

1946

The Cross & the Plough, V. 12, No. 3, 1946

Catholic Land Federation of England and Wales

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The Cross & the Plough



The Organ of the Catholic Land Movement
of England and Wales

QUARTERLY

TWOPENCE.

LADYDAY

1946

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Vol. 12.

No. 3.

The Cross and The Plough

Published by the Catholic Land Federation of England and Wales
at Weeford Cottage, Hill, Sutton Coldfield

Quarterly Subscription: One Shilling a Year

The Papal Statements on the Return to the Land, and a re-statement of the policy of the Catholic Land Federation, are enclosed with the first number of every new subscription. Extra copies may be obtained at twelve for one shilling, post free

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

THE STATE OF EMERGENCY

All news of the quarter must cede in urgency to the serious limitation of food imports from America, following on the denunciation of Lease-Lend and the still dubious matter of the American Loan (and its more permanent consequences).

American pork and dried eggs have ceased. American bacon is ceasing. To these we must add wheat, nominally because it is required in many countries; actually because we lack the credit. And many other sources of food will follow suit. Even the daily Press is beginning to discover that our food is not manna from Heaven, but must be produced and paid for. We say here, as we of this organ are fully entitled to say—*We told you so.*

THE PROBLEM NOW

In face of this serious situation, as of the prevailing and widespread ill-health, the first thing to do is not to consider long-distance action, but how we are to produce the most food ourselves. And how we are to make that food of the greatest value in human nourishment. That is the immediate task, which all realists and all citizens, except the log-rollers, must agree to be primary. It must be insisted that the Government, here and now, recede from its cession to Big Business and take steps at once to make our domestic food production the best possible nutritional value.

THE VILLAIN

The chief foods to be so processed and mucked about as to be, at present, unfit for

human consumption, are bread, milk, butter, cheese, eggs and meat. Let us consider what can be done at once with these foods.

BREAD

Immediately the European fighting stopped, the financial interests urged a wholly absent public opinion to restore the emasculated pre-war white flour.

The man Woolton concurred, in spite of solid opposition in the Lords. It is of peculiar interest to find that proprietary foods are now being advertised, at chemists' prices, which boast of containing all the vital elements of whole-meal flour. These include elements which Lord Woolton's chosen experts said were rather harmful when in bread. The Blessed Foods do not refrain from boasting of their inclusion (e.g., nicotinic acid).

In the House of Commons on 5th February, the present Minister of Food announced that on account of the short supply, "the Government, in order to maintain bread supplies, has reluctantly decided that it must make wheat go further for direct human consumption by raising the rate of extraction of flour and thus further reducing the quantity of feeding stuffs for livestock." (Note the marked absence of any reference to chemists and profits).

And, believe it or not, the full text of the Minister's statement, now before us, does not once mention any rate of extraction to or from. A moment's thought will show the reason. No figure can be disclosed without also disclosing the present rate.

Bread of 100 per cent. extraction must be restored at once.

MILK

Again with the concurrence of the man Woolton, it was decided some twelve months ago that all milk should be pasteurised before sale. The concentration of milk rounds at the same time made any effective resistance from the public almost impossible.

With these two powerful weapons, the Milk Combines have been able to impose a quasi-monopoly, and to buy out many small men. The product now on sale has lost most of its value as milk, and is treated frankly by the Combines as a semi-permanent article. That can be done because the milk has been killed. Pasteurisation, which is no more than a Combine ramp, must be stopped at once and the previous small men, and any ex-Service men who wish, must be encouraged to start their milk rounds. They need have no fear of any lack of demand. The Combines have killed any repute they had.

BUTTER

The official aim seems to be to reduce all butter to a lowest common measure, and in the process make it indistinguishable from margarine. Factory-messed butter must be stopped, and pure fresh butter made available at once to as large an area as possible.

CHEESE

The cheese situation is a plain disgrace. Of all the muck now being forced on a too patient public, factory-made cheese is the most obviously unfit for human consumption. This is a serious waste of good material, apart from poisoning the waterways with characteristic effluent as described by Rolt in *Narrow Boat*.

It is not at all clear why Cheshire and Stilton cheese have disappeared so completely, even if we can't afford Gorgonzola. All must be restored at once.

EGGS

The bottle-neck of the Grading Stations must be removed at once. Not only do many eggs disappear from public ken, but the stations are a serious drain on public funds, and are so inefficient that bad eggs, without remedy from the Food Offices, are very common. Here again, all willing persons should be encouraged to keep poultry. The production of eggs should not be made easy to the disease-ridden large units, and made hard for the small man.

MEAT

By some curious and mysterious process, part of the fat content of meat and bacon is being removed before they reach the public. The practice, which undoubtedly has Government sanction, must be stopped at once. It is more difficult to prove than the other categories, but few housewives will doubt that it exists.

A SHORT HEAD BEHIND

Of almost equal practical urgency is the question of ensuring from our own soil the very utmost food product per acre. As is very well known, our present fashion of large mechanised farms does not produce the most food per acre, only the most food per man employed.

On social grounds, we are going to need small mixed farms to absorb the unwanted unemployed very quickly indeed. On grounds of not starving more than we must, we are going to want small mixed farms NOW.

The present ridiculous Government attitude is demonstrated in many recent official statements, if we had room to quote them. But in none more plainly than in leaflet G372, which purports to be an explanatory leaflet for Agricultural Resettlement Grants. It lays down conditions for a grant to men or women who, before joining the Forces, "were working agricultural or horticultural holdings on their own account for commercial food production." (The reservation is interesting).

Thus, a man who gave up his small-holding out of patriotism, fought six years, and now returns, may be given a maximum grant of—Guess! Of not more than one hundred and fifty pounds! We leave the figure and the leaflet in their pristine and princely generosity. But somebody will have to think again, and think in many millions.

DDT AND ALL THAT

Our note of the last issue was not uncalled for. The Ministry of Agriculture has been forced to issue foolscap Press Notice MAF 1551, in which it warns all concerned of the danger of precipitate use. But the leopard does not change his spots. "Farmers . . . should use them with due care until there has been time for *entomologists and chemists* to ascertain in more detail how they can be most efficiently and safely employed." The italics are ours.

FLOOD MARKS

By CAPT. H. S. D. WENT

WHEN the waters of a flood recede, we can trace the successive stages of their recession by the lines of rubbish which they leave behind on the recovered land. For several years now I have watched the sinking of the evil and destructive flood of NPK doctrine and propaganda which threatened to destroy the fertility of our soil. I suppose the decade following the First World War saw NPK and all that goes with it—mechanisation, monoculture, *latifundia*, all that constitutes what its practitioners proudly called “farming on factory lines”—at the height of its apparent success. At that time agricultural scientists and “progressive” farmers were agreed that dung was out-of-date. Enthusiastic young men, with plenty of money, were attempting “farming without stock” on a large scale. Ex-Service men who had a little capital were dissuaded from trying mixed farming and were assured that they would make their fortunes with pigs and poultry. The late S. F. Edge and two other large pig-breeders merged their businesses and floated them as “S. F. Edge’s Pig Farms, Ltd.” (I am glad to say that you may now search Sussex in vain for Edge’s 1,000-acre pig-farm; but the small farmers whose land surrounded his are still there!). It is of considerable interest that the Ministry of Agriculture was all over Edge. It sponsored at least one official pamphlet on how to keep pigs, with photographs of Edge’s farm, not announced as such.

In the '30s the flood began to recede. The first sign that all was not well with NPK was given when the Chemists’ Assistants admitted that a certain amount of organic manuring might not be a bad thing after all. Then the advocates of sane farming began to make their voices heard. Already, in 1926, King’s “Farmers of Forty Centuries” had appeared; but the main attack may be taken to have opened with the publication in 1935 of Dr. Carrel’s “Man the Unknown,” which calls into question not only NPK but the whole “Industrialist” position. This was followed by Lord Portsmouth’s “Famine in England” and Dr. Wrench’s “The Wheel of Health,” both published in 1938. 1939 opened with

the late Sir Bernard Greenwell’s paper on his experiments, read to The Farmers Club, and this was followed by the really heavy metal of “The Rape of the Earth” by Jacks and Whyte, and the Cheshire Doctors’ “Medical Testament.” Then came 1940—and the devastating 15-inch salvo of Sir Albert Howard’s “Agricultural Testament.” The continued attack began to show results. The first “Flood Mark,” or line of rubbish, left by the retreating flood was “Chemicals *not* Dung.” This was abandoned almost without a struggle, and the Chemists Assistants began to say “Chemicals *and* Dung” (they are now saying that no one has *ever denied* the vital importance of organic manure). The next mark was the discovery of humus by the NPK men. By the end of 1941 Professors Salisbury and Scott Watson were telling us that humus was important, because it held water. (*The Economist* seized on this, of course). The next important “Flood Mark” was the late Sir Daniel Hall’s admission to Lord Bledisloe that he thought that Sir Albert Howard’s theories (which Sir Daniel publicly treated with scorn and derision) would eventually be proved to be sound. Meanwhile the barrage was being well maintained—Lord Northbourne published “Look to the Land,” which sets out the whole philosophy of The Return, in 1940, and in the same year Dr. Wrench followed up his “Wheel of Health” with “The Return of the Peasantries.” On the less technical side, Mr. H. J. Massingham was producing his series of delightful books dealing with various aspects of the countryside, all of them full of the soundest philosophy. In 1943 Lord Portsmouth surpassed his own achievement, in “Famine in England,” by giving us “Alternative to Death” and Lady Eve Balfour published her absolutely invaluable compilation, “The Living Soil.” In August, 1944, an anonymous reviewer of Lady Eve’s book, in *Agriculture*, stated that “Nobody denies the vital role of humus in maintaining soil fertility” and made the remarkable admission that “When all the trimmings have been removed there remains a case for investigation.” In October of the same year, Dr. E. J. Salisbury,

in an article in *The Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society* on “Organic and Mineral Fertilizers,” actually mentioned the mycorrhizal association, while implying that it was only beneficial in the case of “certain plants like the orchids.” 1945 brought Sir Albert Howard’s second 15-inch salvo—“Farming and Gardening for Health or Disease,” and the latest—though it will certainly not be the last—of these “Flood Marks” in an otherwise unimportant little article by Dr. C. S. Orwin in *The Sunday Times* on the 14th of October. For some unexplained reason the article—a piece of ordinary “scaled-pattern” NPK propaganda—appeared among the book reviews and immediately under the title (“Phosphates and Food”) was printed “Farming and Gardening for Health or Disease. By Sir Albert Howard (Faber, 12s. 6d.).” The position and sub-title of the article are queer, because the only reference to Sir Albert’s book is right at the end, and is this “In his latest book, Sir Albert Howard marshalls his facts [“We see no evidence! We hear no evidence! There is no evidence!”] and throws down his challenge. He complains that the scientists will not consider his evidence, or accept his interpretation of it.” It must not be thought that Dr. Orwin has not a good word for Sir Albert—“As a botanist he has done distinguished work for agriculture, both in this country and in India” and “his work has been of far-reaching importance to all peasant communities.” It is amusing to note that composting is an excellent thing for the Indian peasants, *because they can’t afford to buy chemical manures!* I must confess that this praise of Sir Albert—coming from Dr. Orwin—strongly suggests to my mind some cricketer, who occupies quite a respectable position in the team of some Minor County, saying that Hobbs was not at all a bad bat, in his day. The significant thing about the article—what makes it a “Flood Mark”—is that the only argument its author can find against compost is that it costs too much to make. It is a pity he has not read Mr. Sykes’ Appendix to Sir Albert’s book. He concludes: “In the garden and on the allotment, and among the more primitive communities of peasant farmers, composting has its uses, but it is no substitute for systems of complete manuring in the world of commercial food production.” I cannot help thinking that

Mr. Sykes would be rather amused to learn that his farming operations at Chantry Farm, Chute, are not “commercial food production.” Dr. Orwin’s use of the word “complete” should be noticed. As used by the Chemists’ Assistants, the words “complete manuring” and “balanced manuring” simply mean using both organic and chemical manures. Earlier in his short article—it only occupies ten inches of a single column—Dr. Orwin writes: “Vegetable and animal wastes returned to the soil must, it is asserted, form the only basis of soil fertility, and the return to this *primitive technique* (the italics are mine) will restore the human race and the animal kingdom to a condition from which disease is largely eliminated.” I fancy that Mr. Sykes would be even more amused to learn that he follows a primitive technique in his farming. We can picture to ourselves the great British farmers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—whose farming won the admiration of the world—tilling their fields with the antlers of deer and reaping their corn with flint sickles. It was said of Macaulay that he believed that man was not truly human until he took to wearing a top-hat and that civilisation began with the Reform Bill—it would seem that our modern agricultural Macaulay believes that farming began with the foundation of Rothamsted and that it remained primitive until the invention of the tractor. I have mentioned that Dr. Orwin now bases his objection to sane farming solely on the “profit motive” (he is, of course, purely industrialist in his outlook) and I am reminded of a broadcast to which I listened not long ago. Present-day farming was being discussed by an agricultural scientist, a county official and a successful commercial farmer. The Commercial Food Producer repeatedly stressed the duty and necessity of “doing right by the land,” and the Scientist and the Public Official as often interrupted him with excited cries of “Yes, but will it *PAY?*”

THE CHARM OF TERMS

Official psychologists tell the nation
The word you must always use is Frustration.
But over the beer jugs,
We say we’re all sheer mugs.

—H.R.

FOUNDATIONS

By K. L. KENRICK

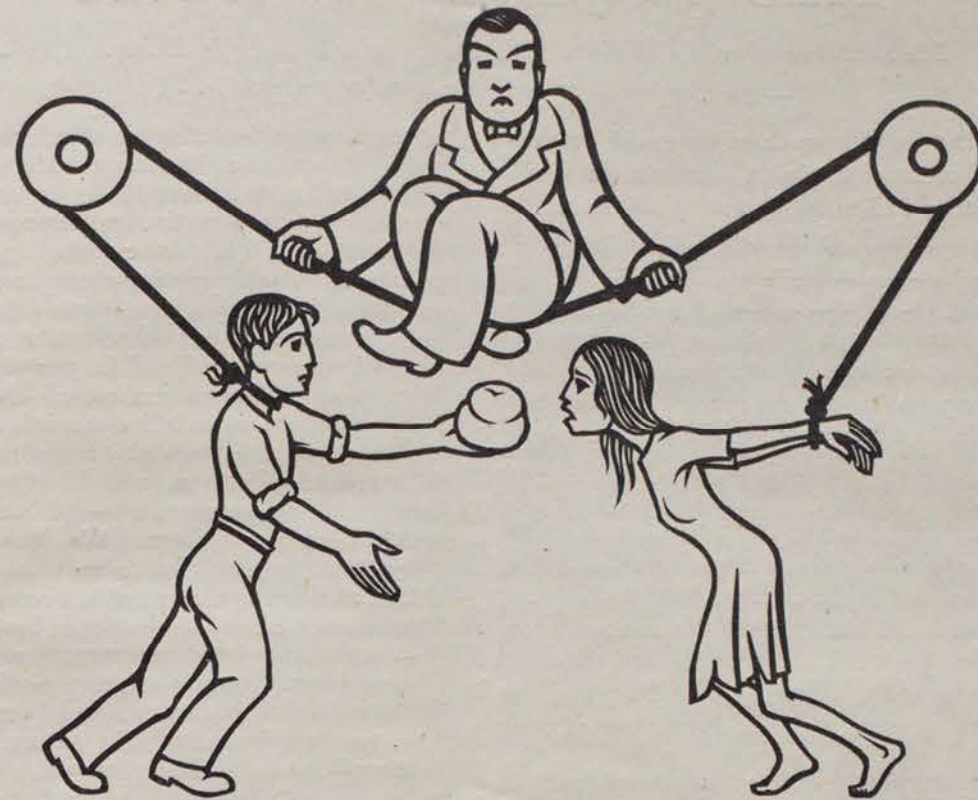
WE live in two worlds, variously called the material and the spiritual, the temporal and the eternal, the natural and the supernatural worlds. Our knowledge, such as it is, of the material world, is derived through the five senses. *Nihil in intellectu esse potest nisi prius in sensibus*. Before the evidence of the senses can be called knowledge it must pass through a process of treatment by reason and judgment. As the senses themselves are fallible and imperfect, and the reason and judgment still more so, we have no cause to pride ourselves on our knowledge of the material world. In fact, it hardly deserves to be called knowledge at all. It is far otherwise with our knowledge of the spiritual world, which is derived not through the evidence of the five senses, but through the divine revelations. This knowledge has a certainty which the other can never attain to. We cannot be certain that the sun will rise to-morrow morning, but we can without frivolity be certain that God will arise and scatter his enemies.

As individuals we should be very badly off indeed if each one had to depend for living at all on the knowledge which he acquired from his own experience and the evidence of his own senses. But we must live in the world; we have no option. What we really live by is the combined wisdom of the whole human race acquired in the course of countless generations. The blind cannot lead the blind, but the lame man can be eyes to the blind and the blind man be legs to the lame. This is how we live; there is no other way. There is a prevailing impression abroad that mankind has made great strides in material knowledge in the last few years. This is quite a mistake. The real fund of universal wisdom and knowledge by which man lives and not dies is prehistoric. It is built on a foundation of mere instinct, shared by man with the animals. This it is, to begin with, that tells him what is good to eat and what is poison. Then he discovers that some animals can be made friendly and tamed, that some plants have seeds which can be sown in soil which has been scratched to break the hard pan, and that these seeds, under the

beneficent influence of the seasons, will grow and produce more seeds. Then there is the discovery of fire and cooking, the knowledge that certain fibres can be spun and woven into clothes which can keep men alive in the coldest weather. No modern discoveries can for a moment compare with these, and these are but the leading items in an endless list.

There is no need to dwell on the fallibility of the five senses. It is patent to all. The eye can see a straight line as curved, and a curved line as straight. Seeing is anything but believing. But the fallibility of the mind in the material world is more interesting. Everyone knows that an angry man cannot see reason. A mind working free from the influences of any violent passion or desire, and deeming itself to be working calmly and judicially, may be warped by ambition, conceit, vain-glory, obstinacy, pride, and a host of other influences which would repay prolonged study. When coal is scarce, people refuse to believe that it comes from a deep mine and that the work of getting it up is a very irksome task which men refuse any longer to carry out. They prefer to believe that some malevolent power has thousands of millions of tons of coal in stock which it refuses to release for some pernickety reason of its own.

This essential fallibility of all human knowledge has several important results. The first is the utter insignificance of any man's (be he ever so brilliant) merely private and personal opinion on any subject of real moment. There are said to be two thousand millions of people on the earth, and we may fairly presume that each and every one of these has his own private and personal opinion on how the world should be run. Nor can the rest of us show any reason why we should pay more attention to the opinion of Bernard Shaw or H. G. Wells than to the most illiterate Indian peasant. It is perfectly true that on questions of no moment at all one should prefer the opinion of the expert to the opinion of the non-expert. For instance, on the question of the distance of the sun I defer to the opinion of the Astronomer-Royal; and on the question of the age of an old manu-



TRYING TO MAKE ENDS MEET

script I defer to the opinion of the Keeper of Manuscripts at the British Museum. But these are not questions of moment, and even in these cases my deference has its limits. I may be living in a State in which such jobs are given to the sons of favourites with no competence whatever. But if a man makes such a statement as that "the Catholic Church is anti-social," I am right to ask him either to produce overwhelming and irrefutable evidence for his statement, or to reconsider and withdraw it, or to hold his tongue for ever.

The second result of human fallibility is the almost (but not quite) infinite superiority of the sum-total of human wisdom over the private opinions of any individuals, however eminent. This is one of the weaknesses of the Socratic dialogue. As far as I am aware, Plato nowhere describes Socrates as trying to make a fool of the whole human race. Certainly in the fable of the Cave, Plato does

show his appreciation of the pitiful ignorance of humanity, but the method there is not strictly that of the Socratic dialectic. Aristotle, on the other hand, does definitely, in the Nichomachean Ethics, set out to pay the highest tribute to human wisdom, by making mankind the sole and final judge of its own conduct. With Aristotle, private opinion counts as nothing.

The third and most important, because most chastening result of human fallibility is the insignificance of my own private opinion. Not only is H. G. Wells one of two thousand million, but I am myself only one of the same humiliating number. What right have I to complain if people will not listen to me? By what virtue can I allow myself to be peeved, or angry or annoyed or depressed if they merely smile indulgently at my peculiar views and then go quietly on in their own way? How can I really make a grievance of their apathy?

THIS MAJESTIC INSTANCY

The substance of an address delivered by a priest to a Catholic Society. After a lengthy historical analysis, the speaker proceeds . . .

TO trace in more detail the sordid development of Capitalist Industrialism is unnecessary. Leo XIII, writing to the whole Catholic world in his Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891), summarised thus the problem facing the Church: "That the spirit of revolutionary change, which has long been disturbing the nations and the world, should have passed beyond the sphere of politics, and made its influence felt in the cognate sphere of practical economics, is not surprising. The demands of the conflict now raging are unmistakable; in the vast expansion of industrial pursuits and the marvellous discoveries of science; in the changed relations between masters and workmen; in the enormous fortunes of some few individuals and the utter poverty of the masses; . . . in the prevailing moral degeneracy. The momentous gravity of the state of things now prevailing fills every mind with painful apprehensions."

This was the opening of Leo's call to action. It was an urgent call—for spiritual life was at stake. . . . Man is reduced from a spiritual rational being, to a cog in the vast industrial machine.

Large-scale machine production has separated the intelligence used in productive processes from the actual manual work. The actual worker has often no responsibility for the machine he tends or the stuff he turns out. He has only the minimum of opportunity for putting any intelligence into his work. While he is working he is subhuman. The whole basis of culture, which in Christian civilisation was entrusted to every man, rests now in the hands of two small classes—technicians and artists—the elite of the industrial world. No wonder that Pope Pius XI, speaking to the world, said: "Bodily labour, which was decreed by Providence for the good of man's body and soul, even after original sin, has everywhere been changed into an instrument of strange perversion: for dead matter leaves the factory ennobled and transformed, where men are corrupted and degraded."

This separation of spiritual values from work has overflowed into leisure. Mechanical and degrading amusements form the relief to mechanical man. Initiative and responsibility have been lost. The culture of the Church is unknown. The liturgy is meaningless. We are faced, indeed, by a gigantic problem. The very education in our schools aims at the State's Pagan standards and fits our youth to be true cogs in the industrial crowd—a crowd so organised and materialised that it is at best soul-less, dangerous, unwieldy and unnatural. The problem faces us, and has faced us throughout this generation—and we have watched and kept silent. We who carry Christ have been satisfied to see Christianity stifled, to listen to the call of His representatives with deaf ears, and hardened hearts. In 1891 Pope Leo warned us that many working men had lapsed from the practice of their faith because of this arduous social problem. His remedy is built upon the restoration of property—the bulwark of free will and responsibility. "Everyone," he said, "should put his hand to the work which falls to his share, and that *at once* and straightway, lest the evil which is already so great become through delay absolutely beyond remedy." Even such burning words from Christ's Vicar failed to rouse Catholics, and so Pius XI, in 1931, re-emphasised Leo's remedy, saying: "We must re-assert it all the more strongly now: his salutary injunctions have been too often consigned to oblivion, either through deliberate suppression or in the belief that they were impracticable—a false belief, for they can and must be applied to-day . . . for modern machinery and industrialism rapidly flooding great tracts of territory—alike in the new world and in the ancient civilisations of the Far East—have enormously increased the numbers of dispossessed proletarians, those whose groanings go up from earth to God."

How many of us in this room—the cream of the Church—even recognise the words of the Pope? My dear people—this is no time for mincing words. You and I have seen the evil flourish—it was born in heresy—it has contaminated even the elect. You and I

have seen the home lose its honoured place as the cradle of culture. You and I have seen the working men lost to the Church, and those who practice become merely Mass Catholics. We have watched all this. Its cause was pointed out to us by Pope after Pope. Its remedy was the remedy for the Church, and we have been content to rest on charity and allow justice to starve. Humanly speaking, the battle is lost—unless we do something and *at once*. *Do what?* Pray—of course: but the highest prayer overflows into action. We are in a unique position: we have the goods. Let us then begin to learn the teaching of the Popes and put them over in our workshop, in our offices, and in our hearts. Changing the modern mentality is our most difficult task. If we fail, however, we fail Christ. Pius XII in 1941 had emphasised the key point of property in the Catholic remedy for our social ills: "It is the teaching of *Rerum Novarum* that nature itself has closely linked private property with the existence of human society and a truly human civilisation, and above all with the existence and development of the family. The link is indeed unmistakable. It is the function of private property to endow the father of the family with the healthy freedom that he needs to fulfil the duties God assigns him—duties involving his family's welfare alike in the physical and in the spiritual and religious sense. . . . Of all forms of goods that can be privately owned, none is more in harmony with nature than the land, the holding on which the family lives and from whose products it partly or wholly draws its livelihood. Such is the teaching of *Rerum Novarum*, and it is in the spirit of the Encyclical to declare that, as a general rule, only that stability which has its roots in a private holding renders a family the most fertile and living cell in society. . . ."

It is Pius XII in his magnificent Encyclical on the Mystical Body who tells us that God, as it were, depends on our co-operation in the furtherance and work of Redemption. Such is our dignity. But what Catholic recognises it? What Catholic Society ever encourages its members to act on the words of Christ's Vicar? Do we not sit back, allowing the fruits of the theological errors of the Reformers to continue to kill the practice of the Faith? It is not Christianity that has failed,

as Chesterton long since recorded, but Christians who have failed Christianity. Easy it is to blame others. To say that is not our job. But this is shirking our responsibilities. This attitude has brought us to our present desperate straits. If we are to save our Faith, our families and ourselves from the wreck, we must act, and act now. You who are united together, you must use your unity to restore all things in Christ. That is the command given by Pope after Pope. So far we have failed. Is this cloud to hang over us until our civilisation perishes? Or are you prepared to restore the culture of the Church? No other remedy will even stand comparison. Are we, or are we not, the Church MILITANT?

People say how marvellous the machine! They forget that while it may increase sales to-day, it can do so in many directions only at the expense of a slowing down in the future. I refer not only to anticipatory future purchases by means of hire-purchase credit, but also to the using up of nature's stored-up capital resources of soil fertility: the consumption of the products of animal and plant populations at a more rapid rate than they can be renewed, and the uneconomic exploitation from the long-term point of view of natural capital resources in the form of mines, water and land. Resources have been used quickly and wastefully instead of slowly and conservatively.—R. Glenday, in *The Future of Economic Society*. (The author is Economic Adviser to the Federation of British Industries).

Work which impairs human character, which stunts human faculties and results in human degradation, however productive of material effects it may be, contradicts the essential purpose of human existence. In the Christian view, we should not have to work just to live—that is slavery; we should live to work—that is freedom.—The Most Reverend R. J. Cushing, Archbishop of Boston (in the *Catholic Arts Quarterly*, U.S.A.).

They that have despised the Word of God, from them shall the word of man also be taken away—C. S. Lewis, in *That Hideous Strength*.

ORDER OF BATTLE: XXV

HOME TO ROOST

IN this Quarterly we have always held that in human affairs the will of mankind is dominant. Any society we want we can have, and to talk of Fate and Laws of Economics is the merest foolishness.

Those fashion-plates who, in agricultural circles especially, have boosted modern developments because they tended to happen, must now be feeling as foolish as they look.

For man is not ultimate. We should expect that when he seeks to follow the Will of God he will find himself in accord with the nature of things, which also has God for its Author.

Accordingly, although we have pressed what is right and reasonable when it was also unfashionable, we should expect that sooner or later the chickens would come home to roost. Ultimately, only that Society endures which is in accord with the Nature of Things. A society which boasted and practised its contempt for that nature would not endure.

The recent war, which has extended and strained, in particular, all those nations which have held Industrialism to have superseded Nature, has done no more than to hasten an inevitable nemesis. We have always said it. Chesterton put it better than any of us twenty years ago, when he said in *The Outline of Sanity* (p. 27):

"Capitalism is a contradiction: it is even a contradiction in terms. It takes a long time to box the compass, and a still longer time to see that it has done so; but the wheel has come full circle now. Capitalism is contradictory as soon as it is complete; because it is dealing with the mass of men in two ways at once. When most men are wage-earners, it is more and more difficult for most men to be customers. For the Capitalist is always trying to cut down what his servant demands, and in doing so is cutting down what his customer can spend."

That is why all the arguments of Big Business are arguments for Communism. As Chesterton also pointed out, that is why there is now no difference between the Parties.

But Communism is no remedy, because when it has supplanted Capitalism, as it is in process of doing, it comes up against an even more impregnable barrier. That is the impossibility of continuing to run the machines; because machines at their peak will always produce more goods than any sane society can require, and will always need more raw material than can be brought into existence.

In the various countries, one stage or the other is now being reached.

Let us agree that the highest blessedness of the highest standard of living has been reached everywhere. Every household has seventeen wireless sets, nine cars, three telephones to every room, and four cottages in various parts of the shore or country; apart from twenty-eight pairs of shoes apiece, to give the chiropodists a chance.

We are still faced with the permanent dilemma that so astronomical is the output of the machines, they they can do all this and still break down when nobody can possibly want any more.

It is now agreed, and publicly stated, that in production the United States call the tune. *The Economist* said some time ago that for England to regain her 1938 position in trade, it would be necessary to export 150% by volume of her 1938 figures.

But so far as can be seen, the United States has not only the equipment, but the full intention, to do all the exporting that is called for. The following propositions appear to be certain, on recent American evidence as disclosed by public acts.

- 1.—The American Industrial Plant, now run almost entirely on mass-production lines, requires the whole world market even to maintain itself on its present scale.
- 2.—Rival industrial plants will be made impotent by every device of international finance.
- 3.—England in particular, after a possible brief interval to enable the world to refit, will not be allowed to compete in export markets.

We must add to these considerations all that range of world-erosion and exhaustion of irreplaceable raw materials with which our

readers are familiar. These will certainly diminish, and ultimately will prohibit any large-scale transfers of food and secondary products from the "new" countries.

These lessons have been learnt already by the Rulers of England, but they are so urban-minded that they are still trying to conceal the fact, or are grudging, or are trying to make the new needs fit into the Industrial frame and vocabulary.

Even as we go to press, we are given by the daily papers the sensational news that the British Cabinet is to press for a drastic killing off of livestock in Europe in order to provide more human food.

This ridiculous statement may not be true. That it can even be made is proof of our radically ignorant and urban approach. Happily, other European countries are not so entirely unaware of the pre-requisites for good husbandry.

It is now clear that this country will have to produce a great deal more food—or starve. That is beyond argument, and critics who have relied hitherto on "cheap food from abroad" have been answered completely and finally.

But it is characteristic of our Rulers that they do not understand, or do not intend, that home food-production should serve the happiness of the English. Their full intention is to fit it into Industrialism, not only because that is their mental habit, but because, for the first time in the modern world, food-production here is going to pay.

That is the task before all the English. We have to insist, not on the highest production per man, but on the highest production per acre. For that is the only way in which we can grow the most food for our survival.

Not only so, we must insist that men and families, cast out permanently from Industrialism by technological or political unemployment, shall not be left to rot in despair—as both Conservative and Labour Governments left them to rot between the two wars.

Maximum home production of food, as we have said, is now beyond any intelligent argument. What we have to press for is that men are more than machines, holdings are better than corporations, and organic villages are better than gyro-tilled deserts.

That is, we want the *Birmingham Scheme*, complete with craftsmen and organic villages, and we want it now.

REVIEWS

The Small Man on the Land, one shilling net. Published by the Land Settlement Association and the National Farmers' Union

This is a pamphlet of 20 pages of text, and is very dear at the price. There are nine signatories, and the keynote of a document as wordy as any Government report is the need for increasing the efficiency of the small man. This is to be by means which our readers may readily guess.

The Land Settlement Association was criticised very severely for its standards of efficiency in the Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Land Settlement (H.M. Stationery Office, Dec., 1939), and the present publication is not without humour.

Soil and Health. Quarterly. Edited by Sir Albert Howard (5/- a year. Subscriptions to Miss Kirkham, The Rise, Milnthorpe, Westmoreland).

Readers of *The Cross and The Plough* will be well aware of *The Compost Newsletter*, edited for a number of years by Dr. Picton on behalf of the Cheshire Medical and Panel Committee. The very important work of making clear the theory and practice of compost farming and gardening has now been taken over by Sir Albert Howard, and the title has been changed to *Soil and Health*.

The first issue, for February, 1946, is altogether admirable, and we would say no more than that it is in Sir Albert's best vein. As he says in his opening words: "All over the world the case for action has been established." This quarterly is essential to all who want to take their part in that action, and we wish it Godspeed.

For the man who knows how to read and does not know how to judge, is in danger of laying open his mind, his memory and his heart to whatever the first comer wishes to plant there.—Dom Pierre-Celestin Lou, Tseng-Tsiang, O.S.B. (in *The Tablet*).

COLLAPSE AND REVIVAL

By HAROLD ROBBINS

NOTE.—The article which follows formed a chapter in a symposium of which the war has delayed publication. It was written in the earlier half of 1940, and has been left deliberately unaltered. The chickens therein indicated have now begun to come home to roost. The six years which have elapsed since these words were written have invalidated no word or principle. They have brought the end of the road six years nearer. But where is there a politician or a citizen who has realised on what verge he now stands?—The Editor.

A REVEALED Religion, a Moral Code, a Philosophy, suffer heavy handicap in all times and places; but none heavier than the reluctance of immature minds to accept the limitation of first principles. As children we fret against barriers erected for our safety, and children of all ages have always sought release from the nature of things in the fairy tale. Fairy Princes, Seven League Boots, the Bean Stalk, are prevalent in most children of a larger growth. It is when we cease to treat the nature, of things as an enemy and begin to accept and co-operate with it, that our minds have grown up. From this point of view, the whole modern world is a class of infants absorbing raptly a series of improbable fairy tales from a small and jaded teaching staff. This is proved by the general use of a phrase which would be impossible in any mature civilization. *The Conquest of Nature* is a contradiction in terms. The man who has conquered nature is dead.

It would be interesting to apply this principle to the history of the past four hundred years, but only the barest reference can be justified here. The first principles of the Christian Faith and Morals are *adult*. They preclude the waste of the human personality in fighting impossibly the nature of things, in order to focus its attention on the real and possible task of self-perfection in the divinely ordered framework of nature and life. Rebels, whether against the fate of Babel or of Babylon, were constrained by the body of first principles accepted everywhere by society, both within and without Christendom. When

the Rebellion finally succeeded, it was the most obvious and inevitable thing in the world that they made the world safe for their rebellion by throwing overboard the very notion of first principles altogether. The origins and legitimate scope of inductive reasoning must not detain us, but what modern Englishmen mean when they boast of the egregious Bacon and his system is that they have cut loose from any nonsense of first principles, and intend to make a world of their own. They have escaped from reality into fairyland. The fundamental atheism, as well as the fundamental immaturity of that operation, have not been observed sufficiently by its critics.

So far as this point goes, it is not necessary for us to insist that the first principles thus rebelled against were unmistakably correct and incapable of amendment. The point is that *some* first principles, accepting the large implications of the nature of things, and working from them, were essential to human sanity and survival, and that they were not accepted.

I have neither the equipment nor the space to follow these considerations into the numerous fields where demonstration is possible, delightful and indeed humorous as such a process would be. There is, for example, the portentous politician who announced in the year of Our Lord 1940 that a man's first duty was to the place where he worked rather than to the place where he lived. But the modern world is full of such raving lunacy, and anyone can find twenty examples of it every day.

In the world of reality man is a being of infinitely subtle capacity, placed in a world of infinitely subtle variation in order to be happy in working out his salvation. Two such infinite subtleties will clearly destroy each other unless used within a framework of right reason, justice, charity and therefore permanence. Such a framework is the Natural Law of mankind, systematised and given formidable and additional sanctions by the Christian religion. Its abandonment by the modern world led to a suicidal civil war—the two infinities began to destroy each other. The

mechanics of this process may be indicated briefly. The framework had provided a common term between man and nature. As its author is God, the nature of man was patient of any action within it, and the nature of things was patient in any action within it; neither was affronted, neither reacted, neither died.

The Framework abolished, some other common term was necessary, and this was found in the formula, so flattering to immaturity, of *The Conquest of Nature*. The long process of implementing this formula may be summarised in the one word *mechanisation*, here used in its widest and most general sense. Now mechanisation has an infinity of its own, and in place of two infinities, ruled and harmonised by Law, we have been confronted with a series of three infinities, with no rule but man's Babylonian heart, and no harmonising but the formula that nature is to be conquered. Clearly they could not persist, and the stress has been resolved in two directions from the centre. The stress between man and his machines has been eased by allowing the mechanical complications to remain, and by imposing on the infinite variety of the mind of man a monotony and standardisation which threaten to atrophy and destroy it. That is, the nature of the machine has been allowed dominance over the nature of man. This fact, so enormous and so irrefutable, is crucial to our future. Its implications are being dealt with by some of my colleagues, and I do no more than record the fact here. But the stress as between the infinity of the machines and the infinity of nature has been eased in the same way, by allowing the mechanical complication to remain, at the expense of the infinite subtleties of nature which are not patient of any such process. It is this second half of the phenomenon which must engage our attention here.

The Primary need of man is food, and food is necessarily of organic origin. No method has yet been discovered by which he can be sustained directly on minerals. This fact alone should give us the clue to our remedy, for a mineral consumed is consumed for ever, whereas organisms form a cycle—plant to animal or man, man to soil, soil to plant again, and so on for the duration of the world. Of all mankind, only the lowest

savages—and modern man—have failed to observe at all times the first law of husbandry, that fertility and permanence must be assured by observing this cycle. It is true that there is much evidence of such failures in the past—the Imperial Romans in Italy and North Africa—the obscure civilisation responsible for the Gobi Desert—and civilisations obscurer still—but these were accidents of time. They may be grouped, with us, as the *after-Christians* of Charles Stanton Devas.

It has been left for us to find, at the very moment when we were boasting of our conquest of nature and the world, that both had revolted against us, and that death by famine, on a scale hitherto unknown, was at our door.

It was said at the beginning of this chapter that mature minds holding to principles suffer heavy handicap. Be they never so sure of their validity, in the face of an incredulous world they must wait until the chickens have come home to roost. Almighty God is seldom spectacular. His ways are so sure that He has no need to be. But there are exceptions, and we may hold that one of them is when a civilisation has been masquerading as brilliant though it has only been living by squandering its capital. A man in that position is, on superficial scrutiny, a wealthy and successful man. So is a civilisation. And yet it was all so painfully obvious. I am old enough to remember that when I was at school the geography books were still excited about the "development" of the prairie lands of Canada, which had so much stored fertility that they would produce wheat-crops year after year for a century with no need of manure. I was old enough, even then, to wonder uneasily what would happen at the end of that optimistic limit, and what would become of a society based upon such fleeting foundation. I never ceased wondering and being uneasy all through the period when British and European farming were being slowly murdered by that suicidal competition, and when Australia, the Argentine, Russia and Africa followed the States and Canada in that feast of death. Was it because I never grew up, or because my contemporaries never grew up? I hesitate to think that even the City of London would consciously condemn the civilised world to death in something less than a century, but that seems the only alternative theory.

At all events, nothing more was heard of the date of execution until 1936. There must have been warning and evidence in plenty, but nothing more than vague hints was available to ordinary folk in England until that year. Then something happened which the Press could not resist. A man bit a dog. That is to say, the tortured lands of the Middle West of America, forced to grow wheat—wheat—wheat—because it was *wheatland* in the modern jargon, turned on their persecutors. They disintegrated and blew across the continent into the Atlantic. The resultant desert is still spreading.

I suppose that even allowing for the sensational headlines of those weeks, no major disaster of history has had so little attention. The modern industrial society then received its formal sentence of death, but no one would know that from the facade of our lives. Like the Best Families, we are going about pretending that the unpleasant thing never happened. But in three weeks there will be an execution, and we shall die too if we have not succeeded by then in dissociating ourselves effectively from the murderer.

This is not the place to elaborate the sombre facts of our disaster. It has been done admirably by many hands, once the verdict of first principles began to be corroborated by events in 1935. Dr. Alexis Carrel, from the very citadel of modernity, issued his great scientific exposure of the effect of industrialisation on mankind. *Man the Unknown* (Hamish Hamilton) may be taken as the first of the testimonies. On world soil erosion and exhaustion, there appeared in 1939 the first English treatise, *The Rape of the Earth*, by G. V. Jaks and R. O. Whyte (Faber & Faber). Others that may be mentioned in an impressive accumulation are *Famine in England* by Viscount Lynton (Wetherby), *An Agricultural Testament* by Sir Arthur Howard (Oxford University Press), *The Wheel of Health* by G. T. Wrenn, M.D. (C. W. Daniel), *Look to the Land* by Lord Northbourne (Dent), *The Labouring Earth* by C. Alma Baker (Heath Cranton).*

But the facts are no longer in dispute in any informed quarter. The difficulty is not with the facts, but with the criminality and obscurantism of the vested interests, and with

* Many later works have not been included for the reason assigned in the editorial note.

the way of revival. To these we must now turn.

The City of London (for under this title it is convenient to summarise the small number of very rich men, ignorant of the principles even of the God they serve, ignorant of the world they have destroyed, intensely selfish, and very small minded)—the City of London is neither convinced nor amused. It has talked up to the present of the necessity of shrinking agriculture back to its original proportions after the war, of giving guarantees for a full twelve months from the close of hostilities. The appropriate Combine is still pressing for the use of its deadly *artificial*s. The most progressive agriculturists, including the Editor of *The Countryman*, think that million-acre farms, which in all civilisations have immediately preceded collapse and extinction, are just what the doctor ordered.

Not one of these groups serves any useful purpose, and the elimination of all of them is a pre-condition for any positive action. Let us proceed.

That structure of society which serves best the nature of man is dealt with elsewhere in these pages, and elsewhere by myself and other writers. In this chapter I should prefer to indicate the problem the other way round. Nature is the servant of God, without whom, by His own decrees, man cannot live and move and have his being. What conditions best sub-serve this nature in her aspect of providing the primary essential of food?

Apart from freakish experiment, human and animal life can be sustained only by plants grown in soil. Soil is a living organism. It includes, besides the mineral constituents which it shares with sub-soil, an infinity of micro-organisms which have the property of making food, air and water available for the plant. In the absence of these organisms plants will not grow or live. Plants sown on bare sub-soil promptly die. It was a superstition of the nineteenth century, fostered by the chemist Liebig, that certain chemicals are dominant in sustaining plant-life. He was wrong, although it is true that by reason of our climate the soil of England will withstand more abuse of that kind than most soils of the world. The composition of this minute infinity of organisms in the soil is largely unknown. We know that their

presence means life, and their absence means death, but that is all. Civilised man everywhere has shown an instinctive appreciation of this fact. He has preserved jealously the top few inches of soil—so long in forming, so quick to disappear under abuse—upon which our life on the earth depends.

The classic example of the essential processes is the forest. The coat of organic earth, or humus, is constantly renewed by falling leaves and branches, and by the decay of animal and insect life within it. It holds moisture in the same way as a sponge, so that streams do not take with them any more than the sheer liquid of the rainfall. When land is cultivated by man, it will speedily lose its fertility unless he can find means of approximating to forest conditions. This he does by assiduous cultivation to keep the soil porous, by maintaining over the surface a standing crop during as long a period of the year as possible, and by constant renewal of the humus content of the soil. This latter process, manuring, is achieved by returning to the soil in due course everything that has been drawn from it, after a process of encouraging above ground the intense activity of organisms which also takes place below. Monoculture, or the continual growing of the same crop on a piece of ground, has never been tolerated by civilised man. Where for some special local reason it has been necessary, intense manuring and renewal of soil texture have always been the rule. It will be seen that crops or stock for markets so distant that return of wastes is impossible, are excluded from a system of permanent cultivation.

The rotation of crops was systematised in England in the eighteenth century. It is one of the few things for which we need be grateful to that anti-social epoch. Because of its obstinate retention by farmers, we have hitherto escaped the worst effects of industrialised farming.

Now every one of these principles has been infringed by industrialised farming throughout the world, and many of them must be so infringed in any large-scale agriculture.

All products are removed to a distance, where the ultimate disposal of their residue is down a river to the sea. In arable cultivation

no live-stock is kept to provide a reservoir of fertility. The soil cannot even recover itself by diversity of cropping. In districts addicted to stock-raising, the stock itself, source of renewal, is removed to a distance.

As has been said, we are not in the early stages of our problem, but in the last. Jaks and Whyte, who are anything but sensational in their methods, have committed themselves to the following terrifying statement:—

PROBABLY MORE SOIL WAS LOST FROM THE WORLD BETWEEN 1919 AND 1934 THAN IN THE WHOLE OF PREVIOUS HUMAN HISTORY. BY 1935 THE ILLUSION THAT NATIONS COULD GET RICH QUICK AT THE EXPENSE OF A BENEFICIENT UNRESISTING NATURE HAD BEEN FINALLY SHATTERED.

But if this be so, and evidence from all over the world confirms it, we cannot expect more than a dozen or twenty years before the life we have all been living suffers final collapse. It is not someone else's problem; it is our problem. People who talk now of standards of living (meaning films, wireless and the rest of the fairyland) or of people not wanting to change their mode of life, convict themselves of a lack of elementary common sense. Industrialism has killed our world, and we have to make another in terms of reality.

One element of choice alone is left to us. We Catholics (since it is Catholics who are under discussion) can do one of two things. We can, as a community or communities, encourage and achieve an orderly reversion to the only kind of life which will enable us to survive, as Catholics and as free men. Or, we can wait in the great Wen until it has sucked the last out of its last victim, and then join in the last mad rush for bits of earth to scratch, and wait miserably for the husks that even the swine would not eat.

But this is astray from our self-imposed restriction. The conditions of collapse are enormous and undoubted. What are the necessary conditions for revival?

All over the world, great tracts of land will have to revert to their original forest or thin pasture until the lapse of centuries has restored them for our wiser posterity.

Human settlement will have to be much closer and on land relatively undamaged by erosion and exhaustion. It must live on the true *annual return* of the land, and not on *capital*.

Farming must be both *intensive* and *mixed*. That is, holdings must be small enough to permit of unremitting attention by a man and his family, and so ordered that everything removed can be restored. This, in turn, involves the notion of close organic communities, and animal husbandry must be an inseparable part of arable farming. Nothing in our unsound policy is so unsound as the ridiculous division of our farming into "industries." As though pigs thrive without skim milk, or wheat without clover leys.

The art of composting wastes must be revived and strengthened. The Kingdom of God is built on muck. Little as our refined urban philosophers may like it, that is the sober truth, and we may venture the opinion that if our Lord did not emphasise it, it was because all the intervening ages would have marvelled had He uttered such a platitude.

Finally, since our country, thanks to climate and the uncommercial obstinacy of our farmers, is still uneroded and relatively unexhausted, at least the greater proportion of the people of our race will have to draw their sustenance from her.

Schemes for Land Settlement in England, Scotland and Wales must be dominant in any reconstruction, and no inorganic projects such as satellite towns should have preference over, or interfere with, that process.

For the day is coming when not only those reading this book, but even those few who have not, will have to realise that of all the wealth of Ormuz and of Ind with which Mammon endowed our fathers, there is left to us nothing now, but only the dear stretches of good brown earth full of those tiny servants of God who will help us to make all things new.

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These considerations are dominant, arising from the nature of things, and no separate discussion of the present industrial basis of England is therefore necessary.

But it is a corollary of the argument of this chapter that, since human communities all over the world will be contracted and made organic, they will tend to become self-sufficient in all essential respects. We shall

lose, therefore, the greater portion of our trade in manufactured goods, and the future of industrialism in England has no more than the importance due to a declining system. We must hope that the decline will be measured enough to permit of true organic change, free from panic, but no other provision is necessary to a discussion based on the realities of this and the preceding chapters.

THE PERMANENCE OF THE PROPHET

Cry, cease not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their wicked doings, and the house of Jacob their sins.

For they seek me from day to day, and desire to know my ways, as a nation that hath done justice, and hath not forsaken the judgment of their God: they ask of me the judgments of justice: they are willing to approach to God.

Why have we fasted and thou hast not regarded; have we humbled our souls, and thou hast not taken notice? Behold in the day of your fast your own will is found: and you exact of all your debtors.

Behold, you fast for debates and strife, and strike with the fist wickedly. Do not fast as you have done until this day, to make your cry to be heard on high.

Is this such a fast as I have chosen; for a man to afflict his soul for a day? Is this it, to wind his head about like a circle, and to spread sackcloth and ashes? Wilt thou call this a fast, and a day acceptable to the Lord?

Is not this rather the fast that I have chosen? Loose the bands of wickedness; undo the bundles that oppress; let them that are broken go free; and break asunder every burden.

Deal thy bread to the hungry; and bring the needy and the harbourless into thy house: when thou shalt see one naked, cover him and despise not thy own flesh.

Then shall thy light break forth as the morning; and thy health shall speedily arise; and thy justice shall go before thy face; and the glory of the Lord shall gather thee up.

Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall hear; thou shalt cry, and he shall say: Here I am.

—Isaías: chapter LVIII