

DESIGN FOR THE FUTURE

BERNARDINE QUIRK, O.P.



It is the almost comic quality of all stock charges against the Church that their sole claim to consistency is their very inconsistency. Two thousand years ago, a certain Master in Israel stigmatized the phenomenon when He said to incredulous Jews, "But whereunto shall I esteem this generation to be like. It is like to children sitting in the marketplace. Who crying to their companions say: We have piped to you and you have not danced, we have lamented, and you have not mourned."¹ Down the centuries, those, who from the marts of the world have opposed that Master and His Church, have been both versatile and persistent. But the one distinguishing note of their combined attacks is a convenient and exasperating disregard for the elementary principle of contradiction.

Today, among the current fallacies concerning the position of the Church in the affairs of men, two dogmatically inconsistent accusations have become most insidious because they are most readily believed. And, strangely enough, both these errors have their common source in the one school of modern thought. That segment of the intelligentsia is commonly known as Pink Liberalism.

On the one hand, our doctrinaires of the dilettante Left, concede that in the Papal program for social reconstruction there is manifestly the expression of real humanitarianism, a provocative exposé of social and economic maladjustments, and an appealing plea for prodigal justice. But they refuse to accept either *Rerum Novarum* or *Quadragesimo Anno* as the firm outlines for a course of practical action. It is maintained with due graciousness that the Popes have indulged their critical talents rather well. That they have produced anything more than so much beautiful rhetoric, however, is not admitted.

Conversely, and quite in the same breath, this contingent of "intellectuals" pontifically declares that twentieth century Catholicism has placed its destiny in the laps of dictators. Because the Rome of St. Peter has realized a workable rapprochement with the Rome of

¹ Matt., XI, 16-17.

the Caesars and because, elsewhere, the Church seems to smile indulgently upon the incumbent regimes of Nationalist Spain, Portugal, Austria and Brazil, She manifestly seeks self-preservation beneath the protecting aegis of Fascism. And thus it is propagated that the Cross and the fasces are to be the double insignia of a clerico-fascism, the well-defined symbol of a new order imposed upon democratic peoples by the impedimenta of modern warfare, properly sanctified, of course, by the casuistic genius of the Vatican.

The genesis of this particular inconsistency is directly traceable to the comparatively recent alignment of more articulate Liberalism with that heterogeneous thing called the Popular Front. Progressively bankrupted in their political and social idealism, their philosophy of *laissez-faire* thoroughly discredited, and with ranks rapidly thinned by a rather general apostasy from the nineteenth century apotheosis of the Natural Man, in a gesture of pathetic desperation Liberals have set their fortunes with the destiny of the coalition groups. Capitalizing on this situation, Communist generalship, by a clever bit of opportunism, has sought and obtained domination of national Popular Fronts. Executing an about-face, on orders from the Comintern, the orthodox terminology of Marxism has been shelved, temporarily, for the more appealing phraseology of Liberalistic-Democracy. And, as a result of this convenient maneuver, the compact, highly efficient Communist minorities have engineered the other component factions of the Popular Fronts into the ridiculous position of defending the thesis that Communism offers the only democratic alternative to Fascism. Therefore, because the Papal Encyclicals are in no sense dependent upon the Marxian dialectic of economic determinism they are to be dispensed with as the futile yearnings of medieval visionaries. And because Mussolini, Franco, Salazar, Schuschnigg, and Vargas have not been summarily excommunicated, the Church is represented as conferring Her benign and categorical approbation upon their respective experiments in government.

Now, the really alarming aspect of this Popular Front inconsistency lies in this: it is rooted in that damnable thing, a half-truth. And half-truths are not only the most effective weapons against the Church but also form the subtle basis of Communist apologetics.

It is perfectly true, for instance, that the Papal program presents no definite economic theory. But it is a lie to assert that, because it refuses either to beguile with utopian mirages or to hypnotize with the roseate illusions of a panacea, it must be rejected as impractical. Both Divine Revelation and the cumulative knowledge of two thousand years form the realistic background of *Rerum Novarum*

and *Quadragesimo Anno*. Their structure rests, firmly, upon a thorough analysis of human nature. And their enunciation of positive principles for social conduct is rooted in a true understanding of Man. Unfortunately, however, Truth does not lend itself to catchword formulae.

It is perfectly true, also, that the Church has effected a *modus vivendi* with certain Fascist and reputedly Fascist governments. But it is a lie to maintain that She does not oppose the totalitarianism of the Fascist ideology as unequivocally as She condemns the Marxian dialectic of Communism. Pius XI, both in his 1926 Allocution to the College of Cardinals and his Encyclical *Non Abbiamo Bisogno*, asserts the uncompromising opposition of the Church to Fascistic claims of state absolutism. However, the fact of the matter is that in their relations with Catholicism these Fascist regimes (exclusive of Nazi Germany and a brief interlude in Italy) have not reduced their Totalitarianism from the theoretical to the practical order. It is undeniable that Fascism has within itself an inherent threat to the authority of the Church. She must be on Her guard, constantly. But as long as She is free to render to God the things that are God's, She admits no incongruity in rendering to Caesar the things that are justly Caesar's.

In any refutation of these widely propagated inconsistencies, however, a restriction to mere negatives cannot suffice. For, if the Papal program offers no definitive system of economics after the manner of the current panaceas, it must be demonstrated, forcefully, that it does contain the indispensable moral principles for rational and enduring rehabilitation. And, if orthodox Totalitarianism and Catholicism are mutually exclusive, it must be shown that, while resisting the pretensions of state absolutism, the Church proposes the skeletal framework, at least, of a social order in which the human personality will be held inviolate and legitimate political authority will be exercised, not for class or party, but for the common good. In short, an adequate answer to the modern challenge, whether such challenge emanates from the corner soapbox or the syndicated columns of the daily Press, is a persistent presentation and development of the Catholic concept of what is known as the corporative society. The existence of this Christian social order is presupposed as the necessary fundament for permanent economic reform. Its full realization obviates the possibility of the dictator. Admittedly, it is a design for the future. But, since the Church is eternal She can wait, patiently, until prodigal mankind emerges from the intellectual and moral chaos

of its own making and returns on its knees to the fount of Divine Wisdom.

The concept of a corporative society is neither novel nor exclusively Catholic. The purest political philosophies of the Greek and Roman civilization manifested the germinal idea of corporativism. But it remained for the Church, during the height of the Middle Ages, to give it a form of relative perfection. However, the growth of Nationalism in the later phases of this period, the vitiating effects of the Protestant revolt, and the subsequent rise of Liberalism, reduced to a minimum the influence of Catholicism in the affairs of men. And when Christendom no longer acknowledged the mother who had gone down into the shadows of death to give it life, it began to pay the penalty of filial ingratitude.

The re-assertion of traditional corporativism in the modern Papal documents on social problems is the culmination of a progressive development. Probably, the first dim sketch of its outlines is to be found in the Leonine Encyclical, *Quod Apostolici Muneris*. Thirteen years after the appearance of this pronouncement, the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* was issued containing a more definitive statement of the philosophical basis for Solidarism (a synonymous term for the Christian social order). In referring to the workmen's right to establish free associations, Pope Leo says:

All such societies, being free to exist, have the further right to adapt such rules and organizations as may best conduce to the attainment of their objects. We do not deem it possible to enter into definite details on the subject of organization. . . . Speaking summarily, We lay it down as a general and perpetual law, that the workmen's associations should be so organized and governed as to furnish the best and most suitable means for attaining what is aimed at, that is to say, *for helping each individual member to better his condition to the utmost, in body, mind, and property.*²

However, it is only in *Quadragesimo Anno* that we find full expression given to the design for the realization of corporativism's proper objects. In the second principal division of this Encyclical,³ Pope Pius interprets and amplifies the doctrines of *Rerum Novarum* under the sub-heading "Reconstruction of the Social Order" which, incidentally, is identical with the English title of the Encyclical itself. And here the Holy Father supplies those "definite details on the subject of organization" for which Pope Leo, prudently, considered his own age not prepared. After firmly stating that real social stability

² Italics mine.

³ See "Analytical Outline" in *Reorganization of Social Economy* by Oswald Von Nell-Breuning, S.J. (Milwaukee, 1936), p. 395. Translated by Bernard W. Brady, S.J.

can be attained only by "the reform of the social order and the correction of morals," Pius continues:

When We speak of the reform of the social order it is principally the State We have in mind. . . . Now this is the primary duty of the State and of all good citizens, *to abolish conflict between classes with divergent interests, and thus foster and promote harmony between the various ranks of society.*

The aim of social legislation must therefore be the re-establishment of vocational groups. . . . But there cannot be question of any perfect cure, except this opposition (between classes with divergent interests) be done away with, and well-ordered members of the social body come into being anew, *vocational groups* namely, *binding men together not according to the position they occupy in the labor market, but according to the diverse functions which they exercise in society.* For as nature induces those who dwell in close proximity to unite into municipalities, *so those who practise the same trade or profession, economic or otherwise, combine into vocational groups.*⁴

From the notions explicitly or implicitly contained in these significant quotations from the Papal Encyclicals, it is evident that the Popes envisage a socio-economic order established upon four cardinal principles. 1) The recognition of Man's social nature and the inviolability of his personality as creature of God. 2) The organic structure of human society and the determination of the individual's role in that organism on the basis of his functional or occupational activity. 3) The existence of free associations of free men, representing the diverse phases of human activity, and the hierarchical integration of these groups within an ordered social fabric. 4) The purposive direction of the interrelated units toward the attainment of the greatest good for the individual and the common good of the whole. An attempt is made, here, to describe, briefly, these four essential characteristics of corporativism.

I

In attempting the solution of any problem, it is axiomatic that first things should come first. Hence, if a new social order is proposed, it is necessary, primarily, to consider the true nature of Man for whose greater benefit the re-alignment of society is ordained. Any other approach to the question is tantamount to placing the cart before the horse.

With brilliant pen, Ross Hoffman puts it thus, "All really serious political and sociological thinking reposes ultimately on a theory of human nature. . . . For the man who proposes a certain kind of state or system of society is proposing, substantially, that we build a house for ourselves to live in, and it therefore makes rather a good

⁴ Italics mine.

deal of difference what kind of beings we are. A barn is a quite suitable house for cattle, but hardly the right kind of home for man; which suggests at once the great political importance of that philosophic and religious question as to whether man is merely one of the animals or something rather more than an animal."⁵

For those of the Faith, this "philosophic and religious question" of paramount importance, was answered on the first page of the penny Catechism. With succinct directness it was stated there, that "Man is a creature composed of body and soul and made to the image and likeness of God." And to the further interrogation, "Why did God make you?" the simple answer was given, "God made me to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him forever in the next."

These facts are the ultimates in human knowledge. They are the first principles of the Faith that is in us. Accepting them, unequivocally, we have certainty as to what we are, from whence we came, and where we are going. Upon their rejection, in whole or in part, life assumes the proportions of a huge question mark.

But, while these elementary truths are believed in their totality both by the Breton peasant and the Master of the Sacred Palace, their extreme simplification in the primers of Christian Doctrine is no longer enough. Nor has it ever been enough. For two thousand years, great intellects have given to the world an almost inexhaustible commentary upon their dogmatic significance, and, drawn from their practical implications, there is the stately edifice of Moral Theology. Moreover, in our own age, the comedy of errors known as Modern Thought, has lost contact so completely with the objective reality of fundamental things, that the simple "credo" of the faithful will neither impress nor convince those who must form with us the material element of a new society. Consequently, in our effort to re-orientate, to dispose minds and hearts for the ultimate realization of Christian corporativism, it is of first importance to supply the true, the Catholic answer to what has come to be known as "the mystery of man."

Centuries ago, Aristotle defined Man as a rational animal. No purely philosophic concept of the *species homo* could be more adequate. And, since its theological connotations have been clearly indicated by St. Thomas in the *Summa Theologica*,⁶ it can serve here as our definition. However, two related and necessary facts about Man must be included in even a cursory explanation of the terms "animal"

⁵ *The Will to Freedom* (New York, 1935), p. 67.

⁶ Ia, qq. 75-90; Ia IIae, qq. 22-48.

and "rational." One is a postulate, the other is a logical deduction.

Presupposed to the obvious existence of the being Man, is the certain existence of the Being God. This is neither a gratuitous assumption nor a convenient hypothesis of the theologian. Rather it is capable of full demonstration by reason alone.⁷ Furthermore, the creature Man is wholly unintelligible unless he be viewed in relation to his Creator, God. Man is what he is because he has within himself the spark of Divinity.

Briefly, then, "Man, a unified nature composed of spirit and matter, is on the dividing line between two worlds."⁸ Possessed of biological and sentient functions, like those of the animals over whom he reigns as lord, he has an essential animality. As an animal he shares with animals, in general, the processes of lower plant life such as growth, nutrition, and reproduction. With other animals he has the physiological equipment for respiration, circulation of blood, digestion, glandular activity, etc. Then, too, he has a complicated cerebrocentric nervous system which is highly sensitive and automatically responsive to proper stimuli. As a further aid to his sentient life he has a complexus of emotions which supply the impetus for a variety of human activity. In all these physical characteristics, with the exception of rational emotional life which is peculiar to himself, Man has a real identity with the beast. It is only when we regard him as a rational being that we can say with the Psalmist that God has made him "a little less than the angels."

Man has within himself as the principle of all those actions which make him something more than an animal, a human soul. This soul is the form of the human suppositum and differs radically from the soul of the beast in that it is both spiritual and subsistent. It can exist independently of the body and is the adequate reason for the distinctively intellectual life of Man. Endowed with an intellect and will, faculties of this human soul, Man is capable of purposive action. That is, the action toward an end which he shares in common with all created beings, differs in him from inanimate and subordinate animate life, in that he not only knows the end intellectually but also is able to choose voluntarily the proper means to attain that end. In other words, because of his deliberative will, man is capable of self-determination.

Furthermore, in all strictly human acts, Man as a free agent acts not only for an end but also acts for an ultimate end, perfect

⁷ *Summa Theol.*, Ia, q. 2, a. 2.

⁸ Grabmann, Martin, *Thomas Aquinas, His Personality and Thought* (New York, 1928), p. 122. Translated by Virgil Michel, O.S.B.

happiness. This ultimate end is perfect beatitude which results from "the possession of real good that satiates totally every desire of the human will." And because only God Himself can wholly satisfy Man, perfect beatitude consists in the Beatific Vision which "constitutes the highest act of the highest human faculty, the intellect, in regard to the highest object, God, Himself, pure intelligence."⁹

However, since it is obvious that Man is unable to attain to perfect beatitude on this earth, he must find relative happiness in imperfect beatitude. This imperfect beatitude consists primarily in the knowledge and love of God and the practice of virtue, and, secondarily, or instrumentally, in the goods of the body and an amicable association with other men.

According to the Thomistic concept, morality consists in a transcendental relation of human acts with a norm which is, ultimately, the Eternal Law of God. Moreover, the Eternal Law, existing in the Mind of the Creator from all eternity and directing the entire universe towards the perfection of the common good, is impressed upon the heart and mind of Man through the Natural Law. This Law supplies him with the activating principles of all moral action. "Do good and avoid evil." Conformity with this absolute, external norm of morality makes an act good. Disconformity constitutes it as evil. Derived from the notion of the supreme norm of morality there is also the concept of duty and correlative right.

So much, then, for Man as an individual. But the concept of Man, however, is not exhausted by an enumeration of the essential characteristics which make him a distinct rational being. Over and above his individuality he possesses an impulse to associate with his kind. Indeed, the full personality of Man is utterly incomprehensible unless this urge is considered to be as essential a constitutive of his nature as his individuality. This fact is a logical deduction from the Aristotelian definition quoted above. And thus we come to a consideration of Man as a social being.

In providing strictly rational proof for the social nature of Man, both Leo and Pius employ the cogent reasoning of St. Thomas. "It is a demand of Man's nature," says the Angelic Doctor, "that he incline to life in society and state, that he live in social fellowship with many others. . . . Nature supplies the animals with food, a protective dress of fur, and means of defense against enemies, like teeth, horns, nails or fleetness of foot. Man was not equipped by nature with any of these, but he received reason instead, so that with its aid his hands might procure all these things for him. But the individual

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

man would never be able to do that, if dependent solely upon himself . . . hence the need of living in fellowship with others." As an additional argument St. Thomas holds that because Man has not the highly developed instincts of the beast he "must supply the deficiency by means of his reason which is only possible for him if he lives together with others. In a social fellowship one man helps the other, and various persons help by the invention of various means." And, finally, he concludes with the most emphatic reason of all, "The clearest indication of the social nature of man is his power of speech, the ability to express his ideas clearly to others, while the animals can express their feelings only in a very general way."¹⁰

In a subsequent article it will be demonstrated that there is a form of society which can both guarantee the inviolability of the human personality and, at the same time, satisfy the demands of individual-social human nature. Most certainly these primary ends of any true social order have not been realized by the *laissez-faire* philosophy of the nineteenth century Liberalist-Capitalist state. Nor are they present realities in the modern Fascist Super-State. And, manifestly, they are impossible of attainment in the mechanistic proletariat of Karl Marx's international Communism. They can become actualities, only in the hierarchical organism of the Christian Corporate Society.¹¹

¹⁰ *De Regimine principum*, Lib. I, cap. 1.

¹¹ Note: The second and concluding part of this article will appear in the September issue.