

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL.

The Lyceum writer aptly illustrates the real position of the Catholic church with regard to private property in land, by likening it to the position of the church with regard to chattel slavery.

The Catholic church has never condemned slavery. It has never taught that it is wrongful in the individual to hold slaves where slavery is sanctioned by municipal law; it has never even taught that the system of slavery is in itself wrongful. Its teachings would doubtless condemn slave insurrection or incitement to slave insurrection, or any attempt to abolish slavery by illegal and violent means.

But for all this it has never given its positive sanction to slavery. It has never condemned those who say that slavery is a wrongful system, nor even those who say that the holding of men as slaves is an individual wrong on the part of the masters. It would doubtless condemn the shedding of blood, and perhaps even the appropriation of property on the part of the slave in the effort to obtain freedom. But it has never taught that the slave is bound by the moral law not to run away, or that the only rightful way in which he can obtain freedom is by the payment to the master of his full value. And whatever individuals may have done in the name of the church, the church itself has certainly never condemned those who seek to abolish slavery by peaceable and legal means. As the writer in the Lyceum says, the Catholic church has raised no difficulty when slavery has been abolished with compensation to the owners, as in the British West Indies, nor yet has it raised any difficulty when slavery has been abolished without compensation, as in the United States.

The case of private property in land is not merely analogous to that of private property in human flesh and blood; it is another form of the same thing. The two systems are but different modes, adapted to different degrees of density of population and different stages in social development, by which one set of men are clothed with authority to appropriate to themselves the benefits of other men's labor.

The one mode makes property of the active factor of production - labor. The other mode makes property of the passive factor - land. The one is better adapted to that rude state of society in which population is sparse and the productive arts are simple. The other is better adapted to that state of society in which population is dense and the productive arts have become complex.

The position of the Catholic church with reference to these two forms of oppression, as with reference to all similar evils which derive sanction from municipal law, is simply this; She teaches certain spiritual truths and certain fundamental principles of morals in their application to the individual, but does not enter into the vexed sphere of the civil government and civil legislation. Beyond these limits of individual action and relation, she is "all things to all men." The aristocrat and the democrat, the pro-slavery man and the abolitionist, the protectionist and the free trader; the believer in the divine right of kings and the most ardent republican - all these the church herself, as intelligent Catholics understand the church, welcomes alike to her altars. If one man robs another of his own volition, or if one man kills another of his own motion, the Catholic church condemns these acts as crimes; but if one man robs another with the permission of the laws of his country, or if one man kills another

by authority of the commission and command of his prince or legislature, the Catholic church holds such an act beyond her tribunal. This may or may not be Christianity as it was taught by Christ, but it certainly is a clear, consistent and defensible policy which enables the church to freely address herself to her special work among all manner of men under all social and political conditions.

Signed: Henry George,
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