

see that what he has in rudimentary form is to be found in its fulness in Christianity.

In the evolution of Russia a new man is emerging—not new so much as a reversion to a more sane type. ‘The new world which is being unfolded to our eyes contains organic spontaneous and real values hidden by a system of shams and illusions . . . This conception is a departure from pure materialism and sociological determinism and rejects the mechanistic theory, of which, incidentally, Marx was never an adherent.’ ‘In spite of the Marxist conception of the indispensable class war, one feels a new breath . . . a timid breath, a flickering light, but a light that once kindled may perhaps never be extinguished.’²³

R. P. WALSH.

THE APOSTOLATE OF CHRIST THE WORKER

THE Apostolate of Christ the Worker, what does it convey? . . . It is a call going out from our Lord’s sacred humanity to all men, asking them to heed the lesson of the thirty years he spent in the carpenter’s home at Nazareth, supposed to be ‘the son of Joseph.’

This call goes out to a world which takes its values mainly from material criteria, forgetful of the interior preparation of the life of the soul, which alone is the safeguard of worth and stability. We are so easily caught by pride, the self-complacency of the ‘practising Catholic,’ self-seeking, and self-pity, or we are downtrodden, worn out through drudgery, forgetful of the divine instinct, by which every man longs for God in his heart.

A great number of the faithful continue to practise their devotions, while taking a thoroughly materialist view on all practical issues and clinging openly to a materialist mode of life. One part of their lives is ‘devotionalised,’ the other part ‘materialised,’ whereas the whole of their lives should be ‘spiritualised.’ This is the great lesson of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, that he as Christ the Worker has *reconciled matter and spirit in his daily working life*. It is this reconciliation of which the world stands in need to-day, and towards which the Apostolate of Christ the Worker strives.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 50 and 55.

AUTHORITY AND HUMILITY.

We tend to divide our Lord's life into separate compartments and attribute his 'teaching' and 'preaching' exclusively to his public life, while both are already embedded in the example of his hidden working life. Is there not a special meaning in the way the God-child of twelve reveals his authority in the temple to his mother? Even she, the humblest and most perfect among the creatures, has to be reminded that she owes the trust confided to her to the self-denial, the utter humility of supreme authority. He was not her possession; he had to carry out his Father's errand on earth. The lesson of the scene lies in the fact that divine authority gives way to redeeming submission and obedience to human authority. Courteously our Lord reminds his mother that he of his own free will, which is identical with the will of his Father, has chosen her for the instrument of his Incarnation and the humble working man Joseph for his foster-father, that by his free choice he lives the carpenter's life in the home of Nazareth, humbly obedient, sharing the round of the working day.

We have hardly any clues as to how prayer and work were carried on at Nazareth. We know that our Lady kept the words of her child in her heart and that she pondered the words of the shepherds. This is meditation and contemplation. What a meditation for her all the way back from Jerusalem, the obedient child at her side, and later in her home, watching and tending him, his words never leaving her mind. How her contemplative powers must have grown in proportion with our Lord's 'advancing in wisdom and age, and grace with God and men.' He grew up in her own house, under her hands, the mirror of his eyes reflecting God's thoughts. God had taken human shape and form in her, in human shape and form he shared her and St. Joseph's life, shared the life of all working humanity.

Like our Lady we must take the words of Revelation into our daily lives, especially the words our Lord spoke to the multitude, or teaching and correcting his disciples. *We* are the multitude, *we* are his disciples. How good to remember that God served his own creatures as a humble worker in the home of Nazareth, or that he came to 'preach deliverance to the captives and sight to the blind, to set at liberty those that are bruised . . .' We find both moral strength and spiritual consolation in the company and example of the worker of Nazareth.

Our Lord's life should penetrate our working lives, and we can let him in by opening the Scriptures to ourselves and our neighbours

as words spoken to us and waiting for a reply from us. We can 'ponder' these words and by doing so bring work and contemplation into line. We are spiritualising our work, we are 'quicken'd' by the spirit: we work faster, less burdened, sometimes with a song through the sanctifying touch of our Lord's company, because each time we remember him he makes himself felt.

As our Lady went on living with him after he had left home, as she went on living with him after his death and resurrection, we must 'learn back' to live with him in our working lives and help others to live with him as Mary of Nazareth did. His company can become as real for us as it was for her. This and the many other lessons that the Holy Family teaches should become the special study of Apostolate members who wish to become co-operators of Christ the Worker. The blend of humility and authority, which particularly marks Christ's life as a worker, carries a message which the devotion to Christ the Worker will help to spread. It will restore an equilibrium of values by teaching humility to 'pride and prejudice' and hope and self-respect to the destitute.

THE CHALLENGE OF CHRIST THE WORKER.

Christ the Worker, God and Man, is leading and challenging the world to-day as he led and challenged the world of his day. To meet this challenge in every sphere of work is the aim of the Apostolate of Christ the Worker. It was founded in 1916 by Fr. Jules M. Schuh, parish priest of the church of St. Clotilde in Geneva, who, after long experience gained amongst the workers clearly saw the need of caring for their spiritual as well as their material needs, and of making use of their actual daily toil for this purpose. He became convinced that no better means of accomplishing this existed than by putting before their minds the example of Christ the redeemer himself, who was not ashamed to be known 'as the carpenter's son,' and even to be a carpenter.¹

In April, 1921, Pope Benedict XV erected the Apostolate of Christ the Worker into a primary or Central Association. He writes: '. . . This devout work was established in the year 1916, with the approval of the Bishop of the Diocese, to labour for the sanctification and salvation of the souls of the workers, and this principally by bringing to their minds the *merits and example of the hidden life of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* in the village of Nazareth, and we, who have had so long in our mind the desire of

¹ From the Statutes of the 'Apostolate,' p. 5.

providing for the spiritual necessities of those who earn their daily bread by the labour of their hands, have of our own accord judged *it good to foster the work thus begun . . .*' In July, when his strength began to fail, Fr. Schuh entrusted the Apostolate to the care of the Dominicans. In May, 1931, the Master General of the Order of Preachers accepted the statutes of the Association. He writes: '*. . . And through the Worship and Imitation of Jesus the Worker each will be able to co-operate in bringing about the peace of Christ in Christ's Kingdom, that peace, which the Supreme Pontiff Leo XIII, surnamed the Workers' Pope, and our present Holy Father Pius XI have never ceased to promote with all their strength. There can be no doubt that the Apostolate of Jesus the Worker will do much to establish this peace. . .*' To cultivate this Worship and Imitation of Christ the Worker the first English branch of the Apostolate was instituted at St. Joseph's House of Hospitality, 129 Malden Road, London, N.W.5, in January, 1939.

• WORSHIP.

Father Schuh had centred the Apostolate in six Mass Intentions, which lift some acute social problems out of the natural into the supernatural order, where Christ's redeeming power is at its fullest: in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Fr. Gerard Meath, O.P., deals with these Mass Intentions in another article. There is, however, one feature common to these intentions which should be stressed in this context as an incentive for unifying worship and action: all are offered in honour of Christ the Worker, as a sacrifice of reparation for the sins and omissions committed against the dignity of work and workers, against justice and charity. The worship of Christ the Worker in the Mass is the heart of the Apostolate.

Action in honour of Christ the Worker springs from our union with him in Mass and Holy Communion. We only dare to encourage the 'front-line fighters' in the battle which is raging in the social structure to-day, if we have a wall of Eucharistic prayer behind us. We have to approach the matter in a missionary spirit, and be as practical as any apostle who adjusts his methods to the psychology of his hearers.

We may here anticipate a possible objection: that all this is already being done or attempted by an advanced guard of Catholic Youth, by the Young Christian Workers and their adult organisation, the League of Christian Workers. But by their very nature the Y.C.W. and L.C.W. are for one class only, while the devotion to Christ the Worker has a claim on everybody, and, moreover, *offers unique possibilities for a renewal of the spiritual life.* Naturally,

members of the Apostolate will do all they can to support movements like the Y.C.W. and L.C.W.: in fact, two new Y.C.W. sections have sprung up through contacts established at the Apostolate centre.

Our worship of Christ the Worker, which is essentially an act of reparation and thanksgiving, will, we hope, one day find its solemn expression in the introduction of the Feast of Christ the Worker, the Church's official praise of the labours of Christ, the sanctifying and redeeming '*Labor Christi.*'

HOUSES OF HOSPITALITY.

The message of Nazareth is the inspiration in the Houses of Hospitality in America and England. Christ the Worker is the invisible host, the leader of a House of Hospitality, whose precepts must be obeyed. Imitation of Christ the Worker begins for those who find their whole-time vocation in the works of a House of Hospitality, by becoming (or remaining) poor for the sake of others as Christ 'became poor for our sakes.' Admitted, this voluntary poverty may sometimes be the source of anxiety, but it certainly is a greater source of joys and blessings. Many of them are unforgotten in the records of St. Joseph's House. It is logical that the following of Christ the Worker should lead to a life of sacrifice and joy, because it is he who is pressing us towards the mark. Such a life needs special training of our spiritual, intellectual and moral powers. The social and apostolic formation demanded by the statutes of the Apostolate begins to provide this training to small groups, who take the Worker of Nazareth for their model, leader and teacher.

Houses of Hospitality do more than provide shelter and food to the needy: their guests are quickly drawn into something like a family circle, irrespective of class distinction. They become a meeting and discussion centre for 'Workers' and 'Scholars.' Contact and co-operation with public social services is maintained on a basis of mutual respect. During the past two years public organizations have repeatedly called upon St. Joseph's House of Hospitality, when they found themselves hampered by regulations where such immediate assistance as was needed could be given by a small Home of Hospitality; particularly on Saturday nights, after shops had closed.

Similar Hospitality centres, run in a similar spirit, could do a lot of good all over the country. They offer an invaluable approach to non-Catholics who share some of our social interests or like to ask casual questions about the Faith. Social work centred in and radiating from a House of Hospitality bears in itself the roots of a

solid social culture—an aspect far too little valued yet, but nevertheless of great importance.

Culture, emerging from such poor quarters? (We hear an echo of 'can anything good come out of Nazareth?'). But there does seem to have been a real culture in the home at Nazareth, a culture nurtured on 'an intimate knowledge of the Scriptures and 'piety and fear of the Lord.' Both can be practised to-day (and under any government) as they were practised then. Both are elements in the social and apostolic formation of members of the Apostolate of Christ the Worker. It is a sign of organic growth, that the first English Apostolate centre should develop from a House of Hospitality.

The sores in our social system are laid open in many lives, which pass through such a house. The growing insight into the spiritual, void of such wrecked lives and the undue material difficulties and moral degradation undermining many a family life, made some Apostolate members seek to extend the work outside the House: they formed a Trade Union and Social Action group, in which members of other Christian organizations co-operate. Its purpose is to carry out the Christian programme of social justice and it started its activities by freely discussing and propagating the five social standards of the Joint Letter in Trade Union Branches and Executives.

It can however never be stressed sufficiently that all our actions in whatever direction they may lie, are the outcome of our Apostolate Masses. The Apostolate of Christ the Worker is essentially spiritual in foundation and essentially practical in aspect. The souls with which Christ unites us in his Mystical Body, the souls of believers and unbelievers of whom he makes us the 'keepers' are incarnate in those whom we meet, support or oppose in social, everyday life. If the points we raise in arguments, or resolutions which we ask our Trade Union friends to pass, deal with economic or material interests—they are clearly seen as a means towards an end, never as an end in themselves. They are part of our work for souls, as the whole Apostolate of Christ the Worker in every sphere of its present and intended scope, desires and strives to be nothing, but: *Work for Souls.*

C. M. SPITZ,

*Secretary of the Apostolate of Christ
the Worker.*