

Communism, Mexico, race prejudice, property, social justice, class warfare.

The layman knows that, whatever course of action he may advocate, he will be denounced as a meddling boob. He cannot possibly hope to please the conservative and the extremist, the pacifist and the militarist, the rich man and the pauper, Fascist and liberal, the white man and his black brother. When he honestly and sincerely tries to put into practice the heroic element in Christ's doctrine, the world will certainly crucify him.

Father Martindale has stated that, in his candid opinion, false nationalism is doing most damage to the Catholic cause. He writes:

Nothing constituted a stronger exterior argument against our Faith, or moved men more to mockery of our religion, than the sight of Catholic countries in bitter conflict during the last war. The argument did not altogether hold water; but it was a terribly specious one. And, when national animosities are carried right outside war-time, and you find pilgrimages to Rome refusing to speak to one another or to pray together when actually in St. Peter's or exhibiting aloofness and even exclusivism during Eucharistic Congresses, you are bound to be shocked almost beyond endurance, and you need not fear to say that you are face to face with what is sinful and matter for the confessional.

The layman who tries to reconcile Christ's message with love of country is going to land in some awkward predicaments. If he asserts that he will not fight under any circumstances, he will be persecuted for his utter lack of patriotism. If he is opposed to any reduction of our armaments at the present time, he will be violently accused of contradicting certain very definite Papal pronouncements on the subject of war and peace.

The young Catholic layman is being encouraged to take an active part in politics. But should he walk into the Democratic National Headquarters during the present vituperative campaign and inform Mr. Farley that Democrats should love Republicans, he will probably be regarded as a dangerous lunatic. It is practically impossible for a Catholic to be a good party man.

What about Communism? I am frank to confess that I hate Communism, Communists, and everything that comes out of Moscow. The vast majority of the people in the United States would like to banish every Communist agitator to Little America for an indefinite term.

No public school teacher in Washington dares to whisper the name of Stalin or Karl Marx. They are forbidden to mention the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in their classrooms. Having taken the time and trouble to recognize Soviet Russia, we are now intent upon closing our eyes to the fact that Russia exists at all.

I do not remember ever having prayed for Communists—Russian or Mexican variety. But if we do not pray for them, if we do not love them, we are no better than the pagans. While we are about it, we might remember Hitler and Mussolini. By a tremendous effort of the will I think I could force myself to offer up one quick *ave* for Cárdenas. The Church, however, is not satisfied with one or two cold perfunctory prayers for our enemies.

The doctrine of the Mystical Body is being made clear. The Church expects us to work out the interracial problem

to the uttermost Catholic consequences. This means that we should not write academic treatises advocating full social, political, and economic equality for the colored race—and stop there. We should be the last people in the world to talk down to the Negro. We must meet him where he is—on his own level—and voluntarily embrace all the discriminations and injustices which are his present unhappy lot. If we are to be consistent, there is no other way. We must take the Gospel literally. And that is hard.

I will conclude with a few words about property. A few years ago my job was the most important thing in my life. Today the Church is my first interest and a job is merely a means of keeping body and soul together. Advancements and increases in salary do not come rapidly to the average layman who carries the problems of the Church into the office and factory with him.

It is the ambition of many young laymen to get married. I have been told that it is advisable to have a thousand dollars in the bank. At once the desire to accumulate material possessions comes into conflict with the dictates of Christian charity.

How can the young layman concentrate upon the purchase of an engagement ring, for example, when he knows that \$30 a month will support a priest in the mission field? How can he take his sweetheart to the theater when thousands of our people are in dire distress? How can he enjoy a waltz in a fashionable hotel when he knows that, in the same city, hundreds are shivering with the cold?

The charge has been made that we are members of the Church Dormant. That has not been my personal experience. I am a very lazy fellow and should have been perfectly content to take an easy back-road into Purgatory. If the laity are inactive, it is not the fault of the Church.

The Charity of Father Baker

ALFRED BARRETT, S.J.

THE Holy Family was poor but not destitute. It is noteworthy that the man who has done more than perhaps any single individual in America to build a communal Nazareth for the destitute of every description should have celebrated on March 19, the feast of the Holy Family's Provider, his sixtieth anniversary as a priest.

He is, of course, the Rt. Rev. Msgr. Nelson H. Baker, V.G., P.A., LL.D., of Lackawanna, N. Y. Several months ago, Father Baker—as he is known, literally to millions—had a birthday. Father Baker said it was his ninety-fourth; but the Buffalo Chancellor, Msgr. Britt, dug up the baptismal record that lit an added candle on Father Baker's birthday cake. The first pupil of the Jesuits to enroll at Canisius College in Buffalo, Father Baker made his priestly studies at Niagara with the Vincentians, and there absorbed the spirit which has signalized him as an American Vincent de Paul. Ordained in 1876, he was sent at once to the rescue of the bankrupt St. John's Protectory at Limestone Hill. He is still there, sixty years later—a bright little shrunken figure in his

monsignorial red—eager to show the visitor through the fifteen magnificent buildings of Our Lady of Victory Charities, a plant worth \$25,000,000—and built on faith.

The writer was privileged, two years ago, to have Father Baker as his guide on one such inspection trip. "How did you manage it all, Father? Where did you get the money?" were inevitable questions. Father Baker smiled and pointed to a statue of Our Lady of Victory. "I had very little to do with it," he said. "She did it all! The Blessed Mother is my manager, my banker. I am the administrator and I never worry."

Until recently Father Baker has not even been budgeted as a beneficiary of the extremely successful Buffalo Catholic Charities campaigns. The rumor of his care for the orphans, the delinquents, the unmarried mothers and their babies, from forty States and from Canada, regardless of race, nationality or creed, has spread in ever-widening circles. To Father Baker's support have come the free-will offerings of the grateful poor, donations from the 200,000 readers of the *Victorian*—edited and printed by his boys—the contributions of those receiving favors during his national novenas to Our Lady of Victory, the proceeds of work by ladies' auxiliaries, legacies, and all the unregimented generosity which responds to a charity necessarily costly, but never cold.

We did not get very far in our tour. "Come in and see my Negro converts," said Father Baker. "Two hundred have been baptized already and Bishop Turner will confirm them next week." I left Father Baker there, teaching catechism to colored adults. Since then he has founded a flourishing Negro parish in Lackawanna. During the depression he has fed 700 transients daily and rented houses to board many of them. These two projects were new demands on a charity which had already raised up a "Holy City," with its Home for Boys (Protectorship is a word tabooed at Victory), its Orphan Boys' Home, its Trade Schools, Infant Home, Basilica, General and Maternity Hospital, Hospital for Contagious Diseases, Home for Nurses, Gymnasium, Academy, Parish School, Farm Buildings, and Working Boys' Home, this last in Buffalo.

Starting with Civil War orphans, Father Baker soon met the menace of industrialism, when the Lackawanna Steel Company began operations with 15,000 men. Besides Americans, white, black, and red—the original natives of the Seneca tribe—Lackawanna's polyglot population represents over forty different languages, nationalities and countries, including Arabia, Persia, Somaliland, Turkey, and Senegal. Living and working in this melting pot, Father Baker is a pioneer in interracial relations. In the cribs of his Infant Home Negro babies crow as joyously as the white; in the washrooms, where Father Baker's boys strip to the waist and go through a scrubbing drill daily at stated intervals, one sees amidst the steam and billowing suds the gleam of ebony skin. Father Baker has answered Communism's revolution of hate by the Pauline inclusiveness of his love.

An instance will show how his charities grew by accretion through his helplessness to resist each manifest need.

In 1906 some dredgers were cleaning an old canal. During the excavations they dug up many bodies and skeletons of small infants. Father Baker mentions in one of his reports of hearing about another case in which 200 bodies were found in a single drainage system. Appalled by these gruesome discoveries, Father Baker added an Infant Home to his other burdens, with the result that thousands of babies have been saved from unnatural destruction. Several thousand have been baptized, and from his *crèche* Father Baker has sent hundreds into respectable homes by adoption. Like Vincent de Paul enlisting Madame Le Gras, he persuaded a Buffalo lady to become first matron of the Infant Home. Later, the Sisters of St. Joseph, who from the beginning till the present day have been Father Baker's tireless and devoted collaborators, assumed charge of the infants.

Having provided for the infants, he next thought of the mothers. In 1915 a maternity hospital was built. Father Baker did not believe that the construction of a general hospital entered into his life's vocation; but in 1924 he was compelled reluctantly to widen the institution's scope, so that the nurses in training might satisfy the requirements of new State legislation. Thus Father Baker can say of his General and Maternity Hospital what St. Francis de Sales said in reference to his establishment of the Visitation Order: "They call me the founder. Could anything be more unreasonable? I have done what I did not wish to do, and have failed in what I wanted to do."

Besides the Sisters of St. Joseph, Father Baker's coadjutors are the Brothers of the Holy Infancy and Youth of Jesus. This diocesan congregation has been too busy even to record its origin, but it is thought to have been founded by the saintly Bishop Timon at Buffalo in 1855. For over a generation, Brothers John Harris, Thomas Curran, and Francis Holmes were the sole members of the community. Needing men to handle delinquents who were too much for the nuns, Father Baker revived the decadent community, which, since its official approbation in 1920, has attracted many fine vocations.

Like our Lady of Victory in Paris, which attracts more pilgrims yearly than Lourdes and Lisieux together, the baroque basilica which Father Baker erected as a shrine to Our Lady of Victory divides honors with Niagara Falls as a magnet for tourists and pilgrims. Its illuminated twin towers, rising to a height of 165 feet, are beacons for the mariners on Lake Erie. On its completion in 1925 it was immediately consecrated, as free of all debt. The marble alone used in construction cost \$480,000, which was admitted free of duty on petition to Congress by civic leaders. Miracles are said to have been wrought at the shrine.

But miracles are nothing new to Father Baker. He likes to tell of his "miracle" gas well. Fuel bills were high. In 1891 Father Baker decided, after prayer, to dispense with them by drilling a gas well. Nobody had ever struck gas there before, and neither did he, as the drills ate up \$2,000 allowed him by the mildly derisive Bishop. Father Baker buried a medal of Our Lady and

ordered more prayers and a procession, when the thousand-foot level had been reached with still no whiff of gas. On the Feast of the Assumption a public novena was begun for the purpose of "striking gas." On the eighth day, a messenger rushed into the sanctuary during Benediction, leaned over to the celebrant and whispered: "Father, they have struck gas! They want you over immediately." A solid shaft of fire thirty feet high was roaring up from the well. The gusher was called the greatest in America; \$60,000 was the price offered for the well and 200 acres around it. But Father Baker wanted the gas, and, although no other well of the many sunk ever reached the gusher vein, Our Lady of Victory has been using its gas well for the past forty-five years.

Father Baker's annual reports, as printed in the diocesan paper, are detailed and fascinating. A typical report includes these items: groceries, \$48,349; meat, \$25,454; dry goods and shoes, \$28,240; total living expenses, \$255,021. But on the credit side, from the 110 Holsteins on the stock farm came 35,228 gallons of milk, valued at \$12,429; from the hen house eggs worth \$1,113; and from the work of the boys as farmers produce totaling \$24,190 in value. There were 1,365 children there.

He is a father in his loving care for the boys, and follows their success in after-life with a father's pride. One of "Father Baker's boys" came back, a prominent doctor, as head of the hospital. Another, the first of a number of priests, was the Redemptorist missionary, Father Thomas A. Galvin, who has written Father Baker's life.

If there is little anti-clericalism in the Buffalo diocese, it is because Father Baker, its Vicar General, is too handy a refutation. He is the "Padre of the Poor" to all classes. Grover Cleveland once served on his board of managers. Each year 150 members of the Automobile Club drive the boys to their picnic in Delaware Park, where the refreshments are served gratis to the celebrants by local merchants.

The papers justly regard Father Baker as good copy. That he preached a sermon last Christmas was front-page news. They printed a picture of his recent birthday party. Before Father Baker was a cake with ninety-five candles. In his arms were two of his babies. On his face was a smile, the smile of the Curé d'Ars. Pope Pius's Encyclical on the Priesthood will tell better than the newspapers the real meaning of the smile of Father Baker.

Communism and the WPA

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IF there is one thing more than another which Communists hate and fear, it is any movement that seeks to alleviate the lot of the worker. Whether it be the A. F. of L., the Socialists, the New Deal, or Catholic Action, all are grouped together as bourgeois and Fascist, whose one purpose is to heal the ills of capitalism, and by that to put off the day of the revolution. By the same token, no Communist who sincerely undertook to cure any of the manifest evils which infect our industrial system could remain for a day in the ranks of the party.

There is no secret about this. It can be found by inspecting any of the resolutions of the Communist International, or the speeches of Lenin or of Stalin—unless he happens to be talking to an innocent like Roy W. Howard, of the United Press.

Yet everywhere the Communists set themselves up as the champion of the worker. They have started strikes, they constantly stage demonstrations protesting against this injustice or that, they pose before employes as a whole as the sole spokesmen who have any chance of getting for them what they want. Yet they know in their hearts that if they ever did succeed in getting it they would be knifing their own movement in the back. It is pretty obvious, then, that their real purpose is to break up order, not to create it; sabotage, not reform.

A good example of their workings and technique can be observed in the WPA in New York. The papers are filled every day with accounts of riots, demonstrations, and protests of one kind or another, presumably manned by those who are receiving aid from the Federal Government by means of projects putting them to work. The

day I write this, the papers tell the story of a police wagon coming up in an elevator all the way to the tenth floor of the building where WPA is housed to carry off ten demonstrators who were disturbing the peace. It was found that the ringleaders were not WPA workers; in fact, Victor F. Ridder, WPA Administrator, informs me that seven of the ten arrested were not on WPA rolls at all. The same rule holds, he adds, of all other demonstrations that have been held. Professional Communist agitators are the organizers.

Every conceivable device is utilized to make the WPA workers dissatisfied with their lot. The threat of laying off workers when the money runs out, the firing of a worker for incompetence or fraud, the change of a supervisor from one project to another, anything is the occasion for a flood of leaflets, of oratory, and invitations to a meeting. There have been more meetings in New York since Communism really became active than there were for a hundred years before. Not many Communists are bona-fide WPA workers—they won't work, but whatever else they do, they can talk.

And they talk to a purpose. The class struggle, the breakdown of the orderly processes of present society, these are their professed aims. They set Negro against white—and they never allow the Negro to forget that he is a Negro—employe against employer, citizen against government. They have a profound belief in the printed word. They have bulletins for everybody; for the Communist units in Macy's and Gimbels; in the New York Post Office; in the Municipal buildings of New York and Brooklyn; in Brooklyn College, a city institution;

