

LÉON HARMEL

CHRISTIAN

DEMOCRACY

ADDRESS DELIVERED

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AT THE WORKERS' CONGRESS OF TOURS



PARIS

A^{ne} M^{on} GAUME ET C^{ie}

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THIS EDITION

This is an English translation of the original French text, made for the website leonharmel.com in 2026. It follows the original sentence by sentence, without cuts or additions.

The text is given in full, translated from the 1897 edition. It has been typeset in the spirit of the original: title pages and headings follow the layout of the book; the illustration has been cut out of the digitised document and restored.

The numbered notes are those of the original work; here they are numbered continuously from beginning to end. The notes marked with an asterisk * have been added for this edition, to shed light on the historical context.

Léon Harmel, le Bon Père du Val-des-Bois

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CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY



ADDRESS BY MR LÉON HARMEL



My dear friends,

You have kindly called me to the honorary presidency of the second regional congress of Tours. I thank you for it. You could not have given me greater pleasure, for my life belongs to the Christian workers.

I have attended your sessions with joy. In them I have felt my confidence grow in the soul of the people illuminated by faith. The Federation of Christian Workers of the Centre and the West has shown its vitality by the number of its representatives, by the importance of the work produced and by the wisdom of the resolutions adopted.

Your brothers of the Nord, of Paris, of Reims and of Lyon, who have sent their delegates, applaud your courage; they proclaim with us that these gatherings are full of promise.

THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT

ABROAD

You belong to the great Christian democratic movement which is rising in every nation, to echo the voice of Leo XIII and to prepare the reign of Christian justice and solidarity.

The ideas that guide you are as old as Christianity. One may say that they were realised, to a large extent, in the Middle Ages, through a communal liberty unknown in our day, which gave crafts-

men a real social power, and through a freedom of association from which we are very far, in spite of the law of 1884.

These ideas suffered a rather long eclipse through the influence of the jurists. They were brought back into honour from the beginning of this century. That was the dawn of the Catholic revival. They have been encouraged by the Papacy, and especially by Leo XIII.

They have developed in Austria, where the Christian democrats have won brilliant triumphs in the recent electoral battles. We do not speak of Switzerland and America, which are the true fatherlands of democracy. In the north of Italy, we have hailed the marvellous flowering of popular ideas and institutions. The diocese of Bergamo has numerous associations, one of which alone gathers sixty-five thousand farmers. The general assemblies are held in the meadows and bring together as many as 15,000 and 20,000 men. The congresses of Fiesole and Padua brought out the agreement of the bishops, the clergy, the intellectuals and the workers in this great movement of ideas that set out from the Vatican. In Belgium and in Holland, our friends have united the Catholics on this ground. Lastly, in Spain, the most distinguished minds are becoming ardent propagators of democracy.

THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT

IN FRANCE

France has been outstripped on this point as on many others; and men sincerely devoted to the good still regard as a disquieting novelty what the neighbouring nations recognise as a vital necessity. Among us, it is the workers who began the democratic organisation. The congresses of Reims in 1893 and in 1894, and the many regional congresses that led up to the national congress of 1896, have marked the various stages of their efforts.

The Pope has blessed and approved these congresses. He has followed them with the most fatherly and the most benevolent solicitude. I can still hear him saying to me, in an audience that followed one of these assemblies: “We have read the address of the worker president of the congress of Reims, and We found it excellent in every respect, wise and measured.”

I hasten to say it: the workers’ organisation which was born in Reims, whose congress of 1893 was its first public manifestation, and which now covers part of France with its federations, does not claim to be the whole democratic party.

It knows that it is only a fraction of it; but that fraction intends to remain autonomous, that is to say that, while wishing to unite with the other fractions of the movement on general questions, it wants to direct its own affairs itself and to remain a workers’ organisation.

As we shall say in a moment, it will receive with gratitude the advice of the clergy, of the employers and of the intellectuals, but while keeping its independence.

Thank God, the democratic movement is organising itself in other circles too. This expansion is the sign of the movement’s vitality.

Indeed, an army is made up of several regiments, and different arms are needed to support the common effort. It is therefore necessary that, in the world of labour, the employers and the tradesmen, and in the intellectual world properly so called, the clergy, the writers, those who have devoted themselves to teaching and the men of leisure should come to an understanding, so that each may bring his brotherly help to the great struggle for social justice.

We had the consolation of witnessing this agreement at the congress of Lyon last November. The throng of members of the congress from every walk of life, seven thousand in number, showed the progress of the ideas.

A certain number of employers have joined the movement; they have understood that, to fight against socialism, democratic organisa-

tion is the only truly effective means. Recently, a meeting was held in the Nord at which the employers were seriously represented.

Last Sunday, 30 May, I presided at Lyon over an assembly where the young workers gave us striking proof of the soundness of our method. There we heard manual workers and simple clerks. They moved us by the eloquence of facts as much as by the loftiness of their thoughts and the fire of their speech¹.

So the movement stirred up by Leo XIII has won every field; from now on it will grow in spite of opposition.

THE WORKERS' ORGANISATION IN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY

Allow me here to confine myself to the workers' movement, in which your confidence has involved me from the beginning.

What is the distinctive character of your organisation? It is to be autonomous, Christian and active.

I. IT IS AUTONOMOUS

Your organisation is autonomous, in the sense that it includes only workers, and that, while seeking the light of the consultative members, you govern yourselves.

It is objected that purely workers' movements have come to nothing, and that it took the direct government of the intellectuals to reach a serious result. In this connection, the Allemanist group in the present socialist party is cited.

We shall answer this objection with history: yes, it is true, in the course of the centuries purely workers' organisations have often

1. General assembly of the Regional Federation of the study groups of the National Union. This Federation comprises 51 study circles with 1,950 members (from the Rhône and the neighbouring departments).

failed when they were guided only by human interests and class passions.

But quite different was the result of the workers' groups inspired by Christ. They became all-powerful over the whole of society.

At the origin of Christianity, as the Holy Father reminds us in the Encyclical *Rerum novarum*, the workers, bereft of wealth and power, managed to win the favour of the rich and the protection of the powerful; they managed to overcome the hesitations of the ruling class of the time.

Later, the same popular thrust prevented France from becoming Protestant at the time of the League. Later still, it kept the deposit of the faith through the universal impiety of the upper classes during the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth. Is it not to the people of craftsmen and workers, to their stubborn hold on the faith of their fathers, that several Catholic sociologists of our time owe it that they adore the God whom their forebears fought against?

Even today, if France has not been officially made Protestant in spite of the complicity of our rulers and the unconscious blindness of Catholics, to whom do we owe it, if not to the remnant of a faith often latent but always alive, deep in the soul of the people: witness those French soldiers who, on our soil of Algeria, preferred death to embracing the Koran?

I therefore believe myself entitled to proclaim, from the history of the past and from the examples of the present, that the most thoroughly Christian part of France is still the working people; in spite of appearances, baptism has left deep roots in their soul, which is ceaselessly drawn closer to God by work and sacrifice.

That is why I will say again to our friends the workers: As long as you remain Christians, be autonomous. As soon as you cease to rely frankly on Christ, then and only then accept the government of others, for you will have become incapable of conducting your own affairs.

Authorities in favour of autonomy.

And now, is this autonomy in any respect hostile to anyone at all?

Are purely workers' associations anti-social? I answer no, and I rely on three authorities that no one will dispute: the Pope, the Bishops, reason.

In his Encyclical on the Condition of the Workers, Leo XIII says expressly: "It is with pleasure that We see associations of this kind being formed everywhere, *whether composed of workers alone*, or mixed, uniting at the same time workers and employers. It is to be wished that they should increase their number and the effectiveness of their action."

In the declaration agreed in Rome in April 1895 between Messrs Féron-Vrau and Léon Harmel, under the eyes of the Holy Father, who revised and modified the text, article 2 expressly reserves the freedom of the workers to found unions or associations of which they would be the *sole* members.

In the programme adopted at Malines on 5 March 1895 by the general meeting of the bishops and diocesan delegates of Belgium, article 3 stipulates that the *professional unions shall be mixed or composed of workers only*. It adds: *They must be organised in such a way that, while on the one hand they are not hostile to the employers or threatening to their authority or their rights, on the other hand they provide the workers with an effective remedy against the ills they may have to suffer in the isolation of individualism*. Do these lines not give the programme of the democratic unions?

A pact of union, based on the declaration agreed in Rome and on the programme of Malines, was signed at Reims on 24 October 1896 by the Christian Industrialists and warmly approved by illustrious French Prelates, notably by His Eminence Cardinal Langénieux and His Grace the Archbishop of Cambrai.

Lastly, the logic of reason and of experience shows that the best organisation is the one formed among equals.

Active members and consultative members.

You have required two conditions for being an active member with a deliberative vote in your congresses: the first, to be a worker in the broad sense of the word²; the second, to belong to a regularly constituted group, a very wise second condition, which gives a serious basis to your organisation. You have taken the most effective means of forming among yourselves educated men, speakers when needed, and above all of developing initiative, which is too easily crushed in mixed meetings. This was already the method that had succeeded for you in your Christian social study circles, to educate yourselves and to make the notion of responsibility entirely practical through the very exercise of that responsibility.

Allow me here to look back for a few moments on my personal experience. All my life I have worked for the rise of the people, through the restoration of initiative and responsibility. I thought that, for so delicate an undertaking, one had above all to study the living book, that is to say the human person in its manifestations and its tendencies. So I lived with the workers; I set my heart against their hearts to feel and understand all their beating. I observed that, in mixed meetings, if the responsibility does not belong frankly to the workers, if they do not feel completely at home, there is, in spite of all the goodwill of those present, a certain pressure, unconscious it is true, but enough to prevent the worker from overcoming his natural shyness and expressing his thoughts freely. From then on intellectual education becomes difficult, for one knows well only what one has ex-

2. Littré defines the worker as one who works with his hands in various trades. The national Christian workers' congress of Reims in 1896 likewise recognised the status of worker in the farmer, the craftsman and the small shopkeeper, provided they employ no wage earners.

pressed and taught oneself, and the worker must be free enough to try to make his comrades share his convictions.

That is why you have kept the chairmanship and the full responsibility of your meetings, while inviting to them, as consultative members, the devoted priests and the educated men who are kind enough to bring you, with self-denial, the fruit of their studies and their experience.

It seems to me that you have perfectly understood the true role of the clergy and of the intellectuals. They are there to remind you of the general principles, without which nothing fruitful can be done, to give you exact notions on many points that you have not had the time to study, but not to deliberate and act in your place. They can provide you with the truth that sets free, but it is for you to translate it into facts, by applying it to the situation that is your own.

I know how eager you are for teaching, with what confidence and what gratitude you accept the word of the priest and of the educated Christian who are kind enough to satisfy your thirst to learn. You have thus solved the difficult problem of securing prudent inspiration for yourselves, while maintaining a necessary freedom of initiative and the autonomous government of your groups.

Security provided by autonomy.

There is no cause for any anxiety in this freedom. For experience shows that the rash opinions and violent decisions that are feared can only be the work of theorists accustomed to speculations of thought. The worker is involved in real life; he is a witness, and often an actor, in the struggles caused by competition and by a liberal organisation as disastrous to the employers as to the workers. In his life of daily toil he acquires a practical sense that puts him on his guard against chimerical solutions. And so, every time he is left to himself, his resolutions have a character of moderation and fairness that has always struck me. What is presented as a danger therefore seems to me a safeguard; on the other hand, what is offered to us as a guarantee might well become a legitimate cause for anxiety.

Our adversaries have not been mistaken about the scope of our movement. They have pointed out the peril to their fellow believers. They see in this organisation the only serious danger to socialism. One of their newspapers repeated it again these last few days: “What people do not see is that the thrust comes from below and from everywhere.”

As for me, I have always encouraged you in the way of responsibility and initiative through complete autonomy. I firmly believe that you must remain faithful to it if you wish to reach the popular masses in earnest and to win their confidence.

This system has allowed you to develop the activity needed in your daily battles. You do not have the *impedimenta* that so often bind men of standing, who are obliged to spare persons and things. You have your freedom of movement, and it is thanks to it that you do good work.

Action of like upon like. A providential law.

The law of the action of like upon like is essentially a providential law. The good Lord could have taken upon himself alone the redemption of mankind; yet he does not wish it to take place without our participation. He has entrusted to each one the care of his neighbour, and we must all be co-workers of Christ.

The truth, formerly reserved for the elite, was to be proclaimed to the multitude; this is the sign that Our Lord gives of his divine mission. For this propaganda he chose to make use of simple fishermen, workers despised in the eyes of the world. Abbé Fouard, in his *Histoire des premières années du christianisme*, tells us how the Gospel was spread in Rome by the slaves and the common people. And so what contempt the philosophers of the time, Celsus for example, show for the Church, which was, they say, “nothing but a rabble of slaves and base artisans. An exaggerated disdain, no doubt, but one which attests that at the origin the great number of believers came from the lower classes”³.

The Sovereign Pontiff recalls it in his Encyclical, where he says:

“We know that in the first ages of the Church her members were reproached with their poverty as a crime, condemned as they were to live on alms or on their work. But, bereft as they were of wealth and power, they managed to win the favour of the rich and the protection of the powerful. They could be seen diligent, hard-working, peaceable, models of justice and above all of charity. At the sight of a life so perfect and of morals so pure, all prejudices were dispelled, sarcasm fell silent, and the fictions of an inveterate superstition vanished little by little before Christian truth.”

What the people of the first centuries did, the workers of the nineteenth century can do. They can bring back the social reign of Jesus

3. *Saint Pierre et les premières années du Christianisme*, by Abbé C. Fouard, page 403. Victor Lecoffre, rue Bonaparte, Paris.

Christ and, through him, deliver their brothers from the yoke of the liberals, the Jews and the Freemasons^{*}.

II. IT IS CHRISTIAN

Your organisation is *Christian*; you have written at the head of your programme: *Religion, family, property, fatherland*, four affirmations that separate you for ever from the socialists.

You have taken the cross as your standard, because you know that it is the only source of liberty, of justice and of true fraternity.

Even today, what do we see in the nations where the cross is not honoured? The darkness of ignorance, the ignominy of slavery, the bloody horror of barbarism, as in Turkey.

You have studied history in your study circles, and you have observed that before the Christian era, if one excepts the small people of God, the whole of mankind, like a vile herd, was systematically plundered by the oppressors.

The history of government, among the most vaunted peoples, is in a way nothing but the science of making the most of the human cattle. Rome in this respect was the model.

The Church had much to do to stop the depredations of the powerful. From the third century to our own day, her ceaseless work has been to raise barriers to protect the weak against the wild beasts around them. An admirable thing! It took a saint for each of these barriers: the right of sanctuary, to which the name of St Chrysostom

^{*} **NOTE** In this address (p. 13, 16, 19 and 22), Léon Harmel ranks the Jews, always alongside the Freemasons, among the adversaries of the Christian workers. This hostile language was then widespread in a large part of the French Catholic press and circles, in the years of the Dreyfus affair, which deeply divided France after the unjust conviction for treason of a Jewish officer, Captain Alfred Dreyfus, in 1894; the Christian democratic congresses of those years (Lyon, 1896-1898) bore its mark. Such language does not appear in his works on the mill, the *Manuel d'une corporation chrétienne* (1877) and the *Catéchisme du patron* (1889). We reproduce these lines out of fidelity to the document: they belong to their time, and this edition does not make them its own.

is gloriously attached; the Truce of God, of which St Odilo of Cluny was the craftsman; the shelter of the guilds, which St Louis definitively codified; the ecclesiastical tribunal, protector of the oppressed, on whose pediment shines the name of St Yves; chivalry, which again recalls St Louis to us; the charter of human liberty, formulated by St Gregory VII in his struggle against the encroachments of Caesar on conscience and on justice; the prohibition of usury, pronounced by the Holy Fathers and formulated scientifically by the founder of the true science of political and social economy, St Thomas; the rule of the Third Order, destructive of feudal tyranny, by St Francis of Assisi. Then comes the invasion of paganism. Four centuries pass, during which the priests are relegated to the sacristies. Mankind becomes pagan again; at the same time the reign of oppression begins anew. All liberties founder; the workers see themselves stripped of the reserves accumulated over the centuries to relieve their misfortunes. The fortress of the guilds is destroyed; the craftsmen and the workers are delivered defenceless to the appetites of the powerful. The law is made once more for the exploitation of the weak, to favour speculation and monopoly at the expense of labour.

Usury has reconquered the sovereignty it enjoyed in pagan Rome.

The intervention of Leo XIII.

It was then that the great Pontiff Leo XIII arose. Taking up again the traditions of the Church, he pointed out the real causes of the ills from which society suffers: the destruction of the guilds without putting anything in their place, from which was born the regime of individualism; every religious principle and sentiment driven out of the laws and public institutions by the oppressors, who know that an atheist people is ripe for slavery; the workers, isolated and defenceless, delivered to the mercy of inhuman masters and to the greed of unbridled competition; a voracious usury in new forms, and the concentration of wealth in a few hands.

The most relentless defenders of the social order see only one enemy: socialism. They are angered by the bold men who lay hands on the holy ark of economic liberalism. Blind men, who do not see that socialism is only a consequence, and that the effects will remain as long as the causes that engender them have not been attacked.

Does the Encyclical on the condition of the workers not appear to you as the greatest event of this time? In it we find again the holy boldness of the first centuries of the Church. From the very beginning, it states that the workers are for the most part in undeserved misery, whereas we have heard economists, even Christian ones, assert that unfortunate workers have only what they deserve. The Holy Father has made a cry of justice ring out in a world that claimed to cure everything by charity.

Do you remember the motto chosen by Leo XIII for the commemorative medal of the unforgettable pilgrimage of 1891:

“Merces operariorum clamat in aures Domini.”

“The wages of the workers cry out in the ears of the Lord.”

Who then would have dared to fling such a word at our capitalist society?

The Vicar of Jesus Christ went further. Overturning the notions of Caesarian law, taught from every chair (in the state universities and in the independent ones), he proclaimed that, in the question of wages, the justice of the contract does not depend solely on the free consent of the parties.

“Let the employer and the worker, then, make as many and such agreements as they please; let them come to terms, notably on the amount of the wage; above their free will there is a law of natural justice, higher and older, namely that the wage must not be insufficient to keep a sober and honest worker.”

This truth rests on arguments that we should all learn by heart and meditate upon.

The democratic abbés.

Could such language be heard by the Jewish and Masonic race that oppresses us^{*} without provoking deep irritation? No, certainly not. But how was its author to be attacked? In every nation, the immense army of the workers acclaimed Leo XIII as a liberator.

Before this popular enthusiasm, in the face of this authority won over minds and hearts, there was nothing for it but to dissemble.

They fell upon the propagators of this awkward truth, and, from every side, there came the most violent and the most unjust attacks against the priests and the laymen who echo the voice of Leo XIII.

Poor democratic abbés, with what invective would you be showered if you dared to speak like St James, like St John Chrysostom, St Ambrose, St Augustine and so many other Fathers of the Church?

You are reproached with a few imprudences, a few excesses of language.

Do you believe that the monks of the Middle Ages, who braved the old keeps, who stood up before the mighty lords clad in iron to demand justice for the weak, do you believe that their language was always well balanced⁴?

No, certainly not. But these imperfections vanish in the eyes of history before the greatness of their mission; they were dispensers of justice and peacemakers; it was they who won personal liberty, the communal charters and all the goods of which our civilisation is proud. They were the great voice of justice which once made itself heard through the prophets who were massacred, through the popes and the priests whom the powerful have always persecuted. It is the same passion for truth and justice that today inspires the generous

^{*} **NOTE** See the note on page 13.

⁴ See the *Histoire de saint Cyrille*, Bishop of Alexandria, in Rohrbacher, volume IV, pages 396 ff., Gaume edition, 3, rue de l'Abbaye, Paris.

priests who are ready to sacrifice everything to fulfil their mission. They must not be surprised to be treated as their predecessors have been treated in every century.

But they must console themselves with the sense of duty done. They can reread the pontifical directions brought to light by Mgr Radini Tedeschi in his address to the congress of Fiesole:

“The action of the priest,” he says, “must extend to everything that is the Catholic movement, to science and social studies, to the various forms of Catholic associations, and principally to the work of the congresses and committees, to the daily and periodical press, to the good of young men, of girls, of mothers, of workers, of farmers, of craftsmen, of the people, from the religious, moral, economic, temporal and spiritual point of view, according to need and opportunity⁵.”

5. *La mission sociale du prêtre dans l'action catholique* — Pamphlet published by the Maison de la bonne presse, 8, rue François I^{er}, Paris. We think our readers will like to read a page of this most important document:

“In a word, a terrible catastrophe is inevitable if the priest does not fulfil his whole public and social mission.

“Does he wish to avoid the responsibility, the near complicity, for it? He must devote himself to this work of social restoration with as much ardour as the cunning and the sectarian violence, and the flatteries of the impenitent advocates of conciliation, put into trying to condemn him to that resignation which is not the virtue of the strong, but the inertia of the brute, of the ass. The priest, gentlemen, must be a lion; never an ass! Besides, the argument of arguments is the will of Christ, who speaks through the mouth of Leo, *qui per Leonem loquitur*. Listen to him.

“The priest, in the present conditions of the Church, must also take upon himself this office of guiding the crowds and the souls of the faithful, by virtue of his authority, openly and by his example.

“They can do it, says the Pope, and therefore Christ: so they must do it, for the priest, gentlemen, when it is a question of the glory of God, the good of souls, the defence of the Church, the salvation of the fatherland, the priest owes all that he can.

“And if anyone judged inopportune, useless, not obligatory what the Pope judges opportune, obligatory, necessary, that man could not — and it is again the Pope who expressly affirms it — continue to celebrate Mass without fault and without scandal.”

Mission of the workers.

As for you, my dear friends, you keep to a more modest sphere. You do not presume to lecture anyone. Far from attacking the employers, you ask for their help and support.

You know that, to a large extent, their interests are shared with yours; they too are victims of the social injustices that breed usury, speculation and monopolies. Often it is their rights that you uphold in claiming your own.

We have sometimes been reproached for speaking to the workers of their rights, when we should only have taught them their duties.

Well! Shall I tell you which situation seems to me the most hopeless for a nation? It is when the citizens no longer know their rights. No doubt duty is the source of rights, but are not the awareness of rights and their free exercise necessary for the practice of duties? Now, in our pagan society, the most sacred rights are trampled underfoot by legislation and by the abusive interference of the State; they are oppressed by the prevailing errors, notably the economic ones. We can therefore rightly say: No more rights, no more duties. It is this debased condition that has allowed our atheist government to take the education of children away from their parents, to defile the home by divorce, to drive our holy nuns from the bedside of the sick, and to deprive of the consolations of the priest the soldiers who go to die, far from family and fatherland, in the anguish of abandonment.

If the people were aware of their rights, would they allow the poor to be persecuted by draconian legislation, and the admirable women who sacrifice their families, their fortunes and their lives to devote themselves to the relief of every misery to be hunted down like criminals? No, for they would be aware of who their defenders and supporters are; they would cry out with vehemence: "Hands off them!" And before the protest of the people, the oppressors would stop.

Yes, we must know our rights and defend them; for, in the present case, it is the sacred rights of God, of the fatherland and of the family that are at stake.

Continue then, my dear friends, to fight against isolation by means of the unions, to proclaim the truth about the just wage, about excessive work and about the abuses of every kind that have crept in under cover of false doctrines.

As long as you remain attached to Jesus Christ, the true dispenser of justice and true emancipator of the world of labour, as long as you follow the directions of his Vicar, you are sure to be on the right road and to be doing a work that is eminently humane and patriotic.

III. IT IS ACTIVE

The third character of your organisation is that it is active.

You wish to bring about in practice the pacification of minds and hearts.

You have been moved on seeing the deep divisions that the Jews and the Freemasons have sown among the workers in order to paralyse their efforts^{*}. You want all to become brothers again, sincerely united in the love of justice and in the practice of Christian solidarity. No doubt the most generous attempts have already been made to reach this goal, but without yielding what was to be expected of them. The democratic action that you have begun appears to us as the only hope of social salvation that remains to us. It would therefore be an immense misfortune if anyone succeeded in stifling it; but we know your courage well enough to fear nothing on that score.

You are preparing for your fine mission by study; working to educate yourselves is already a first action. You know that the idea must precede the fact, to which it gives its moral and social significance. The history of the Church, so bound up with the history of labour

^{*} **NOTE** See the note on page 13.

across the centuries, is very instructive. In certain groups, papers have been written on Freemasonry, on the false great men and their baneful influence, on Protestantism and its harmful action in France. The documents on the institutions now being tried in various nations for the well-being of the labouring classes, and foreign labour legislation, provide precious indications; lastly the professional questions, the representation of interests, the substitution in elections of real interests and of liberty, in every field where it is beneficial, for the deceptive political passions that are sources of division and ruin: all this must be studied.

You also wish to be sowers of ideas. You train yourselves in public speaking and you carry the good news among your fellow workers.

Popular apostolate.

You are not afraid to go into stormy meetings. Thanks to your courageous intervention, the crowds, who heard nothing but blasphemy and cries of revolt, have heard the name of Jesus Christ glorified, the beneficent role of the Church in history proclaimed, and Leo XIII hailed as the emancipator of the popular masses. Already you have had the consolation of bringing back to the truth some of the most intelligent and most ardent among your adversaries.

The manual worker is all of a piece, in good as in evil. He knows nothing of cleverness, calculations and schemes. As soon as the truth appears to him, he falls like Saul, to rise again an apostle. From then on he does not hesitate to sacrifice his daily bread for the propaganda. Honour to the valiant who have the courage to face the anger of former friends, in order to proclaim the truth and seek conquests in their turn! Honour to those who have raised to life again these souls made for noble and generous combats!

Encouragements of Leo XIII.

It seems that the Sovereign Pontiff, in his encyclical, foresaw the persecutions you are undergoing. He encourages you by the example of the first ages of the Church: it was workers who had the leading part in the spread of the Gospel. He adds:

“Whatever the strength of prejudice and passion in men, if a perverse will has not entirely stifled the sense of what is just and honest, sooner or later public goodwill must turn towards these (democratic) workers who will have been seen to be active and modest, putting fairness before gain, and preferring the religion of duty to everything.”

See how perfectly this quotation applies to you. I had only to add your title of democrat to show you in the words of the Pontiff a consolation for the harassment you are undergoing.

The Encyclical goes on; it gives to you, Christian workers, the mission of converting your brothers. With what tenderness it speaks of them!

“These workers generally understand that they have been the plaything of false hopes and lying appearances: for they feel, from the inhuman treatment they receive from their masters, that they are valued by them hardly more than by the weight of the gold produced by their labour. As for the societies that have ensnared them, they see clearly that instead of charity and love they find in them only internal strife, the inseparable companion of unbelieving poverty. Broken in soul, worn out in body, how many would like to shake off so humiliating a yoke? But, whether from human respect or from fear of want, they dare not.”

It is to you that he entrusts this delicate mission, asking you to welcome them eagerly and to assure them safeguard and protection.

You are also striving to found the institutions best suited to promote the well-being of working families. You apply the relief that is

possible today, until laws and customs allow more.

Electoral action.

Lastly, electoral action, without which we shall never reach any definitive result, rightly concerns you. In a country of universal suffrage, it is a duty for all citizens to inform themselves on such grave questions. The catastrophes we are witnessing come from the ignorance in which the masses have always been of their true interests. The example of Austria is a happy omen for you. In our country, more and more, the Jews and the Freemasons are allying themselves with the socialists^{*}. All the shades of party are tending to disappear. Only two armies will remain face to face: atheist socialism and Christian democracy.

Multiply, then, the meetings and the lectures, to make the electors understand their duty and their responsibility. They hold the future in their hands. That future will be what their votes make it, happy or unhappy, according as they have taken heed. It is their ballot papers that will decide the recovery of the fatherland or its irremediable collapse.

Such is the great and manifold work that you have marked out for your activity. That is why you need great energy in action.

So it is with good reason that you have taken as your motto that of Joan, the noble daughter of the people: Long live labour! Long live labour today! Long live labour tomorrow! Long live labour for ever!

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Go on with confidence, my dear friends.

The teachings of the Popes become sooner or later the thoughts of the peoples. We therefore firmly believe in the triumph of Christian democracy.

^{*} **NOTE** See the note on page 13.

On that day there will still be, as today, democratic congresses. But then our successors will hail the victory; they will acclaim the deliverance of the workers from all the oppressions from which they suffer today.

People will tell of the battles of which you are the witnesses and the actors. They will recall the workers' pilgrimages to Rome, where the nascent workers' democracy was consecrated in the Basilica of St Peter.

They will sing the glories of the great Pope Leo XIII and his insight into the future, and they will say: "He was not only a saint, he was also a prophet. It is He who prepared the reign of justice in the century that followed him."

They will speak of you, dear workers of Reims, who humbly began the Christian social study circles. They will recall your names, valiant friends of the Nord, ardent in the struggle, tireless in work, and you too, excellent friends of Paris, of the Centre, of the West and of Lyon: they will tell again of your energy and your perseverance.

They will recall the names of our democratic abbés, at whose head they will place the kindly and smiling Abbé Lemire, whose goodness and courage win all hearts.

They will repeat with admiration the names of the newspapers that braved unpopularity and cancelled subscriptions to fight under the orders of the Pope for the Church and for the people.

At their head they will salute the *Univers*, which has been fighting fearlessly for more than half a century. It is the oldest, and it has remained the model of the valiant. They will say: Louis Veuillot devoted his incomparable talent to rebuilding a Christian France; after him, Eugène Veuillot nobly spent a life, prolonged by Providence, in raising up our fatherland through submission to the teachings of Leo XIII.

Lastly, they will cite the names of the disinterested men, employers and others, who understood the future and lent their help to the

valiant initiators of the movement.

And they will end by giving glory to Jesus Christ, master and king of mankind, and by acclaiming the working people, through whom He willed to restore the reign of justice and solidarity, and thus to rebuild a Christian and free France.

