously challenged to find any other bond compatible with freedom. The after-Christian community cannot simply return to the state of a fore-Christian one like China or India; to do this were a biological impossibility. The “newer Athens” of Shelley’s<sup>33</sup> dream can never arise in Christendom.

It has been further shown that the hope of the Church lies not in the decaying cities, where her work must be to rescue individual souls at all costs from the deluge of corruption, but in the countryside, which must be re-peopled, if Christian and English England is not utterly to perish, by families of land-workers and hand-workers. Again, the case for the peasant, the claim that he is the permanent ground and support of the life, the liberty and the beauty of human story, qualities which perish if transplanted, has been cogently presented.

Finally the case for the hand-worker has been, we think, convincingly stated, and an exceptionally clear, bright light thrown upon the immense evils of mechanization. To the present writer it were tempting to enlarge upon this theme, were that not to put his sickle into another man’s harvest. He will only add, therefore, that precisely in North America where machinery achieved its greatest triumphs, is the rebound from the machine most decisive and wholehearted among those who are seeking a veritable way of escape from the prevailing confusion. The charge of Manicheism has surely been sufficiently refuted, while the counter-charge that

---

† “The ancients...held that light alone gathers in unity...and light is essentially objective, the light of being, which derives in every degree of created participation from the eternal subsistent light. And all that refuses to acknowledge the light is necessarily outside unity; insomuch that light is at once the principle of peace and the sign of contradiction. And in order to form human beings into any real union, nothing less is needed than the Divine Light in person, Who gathers them together in the unity of His mystical Body.” (Maritain, *Théonas*, 1925, p. 119.)



a country life to which tractors and film houses have been “added” is *not* “enriched,” but transformed for the worse, seems unrebuted. Folk song and films do not harmonize; nature forbids the banns. The tolerable film may be necessary to counteract the bad film in the industrial towns but not in the country. This spirit of compromise is, we submit, rather that of the half-converted than the fully land- and homecraft-minded.

A priest of exceptional experience and judgement wrote to me from Rome on March 17, 1931, “There is only one way of salvation, but the nations will not take it. There are two alternatives but no third. (1) Return to simplicity, for example, one loom to every man, who is his own master, abolition of all duplicating machinery, and as a consequence all millionaires too. (2) Violent revolution which will destroy the whole civilization as we know it.” In another letter, “Machinery has produced millionaires, poverty and unemployment.... Once a millionaire became a Christian (a miracle indeed, I admit, but not impossible) he would cease to be a millionaire.” Those who are not fully emancipated from “the modern mind” find it hard to relinquish the notion that we are, after all, somehow better off than our forefathers, owing to the new inventions. Machinedom, said Veuillot,<sup>34</sup> will lay its brazen yoke upon the world, “as for us Christians, God grant us an interior eye always open toward Heaven. Machinedom will not prevent those who wish to belong to God from beholding Him continually, but those times will be hard, and many will give up thinking altogether.” (*Le Parfum de Rome*, ch. I, Collection Gallia, vol. I, p. 29.) There is also the implicit assumption that the novelties are *additions* to our heritage, whereas if the matter be looked into it will be seen that in most, if not all cases, they *displace* some far more valuable part of that heritage. In every case they are bought at a heavy cost, most commonly an exorbitant one.† It may fairly be claimed also that the multiplication of artificial wants has been accompanied step by step with increase of discontent

---

† “The Arabs say that stout dugong sandals last several months, but ordinary English boots are quite inadequate to heavy working in the Sinai range.... Some of us were provided with excellent talc-sided folding candle lanterns. These were the greatest comfort, as they stood the proof of many eventualities. Electric lamps are inclined to play tricks, where a good old-fashioned candle, well-protected, holds its own” (A. Mary R. Dobson, *Mount Sinai, A Modern Pilgrimage*, 1925, ii, 13–14).

and impoverishment of the spirit. "A man's life doth not consist in the abundance of things which he possesseth" (Luke xii. 15), and the final outcome of the general scramble for material possessions is that no one, save the few whom Berdiayev<sup>35</sup> calls the "Satanocracy," possesses anything, least of all, if they can help it, his soul.

And here we touch the master delusion of the nineteenth century for which Ruskin's<sup>36</sup> name "the elect pattern of perfect Folly, for a warning to the farthest future" (*Fors* V. 1871), no longer appears extravagant. The notion of Progress reached this pitch of inconsequence: man is descended from an ape; *Venite adoremus*. The last word thereon may well be Maritain's: "The idea of necessary historical progress is not less contradictory, fundamentally, than the idea of a square circle. To speak of historic progress is in effect to speak of evolution in time; to speak of evolution in time is to speak of matter; but to speak of matter is to speak of radical appetite for the new, appetite for what is different, as such, and not what is perfect, and so the absence of necessary progress or of necessary tendency to the more perfect. The myth of progress is an excellent type of a pseudo idea, an idea at once 'clear' to our emotions and fundamentally false in itself" (*Théonas*, 1925, p. 127).

Another penetrating comment, made some ninety years earlier, by Lacordaire, the more remarkable as coming from one who hoped for a *modus vivendi* with Liberalism, is well worth recalling today. "Predestinated as we are to enjoy the infinite, the infinite is our want, and we pursue it everywhere. Now, novelty is the only thing here below which gives us some sensation of the infinite. As soon as we have considered an object, we say: It is enough. Who will turn the page? Novelty turns it, and in turning it, disguises its feebleness to our intelligence by a false gleam of progress, which enchants us." (*Jesus Christ*, Eng. trans., 1875, p. 107).

As I write there comes to hand a new book by Léon de Poncins,<sup>37</sup> *Tempête sur le Monde* (Paris, Beauchesne), perhaps the most triumphant exposure of the whole vaunt of advance that has yet appeared. With French logic and French incisiveness it weighs the promises of those who from humanism onwards proclaimed man's self-sufficiency with the palpable visible results that fill the world today. M. de Poncins cites (pp. 81-82) the orientalist, René

Guénon,<sup>38</sup> and the Italian scholar Gina Lombroso<sup>39</sup> as having proved that the principles of machinedom were known to the ancient Chinese and Greeks, and deliberately rejected by an intelligence which foresaw the outcome of their application to industry. One by one the vaunts of Progress have been refuted by the very science to which they appealed, and now the *differentia* of the modern world is found to be but a rediscovery and reckless misuse of what had been known in earlier ages!

No Catholic, no Christian can deny that scorn of simplicity, contempt of age-long traditions and craving for novelty or change merely as such are reprehensible and mischievous, directly opposed to the whole example of the Holy Family and our Divine Redeemer Himself. And yet many Christians, infected by the atmosphere in which they live, use phrases whose logical implication is that Nazareth was “barbarous,” “primitive,” “benighted,” and generally contemptible. All unconsciously they echo the thought which Russell Lowell<sup>40</sup> put into the mouth of an impious fool that “they didn’t know everything down in Judee.” Moreover we have divine precept as well as example for the “drudgery” from which the “progressives” and, if we may thus put it, the *viamedians* ache to set us free. The command, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the earth out of which thou wast taken” has not been repealed.† The increasing attempts to evade it during the last century have not brought happiness; they *have* led to destitution on a scale never before dreamed of; they *have* brought us to the present pass. Again we read in Ecclesiasticus, “Hate not laborious works, nor husbandry ordained by the most High” (vii. 16). But these are the very things which the moderns and the tractorians have persistently hated. The great trading cities like Tyre and Sidon appear in Holy Writ as types of reprobation, while Our Lord’s parables are taken from husbandry and the primary crafts, one of which He chose to hallow by personal practice. The somewhat ignoble fear of being dubbed “old-fashioned” or “out of date” by the contemptuous world leads to very questionable compromises and self-deceptions.‡ We are forever being told that

---

† Without the Fall there would still have been labour, hand labour be it noted, but this would not have been in any way irksome, but pleasant (St. Thomas, *S.T.*, i, q. 102, a. 3).

‡ *The Irish Press* of 13<sup>th</sup> November, 1933, furnishes a striking example. (*cont’d*)

although *de facto* the new methods industry and agriculture have unfortunately reduced employment to a vast extent, they are nonetheless bound, as soon as they are “controlled,” to prove a very great blessing. This is, to say the least, unconvincing. The oracles add that it is “unthinkable” to go back to the “primitive” methods in use over most of the world until yesterday. Why “unthinkable”? It is being not only thought but done to a large extent, of all countries in the world, in North America!†

*Tamen usque recurret.*<sup>41</sup> In 1860, at the height of the Manchestrian triumph, Ruskin, resigning himself for a moment to the thought that “Englishmen, sacrificing themselves to the good of general humanity, may live diminished lives in the midst of noise, of darkness, and of deadly exhalation,” exclaimed, “But the world cannot become a factory or a mine.... Neither the avarice nor the rage of men will ever feed them; and however the apple of Sodom and the grape of Gomorrah may spread their tables for a time with dainties of ashes, and nectar of asps,—so long as men live by bread, the far away valleys must laugh as they are covered with the gold of God, and the shout of His happy multitudes ring round the winepress and the well” (*Unto this Last*, iv, 1884, pp. 166-167). That unblest self-immolation of Englishmen to Mammon has spelt ruin to England, it has not been to the good of general humanity. There is an old saw that a thing is found where it is lost. But the vested interests oppose

---

Mr. Lemass, Minister of Industry and Commerce in the Irish Government, is reported as admitting that “despite that tremendous increase in productivity, unemployment and poverty increased – increased in proportion to mankind’s progress in technical skill” yet utterly scouting the return to hand-labour as a remedy. Those displaced by the new inventions must be “occupied in increasing production in some other line or else secured against destitution” – how we were not told. The speaker then solemnly announced that, “heretofore, mankind had accepted too literally the interpretation of the biblical phrase ‘By the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread,’” blissfully unconscious of the colossal presumption implied in correcting a Christian tradition of nineteen centuries. President De Valera, on the other hand, has always laid stress on the peasantry as the foundation of national welfare.

† “The Western Canadian farm is now self-sustaining on a scale never before seen...spinning and weaving also are now practised in thousands of homes where these traditional peasant crafts have been held in contempt.... Sheep are now often shorn on the farms, the wool carded, spun, and woven into rough garments which make up in warmth for their lack of skill in manufacture. The West is breeding

by every means in their power any sincere search, for they are very anxious that what was lost should never be found. Those who shall obtain eugenical passports to existence may indeed become tractor-fodder, instead of loom-fodder, but peasant proprietors – never.

Those who are not Christians may well be reminded of that plain and primary truth drowned for a time by the din of the loudspeakers and loud-brayers of industrial plutocracy, and the fleeting triumph of the Dantons and Lenins, the concordant testimony of the wisest and greatest thinkers in all ages and countries that religion is the bond of the State and agriculture its foundation. That without religion the State rots and dissolves, without the agricultural base it collapses like Carthage, or Athens, that Athens whose amazing brilliance, that so dazzled the neo-pagan Goethe<sup>42</sup> and all his following to this day, cannot hide the fact that her blossoming, early cankered by lust, was exceedingly short-lived and her citizens' freedom based on slavery. The highest and longest-lived of pagan cultures is surely that of China, and China has been emphatically based upon agriculture, reverence for the family and a certain form of natural religion. The classics of the nations most clearly affirm the same thing, even the men of inflated cities and sophisticated times, the testimony of Horace<sup>43</sup> is one with that of Hesiod<sup>44</sup> and Euripides,<sup>45</sup> that of ancient Egypt, India, and China with that of Napoleon and Mussolini. Aristotle concords with St. Thomas Aquinas, Blessed Thomas Moore with Salvian<sup>46</sup> and De Maistre,<sup>47</sup> Virgil<sup>48</sup> with Ruskin, Veuillot and Cato<sup>49</sup> with Claudian.<sup>50</sup> Tacitus<sup>51</sup> has one tale with Cobbett and O'Connell.<sup>52</sup> Gandhi agrees in effect with Polybius.<sup>53</sup> It were needless to develop this further did space permit us. Those who contravene the witness of the ages may impose themselves for a moment upon human credulity (artificially stimulated as never before in our perishing day), but history can only echo the divine verdict, "all men are in vain in whom there is not the knowledge of God" (Wisdom xiii. 1), and "professing themselves to be wise they became fools" (Rom. i. 22).

---

a race of farmers who are more self-sustaining than ever before and who have reduced their costs of production to figures which a few years ago seemed impossible. Costly machinery has been in many cases done away with. Many farmers have been forced to abandon their large holdings" (*Times*, 25<sup>th</sup> November, 1933).

Another testimony should not be overlooked, the concerted effort of those who conspire (formally or informally) for the overthrow of Christianity, to uproot the peasant with the prince, the family with the landowner and land-worker. This is well illustrated in Mgr. Dillon's<sup>54</sup> *The War of Anti-Christ with the Church* (1885, pp. 108–109, 113–115, and authorities there cited). Also the very well-informed booklet, *Ireland's Peril*, by Fr. E. Cahill, S.J.,<sup>55</sup> and his *Freemasonry and the Anti-Christian Movement* (both Gill, Dublin, 1930). This is no place to discuss the authorship and date of the *Protocols*. It is enough that they agree with what is known from other sources as to Judaeo-Masonic aims, and as manifestation of those aims have been vindicated by events wherever the secret societies' power has been effective. We invite attention to these words: "What we want is that industry should drain off from the land both labour and capital and by means of speculation transfer into our hands all the money of the world, and thereby throw all the *goyim* into the ranks of the proletariat" (Eng. trans. by V.E. Mardsen, 1925, p. 28).

The plight of England is especially harrowing to all her faithful children (many of whom strongly resent the claim of Kipling's<sup>56</sup> disciples to exclusive patriotism).† England was until the decline of the eighteenth century preeminently rural; London was almost the only great city; but now she is far more deeply and desperately committed to industrialism than any other country whatsoever. Sacrificing agriculture to trade she has lost both, and her peril is obvious to all but those who find their account in that peril. Thirty years ago a patriotic voice said, "The English peasantry, once deemed the finest in the world, have left the soil of England. They have flocked to the great cities. Our villages are half-populated. And what a population – consisting chiefly of the maimed and the halt and the blind, the rheumatic, the paralytic, and the moribund. The vampire of Free Trade has sucked the very life blood of the nation. This, surely, is a matter of transcendent importance. In it are involved issues of life and death for us. It means, in no very far

---

† They hold rather, with Chesterton, that "Cobbett was defeated because the English people were defeated. After the frame-breaking riots, men, as men, were beaten: and machines, as machines, had beaten them. Peterloo was as much the defeat of the English as Waterloo was the defeat of the French." (*The Crimes of England*, 1915, v. 66.)

off future, hopeless decay within, unless a remedy be found." (W.S. Lilly and C.S. Devas in J.B. Byles' *Sophisms of Free Trade*, 1904, Intro., p. xxxv.)

This however but echoed what a few men of insight strove in vain to win heed for a generation earlier, of whom Ruskin was surely the truest seer, at least from 1857 onwards. Another thinker, even now too little known, uttered words which in the light of the present calamities are worth pondering: "What is the Englishman or Scotchman of the nineteenth century but a dexterous Blacksmith to whom the Demons have surrendered their myths of Gas, Steam and Electric force in return for his strong hatred of God and His Church?" (R.S. Hawker in 1865, in F.G. Lee's *Memorials*, 1876, ii. 62). With unconscious irony, it may be added, that century chose for its emblem the most evanescent of all things, vapour!

Two lines of Tennyson written over ninety years ago picture the world of today famishing and despairing amid hoarded abundance.

"Slowly comes a hungry people, as a lion creeping nigher,  
Glares at one that nods and winks behind a slowly dying fire."<sup>57</sup>

As Catholics we cannot be in the least surprised by the present crisis. Our Faith teaches us that Sin is essentially a turning away from the Creator to the creature – and that turning away has been increasingly the curse of the world ever since the outbreak of pagan humanism (as distinct from what was Christian in the Renaissance) in the fifteenth century. Saints and seers have never been wanting to warn us what the end would be, but the world, as Walter Bagehot<sup>58</sup> said, is "essentially Sadducee." Wise in its generation, in the long run it proves a fool, even in the things of time. Human emancipation finds its consummation in Soviet Russia. It is often forgotten, however, that industrial capitalism as such can ill-afford to stone the Kremlin. Its practical atheism has been the more offensive for its hypocrisy.† Many who are not romantically given come to see in

---

† Mr. Chesterton's indictment may be recalled: "Darwinian competition, in commerce or race conflict, was every bit as brazen an atheist assault in the nineteenth century, as the Bolshevik No-God movement in the twentieth century. To brag of brute prosperity, to admire the most muddy millionaires who had cornered (*cont'd*)

it a barbarism worse than that of the barbarian.† The old evils from which Progress so confidently undertook to deliver us flourish on an enormous scale, war, famine, disease, cruelty, ignorance, slavery and the rest. Never was there less of liberty, equality or fraternity. Slavery, under whatever new disguise, is the alternative of property,‡ property cannot be restored or maintained without religion, religion cannot with impunity ignore the Divine Revelation and its divinely founded organ. Therefore we of the Catholic Land Movements do what we may, by example and advocacy, to urge and further the return to simplicity as part and parcel of that return to God without which there is no hope whatever. We should be fools to put any trust in politicians or experts as such. For us the true political economy is “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you” (Luke xii. 31). That is the burden of the social teaching of the Holy See, of Leo XIII no less than Pius XI. Very searching and terrible are the words spoken in his allocution of December 24, 1917, by Benedict XV: “Just as the disorder of the senses once hurled famous cities into a sea of fire, so in our own time the want of piety in public life and the erection of atheism into a system of so-called civilization have hurled the world into a sea

---

wheat by a trick, to talk about the ‘unfit’ (in imitation of the scientific thinkers who would finish them off because he cannot even finish his own sentence – unfit for what?) – all that is as simply and openly anti-Christian as the Black Mass. Yet some weak and worldly Catholics did use this cant in defence of Capitalism, in their first rather feeble resistance to Socialism. At least they did until the great encyclical of the Pope on the *Rights of Labour* put a stop to all their nonsense.” (*St. Thomas Aquinas*, 1933, iv. 125–126.)

† The barbarian adds his testimony to that of the cultured pagan. “Suppose in destroying this present social fabric we fell at once to the level of the savage, what then? We know all you say about the horrors that are incidental to savage life – especially when the White Man’s helmet has once appeared above the horizon. But we remember also what you perhaps forget, that almost all travellers, except those sent out for purposes of annexation, from Herodotus and Tacitus to Mungo Park and Livingstone and Selwyn, have with one voice dwelt upon the lightheartedness and the personal dignity of the normal life of uncivilized man. The normal life of the poor in Europe is not light-hearted and dignified, nor yet that of the rich. There are more and more things without which we are miserable, and with which we are not a whit happier”—Gilbert Murray’s “Essays and Addresses” (1921) p. 173, *National Ideals*.

‡ Classical antiquity may here read us a parable: “The development of agriculture



of blood...the present calamities will not come to an end until the human race has returned to God." The non-Catholic will own that seventeen years have only underlined this warning. Experience has surely justified this contention that in urban industrialism religion has to fight desperately for bare life against the humanly speaking overwhelming odds of anti-spiritual environment. In the homestead and the home workshop, unless shut out by individual perversity, she gladly dwells and reigns, and each such home becomes another reflection of Nazareth.

Our movement is no more "retrograde" than that of a man who finding himself floundering in the dark in a malarial swamp strives manfully to regain the way he had lost. What that way is we trust we have been enabled to make clear. Searchings of the heart meet us daily in quarters neither Catholic nor landward given. Take the following: "It is applied rather than speculative science that has caught the contemporary imagination. Science is accomplishing marvels in astronomy, but wireless and the machine are its more representative contributions to the civilization of our age. It seems confident in the assumption that machines are *a priori* good for humanity. Is not this assumption possibly the latest form of scientific encroachment on realms not its own? Science, *qua* science, can tell us nothing whatever about the spirit of man. Where values are concerned, it is blind as CUPID. It can give us the machines, but it can never give us the ends to which we shall use them. The ends are set by the statesman, the philosopher, and the intuition of mankind, whether individually or in the mass. And who knows but that some day (withal not yet!) we may not prefer to relegate to the museum all the new gifts of applied science?" (*Morning Post*, 7<sup>th</sup> September, 1933.)

The principles of 1789 assumed that there was no divinely ordained pattern of human life. From the Revolution to the present

---

on a large scale for profit was undertaken with labour so heartless and unintelligent that there was little or nothing to be gained by improving tools. The same phenomenon has been noticed in modern times. Free hired labour was but seldom employed, and in agriculture only as an occasional reserve. The mere wage-earner was necessarily a mean figure in ancient civilization, in the Roman perhaps most of all." (W.E. Heitland in C. Bailey, *The Legacy of Rome*, 1923, 510–511.)

## FLEE TO THE FIELDS

hour the innovators have left no stone unturned in order to change human life fundamentally. The results are before us. But reason and revelation, doctrine and experience alike insist that there is a pattern of human life permanently ordained and that we must return to it or perish. The Landward pioneers are full of hope, they show the faith that is in them by consistent practice. And days to come may haply date the beginning of England's recovery from the first furrows turned at Chartridge and a newer and happier Bosworth Field.<sup>59</sup> May God grant it.



*The Cottage*, by Robert Gibbings (1889–1958)

From *Wood Engraving*, a book published in 1921 by Ditchling Press, and featuring an introduction and appendix by Eric Gill (1882–1940). From 1924 to 1933 Giddings owned and directed the Golden Cockerel Press, one of the most renowned English private presses of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and for which Eric Gill created typefaces and numerous wood engravings. The most famous work to result from the Gibbings-Gill collaboration is the 1931 book, *The Four Gospels*. Gill and Gibbings were also founding members of the Society of Wood Engravers, which was formed in 1920.

## Notes.

<sup>1</sup> Cardinal Francis Bourne (1861–1935). Entered the priesthood in 1884 and became Bishop of Southwark, London, in 1897. He became the Archbishop of Westminster in 1903, and received the cardinalate in 1911. He was a mild man who sought to advance the Catholic Church in England through patient understanding of the “sensibilities” of the British government, though he believed wholeheartedly that there was nothing more native to England than Catholicism.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Henry Tawney (1880–1962). One of Britain’s most celebrated economic historians. He studied at Oxford’s Baliol College where he joined the Christian Social Union, and entered the London School of Economics in 1912 as a Professor of Economic History; he spent his entire professional life there, following a short period lecturing at Glasgow University (1908–1914). He was a Christian Socialist who became involved with the Workers Education Association in 1905, and served as its President from 1928 to 1944. He was an incisive social critic whose writings covered an enormous field, bringing him widespread peer-group recognition. His main works were *The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century* (1912), *The Acquisitive Society* (1926), *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (1926), and *Equality* (1931).

<sup>3</sup> Flying shuttle. A device used in weaving introduced by John Kay (1704–1764) in 1733. Prior to its invention, it was only possible for cloth to be woven up to a maximum of the width of a man’s body – across his arms – because he had to pass the shuttle backwards and forwards, from hand to hand. The Kay shuttle was put on wheels and controlled with a driver, so that a wider shuttle bed could be worked, at much greater speed.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Cobden (1804–1865). English reformer and Free Trade capitalist, whose successful crusade to repeal the protectionist Corn Laws made a lasting name for him as an advocate of liberal, unrestricted trade and commerce as the key to national and international prosperity, a position which had a close affinity to that advocated by continental liberal Frédéric Bastiat. He founded, with Archibald Prentice, the Anti-Corn Law League in Manchester, in 1838, as a successor to the London Anti-Corn Law Association founded by Joseph Hume, Francis Place, and John Roebuck in October, 1837. The industrialists and merchants of the major cities of England and the North of Ireland fully supported Cobden’s demand for repeal of protectionist laws which tended to favor aristocratic landowners to the detriment of the merchant class. Cobden’s movement was the foundation of the Manchester School of economic liberalism.

<sup>5</sup> John Bright (1811–1889). Son of cotton manufacturer Jacob Bright, and Quaker committed to political and religious equality. Joined Cobden’s Anti-Corn Law League and toured England, proving to be an effective speaker, drawing large crowds. Entered Parliament as a Radical in 1843, and pushed for repeal of the Corn Laws, which repeal came about in 1846. An advocate of Parliamentary reform, universal suffrage, and anti-slavery. In 1868, he entered Gladstone’s government as President of the Board of Trade.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Peel (1788–1850). The son of cotton manufacturer Sir Robert Peel who entered Parliament as a Tory in 1809, and proved a persuasive speaker. From 1812 to 1817, he was Chief Secretary of Ireland and a strong opponent of Catholic emancipation. Entered Lord Liverpool's government in 1822 as Home Secretary, and began to reform the legal system. In 1829, he did a *volte face* and introduced Catholic emancipation to ward off Irish rebellion. He was responsible for the formation of the London police, who became known as "peelers" or "bobbies." He was Prime Minister from 1834 to 1835.

<sup>7</sup> A reference to the De Dion-Bouton motor car designed by Count Albert de Dion (1856–1946) and Georges Bouton (1847–1938). It won the first World Motor Race in 1888, going from Paris to Versailles with an average speed of 13mph. In 1895, De Dion created a new cylinder which was three times faster than any other engine of the time. He became a French Senator in 1923.

<sup>8</sup> Professor Frederick Soddy (1877–1956). A world-renowned figure in the study of the chemistry of radioactive materials. He was responsible for adding the word "isotope" to the scientific vocabulary. He won the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1922, but he was always anxious that his discoveries should not be abused by evil men. Becoming interested in Economics, he applied his scientific mind and method of investigation to economic forces, and produced the highly original book, *Wealth, Virtual Wealth, and Debt* in 1926. It not only offended orthodox economists like J.M. Keynes, but also Major C.H. Douglas of the Social Credit movement. Soddy proclaimed: "The threatened collapse of our Western civilization has nothing to do with the political issues between Capitalism and Communism, but is the consequence of its false money system."

<sup>9</sup> Test Acts. In general, a reference to the penal laws imposing civil disabilities on Catholics and Nonconformists following upon the so-called Reformation in England. In this case the reference is to the Corporation Act of 1661, which excluded from membership of Town Corporations (and thus from influence) all those who refused to receive Communion according to the usage of the Church of England. The same Act was also imposed in 1673 on holders of military and civil office, with the result that Catholics, Dissenters, and Jews were excluded. The two Acts were repealed in 1828, though public office was only opened to Catholics in 1829 with the passage of the Catholic Emancipation Act.

<sup>10</sup> Dissenters. Protestants who refused the rites, hierarchy, doctrine, and practises of the Church of England. The name covered a wide range of types including Methodists, Presbyterians, Quakers, and Unitarians.

<sup>11</sup> William Cobbett (1763–1835). English writer, farmer, ruralist, and political journalist. He became one of the most famous polemical journalists of the day, earning a reputation for fearlessness and integrity. He wrote 17 major works, and founded and edited the *Political Register* from 1802 until his death. At a time when Catholics were still being persecuted, he found the courage to write that "the Protestant religion had been established by gibbets, racks, and ripping knives," though Cobbett himself was *not* a Catholic.

<sup>12</sup> Lord Charles "Turnip" Townsend (1674–1738). English lord who was a

## FLEE TO THE FIELDS

renowned agricultural reformer. He introduced the four course crop rotation into England, which reduced the amount of land lying fallow and permitted many more animals to be over-wintered. This was done through the use of clover which revitalized fallow land, and turnip which provided food for the animals. These changes greatly increased food and fiber production. Also served as Secretary of State and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland under King George II.

<sup>13</sup> As indicated in the editors' note on the *verso* of the title page, the Birmingham Scheme was not included in this edition of *Flee to the Fields*.

<sup>14</sup> Sir Alfred Daniel Hall (1864–1942) A eminent agricultural reformer who was Director, from 1902 to 1912, of Rothamsted Experimental Station, an agricultural experiment station founded in 1843 by John Lawes, and later Director at the John Innes Horticultural Institution, from 1926 to 1939. Also served as President Secretary of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries (ca. 1918) and was a member of the Trades Union Congress Scientific Advisory Committee. An expert on Tulips, he wrote *The Tulip* (1929), *The Cultivator* (1934), *There is no Over-Production* (1934), and *Reconstruction and the Land* (1941).

<sup>15</sup> Christopher Hatton Turnor (1873–1940). Prominent agricultural reformer who wrote widely, whose works include *Land Problems and National Welfare* (1911), *The Land and the Empire* (1917), and *The Land, Agriculture and the National Economy* (1929).

<sup>16</sup> Sir John Russell (1872–1965). A prominent soil scientist who succeeded Sir Daniel Hall as Director of Rothamsted Experimental Station, serving from 1913 to 1943. He visited many countries to advise on soil and crops, and in the process produced over 1,000 glass lantern slides now housed at Sheffield University. These slides provide an interesting glimpse into life in 1930s Poland, Stalinist Russia, and Libya under the Fascists. An enthusiastic advocate of organic farming, one of his better known works is *Soil Conditions and Plant Growth* (1912).

<sup>17</sup> Peter Alekseevich Kropotkin (1842–1921). Began life as personal page to Alexander II of Russia. Became a radical socialist and a member of the International Workingmen's Association (the First International). Wrote extensively on political and economic subjects; his works include *Conquest of Bread* (1892), *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (1899), *Fields, Factories and Workshops* (1901), *Mutual Aid* (1902), and *The Great French Revolution* (1909).

<sup>18</sup> *Jam foetet*. "It already stinks." From St. Martha's remark to Our Lord regarding Lazarus, in St. John, xi:29.

<sup>19</sup> *De omni scibili et quibusdam aliis*. "Concerning everything knowable, and certain others."

<sup>20</sup> *Revirement d'idées*. "A change, reversal, or turnaround of ideas."

<sup>21</sup> Geoffrey Chaucer (1343–1400). A soldier, diplomat, intelligence officer, and public official who made a permanent place for himself in the history of English literature with his unfinished masterpiece, *The Canterbury Tales*, as well as others such as *Troilus and Criseyde*, one of the greatest love poems ever written in English.

<sup>22</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778). Swiss philosopher who made famous the idea that man in "a state of nature" was essentially good, "a noble savage." He

believed, therefore, that society and civilization were the cause of man's unhappiness. Was a fierce opponent of private property; he also greatly over-emphasized freedom in his thinking. His main works, *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences* (1750) and *The Social Contract* (1762), have heavily influenced modern philosophy.

<sup>23</sup> Adam Smith (1723–1790). Scottish political economist and philosopher whose lasting fame is due to his major work, *The Wealth of Nations*, written in 1776. Was Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow University (1752–63) and also wrote *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). Was a friend of the rationalist David Hume (1711–1776), and in 1763 became tutor to the young duke of Buccleuch, an employment which was the motive for his lengthy visit to France (1764–1766). This visit brought him into contact with the famous “Encyclopedists,” notables (noteworthy for their irreligion, skepticism, and rationalism) of the so-called French “enlightenment.” These include D’Alembert (1717–1783), Helvétius (1715–1771), and particularly François Quesnay (1694 – 1774), the Physiocrat who, as one of the founders of economic liberalism, exercised such great influence over Smith’s later writings. Celebrated Catholic economist C. S. Devas remarks of him, “[his] true position...is that of the great interpreter of the Physiocrats to the English world, and the great apostle in the British Isles of economic liberalism. His particular merit is that he is so much better than the doctrines he represented.... Thus, like all great men caught in erroneous systems, he is full of inconsistency” (*Political Economy*, 1891, p. 553).

<sup>24</sup> Charles Darwin (1809–1882). British naturalist who became famous for his controversial and still empirically unproven theories of Evolution and Natural Selection. His most celebrated book is *The Origin of the Species* (1859), but thereafter he wrote extensively on Botany, Geology, and Zoology.

<sup>25</sup> Hannibal (247–182BC). Carthaginian General who was known for his efforts in the Second Punic War, but who was also vital in the conquest of south-eastern Spain in the 220s. It was the fall of Saguntum in 218B.C. in Spain that led to his clash with Rome, and the now famous crossing of the Alps on elephants. He established himself at Barletta, some 300 miles from Rome, but didn’t attack Rome until 211; the delay cost him allies, and so he failed. He returned to Carthage in 203, and spent the rest of his life seeking to destroy Rome. He committed suicide in Asia Minor rather than surrender to his life-long enemy.

<sup>26</sup> Alexander the Macedonian (356–323BC). Better known as Alexander the Great. Became King of Macedonia in 336, and launched a campaign in 334 to punish the Persians for their previous invasion of Greece. His campaign took him to Persia, Syria, Egypt, Afghanistan, and India. Major victories were at Chaeronea (338), Tyre (332), and Megalopolis (331). He died preparing an invasion of Arabia.

<sup>27</sup> Midas. According to Greek and Roman sources, King Midas of Phrygia lived between c736 and 696B.C. In Greek and Roman legend he is the rescuer of Dionysus’s best friend, Silenus; in gratitude, Dionysus granted Midas one wish. The latter asked that everything he touched turn to gold. Some days later, finding that his food, his drink, even his daughter had turned to gold, he asked for the wish to be revoked. Dionysus spared him, and indicated that the cure lie in bathing in the spring of the River Pactolus in Lydia. He did so; this “explains” why the Pactolus always contains gold dust.

<sup>28</sup> Rev. James Edwin Thorold Rogers (1823–1890). Anglican minister and economic historian who taught at King's College, London, and Oxford University. A strong advocate of *laissez-faire*, his greatest work is *A History of Agriculture and Prices in England*, produced in eight volumes between 1866 and 1902. Other works include *A Manual of Political Economy for Schools* (1868), *Six Centuries of Work and Wages* (1884), and *The Economic Interpretation of History* (1888).

<sup>29</sup> The exact reference for the passage is *De Regno*, II, 3, based on the authoritative edition of I. Th. Eschmann, O.P., of 1949, published by the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, Toronto, Canada.

<sup>30</sup> *Antiquam exquirite matrem*. “Seek out the ancient mother.” From the *Aeneid*, Book 3, line 96; it is the message of the oracle of Apollo to Aeneas and his Trojan band. John Dryden's translation of the message, lines 94–98 in Virgil's original, is as follows:

“Undaunted youths, go, seek that mother earth  
From which your ancestors derive their birth.  
The soil that sent you forth, her ancient race  
In her old bosom shall again embrace.  
Thro' the wide world th' Aeneian house shall reign,  
And children's children shall the crown sustain.”

<sup>31</sup> Fr. John Lingard (1771–1851). An outstanding English priest and historian, who studied at Douai before returning to the Chair of Philosophy at Durham. His fame came with the publication of the first three volumes of his *History of England* in 1819; he was unique – for his time – because he insisted upon studying the primary sources. The *History* expanded over the years, and had become eight volumes by 1830 – with translations appearing in French, German, and Italian. He also helped to re-establish the English College in Rome, and was granted a triple doctorate by Pope Pius VII in 1821. In spite of the passage of time, his *History* is still regarded as the standard and authoritative work on many periods. Hilaire Belloc edited an edition of Lingard's *History*, subtitled *From the First Invasion by the Romans to the Accession of King George the Fifth*, which saw publication in 1912–1915, and for which Belloc contributed the eleventh volume.

<sup>32</sup> Sir Arnold Lunn (1888–1974). English Catholic convert, who was a writer, controversialist, and apologist. He is the recognized “father” of modern skiing, something that stems from his love of, and time in, Switzerland. Converting in 1933, he debated people such as C.E.M. Joad, J.B. Haldane, and G.G. Coulter. *Now I See* (1933) is the biography of his conversion. Other works, amongst many, include *The Third Day* (1945) and *Yet So New* (1958). He wrote a trilogy of works with Garth Lean in the last decades of his life: *The New Morality* (1958), *The Cult of Softness* (1965), and *Christian Counter-Attack* (1969).

<sup>33</sup> Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822). English poet regarded as one of the finest of the Romantic period. In his poetry, he reveals his philosophy, which is a combination of belief in the power of human love and reason, and faith in the perfectibility and ultimate progress of man. His works include *The Revolt of Islam* (1818), *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), and *The Cenci: A Tragedy* (1819).

<sup>34</sup> Louis-Francois Veillot (1813–1883). Founder of the French Catholic journal, *Univèrs*, which championed the powers of the Papacy vigorously, and whose writings extend to some forty volumes! He is described by Sparrow-Simpson in *French Catholics in the Nineteenth Century* as: “A man of exceptional abilities in exceptional times, he played so important a part in the religious and political history of France during the latter half of the nineteenth century that French Catholicism can hardly be described without him.”

<sup>35</sup> Nicholas Berdyaev (1878–1948). Russian philosopher exiled because of his opposition to the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. He saw the central historical problem of the age as the rise of the bourgeois spirit – that spirit being a spiritual state and a direction of the soul. For Berdyaev, the bourgeois is the idolator of the world, who does not see the central role of Christ’s Incarnation and Redemption as the key to history. He had a powerful influence on Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day of the Catholic Worker Movement. Works include *Bourgeois Mind and Other Essays* (1934), *The Meaning of History* (1936), *The Origins of Russian Communism* (1937), and *The Russian Idea* (1947).

<sup>36</sup> John Ruskin (1819–1900). Artist, scientist, poet, philosopher, and art critic. He helped the Pre-Raphaelites to establish their reputation through his written interventions, and did much to support artists such as Rossetti, Millais, and Holman Hunt. His major work, first published in 1871 as *Fors Clavigera*, was subtitled “Letters to the Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain,” and ran ultimately to eight volumes.

<sup>37</sup> Count Léon de Poncins (d.1975). French aristocrat who spent his life researching and writing about the forces behind World Revolution. A prolific writer who worked for years with Mgr. Jouin on his journal *The International Review of Secret Societies* (R.I.S.S.). Some of his most important books include *The Secret Powers behind Revolution* (1928), *Portugal Reborn* (1936), *Occult Forces in the Modern World* (1943), *Judaism and the Vatican* (1967), *Freemasonry and the Vatican* (1968), and *State Secrets* (1975). *Tempête sur le Monde* (*Storm throughout the World*) was written in 1934, and was subtitled “French Masonry according to Secret Documents.”

<sup>38</sup> René Guénon (1886–1951). French founder of the “traditionalist” school of esoterism. In 1909, he founded and edited a review, *Gnosis*, wherein he wrote about esoteric subjects and spirituality. He converted to Sufi Islam in 1912. His doctoral dissertation provoked an uproar when presented in 1921: *A General Introduction to the Study of Hindu Doctrines*. In 1924, he published a major work of philosophy and spirituality, *Orient and Occident*. In 1930, he moved to Egypt and led a largely reclusive life, though he was visited by other esoteric scholars, including Titus Burckhardt and Frithjof Schuon. At base, Guénon’s thesis is that there is a primordial and perennial truth which manifests itself in a variety of religious traditions and metaphysical systems; it is thus a type of syncretism. His most influential work was *The Crisis of the Modern World* (1927).

<sup>39</sup> Gina Lombroso-Ferro (1872–1944). Jewish scientist, writer, student of criminology, and daughter of the eminent Italian criminologist, Cesare Lombroso (1835–1909). Both father and daughter believed that criminals possessed distinguishing features. She published her classic work, *Criminal Man*, in three volumes in 1876. She was a militant feminist and was heavily involved in anti-fascist activities. Other



## FLEE TO THE FIELDS

works include *The Soul of Woman* (1929) and *The Tragedies of Progress* (1931).

<sup>40</sup> James Russell Lowell (1819–1891). Prominent American poet and author. Graduated from Harvard in 1838 and admitted to the Bar in 1840. He became Professor of Modern Languages and Literature at Harvard in 1855, succeeding Henry Longfellow. He edited the *Atlantic Review* (1857–1862) and the *North American Review* (1863–1872). He was American ambassador to England from 1880 to 1885. His works include *The Vision of Sir Launfal* (1848), *The Biglow Papers* (1848), and *Political Essays* (1888).

<sup>41</sup> *Tamen usque recurret*. “She will always come back,” from the longer: *naturam expellas furca, tamen usque recurret* (“Though you may drive out nature with a pitchfork, she will always come back”), of Horace’s *Epistles*, Book I, x.

<sup>42</sup> Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749–1832). German poet, novelist, playwright, and natural philosopher. He was part of the *Sturm und Drang* school, which saw man, rather than God, as the center of life. Amongst his most important works were *Faust* (1808 and 1832), *On Byron’s Manfred* (1820), *Egmont* (1788) and *The Diary* (1810).

<sup>43</sup> Horace (65–8BC). Quintus Horatius Flaccus, dramatist and poet. Lived mainly in Rome though studied philosophy in Greece, coming to know both Virgil and Varius. He is known for, among other works, his *Satires* (35BC), his four books of *Odes* (23, 13BC), his *Epistles* (20BC), and the *Art of Poetry* (19–18BC), which is, according to Professor Sainsbury, “the most complete example of literary criticism that we have from any Roman.” His friendship with Roman Emperor Augustus earned for him the Emperor’s commission to write the fourth book of *Odes* and the poem *Carmen Saeculare* (17BC).

<sup>44</sup> Hesiod. The father of Greek didactic poetry, of whose life little is known. It is generally believed that he lived in the eighth century before Christ. A number of works are attributed to him: *Works and Days*, *The Theogony*, and *Shield of Heracles*.

<sup>45</sup> Euripides (480–406BC). Celebrated Athenian tragic poet who wrote 92 plays, and was compared during his own lifetime to Aeschylus and Sophocles. Considered to be the first of the Greek realists; Aristotle calls him the “most tragic” of the poets. Major works include *Hippolytus*, *The Bacchae*, *Medea*, and *The Cyclops*.

<sup>46</sup> Salvian or Salvianus. A fifth-century writer, monk, and priest from Gaul. He became a renowned preacher and teacher of rhetoric. His most celebrated works are *On the Governance of God* in eight volumes, which attacks the degradation of Roman and Gallic society; and *Against Avarice*, which is a plea for generosity to the Church.

<sup>47</sup> Joseph de Maistre (1753–1821). Although French by language and culture, de Maistre was a citizen of Piedmont (now in Italy) and served in several legal and diplomatic capacities with the Piedmontese government. Regarded as a foremost Counter-Enlightenment theorist, who inspired Ultramontane Catholics and French Royalists, he was not always found on the right path. He was involved with a number of illuminist Masonic lodges from 1774 to 1790, and thus was favourable to the French Revolution at the outset. He later became a staunch defender of Throne and Altar.

<sup>48</sup> Virgil (70–19BC). Publius Vergilius Maro, the greatest of the Roman poets. His deep religious sentiment, humility, and tenderness have caused him to be seen

as a proto-Christian; Dante chose him as the Guide in the *Divine Comedy*. His *Eclogues* (37BC) idealized rural life, and his later *Georgics* (30BC) presented the charms of rural life as it is lived. His most famous, yet incomplete, work is *The Aeneid* (29–19BC). Happily, the Emperor Augustus forbade Virgil's executor from fulfilling Virgil's request to have the latter work destroyed upon his death.

<sup>49</sup> Cato the Elder (234–149BC). Roman statesman, orator, writer, and defender of conservative Roman Republican ideals. He was also a life-long agricultural reformer, writing his *De Agri Cultura* in 160B.C., now the oldest Latin literary encyclopaedia in existence. His Latin history of Rome, *Origines*, was undertaken to counter what he believed to be the evil influence of the Greeks. A very strict moralist, he was known for censoring public officials, combating luxury, and fighting the evils of Capitalism. Popular with the Common Man, he coined the famous phrase "*Delenda est Carthago*" ("Carthage must be destroyed").

<sup>50</sup> Claudian (c370–c405). The last of the notable Roman poets. He flourished at court under Arcadius and Honorius, the sons of the last sole Roman Emperor, writing panegyrics, idylls, epigrams, and several epics; his work demonstrated skill and imagination. Celebrated works include *The Rape of Proserpine* and *Against Rufinus*.

<sup>51</sup> Tacitus (56–120). Roman orator and public official. One of the greatest historians and prose stylists of the Latin language. He sought to elucidate facts in his work, but he was keen, too, to promote a moral agenda, which he accomplished through the use of rhetorical flourishes. His major works include *Agricola* (c98), *Germania* (c98), *Historiae* (c100–c110), and *The Annals* (c110–120).

<sup>52</sup> Daniel O'Connell (1775–1847). Irish political leader who first came to prominence in January, 1800, as a part of the minority of Catholics who opposed the Act of Union with England. He was a capable lawyer who possessed great oratorical and organizing abilities, which he devoted to the cause of Catholic emancipation. Mass agitation in Ireland was a tactic that he created, and thus he became the hero for the nineteenth-century moderate nationalists. Dublin's famous O'Connell Street is named in his memory.

<sup>53</sup> Polybius (c203–c120BC). An arcadian who was the greatest of the ancient Greek historians after Thucydides. His work deals with the rise of Rome and the history of the Mediterranean. Amongst his main works are *Rome at the End of the Punic Wars*, *Rome and Carthage Compared*, and *An Analysis of Roman Government*.

<sup>54</sup> Mgr. George F. Dillon. A priest and Doctor of Divinity who served in Australia as, among other things, parish priest of Armidale, from 1862 to 1864, and later as Missionary Apostolic in Sydney. He became known for his lectures and writings aimed at the malign influence of Freemasonry, and particularly for a much celebrated lecture given on the subject in October, 1884, in Edinburgh, Scotland, and printed a year later in Dublin as *The War of Anti-Christ with the Church and Christian Civilization*. Coming just six months after the publication of *Humanum Genus*, the anti-masonic encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, his work was both timely and accurate. The same pope had the Italian translation printed with his approval and at his expense.

<sup>55</sup> Fr. Edward Cahill (b. 1868). An active and intelligent Jesuit, very much in the mould of his Holy Ghost Fathers counterpart, Fr. Denis Fahey (1883–1954).

## FLEE TO THE FIELDS

Apart from *Ireland's Peril* (1930), Cahill wrote *Ireland and the Kingship of Christ* (1928) and *The Framework of the Christian State* (1932). He participated in the discussions surrounding the Irish Constitution of 1937, and played a key role in influencing the content of P. J. O'Loughlin's 1938 Minority Report, *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Banking, Currency and Credit*; it attacked the whole economic and financial approach adopted in Ireland following the 1922 Civil War, and quoted approvingly from *Rerum Novarum* (1891), *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), and *Divini Redemptoris* (1937). Cahill was also involved in the founding of *Clann na Poblachta* in 1947, which challenged De Valera's *Fianna Fáil*, because he believed that Catholic and rural Ireland was being betrayed.

<sup>56</sup> Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936). English short-story writer, novelist, and poet. He celebrated the alleged achievements of British Imperialism, gaining much popularity with his poem, *The White Man's Burden* published in 1899. His most famous works are: *The Man Who Would Be King* (1888–9), *The Jungle Book* (1894), *The Seven Seas* (1896), and his probable masterpiece, *Kim* (1901). He was the first Englishman to win the Nobel Prize for Literature, awarded him in 1907.

<sup>57</sup> From “Locksley Hall” of Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809–1892), published in his *English Idyls, and Other Poems* (1842).

<sup>58</sup> Walter Bagehot (1826–1877). A British journalist and early editor of *The Economist*, who had a special interest in central banks, interest rates, and money supply. His financial writings influenced both the Federal Reserve System and the International Monetary Fund.

<sup>59</sup> Battle of Bosworth Field (August 22, 1485). In 1485, upon the death of Edward IV, King of England, his brother Richard III usurped the throne by having himself proclaimed king after imprisoning Edward IV's two sons, the rightful heirs to the throne. On August 7 Henry Tudor landed near Milford Haven with his army, and arrived south of Market Bosworth on August 21 to confront Richard's army. Henry prevailed the following day, thus inaugurating the Tudor dynasty.





## About IHS Press

IHS Press believes that the key to the restoration of Catholic Society is the recovery and the implementation of the wisdom our Fathers in the Faith possessed so fully less than a century ago. At a time when numerous ideologies were competing for supremacy, these men articulated, with precision and vigor, and *without* apology or compromise, the only genuine alternative to the then- (and still-) prevailing currents of thought: value-free and yet bureaucratic “progressivism” on the one hand, and the rehashed, *laissez-faire* free-for-all of “conservatism” on the other. That alternative is the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church.

Catholic Social Teaching offers the solutions to the political, economic, and social problems that plague modern society; problems that stem from the false principles of the Reformation, Renaissance, and Revolution, and which are exacerbated by the industrialization and the secularization of society that has continued for several centuries. Defending, explaining, and applying this Teaching was the business of the great Social Catholics of last century. Unfortunately, much of their work is today both unknown and unavailable.

Thus, IHS Press was founded in September of 2001 A.D. as the only publisher dedicated exclusively to the Social Teaching of the Church, helping Catholics of the third millennium pick up where those of last century left off. IHS Press is committed to recovering, and *helping others to rediscover*, the valuable works of the Catholic economists, historians, and social critics. To that end, IHS Press is in the business of issuing critical editions of works on society, politics, and economics by writers, thinkers, and men of action such as Hilaire Belloc, Gilbert Chesterton, Arthur Penty, Fr. Vincent McNabb, Fr. Denis Fahey, Jean Ousset, Amintore Fanfani, George O'Brien, and others, making the wisdom they contain available to the current generation.

It is the aim of IHS Press to issue these vitally important works in high-quality volumes and at reasonable prices, to enable the widest possible audience to acquire, enjoy, and benefit from them. Such an undertaking cannot be maintained without the support of generous benefactors. With that in mind, IHS Press was constituted as a not-for-profit corporation which is exempt from federal tax according to Section 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code. Donations to IHS Press are, therefore, tax deductible, and are especially welcome to support its continued operation, and to help it with the publication of new titles and the more widespread dissemination of those already in print.



For more information, contact us at:

222 W. 21<sup>st</sup> St., Suite F-122-Norfolk, VA 23517-(757) 423-0324  
info@ihspress.com www.ihspress.com fax: (800) 364-0186

IHS Press is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) corporation; EIN: 54-2057581.  
Applicable documentation is available upon request.

## OTHER TITLES AVAILABLE FROM IHS PRESS ON THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH.



### ***The Free Press***

Hilaire Belloc

**\$8.95** 96 pages  
paperback

0-9714894-1-6

Belloc's unabashed look at what in his day was the Press and in ours is the Media. It is the only work of its kind: a critique and analysis of the media from the coherent perspective of a Catholic and a Distributist.

Belloc connects Capitalism, Finance, and the Press, explaining the subservience of the modern

media to the economic and political system. The essay is a criticism of media manipulation, control, and suppression of news and opinion, and a call for a Press free to report real news and sponsor an intelligent exchange of ideas.

### ***The Outline of Sanity***

G.K. Chesterton

**\$14.95** 183 pages  
paperback

0-9714894-0-8



Chesterton wrote *The Outline* as a lively yet rigorous examination of how both Capitalism and Socialism work in the real world. He looked at their effect on families, homes, and men, as if "economics" had something to do with households. *The Outline* is not just a

stinging critique of modern economic life by a brutally honest writer. It is an introduction to an alternative view that transcends old dichotomies and offers a vision of an economy which, rather than dominating man, actually serves him.



### ***Action***

Jean Ousset

**\$16.95** 272 pages  
paperback

0-9714894-2-4

A manual for today's Catholic Crusader by one of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century's most respected and knowledgeable Catholic laymen.

Ousset, scholar of the Revolution, and leader of the anti-Marxist movement in Europe, founded *La Cité Catholique* in France in 1946 to spread the Social Reign of Christ. *Action* is one of his manuals

designed to inspire, motivate, and guide the modern Catholic layman in the understanding and performance of his duty to fight, with every available and lawful means, for the implementation of Catholic principles in society.

### ***The Church and the Land***

Fr. Vincent McNabb

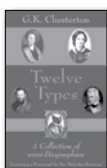
**\$14.95** 192 pages  
paperback

0-9714894-6-7



Fr. McNabb: *de facto* chaplain to the Distributists and one of the movement's most vigorous, genuine, and original defenders. In this collection of articles and essays, Fr. McNabb emphasizes that the solution of the "economic question" is not in piecemeal reforms, but in the restoration of ownership

– principally of land – to the masses. As persuasive today as when it was written, Fr. McNabb's principled critique of industrial capitalism will provoke and enlighten.



### ***Twelve Types***

G.K. Chesterton

**\$8.95** 96 pages  
paperback

0-9714894-8-3

Chesterton takes on modern culture, literary criticism, art, and history, in this slim but poignant volume of biographical and historical essays on figures ranging from the Renaissance Franciscan reformer Savonarola to literary figures such as Walter Scott, Tolstoy, and Emily Brönte.

In each essay GKC applies his Catholic and common sense to the work of writers, artists, and reformers, leaving the reader with a rich and Catholic appreciation of the subject. Essential for a continuing Catholic education.

**ORDER DIRECTLY FROM THE PUBLISHER AT THE ADDRESS BELOW. ALSO AT FINE BOOKSTORES.**



### ***The Restoration of Property***

Hilaire Belloc  
**\$8.95** 96 pages  
 paperback  
 0-9714894-4-0

**T**he famous Distributist tract: a clear, concise sketch of how a society of real property owners might be re-established and defended.

*Re-established:* until 150 years ago men were independent owners of real property. It was not so long ago that they possessed freedom to control their own destiny.

*Defended:* once established, such a society must be maintained by consensus, custom, and law. Just as men choose to inaugurate social-Darwinist economics, so too can men act to move society in a different direction. Belloc's *Essay* points the way, and indicates generally how to get there.

### ***Utopia of Usurers***

G.K. Chesterton  
**\$11.95** 136 pages  
 paperback  
 0-9714894-3-2



**C**hesterton at his energetic and boisterous best: *Utopia* is a collection of articles written in 1913–1915 for the *Daily Herald*. What results is a full-scale broadside against the folly of modern economic and cultural life.

This new edition features a Preface by Mr. Aidan Mackey, English Chesterton scholar of singular renown. Mackey founded the Distributist Association in 1947 and edited *The Distributist*, which was active from 1953 to 1960. Mackey wrote *Mr. Chesterton Comes to Tea* (1979); *The Wisdom of GKC* (1986), currently being re-edited in a new edition for the Catholic Truth Society of England; and *Hilaire Belloc and His Critics* (1991).



### ***Irish Impressions***

G.K. Chesterton  
**\$12.95** 152 pages  
 paperback  
 0-9714894-5-9

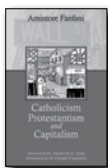
**C**hesterton's visit to Ireland in early 1918 resulted in this unique and thought-provoking book on Ireland and the Irish situation of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In *Irish Impressions*, familiar Chestertonian themes – distribution of property, industrialism, the Faith and Christian society – are discussed in the context of Ireland's struggle for national and cultural independence from the Britain of the early 1900s. He points out both the strengths and weakness of the English and Irish positions during that crucial period, always with wit, wisdom, and an appreciation of essentials that is characteristic of Chesterton's work.

This edition features a Preface by Dr. Demot Quinn of the Chesterton Institute for Faith and Culture at Seton Hall University, New Jersey, USA.

### ***Catholicism, Protestantism, and Capitalism***

Dr. Amintore Fanfani  
**\$14.95** 192 pages paperback  
 0-9714894-7-5



**T**his masterful treatise of economic history and philosophy will open eyes and enlighten minds on the difficult but essential subject of the attitude of the Social Doctrine of the Church to capitalism.

Fanfani's expertise as a professor of economic thought and economic history is evident in this comprehensive look at the social philosophy behind capitalism and the Catholic Faith. His book is the *definitive work* on the antagonism between that Faith and modern economics. Essential reading for Catholics, and all of good will, seeking to understand this complex problem.



**Order direct today:** by phone, fax, mail, e-mail, online.  
**s/h:** \$3.00 per book; \$1.00 ea. add'l. book. Check, m.o., VISA, MC.

222 W. 21<sup>st</sup> St., Suite F-122~Norfolk, VA 23517-(757) 423-0324  
 order@ihspress.com www.ihspress.com fax: (800) 364-0186











# FLEE TO THE FIELDS

## Papers of the Catholic Land Movement

Fr. Vincent McNabb

**FLEE TO THE FIELDS** IS A COLLECTION OF ESSAYS BY THE LEADERS OF THE CATHOLIC LAND MOVEMENT which flourished in England and Scotland during the quarter-century just prior to the Second World War. It was and remains: a challenge to all those attempting a Faustian bargain with modern, industrial "civilization"; an inspiration for those seeking the vision and practical elaboration of a scheme for the restoration of agriculture and craftsmanship, as the foundation of a truly Catholic civilization; and a call to arms for those awaiting a clear signal heralding the start of today's most timely and essential Crusade.

HILAIRE BELLOC

Fr. H.E.G. Rope

*George Maxwell*

CDR. HERBERT SHOVE

Mgr. James Dey

Capt. Reginald Jebb

FR. JOHN MCQUILLAN

Harold Robbins

FEATURING AN INTRODUCTION BY DR. TOBIAS LANZ  
Dr. Lanz received his Ph.D in International Studies at the University of South Carolina, where he currently teaches Politics. His research and recent writings emphasize the impact of modernization on agrarian societies.

K.L. Kenrick

*"The Land Movement* will **PUT BACK THE CLOCK**  
as far as may be necessary....

When noon is

**ANGELUS-TIME**

the **CLOCK** is **RIGHT."**

—Harold Robbins

ISBN 0-9718286-0-1



9

780971 828605

