

of Chateaubriand and the justifiable reaction from the 'noble savage' myth of Rousseau, which allied itself to the conviction of Western superiority induced by the technical achievements of the 19th century, the Church has ever refused to identify herself with any one culture. Individuals, even great men like Mgr Duchesne, may have regarded the civilisations of the East as anti-human monstrosities, but the saner view has always prevailed. The missionary, wrote Pius XI, holds his sublime commission 'not from Governments, but from our blessed Lord' (Letter *Ab Ipsis*, 1926). It is this truth that missiology strives to protect by pointing out the underlying principles of missionary work and underlining view points which tend to compromise these principles.

IAN HISLOP, O.P.

MOBILITY AND PROPERTY

THE idea of this article was suggested by an anthropological lecture on two aboriginal peoples of the Pacific.

Two peoples, the Andamanese Islanders and the Tikopia, have lived within boating distance of each other for countless generations. The one is semi-nomadic, hunting and fishing. The other is, or was, agricultural. In the first the communal element in the ownership of property is very marked. In the second the private or personal ownership was far more marked.

From this arises a thought. Is it possible that the question of the balance of individual with communal or social rights in the ownership and use of property is not a matter of industrialism, nor of atheism, but chiefly of mobility or immobility of social occupation?

One can follow the idea in many fields: for instance in the Catholic Middle Ages. As the peoples of Europe began to settle, but were yet uncertain and largely mobile and pastoral, they developed the system called feudalism. Feudalism was a kind of socialism, in the sense that the prince, the owner and the employer all three coincided in the person of the feudal lord. All lands were held in trust from him. He was the government. He was the employer in so far as there was an employer outside the subsistence economy of the people who held tenures on his land.

As the people became more and more settled, agricultural, less and less mobile, in the later Middle Ages and Reformation period, absolute individual tenure of land outside any further responsibility to an overlord became more and more common. The squirearchies appeared, and more and more independent farmers.

But in the peoples who did not immobilise, the Celtic clans for

instance, a largely communal form of ownership, very similar to feudalism, survived. The only real 'owner' or employer was the chief, who was also the government. His were the lands, and grazing concessions, and he employed the men in their principal employments: arms, hunting and herding.

It seems that anyone who had time to work it out would find this law applying: Agricultural peoples who are settled on one piece of land tend to private ownership, although co-operation in *use* is largely practised among them. Mobile peoples tend to more communal forms of ownership and security. If it is so the reasons for it are clear enough. Agriculture gives a settled, steady form of economic support—if widely practised. Mobile forms of occupation, hunting and fishing, or the nomadic seeking for work in modern industrialism, are less secure. The people need more insurance from others. They live hand to mouth, on the job or the catch of fish or whatever it is, momentarily.

So, for instance, the nomadic native tribes of South Africa have traditionally a form of ownership similar to the Celtic clans. The agrarian peoples of the Balkans had one similar to agrarian England. The example of two aboriginal tribes, developing so differently on this pattern, was given as the text of this study. There is at least a strong suggestion here, worth following up, that the modern problem of private property versus communism, of individual self-support versus Beveridgeism and social security, is one not so much of ethics as of movement.

There is no such thing as a secure, self-supporting, individual breadwinner. He may get sick, or die, or lose a limb, or be a drunkard. Some form of communal measures of security is always necessary. In a good agrarian community, an old-fashioned French or Italian village, this was ensured by co-operation based on *locality*. In the clans or among the Tartars or the African tribes it was by co-operation based on *kinship*; and it was the more noticeable because the individual was less secure than the peasant. When artisans appeared in the towns of Europe, cut off from the security of maintenance on feudal land, they organized for security on a basis of *occupation*. The guilds were an attempt to give the landless migratory worker in the towns a new security for the ones he was losing. It is interesting to note that the first attempts at Communism in Europe were among the new artisans of the towns, cut off from secure maintenance on the land. There was also a spiritual flavour, of the Vaudois and Albigenian leaders, but the movement of the early 13th century had an economic background. All three forms of communal security were knocked on the head by commercial industrialism. MacDonaldis or Flahertys might be working in all corners of the globe, so kinship fell.

The village communes were upset by enclosures, the advent of money economy, drainage of manpower to towns (or conversely extra population); and occupational co-operation fell as crafts gave place to mass production. Trades unions agitated, but did not insure.

What is now to take the place of these three? The individual breadwinner is more mobile, and more insecure, than ever. The answer is surely some universalised form of social security that will follow him wherever he goes, and in all his ups and downs: i.e., State security measures. Why then do so many Catholics attack social security measures and Beveridgeism? Surely it is because of a foreshortened outlook on human history, a misunderstanding of the meaning of personal property and economic independence.

The Church did not quarrel with feudalism; nor with the Celtic clan system. Nor does it now quarrel with the system of the Bantu tribes of South Africa which is so similar. It is very different to peasant proprietorship, or small craft or small shop ownership. But these are only one, and a relatively small, phenomenon of systems of ownership shown us by history and anthropology. They are not even most specifically Catholic, but coincide rather with the revival of pagan Roman Law in Europe, with its special concept of proprietorship. The feudal-tribal system allowed much further reserve of ownership to the prince or government. From it he was bound to see to the maintenance of all who were born in his domain and with a right to subsistence on it. Whatever its faults of arbitrary power, feudalism was a complete system of state security, as is the African tribal system now. When an African needs land he simply goes to his chief and gets a coloniser's right to a section of land, of which the chief remains the owner. The chief does not remove him if he behaves. Again, general property rights are more communal. There are personal rights to cattle, going with each house. But grazing is communal. There are personal rights to crops. But a man would be permanently disgraced if he did not share, not out of 'charity' but by law, with his kinship group. The distributist idea of the wholly independent, self-supporting owner is simply unknown. Security is communal. There is no such thing as an orphan. Orphans *ipso facto* fall to the next of kin, and the same applies to widows and the aged.

St Thomas Aquinas, living in the already settling feudal age, using Aristotle who lived in an agricultural country, is content to say that the ownership of property should be individual, its use part communal.

Leo XIII was content, in the first crisis with atheistic socialism, to halt it by a restatement of this. Pius XI went further. He suggested a more communal form of ownership, the vocational group in which

the employee will be admitted to partnership. So the ownership of big concerns can be divided. Also he said that there are some forms of ownership so great in the power they carry that they should be reserved to the State.

As the new age develops, so comes a development of the concept of communal or State ownership.

The Popes have not yet spoken of social security codes, though they thoroughly blessed the first complete one: the internal social security system of the J.O.C.—Y.C.W. Such systems appear to be necessary, for the reasons given above: mobility, insecure income, consequent need of universalised security measures, where kinship and local systems have failed. Certainly the system the Church seems to be urging so far is rather occupational than State—Leo XIIIth's reference to the guilds, Pius XIth's reference to partnership for the workers, the absence of any reference to state pensions, etc. . . . But the Popes have also said—and it is often forgotten—that all they put forward is dependent on moral preparation. An essential part of this is a sense of responsibility. This is singularly lacking in modern people, who desire rather security—are too economically tired to desire anything else. The occupational grouping system suggested by *Quadragesimo Anno* can only be run with this high sense of responsibility, or (as Pius XI lamented), with too much State interference as in Italy. It is noticeable that the man in the best position to implement the system, Salazar, has gone dead slow about it and concentrated rather on a public works system first.

In the meantime, in most countries, is there anything better than a social security code, after the New Zealand pattern, which at least ensures subsistence? It may be a second best, since it certainly does place much economic influence in the hands of the State, but as with feudalism or African systems I do not see why Catholics should quarrel with it. I am not sure it is even a second best. Our idea of ownership has been narrowed by studying too exclusively the later European concept of it. Leo XIII said that Providence has left to the customs of peoples—not just of Europe but of peoples in general—to work out its forms. It seems that if we focus our enquiries further into these forms we will find:

(a) that the balance between individual and communal ownership rights is illustrated chiefly by the immobile—secure conditions of agricultural life, over against the mobile—insecure conditions of nomadic life;

(b) that we are progressing more and more towards the latter, with the insecure-mobile worker in industry;

(c) that if we follow *Quadragesimo Anno*'s developments we shall

find ourselves led to a greater and greater emphasis on communalised and State ownership, while retaining the full concept of personal ownership.

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This article is a question rather than a thesis, written not spontaneously but at request, and I could not argue fully about many points it raises. But I think it contains an idea on which Catholics with more time than a missionary might well be working.

FINBAR SYNNOT, O.P.

GRADATION, EVOLUTION AND REINCARNATION

The following essay by Dr Coomaraswamy is offered to BLACK-FRIARS readers for the very high degree of interest which attaches to the approach from an unfamiliar standpoint to the familiar problem of the relation of science to religion.

The metaphysical focus of the essay may perhaps be best obtained from the brilliant paragraph on the *Cogito* of Descartes. Here the startling character of the thought is due to the contrast of the respective ways in which the imagination of East and West lends support to the concept of being. If the West, especially in that caricature of itself which is called modern philosophy, has tended to imagine reality in terms of visible solids, thus colouring the concept of being with an externality and a rigidity of outline not wholly its own, the imagination of the East has generally been more suggestive of a conception of being as an *act*, personal or impersonal as the point of view changes.

For St Thomas also, being is an 'act' to which, ultimately, even substance among the categories is potential, and, to that extent, relative. From no other position available to the West can fruitful contact be made with the tradition Dr Coomaraswamy represents.

From a deepened understanding of the principles of St Thomas's metaphysics, it may be possible, now that Eastern writers are more readily available to explain their own thought to us, to carry the understanding of Eastern tradition further than the position outlined in the *De Unitate Intellectus contra Averrhoistas*. In any case it is certain that the unity, or rather the non-duality, of consciousness of which Dr Coomaraswamy speaks, has nothing to do with the evolutionary and sentimental conceptions of theological modernism.

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