

The Safeguards of Society against Bolshevism.



Alumni Prize Essay by W. J. O'Leary, '23.



I had just settled down in my favorite chair before a cheery log-fire in my den to enjoy an after-dinner pipe when the door-bell of my bachelor's apartment rang, and shortly afterwards my man ushered the caller into my presence. The fire did not throw sufficient light for me to recognize immediately the short, dark man before me, but he did not leave me long in doubt as to his identity.

With a pleasant, "Your memory is not as good as it used to be, Steve," he grasped my hand, as I rose, with the familiar clasp of my college chum of a few years before, John Stanton, whom I had not seen since the day we graduated, and had consequently almost forgotten.

I expressed my delight at seeing him once more, drew up another chair for him before the fire, and resumed my pipe. We talked reminiscently of college days for a time; then, curiosity getting the better of me, I asked him what had brought him all the way from Chicago to New York.

Immediately he became enthusiastic. "I have recently secured a position with a Chicago publishing company — I am not at liberty as yet to divulge its name — as special reporter, with indefinite ticket-of-leave and an expense sheet, and sixty dollars a week. What do you think of that?"

"Congratulations, my dear fellow, What is to be your work, and when do you start?"

"My company has entered upon both a philanthropic and a business enterprise," John began. "You know what a muddle the world is in today through Bolshevism. Bolshevism is like a quagmire into which society has stepped, and the more it struggles to free itself, the deeper into the quagmire it sinks. So society's means to the end of releasing itself must be wrong. Hence, here I am. My company is going to publish a series of

pamphlets dealing with the failure of all socialistic theories hitherto propounded, and it is my work to report on all big socialistic meetings in the United States and England, and through the pamphlets to put the people on their guard against going deeper into the mire.

"The most famous economists in America are now trying to discover the true solution to these difficulties, which will then be printed in our pamphlet for the benefit of everybody. I started this afternoon when I heard S—H—, the big man among the Reds here, and he more than raved. He can speak, though, to give the devil his due. Even though I could not understand till he translated, he almost had me once or twice. Well, what do you think of the proposition?"

"It certainly sounds all right," I answered. "Its aims appear altruistic enough, but what are its methods of arriving at the truth?"

"As I said before, this pamphlet intends to put society on its guard against every form of radicalism by pointing out to those who are not already embroiled, and therefore reasonable, the mistakes of the others. As for the remedy for all these disorders, the only apparent one is some form of communistic democracy, on which these economists are now working. There is the whole thing in a nutshell," said John.

"Well, I can assure you that it will not get far," I replied.

Rather nettled, my chum asked me my reasons for so decisive a statement.

"You have, indirectly of course, undertaken to safeguard society against Bolshevism, which is threatening to overrun the world," I began. "In the first place, you misapply your term society by not comprehending in it the parties embroiled—capital and labor. They, as human beings, belong as much to society as do those who are standing by, watching them fight and imbibing their doctrines, because human society is the relationship existing between men that unites them, as creatures of God, on a common and equal footing. One is no less a man than the other. Since, as I will show you presently, there is a cause for this disturbance, why not, therefore, safeguard both of these parties also, as members of society, against it?"

"But they won't listen; they are too full of themselves," objected John. "Communism, absolute equality, presents so enticing a future that few will hear of anything else at present, particularly the Bolsheviks who are so near to it, even though

their methods were repugnant. We want communism, but we must first show the people that Bolshevism is not the way to obtain it."

"You admit, however, that the Bolsheviks are members of society?"

"Concedo," grinned John.

"Then," I continued, laying down my pipe, "what do you understand by Bolshevism? Do you understand, as I do, that it is a peculiar trend of socialism with anarchy—the forcible overthrow of capital and all existing government—as a means to ideal communism? Of course, on this side of the Atlantic there is as yet none of the violence of which Europe is full, nevertheless the undercurrent is there and is being nourished by the wrongs suffered by the labor party. Is that what you too, understand by Bolshevism?"

"Exactly," answered John.

"Very well, then. When you want to prove anything, a geometric theorem for instance, what do you do? You get back to first principles and build up from them, don't you? Right principles are the only foundation of stable reform. Right principles are all important nowadays when economic faddists are abroad and self-appointed saviours like your employers are squabbling. So let us apply right principles to the case at hand. First, to show you that your conception of its remedy is wrong, and secondly, to conclude the true and only safeguards of society against Bolshevism.

"To proceed, the individual is antecedent to and older than the State, for a thing cannot exist before its parts; therefore, the individual has a right to a living prior to the State. Then, by industry of mind and body, a man leaves the impress of his personality on his product and consequently the result of his labor belongs to him. And confirming this natural law there is the Divine law: 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbors goods.' So any form of communism is directly contrary to Divine and natural law. There is no getting away from that, but if you require further proof, I refer you to Leo Thirteenth's Encyclical 'Rerum Novarum.'"

"Just a minute, now. All men were born equal, as you just said a minute ago, so they should also live equal."

"I said that they were equal inasmuch as they were all creatures of God. It is impossible to reduce human society to a level, because there naturally exist among mankind innumer-

able differences of the most important kind; people differ in capability, in diligence, in health and in strength; an unequal fortune is a necessary result of inequality in condition. You would not expect an idiot to amass what an energetic, intelligent man could, would you?"

"No, I have nothing to say against that," my companion replied after a moment.

"Admitted, then, that communism, which is the Bolshevik theory, is opposed to all fundamental principles—for 'there is no authority but from God'—to find the remedy for Bolshevism—for since society includes also the Bolsheviks themselves, the safeguards of society against Bolshevism would save the Bolsheviks from themselves and would therefore be a remedy—to find the remedy for Bolshevism we must first find the causes of which it is the effect.

"Bolshevism is the product of the five great evils that are rampant in the world today, viz: First—Disregard for authority; second—Hatred among brothers; third—Disgust for work; fourth—Love of pleasure; fifth—Forgetfulness of the Supernatural. What enormity would you not expect from the combination of excesses of these? To prove my position I will take each one in the order in which I mentioned them, and show how they effect Bolshevism.

"First, disregard for authority. This is the essence of Bolshevism as I defined it a moment ago—the forcible overthrow of all lawful government. And 'he that resisteth the authority, resisteth the ordinance of God'. Supposing the heavenly bodies began to follow their own orbits, and refused to submit to the laws of gravitation, the catastrophe would be too appalling to imagine. Such surely must be the fate of the unrestrained Bolshevik. Yet doubtless the great Red leaders are wondering why their plans are not as successful in practice as in theory. In fact, the only reason for Lenine's success hitherto is that the Russian people have been so used to absolute autocracy that they were easily imposed upon by the newcomer."

"Russia is not the only country under the sun," objected John. "Even though communism is not yet a success there, even though it is getting away from fundamental principles, we are a new generation in America and the times must move with us, and not we with the times. Besides, idealistic pictures

of the future that you draw from your principles are unscientific and utopian."

"Unscientific and utopian! Quite true; but it is rather strange for a communist to advance this excuse when he is tempting the public with visions of a future bliss and veritable paradise on earth. An inquiry into the practicability of the future state can be called unscientific only if we are prepared to assume that in future men will be quite different and actuated by other motives than at present.' For human nature is the same everywhere, and though man may become more perfect, at the bottom he will remain essentially the same and be actuated by the same propensities and impulses. As for the times moving with you, and not you moving with the times, bear in mind that history is always repeating itself. That was what the Romans thought, and the Babylonians before them, and the ancient Medes—you can trace it right back to Eve's abortive attempt to start out on her own hook. That younger-generation-revolt theory is pure nonsense! But to continue.—

"In the second place, hatred among brothers. You know as well as I do, of the frightful depredations made by the Bolsheviks, through strikes in America and England, and with their armies in Eastern Europe. You have heard of the enormous number of people sacrificed to their anarchic principles. I hope surely that I will not have to disprove that all this was the outcome of brotherly affection, for the answer is too obvious.

"Then, disgust for work and love of pleasure. I take these together both because one is the inevitable consequence of the other, and because they are both a rebellion against the sentence imposed by God on man after his fall—'In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou earn thy bread.' These evils are also exemplified almost the world over in connection with Bolshevism. Strikes are declared daily and debauchery was never before so broadcast in the world as it is today, advocated as it is by nebulous communistic theorists. But why should mere human beings dare to think of changing the Divine Will? To suffer and endure has been the lot of humanity since Adam's fall, and will be till the Day of Judgment. Besides, by His manual labor in Joseph's workshop, and His toil for our

salvation Christ has ennobled work. Why then should any man scorn it?

"And lastly, forgetfulness of the Supernatural. What creed do the Bolsheviks profess? Atheism! Bolshevism is the revamping of Haeckel's theories of Darwinian evolution, in which God is counted out entirely. Did you read lately of the slaughter of numbers of Orthodox and Catholic priests,—Russian and Lithuanian,—and of the destruction of all their churches and mosques? There is no regard for the Supernatural there. Do you follow me as far as I have gone?"

"Yes, yes, go on," answered John. "This is an entirely new phase of the question. I had not seen it in that light before. Most people, including myself, have been led to believe that communistic Bolshevism was the righteous indignation of the honest working men visited upon tyrannical and capitalistic institutions, and I had been rather in favor of it."

"If you had not read so much of that insidious Bolshevik propaganda that has been disseminated on every side during the past five years, you would not have imbibed so many of their ideas," I said, and he flushed under my rebuke. "I am no better informed than you would have been had you kept abreast of the Church. But to continue, I have shown you as clearly as I could the true state of affairs—that Bolshevism is the result of the five great evils of the day. And now you want the remedy for them. And the obvious remedy is—"

"To counteract and eradicate those evils, of course," interrupted John.

"But there you are up against a stone wall again," I replied. "It is all very well to say counteract those evils, but the question is rather *how* to counteract and eradicate them. And to this there is only one answer."

"And that is—?" My friend leaned forward intently as though to catch every syllable, though only a few feet separated us.

"And that is—" I repeated, "Restore all things in Christ." I paused for a moment to let the full significance of my words penetrate. I was rather surprised to find that he had indeed wandered a little farther from the path than I had at first supposed. Presently, I continued.

"The Gospel of Christ is society's only safeguard. Labor is for the time being in the ascendancy, and without proper leadership it is a menace. The Gospel of Christ has taught and

still teaches the workingman to 'carry out all equitable agreements freely made; never to injure capital; never to use violence in representing his own cause, and to have nothing to do with men of evil principles, who work upon people with artful promises, and raise foolish hopes that usually end in disaster and in repentance when too late.' It is the Gospel of Christ that brings peace and content into the souls and homes of conscientious workers and nourishes love of neighbor together with love of God. 'Come to Me, ye who labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you.' Can communism utter such a promise, let alone fulfill it?

"The Bolshevist does not see that labor co-operates with capital to produce wealth, as two blades of a scissors give form to and divide up raw material. The Gospel of Christ has the *only* lucid precepts on the relations of capital and labor to each other, as history shows us through the thirteenth century craftsmen's guilds. The mediaeval guilds, based on the social charity and brotherly aid which Christ's Gospel has never ceased to inculcate, are glowing examples of the most perfect unison of employers with employed in society that the world has ever seen. When a society is perishing, recall it to the principles from which it sprung, do not distort it even more by trying to mould it to fresh ones. And Who is the origin of all things, including society itself, but Christ Himself?

"For the benefit of those who do not know these things, a great Catholic educational campaign has been started. All classes of society are awakening to the danger of the spreading Bolshevism, and have entered into this general campaign of education to warn the unwary against Bolshevism. For participation in public life develops conviction; conviction repeatedly asserts itself; continued assertion creates opinion, and public opinion is one of the most universal powers at work in the world today.' So if you wish to publish a remedy for Bolshevism, proclaim the Gospel of Christ, advocate it as the only true solution and safeguard for society. Safeguard not only the present generation, but the generations to come! We must provide for the future by shaping the thought and guiding the purpose of our children and youth, and not, as the Bolsheviks would have it, by employing our efforts to develop faculties that are not there. Great will be our responsibility on that last, awful day if we have not fulfilled our duties in this respect.

"Again I say: Restore all things in Christ. One true reform

the world has known, and that was effected not by force, agitation of theory, but by a Life in which the perfect ideal was visibly realized, becoming 'the Light of men.' Through the Gospel of Jesus and His living example mankind learned the meaning, and received the blessing of liberty. Therefore, I repeat it again, society's only haven of refuge from Bolshevism is the Church of Christ."

There ensued a long pause during which John sat forward, staring into the glowing logs. Finally he raised his head. "I guess you are right, Steve," he said. "But there was one point in your argument that I did not quite understand, though I admitted it for the moment to see your point. You see I am holding out to the last, but if you can explain that, I will capitulate entirely and forget communism. How does a man leave the impress of his personality on his work, and why does its result consequently belong to him?"

"Man's labor," I answered, "has two characters. It is first of all personal; for the exertion of individual power belongs to the individual who puts it forth, employing this power for that personal profit for which it is given. Secondly, man's labor is necessary; for without the results of labor a man cannot live; and self-preservation is a law of nature to fail wherein is a crime. Now since man has spent the industry of his mind and the strength of his body in procuring that result, and since it is necessary to him, as effects follow their causes it follows that that result must belong to him to dispose of as he will, and not to another. Do I make myself clear?"

My friend nodded in reply.—We sat in silence for a few moments longer, then, still in silence, John rose to leave. I accompanied him to the door, helped him on with his coat, gave him his hat and stick, and not till then did he speak. Then: "Restore all things in Christ," he said. "Funny I did not think of that before. I will have to think it over." He left—and I felt sure that I had won a convert to Christian democracy