

PONTIFICIA UNIVERSITÀ LATERANENSE
ACCADEMIA ALFONSIANA
ISTITUTO SUPERIORE DI TEOLOGIA MORALE

THE VALUES OF HUMAN WORK
ACCORDING TO POPE LEO XIII (*RERUM NOVARUM*)
AND LEO JOHN DEHON
A COMPARATIVE STUDY

A study submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree
of Licentiate in moral theology

Prepared under the guidance of
Prof. Dr. Raphael Gallagher C. Ss. R.

Presented by
Carolus B. Kusmaryanto SCJ
ROMA 1998

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Carolus B. Kusmaryanto SCJ

Roma, February 1998

INTRODUCTION

The problem of human work has existed as long as humans have existed and until now there has no satisfactory solution. The problem becomes crucial due to the distressful and fatiguing aspect of work which are sometimes unbearable.

Through out the centuries, people have been seeking the value that human work has for human kind. They have seen that it has multidimensional values. In the Catholic tradition, the values of human work changed emphasis and varied from time to time. Largely theological reflections on human work such as currently exist only underwent significant development in this century along with the development of the Social Teaching of the Church.

Pope Leo XIII (1811 – 1903) with his encyclical *Rerum Novarum* is regarded as the stepping stone for the modern Social Teaching of the Church. He is the Pope who for the first time in the history of the Church gave an extensive and comprehensive description of the social teaching of the Church especially regarding human conditions. In *Rerum Novarum* he defended workers against exploitation of capitalism and gave new values to human work.

Leo John Dehon, the founder of the Priests of the Sacred Heart who lived in the same era as Pope Leo XIII faced the same problem with him. In his pastoral and spiritual journey, Leo John Dehon confronted harsh and difficult conditions of workers in the city of Saint Quentin; the workers had no hope of getting their conditions improved. As pastor, he answered the plea of the workers to defend them and to improve their condition by founding workers' movements, workers' organizations, organizing workers' congresses, writing books and articles etc.

Leo John Dehon received an appeal from Leo XIII to preach his encyclicals. Hence, based on the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* he developed his thinking on human work and developed its value according to his spiritual journey which he applied to a concrete situation in his country.

Both Leo XIII and Leo John Dehon made contributions to the development of Social Teaching of the Church in the modern era, as a part of Church concern and care for the poor and the needy.

Part One

LEO JOHN DEHON'S LIFE AND TEACHINGS

I. BIOGRAPHY OF LEO JOHN DEHON ¹

Leo Gustave Dehon was born in La Capelle (department of Aisne, France), on March 14, 1843.² He was the youngest of 3 brothers. His father, Jules Alexandre Dehon was a good and decent man, respectful toward religion but not himself a practicing Catholic. Jules Alexandre Dehon lost his faith while he was studying in college.³ One of his ancestors was a rural noble from Hon (de Hon). In the era of the French revolution, Leo's grandfather changed his name from de Hon to Dehon. In short, he was liberal, rich, and semi noble background.

Leo's mother, Adele Stephanie Vandelet, was a gentle and pious woman. She had received an excellent education in the boarding school at Charleville (Ardenne) from the Ladies of Providence, founded by St. Madeleine-Sophie Barat, who were later merged with the Religious of the Sacred Heart. Before her marriage, she

¹ I wrote this biography mostly base on Leo Dehon's autobiography -- *Notes sur L'histoire de ma Vie*, vol. 1 -- 8, which were published by Centro Generale Studi (SCJ), Rome.

² Leo Dehon, *Notes Sur L'Histoire de ma Vie*, vol I, Centro Generale Studi, Roma, 1975. p. 1

³ L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 6

intended to be a sister but she changed her mind after the death of her mother. For Leo Dehon his mother was "*one of the greatest God's gift for me and she was the instrument of thousand graces.*"⁴

Leo was baptized on March 24, 1843 which was the First Vespers of the Feast of the Annunciation. Later, Leo saw this day as a Divine Providence in connection with his congregation, since his congregation has a motto "*Ecce Venio et Ecce Ancilla*"⁵. For this reason, Leo liked making a pilgrimage to the small chapel in La Capelle on the anniversary of his baptism.

When Leo was a child, he suffered a serious cerebral fever and his health was so fragile that his mother was nervous about losing her youngest son. For that reason she loved him very much. She taught him how to pray and brought him to a small chapel next to their house to say prayers.⁶ Leo remembered the pew where he and his mother used to pray. His mother taught him prayers and devotion to the Heart of Jesus, the Blessed Virgin, and St. Joseph. From his earliest childhood on, Leo experienced a religious sentiment which flowed from his mother and became a great and joyous experience.

Dehon entered boarding school in his town, La Capelle. It was in La Capelle that he felt God's calling for priesthood.⁷ His father wanted to send Leo to a Lycée

⁴ My translation from L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 4

⁵ L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 1.

⁶ L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 9

⁷ L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 7

(high school) in Paris, but a simple maid in the Dehon household put Leo's father in contact with the Lycée in Hazebrouck.

Life in Lycée Hazebrouck was austere. Under the direction of Fr. Dehaene, the students had to get up early, had lots of work to do, and had hardly any free time, were under rigid discipline. His personality attracted young people so that Fr. Dehaene became a true father for the students. He tried to form them into good Christians and directed them toward the priesthood if they showed signs of a vocation. He animated his students with his words and he was spiritual director for the student. He showed fatherly compassion, especially to the youngest. For Leo Dehon, Fr. Dehaene was "the father of my soul" because he was Dehon's confessor and spiritual director.⁸ For Leo, Hazebrouck was a good place for his young formation for religiosity.⁹

After finishing his studies in classics and humanities in Hazebrouck in 1859, he started his university life in Paris. Actually he didn't want to go to the university because he wanted to enter the seminary, but his father wouldn't give him permission. He wanted his son to be a diplomat or magistrate.¹⁰ He entered the Institute Barbet to get a bachelor degree in science. But he lasted only 2 months in boarding house, because he felt that the moral life of some students was very bad, and they didn't seem to have any faith at all.¹¹ Finally Leo lived with his brother and

⁸ L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 17

⁹ L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 35

¹⁰ L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 38

¹¹ L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 39

attended Institute Barbet as a day student until he got his bachelor degree in science on June 12, 1860.

On December 26, 1859 he joined the Catholic Circle, a Catholic student organization whose activities promoted a social-religious life among the students.¹² There he got to know young people from both middle class and the aristocracy. He also joined the St. Vincent de Paul Society in the parish of St-Nicholas-du-Chardonnet.¹³ This parish took care of the poor in the squalid Mouffetard quarter of the city. The society had begun in 1833 through the initiative of Frederic Ozanam and Emanuel Bailly together with six Parisian students. Leo's task was to look after two elderly men, with whom he came to be on good terms. As a student, he helped Abbé Prével (Abbé of St. Sulpice) teach catechism for the poor of the neighborhood. There were always 200 - 300 people.

Leo had prepared to attend the Polytechnic, but mathematics and natural science were probably not his forte. The thought of becoming a mathematician, scientist, engineer or architect did not appeal to him. And so already in his first year (1859-60), while working on his bachelor's in science, he enrolled in law school but without attending classes. In his second year (1860-61) he devoted himself completely to the study of law. On July 26, 1862 he earned his bachelor degree in law and on the 18th of August of the same year, he succeeded in defending his

¹² L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 43

¹³ L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 44

thesis for his licentiate.¹⁴ From that time on, he worked in the office of the prosecutor Mazza. He continued his study in law and got his doctorate in law on April 2, 1864 although he continued his studies only to get permission from his father to go to the French Seminary in Rome.¹⁵

Although his father had promised to let him choose his life after getting his doctorate in law, when the time came, his father wouldn't let him to go to the Seminary. So as not to disappoint him, his father gave him permission to travel. Leo chose to travel to the Holy Land.¹⁶ This travel made him more confident about his vocation of being a priest. Finally his father couldn't do anything except let him go to Rome to study for the priesthood. But his father didn't let him become a religious priest. He had to be a diocesan priest. In the mind of his father, a diocesan priest could easily become a bishop, a higher rank in the society.

Leo entered the French College, Seminary of St. Clare, in Rome, on October 25, 1865 and studied theology at Gregorian University. He gave the reason why he studied in Rome, "*An inner logic was telling me that water is purer at its source than in the stream - doctrine and piety are drawn more easily and plentifully at the center of the church than elsewhere.*"¹⁷

¹⁴ L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 112.

¹⁵ L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 187.

¹⁶ He called his travel '*Voyage d'Orient*' from August 23, 1864 – June 14, 1865. He traveled to Swiss, Italy, Greek, Turkey, Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Hungary and Austria. He wrote his experiences of his travel in his autobiography, *Notes sur l'Histoire de ma Vie*, vol. II, Centro Generale Studi, Roma, 1976.

¹⁷ L. Dehon, *Notes sur l'Histoire de ma Vie*, vol. I, p. 187.

He was interested in many subjects: Philosophy, ecclesiology, canon law, dogma, and moral theology. He said that the most important characteristic of moral theology as taught at the Gregoriana was its absolute rejection of Jansenism.¹⁸ About Antonio Ballerini, his professor of Moral theology, Dehon said that he was very capable in dealing with all kinds of questions and human situations. Beginning with moral principles and the laws of psychology, he would confidently come up with answers that were satisfying to one's conscience. He did not indulge in the rigorism of the Jansenists nor did he fall into laxism.¹⁹ He admired St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori.²⁰ In 2 consecutive years (1867- 1868), he won the first prize in the school of Moral Theology.

By the time he left Rome, he had four doctorate degrees: Philosophy (July 25, 1866), Theology (June 6, 1871), and Canon Law (July 24, 1871) and a Civil Law degree which he got it in Paris (on April 2, 1864)

Leo received tonsure from the vicar of Rome, Cardinal Patrizi, on December 22, 1866 at St. John Lateran and was ordained subdeacon on December 21, 1867. He received tonsure from the vicar of Rome, Cardinal Patrizi, on December 22, 1866 at Basilica St. John Lateran and was ordained subdeacon on December 21,

¹⁸ L. Dehon wrote, "*Les dogmes sont les principes; la morale en est l'application. C'est dans les dogmes que la morale trouve son autorité et sa sanction. Rien de plus faux et de plus funeste que la séparation des dogmes et de la morale inaugurée par le Jansénisme et continuée jusqu'aujourd'hui.*" Leo Dehon, *Notes sur L'Histoire de ma Vie*, vol. III, Centro Generale Studi, Roma, 1977 p. 84.

¹⁹ L. Dehon, op. cit., p. 84 – 88.

²⁰ L. Dehon wrote, "*St. Liguori a inauguré la casuistique. C'est vrai ; mais il l'a fait avec plus d'ampleur. Il a comme incarné les principes dans des cas de conscience et il a déterminé leur mise en application par des exemples choisis et des solutions claires.*" L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 86.

1867. On June 6, 1868 he was ordained deacon. He was ordained a priest on December 19, 1868 together with 200 others in basilica St. John Lateran, Rome. After his ordination, Leo continued to live in Rome due to the preparation of Ist Vatican council. He was assigned to be one of the stenographers in the Ist Vatican Council together with 23 others.²¹

His yearning for the religious life didn't cease after his priest ordination. Now he had many choices in front of him: He was interested in a pastoral higher education since he was a young student in Paris, when he used to help Abbée Prevel;²² meanwhile Fr. D' Alzon, a closed friend of him, did everything in his power to get him to join his congregation, the Assumptionists; Msgr. Hautcoer, his closed friend and the founder of the University of Lille, tried to persuade him to become involved in the foundation of the Catholic university of Lille, or at least to teach a few courses there. Leo refused both invitations because he wanted to devote himself to the apostolate of higher education, especially for the clergy. It was a real need at the time.²³

Together with his fellow seminarians in Rome he founded the apostolate of St. Catherine for teaching catechism to the children. Later, as a young priest at Saint Quentin, he would start a youth fellowship, a newspaper, a circle for young people,

²¹ L. Dehon, op. cit., p. 219. Leo Dehon wrote his experiences to be a stenographer in I Vatican Council in his autobiography, *Notes sur L'histoire de ma vie*, vol. IV, Centro Generale Studi, Roma, 1980.

²² L. Dehon, *Notes sur L'histoire de ma vie*, vol. V, Centro Generale Studi, Roma, 1978, p. 90.

²³ L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 46.

a college, and an association for priests. It was also in St. Quentin that he started his social pastoral work.

While he was working at St. Quentin, his desire to be a religious didn't cease. He made a long retreat and consulted with many priests. He was thinking of being an Asumptionist or a Jesuit, or a member of Congregation of Holy Spirit. But the more he thought about them, the more he felt a deep calling to do something else.

Finally, he decided to found his own congregation. In his diary, he wrote, "*The providential moment had come for me to realize my vocation. I made my decision on June 27, 1877 and would take my first vows on June 28, 1878*"²⁴. He founded the Oblates of the Sacred Heart. He was very absorbed in the devotion to the Sacred Heart and reparation. He wrote why he founded the new congregation, "*I was completely drawn to the Sacred Heart and to reparation... I kept searching and waiting... In 1877 I could hold out no longer. Through letters and trips I tried to find out whether any existing institute could satisfy my attraction to the Sacred Heart and to reparation... I found nothing to suit me, and besides I was too tied to my work to be able to leave... What to do? At Saint Quentin the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart shared my desire for an institute of priests. I began to wonder if Providence intended for me to start something myself.*"²⁵

²⁴ I translated from L. Dehon, *Notes sur l'Histoire de ma Vie*, vol. 7, p. 23.

²⁵ I translated from Records, L. Dehon, *Lettere Circolari*, no. 333-334, 338-339.

He named his congregation Oblates of the Sacred Heart to express his spiritual life of reparation and immolation to the Heart of Jesus. *"My intention was not to found an institute without reparation but an institute of reparation and of victims. I never adopted the name victims; I chose Oblates, which means the same thing.... We are priest-victims. Our particular spirit is spiritus amoris et immolationis. Live well your act of oblation and you will be a good... victim of the Sacred Heart."*²⁶

The history of this new congregation was not smooth. Like other congregations, the Oblate of the Heart of Jesus was suppressed by the Holy See, on December 3, 1883. The reason why the congregation was suppressed was because the Holy See saw that this congregation was established on the basis of personal revelation.²⁷ He was very sad and he called this year as '*Consummatum est, année terrible*'.²⁸

Leo wrote about this day, *"I received this death sentence on the beautiful feast of December 8. I had been thrown to the ground and crushed. So I had been wrong. What would my future be? I still had the college, but my attraction and my vocation did not lie there."*²⁹ Although later he saw it as a Divine Providence because then he could explain clearly that those accusations were false. On March 29, 1884 the Holy

²⁶ Archives of the Dehonians, B. 44/7.

²⁷ L. Dehon, *Notes sur l'Histoire de ma vie, vol VIII*, Centro Generale Studi, Roma, 1983, pp. 68 – 70.

²⁸ He wrote, *"C'est l'année du Consummatum est, l'année terrible. Quelles angoisses ! Quels déchirements ! J'avais tout quitté, tout brisé, tout sacrifié pour fonder l'oeuvre de réparation au Sacre Coeur, tout, ma carrière séculière, ma fortune, bien des amitiés, les espérances et la paix de ma famille. Dieu avait paru accepter mon sacrifice par bien grâce et même par ce qui me paraissait être des encouragements formels et des paroles divines."* L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 66.

²⁹ L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 70.

See issued a decree to re-establish the congregation but with a new name: Priests of the Sacred Heart.³⁰

The re-establishment of his congregation didn't mean that his suffering ended. He suffered from financial burden for his college and other work, from the fact that many religious left his congregation, from the bishops where his institutions were established, etc. But all of his sufferings, he offered to the Sacred Heart of Jesus as oblation, immolation, and reparation. By the time that he died (12 August 1925), his congregation had spread to 21 countries with 772 members.

³⁰ L. Dehon, *op. cit.* pp. 71 - 72

II. LEO JOHN DEHON AND SOCIAL MOVEMENT

1. THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SITUATION IN FRANCE, ESPECIALLY IN ST. QUENTIN

a. Situation in France

Under the second empire of Napoleon III, the French declared war against Prussia on 19 July 1870³¹. This war caused instability in French politics, because of the lack of preparation and the lack of trained soldiers. The war quickly turned into a major disaster. There was a string of defeats: Wissembourg (August 4) and Worth-Fröschwiller (August 6). Mac-Mahon abandoned Alsace, and in Lorraine, Bazaine let himself and most of the French army (180,000 men) become trapped at Fort Metz. The remaining French troops were led by the weak Emperor Napoleon III. Their position

³¹ L. Dehon was very absorbed and saddened by this war. It made the situation worse and unbearable. In his autobiography he wrote, "*La guerre allait durer six mois. Elle passa comme un long et terrible cauchemar, tout rempli d'angoisses et de souffrances.*" L. Dehon, *Notes sur l'Histoire de ma Vie*, Vol. V, p. 1. His sadness was even greater because of the loss of the Papal States under Pius IX. The Italians invaded and seized Rome. In his autobiography dated 20 September 1870, he wrote, "*Le 20 septembre, les Italiens s'emparaient de Rome et pénétraient par la brèche sacrilège de Porta-Pia. Mais le même jour s'achevait l'investissement de Paris. Nous devions souffrir en même temps que Rome et pour expier l'abandon de Rome. Les dépêches nous apportaient celle nouvelle, c'était pour moi un dur crève-cœur. J'aimais tant Rome, la Rome papale!*" See L. Dehon, *Notes sur l'Histoire de ma Vie*, Vol. V, p. 9.

was precarious. Surrounded in the Sedan Valley (September 1-2), they were forced to surrender and Napoleon III he was taken prisoner by Wilhelm I.³²

To stabilize the situation after the war, France held election on February 8th 1871 where the conservative monarchist won. But this election did not bring peace to France where became anarchy and worse. It was declared under a state of siege until 1876 because of internal conflict among the Republicans, the conservatives and the monarchists. Many organizations and newspapers were suspended. On March 14, 1872 the government issued a law which forbade all workers the right to organize³³. Although many of them were imprisoned, it did not reduce their ability to resist. In the following year there was election on May 24, 1873 when the Republicans were victorious.

With the victory of the Republicans, the political conditions changed, not only because of the changing of the fundamental political setting but also because of changing in the political basis. The Republicans suspended the

³² When France gave up, Dehon was very sad. He wrote, "*Quelles tristes journées! Et quelles pénibles impressions elles m'ont laissées! Des hommes de toutes armes passaient dans un désordre qu'on ne peut pas imaginer. C'étaient des fantassins, des artilleurs, des cavaliers pêle-mêle, avec leurs vêtements déchirés... Ils apportaient et semaient sur leur chemin le découragement et le désespoir. Tout est perdu - Tout est fini...*" L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 7.

³³ Jean-Marie Mayeur noted: "*La loi du 14 mars 1872 frappe d'emprisonnement et de privation des droits civiques les membres de l'Association internationale des travailleurs ou de « toute autre association professant les mêmes doctrines et ayant le même but ». Sont visés ceux qui veulent « l'abolition du droit de propriété, de la famille, de la patrie, de la religion ou du libre exercice des cultes ». Les socialistes, mais aussi les radicaux, peuvent tomber sous le coup de ce texte.*" (Jean-Marie Mayeur, *La Vie Politique sous la Troisième République 1870 - 1940*, Edition du Seuil, Paris, 1984, p. 36).

law of '*Ordre Moral*'³⁴ and liberalized many things such as newspapers, magazines, to make way for a new form of organization, debates forum etc. But these changes did not create new hope. The more enlightened Republicans, the natural heirs of the French Revolution, admitted its shortcomings--so many failed experiments, so many dashed hopes. The spirits of young and old alike were overcome by a sad lack of trust.

The church, which traditionally supported the monarchists, now was in a difficult situation. It did not have administrative authority any more. The relationship between the church and the state was very difficult. The Republicans wanted to make a clear separation between church and state although in 1801 Napoleon I, as the president of the French Republic, had signed a concordat to regulate the relationship between the church and the state.³⁵

The Republicans said that their struggle which was anticlericalism was not against religion as such, but they wanted to maintain liberty of the

³⁴ "*Ordre Moral*" was reestablished by General Mac-Mahon on May 25 1873 in the cabinet of Broglie to guarantee the norms of Christianity in the government. He stated, "*Avec l'aide de Dieu, le dévouement de notre armée qui sera toujours l'esclave de la Loi, l'appui de tous les honnêtes gens, nous continuerons l'oeuvre de la libération du territoire et du rétablissement de l'ordre moral dans notre pays. Nous maintiendrons la paix intérieure et les principes sur lesquels repose la Société.*" In J. M. Mayeur, *La Vie Politique sous la Troisième République 1870 - 1940*, p. 48.

³⁵ Concordat is an international law agreement between Holy See and other sovereign country which regulates question about the institutions and activities of Catholic Church in that country. The concordat 1801 between Napoleon I and Pope Pius VII was ratified by the pope on August 15, 1801 and by Napoleon Bonaparte on September 8, 1801. The concordat broke away the secular alliance between the Church and the state of France: The Catholic religion is not an official religion for the state anymore. (See *Encyclopaedia Universalis*, Vol. V, *Encyclopaedia Universalis France S.A.*, 1985, p. 272).

conscience and to defend the Republic. Marcel Sembat, a Republican, said that the highest rank of doctrine was the Republic³⁶. The anticlericalists made a coalition with the 'Libre-Pensée' to completely break the linkage between the state and the church. They published many newspapers and journals to spread their ideology.

Briefly, the anticlerical third Republic wanted to eradicate Christianity from society and the minds of the French. Thus, for the church, it was a question of survival. The problem of de-Christianization was acute in all sectors and at every level of society.

The Catholic Church in France also faced another battlefield which was positivism. Vacherot, a philosopher, said, *"The science is the light, the authority, the religion in the XIX century. The idea of God is neither the representation of the perfection nor the existence of the human spirit."*³⁷ Many Catholic believers and scientists were influenced by the positivism of August Comte and their concept of rationalism which excluded supernatural existence. Religion was rejected as out of date. Religion was only a theological illusion which had no basis to exist³⁸. Nineteenth-century secularism, heir to the Revolution and Enlightenment confined the human

³⁶ Marcel Sembat noted, *"Nous croyions que c'était la doctrine du gouvernement républicain que les vérités scientifiques suffisent à elles seules à la vie intellectuelle et morale de la nation toute entière."* In G. Cholvy and Y.M. Hilaire, *Histoire Religieuse de la France contemporaine 1880-1930*, Bibliothèque Historique Privat, Toulouse, 1986, p.22.

³⁷ My translation from G. Cholvy and Y. M. Hilaire, *op. cit.*, p.19.

³⁸ G. Cholvy and Y.M. Hilaire, *op.cit* , p. 20.

being to the horizon of earthly existence. It exalted the power achieved through science and technology, in the exclusive attainment of temporal happiness, and in endless progress which enabled one to develop his or her abilities.

The result of this situation was clear: a religionless society. The widespread godlessness among the youth led to shocking acts of blasphemy and sacrilege. During Restoration, politics and religion seemed to be partners and were hated; freedom and disbelief seemed to go together and were extolled. Usually, families considered it important that their children receive first communion. This marked the end of childhood and frequently the end of religious practice. With the onset of adolescence, the faithful abandoned the church.

One can say that politically, culturally and sociologically speaking, nineteenth-century France was the center of Western Europe. With his "French Revolution", it gave many new inspirations in building up society. Currents of theistic and anti-Christian humanism, expressed in Voltairianism and in Positivism, predominated. Those who were contaminated by these ideas were the middle class and the working class. Many middle classes were non-religious, non-practicing, and often anticlerical like Jules Alexander Dehon, Leo Dehon's father. While the working classes embraced atheism and materialism and socialism. They hoped to find an answer to their unjust

social condition. They were further alienated from religion by the fact that most of the clergy were insensitive to questions of social justice. Atheistic humanism pointed an accusing finger at Christianity and found it guilty.

This was a difficult era for the Church, because this situation created great misunderstanding and suffering. This conflict between the church and the state ceased under Pius X on December 9, 1905. The church and the state agreed to a friendly separation. The church accepted the secularity of the state, while the state agreed to respect the church.³⁹

Another battlefield of the church in the late 19th century was the unjust social condition and exploitation of the workers. Significant progress and development of science and technology marked some of the European countries in the 19th century. The industrial products were varied and booming and the new invention of products were immense. Certain countries wanted to show their progress in the industrial area by sponsoring a universal exposition: London in 1871, Vienna in 1873, Philadelphia in 1876, Paris in 1878 and 1890 when the Eiffel tower was constructed (1889) to mark the

³⁹ The most important parts of this agreement are:

§ 1. *La République assure la liberté de conscience. Elle garantit le libre exercice du culte sous les seules restrictions édictées ci-après dans l'intérêt public.*

§ 2. *La République ne reconnaît, ne salarie ni ne subventionne aucun culte.*

§ 4. *Après inventaire et estimation, les biens mobiliers et immobiliers des Eglises, catholique, protestante, juive, seront, dans un délai d'un an, transférés aux associations culturelles légalement formées dans les anciennes circonscriptions.*

See F. Burdeau, *La Troisième République*, Montchestien, Paris, 1996, p. 57.

progress of the iron technique construction which was the most interesting thing in that exposition.

That progress brought a spectacular prosperity only for a minority of citizens, the bourgeoisie, while the rest did not prosper. The demand for the new products and demand of the overseas market made the producers exploit the workers. The workers were forced to work hard in the long period of time in miserable conditions of life, without an appropriate salary. Exploitation of the workers was everywhere, meanwhile the spirit of the French revolution had not ceased. With the spirit of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, the most of French realized that their dream of prosperity had begun to fade away. It caused social unrest at an alarming rate.

b. Situation in St. Quentin

St. Quentin in the time of Leo Dehon was a developing city. It used to be the capital of Vermandois. Before the French revolution, St. Quentin was a considerable industrial center. Before the French revolution, in 1780 the factories in St. Quentin had 14,000 workers and about 70,000 spinners who worked in the cotton industries⁴⁰. Although the city had suffered a lot during the French revolution, it soon rebuilt its industrial center.

⁴⁰ Robert Prélôt, *L'Oeuvre Sociale du Chanoine Dehon*, Edition Spes, Paris, 1935, p. 44

In the time of Leo Dehon, St. Quentin, like most others cities in France, enjoyed economic development, especially because of the cotton industries. Those who enjoyed real prosperity, however, were a minority of the middle-class while the rest lived under miserable conditions.

By 1835, Saint-Quentin had rebounded to the level of industrial development that had existed before the French Revolution.⁴¹ At that time it had focused on linen weaving; now it was wool and cotton. The wool industry was the most important, followed by cotton. Saint-Quentin was the industrial center of Aisne and had the greatest concentration of workers. Cotton weaving provided work in more than a hundred built-up areas around the city. Production was usually carried on in unhealthy rooms located in basements. These had to be held at a constant temperature in order to maintain an even tension in the thread, so it would not break. The workers, who were miserably paid, preferred the wool industry, which paid better.

In October - November 1835, L'Académie des Sciences investigated the social situation among the workers in St. Quentin. It came up with following results⁴²:

- a. Age to enter to work: around 8 years.

⁴¹ R. Prélôt, op. cit. p. 46.

⁴² R. Prélôt, op. cit. pp. 47 – 50.

- b. Workday: about 14 - 15 hours a day. It had to be added with the time to travel around 2 or 3 hours.
- c. Moral life: There was no police surveillance and morality was very lax and debauched. There were many women who recruited girls for prostitution in Paris. There was a lot of drunkenness. Young men of 15 years were allowed into the cabaret.
- d. Wages: The average wages for the daily workers was 1.50 - 3 francs/day for men, 0.90 - 1.25 franc for women, and 0.50 - 1.25 franc for children.⁴³ The situation was worse in the countryside.
- e. Health: Many workers had bad health because of poor heating system in factories.

Although this investigation was held in 1835, there were no significant changes in the time of Fr. Dehon except the length of the workday. After he arrived in St. Quentin to start his ministry, he sent a letter to his parents (26 November 1871) and his friend, Palustre (2 December 1871). He wrote: "*La paroisse a un noyau de fervents chrétiens et toutes les oeuvres y prospèrent. Mais il y a à côté de cela une population ouvrière fort travaillée par la propagande révolutionnaire (...) Je me trouve au milieu d'une population bien immorale, Je vois de près les misères de la société dans la direction des*

⁴³ Compared to the living expenses, their salaries were almost nothing. The cost of daily meal for a worker who drank only water, was 0,75 franc. R. Prélôt. op. cit. p. 48.

âmes, la visite des malades et des écoles, la tristesse que causent l'apathie et l'immoralité des masses."

In the following years of his presence in St. Quentin, Leo Dehon saw many strikes by the workers. Their demands were almost the same issues: reducing the work days, increasing their salaries, better work conditions, especially with the heating system, and abolishing overly harsh factory rules.

Although there were many strikes for better conditions, the improvement was minimal. Strikes were usually brief and not very effective. But some lasted longer. In 1879 the weavers and spinners struck for 13 days in order to get the workday reduced from 12 to 10 hours with the same pay. A strike in 1883 lasted 32 days, and one in 1884 lasted 89 days. Although these strikes were unsuccessful, they had the positive effect of helping create solidarity among the workers and create a better union among them.

Facing the same fate and concern, the workers organized more strikes in the following years. Some of them were involved in demonstrations that turned violent. Barricades were erected, buildings were damaged and the police had to intervene. These strikes involved the textile industry in particular. For example, in 1886 a general strike was called. Its goals were the reduction of the workday to eight hours, the same wages in all textile factories of the city, and the abolishment of fines. After twelve days of fighting the workers had to give up - once again defeated but anxious to

resume the battle. In fact the strike resumed for a moment. It lasted 17 days and some of the owners signed a contract with their workers. Between 1883 and 1891 the strikes were mainly of a defensive matter to defend their rights. The workers had obtained limited concessions and wanted to keep them in the face of the owners who would reduce or cancel them.

To get more results from their strikes, the workers needed organization to unite their power. The first mention of an organization of workers, or workers' association in St. Quentin was in 1877. In the following years, the workers association grew rapidly. Its purpose was to give the workers a sense of power and support and coordinate their action. They were most active between 1885 and 1895. Those that originated in a socialist environment were opposed to the republican government. Other workers' unions were non-political. The strongest, with 800 members, was that of the textile workers. With all of the effort to strike and make workers organize, their conditions did not improve much. They lived in poor and oppressed conditions. In many occasions, after the strikes and demonstrations, they finally did not have any choice but to accept the situation.

2. THE INVOLVEMENT OF LEO JOHN DEHON IN THE SOCIAL MOVEMENT

For Leo Dehon, social work was not a new thing. His mother, Adele Stephanie Vandelet was an active member of The Work of St. Joseph, a charitable woman's organization in La Capelle, where Leo Dehon grew up. She was active in that organization for 30 years.⁴⁴ Since Leo Dehon was a child in La Capelle, he had been involved in social work. He helped his mother and other women in that organization by taking care of the church and by visiting the poor and the sick⁴⁵.

In Hazebrouck, he continued his interest in social work by entering the Society of St. Vincent de Paul since his first year. He was treasured for a long time.⁴⁶

As a student in Paris, he was very much interested in social, cultural, and religious affairs. He reentered the Society of St. Vincent de Paul from which he had learned about the social conditions of the poor and the marginalized. He highly esteemed that society.⁴⁷ He participated in the Chapter of Society St. Vincent de

⁴⁴ About the social activity of his mother and the women in his village, Leo Dehon wrote, «*Ces dames contribuèrent avec Mr. R., percepteur, à fonder l'oeuvre de St Joseph, conférence de charité des dames, dont ma mère fut vraiment la cheville ouvrière jusqu'à sa mort. Que de bien ma mère fit par cette oeuvre! Et réciproquement que de bien cette oeuvre fit à ma mère! St Joseph sut gré à ma mère d'avoir longtemps fait la charité en son nom, il la conduisit à Dieu le jour même de sa fête, le 19 mars 1883.*» L. Dehon, *Notes sur L'histoire de ma Vie*, Vol. I, p. 14.

⁴⁵ L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 13.

⁴⁶ L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 31.

⁴⁷ In his autobiography, he wrote, «*La charité chrétienne est bien servie par la société de St Vincent de Paul. On trouve là le véritable esprit de l'Evangile, l'accomplissement des oeuvres de miséricorde. Cette organisation de la charité est une grâce de notre siècle.*», L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 44.

Paul in 1861, which was attacked brutally by Persigny, the Minister of Internal Affairs in the era of Napoleon III. He was active in the '*Circle Catholique*', a social organization under direction of M. Béluze whose aims were to teach catechism to the poor. He was a member of 'Conférence Ozanam' where he discussed and helped the poor.

As a seminarian in Rome, he continued his interest in social work. With some other seminarians he organized a small group to teach catechism to children. The members met weekly and elected Leo president.⁴⁸ During recreation they would teach catechism to some poor children who had been sent by the parish priest of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva. The sessions concluded with refreshments, contests and prizes. This small group, under the patronage of St. Catherine of Siena, continued for many years after Leo left Rome.

a. St. Joseph Youth Club

The great social work of Fr. Dehon started in St. Quentin when he was a chaplain there. He started his ministry on November 16, 1871 in the Basilica of St. Quentin even though he didn't want to be a chaplain⁴⁹. With his broad intellectual formation (with 4 doctorates), he wanted to dedicate his life to study, recollection and prayers but especially higher education for priests. He thought that particularly

⁴⁸ L. Dehon, *Notes sur L'histoire de ma vie*, vol. III, p. 109.

⁴⁹ L. Dehon, *Notes sur L'histoire de ma vie*, vol. V, p. 90.

French priests were no longer the intellectual leaders in their country. They had to regain that. His closest friends, Abbé Bougouin and Abbé Dugas, assured him that the hand of the Lord placed him there to do something different. Finally he accepted his job with fervor. But soon Dehon was moved to another old house to live with another chaplain whose intellectual and spiritual formation was great. The bishop of Soissons, to which St. Quentin belonged, had a special purpose for him. He wanted to revitalize the city St. Quentin, like in the Middle Ages, where St. Quentin used to be a major religious center.

As a young and highly educated chaplain, Dehon observed the social conditions in St. Quentin. He soon realized that the wealth lay only in the hands of the middle class: merchants, landowners, magistrates and professionals while the majority were poor.

At that time, St. Quentin was a growing city because of the textile industry. It was the industrial center of Aisne and had the greatest concentration of workers. The major textile industry was wool and cotton. Saint Quentin had about 35,000 inhabitants and most of them were workers. Their working condition was miserable because of the uncertainty of their wages and lack of social assistance.⁵⁰ The

⁵⁰ Although in the big city, there was insurance that guaranteed the workers, but in a small city like St. Quentin, there was not. *"Le salaire hausse ou baisse suivant le cours, comme le prix des esclaves. Aucune institution ne protège l'ouvrier. Les neuf dixièmes des industriels et des entrepreneurs n'ont aucune notion des devoirs du patronat. La vieillesse, la maladie, les nombreux enfants amènent la faim et la misère dans la famille."* L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 98.

majority of the workers had to depend on their daily salaries. There was no public insurance which guaranteed their fate.

For the first year, Leo Dehon worked like an ordinary priest: visiting and anointing the sick, teaching catechism, confessions etc.⁵¹ He soon realized that it was not enough. He saw many children in his parish who were lacking in appropriate religious education. He thought that religious education for children was very important. He taught catechism in a public school of Saint Quentin. He enjoyed teaching catechism with the children.⁵²

With the help of Mrs. Julien, a retired teacher and the president of Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Saint Quentin, on June 23, 1872, he started to organize the youth. They played, sang and studied, and listened to the history of the saints.⁵³ He named the group St. Joseph's youth club. Because of the increasing number of the youth signed up in his organization, he looked for another place for his youth club also for building a chapel.

⁵¹ In his biography, he wrote, "*Un autre fait bien saillant, c'est le progrès rapide que font certains malades dans la piété. Il semble que Dieu donne en peu de temps à ceux dont il abrège la vie toutes les grâces qu'il leur aurait offertes dans une vie plus longue. J'ai vu une fille du peuple, poitrinaire, vivre quelques mois comme un ange, dans la prière et les pieuses lectures, patiente, douce, édifiant tous les siens et les prêchant efficacement.*" L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 101.

⁵² Although he wanted to work for higher education for priests, he enjoyed teaching the children, "*J'allais le mardi d'un côté et le vendredi de l'autre, à 11 heures, faire une conférence d'une demi-heure. J'y mettais tout mon zèle. C'était un catéchisme de persévérance avec des exemples et des histoires. J'étais écouté. Je voyais là de bonnes figures, des âmes accessibles au bien.*" L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 102.

⁵³ He was deeply impressed by that activity. "*Le 23 juin, nous commençâmes régulièrement. C'est une date dans ma vie. Les enfants jouaient deux heures dans la cour, puis je leur faisais une causerie à l'étude.*" L. Dehon. op. cit. p. 122.

The youth club was well accepted in the city and developed other activities such as a music and song festival. With all of his activities, he could raise money and donations to maintain their clubs and continue the construction of the building.

The main activities of the St. Joseph Youth Club were mass, games, general meetings and was closed by Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Although the new building had been constructed, the space become too crowded because of the increasing number of the members.

At a public meeting, June 13, 1875, in the presence of the civil and church authorities, Dehon expressed concern about the increase in the number of youth and the recently built premises which were already inadequate. The rooms used by the circle could hold only half the members. During the winter many had to be turned away. He had faith in God and the spirit of the initiative of generous people. The number of children continued to grow. It reached five hundred.⁵⁴

The St. Joseph Youth Club had a great influence everywhere: in the families, in the shops, in the offices. When there was a celebration, the children came together with their families. The employers appreciated his work and became sympathetic.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ In his autobiography dated 11 September "*Je suis très occupé par ma construction qui grandit petit à petit, mais pas aussi vite que je le voudrais. L'oeuvre marche très bien, nous avons dimanche une réunion de cent jeunes gens. Il y a de la besogne pour diriger et organiser une oeuvre aussi importants...*" L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 130.

⁵⁵ Dehon was very optimistic in his youth club. He saw that this activity was a start of his further social action. The influence of his youth club was very widespread, "*Notre action pénétrait partout, dans les familles, dans les ateliers, dans les bureaux. ... Les patrons appréciaient notre oeuvre et lui devenaient sympathiques. ... On pourrait dire bientôt que toute la ville était de l'oeuvre, et le bien se faisait largement. C'était l'âge d'or de cette chère oeuvre.*" L. Dehon. op. cit. p. 163.

b. Workers' Organizations

Seeing above-mentioned social condition in Saint Quentin, he realized that he had to do something for the workers. In a meeting with his newly born St. Joseph Youth Club, he said that the social work and apostolate for the workers for that time were the works of salvation.⁵⁶

He realized that he had to pay attention to the workers.⁵⁷ The workers didn't have an adequate place in the Church. Together with some of his friends and other lay volunteers, he organized his apostolate workers. He established a worker's circle on October 23, 1873. This circle was part of the great Catholic Circle Movement which was started in 1871 by Albert de Mun and R. la Tour du Pin. The purpose of these circles was to create associations of workers under the direction of the Catholic members of the middle class. These circles did not spread and take root among the proletariat because the workers were not the ones with the power and responsibility. Still, they prepared Catholics for the evolution from the Christian corporative system to the establishment of labor unions.

Dehon met with many aristocrat families and actually they were ready to aid financially, but they didn't want a democratic workers organization, although in

⁵⁶ R. Prélôt, *L'oeuvre Sociale du Chanoine Dehon*, Edition Spes, Paris, 1936, p. 52.

⁵⁷ When he started his ministry to the workers, he had been famous and deeply associated with the St. Joseph Youth Club. However, he realized the importance of the apostolate for the workers. "*Ces oeuvres d'ouvriers sont donc nécessaires. Elles suppléent un peu aux corporations et confréries anciennes. Les ouvriers n'ont pas de place dans nos églises et ils n'y reçoivent pas la direction et l'instruction qui leur conviennent. Ce sont des brebis sans pasteurs. Ils retrouvent dans les patronages quelque chose des soins paternels et dévoués que l'Eglise devrait exercer vis-à-vis d'eux. Le clergé a le devoir de fonder et d'asseoir solidement ces oeuvres dans toutes les agglomérations*". L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 164.

many cities there were many such organizations.⁵⁸ He had to convince the employers to give space to a democratic workers organization. In a meeting with the employer in 1876, he spoke about the duty of the employers, *"This is the biggest target that we want to accomplish. Our work is more than giving a fun playground for children on Sunday. It is necessary for us to be more efficient competition on the part of the employers. So we want to establish a Christian organization in our factories for protecting, supporting, and encouraging our workers In this way we can gain the base for the way to raise up Christianity and social appeasement.... So we will soon establish an association of the Christian employers."*⁵⁹

This new apostolate for the workers was tied deeply to St. Joseph's Youth Club. The youth club had managed to arouse the concern for the plight of the workers. This in turn gave rise to another much-needed project, the construction of housing for them. Unfortunately it never received sufficient legislative support. One of the Christian owners, M. Jourdain, had gone with Dehon to visit the hovels where the workers lived in the various quarters of Saint Quentin. Some of these quarters were worse than stables for animals. How could the workers not feel a sense of anger against society? And so M. Jourdain along with Leo's friend, M. Julien, created a joint stock company and began to erect houses on two lots in the

⁵⁸ Dehon realized the great difficulties for his new apostolate. *"Les familles aristocratiques du Tiers-Etat sont de bons riches toujours prêts à souscrire pour les oeuvres, mais qui ne paraissent pas se douter qu'il peut y avoir place à côté du patronat pour une organisation démocratique."* R. Prélôt, *op. cit.* p. 52.

⁵⁹ My translation from R. Prélôt, *op. cit.* p. 58. Dehon thought that if he could make a Christian organization for the employers, the next step to make the worker organization would be easier.

suburbs of Saint Quentin. The buildings were sound and the workers could achieve ownership by paying rent. Unfortunately this project, which was so badly needed, ran into many obstacles and did not thrive due to lack of favorable social legislation.

The first public act of this worker's association was a pilgrimage to Notre Dame de Liese on August 17, 1873.⁶⁰ There were 1,500 members gathered in the pilgrimage from northeastern France.

The following years, Dehon and his worker's association took part in many general assemblies in Paris or in other places. He also participated in the congress in Nantes for the directors of the worker's association on August 25-29, 1873, where Léon Harmel reported his work which transformed Val-de-Bois. In 1861 this area was de-Christianized; there were hardly any practicing Catholics except for a few women. But through the influence of a committed Christian businessman the area had become intensely religious.

Christian associations had completely transformed the workplace. It was in Nantes that Leo Dehon met Léon Harmel for the first time. He called him "Bon Père" and for the years after, the two of them were good collaborators.

For Leo Dehon, Léon Harmel was a good example of social concern. Harmel's faith amid the disaster was worthy of a saint and his spirit of initiative worthy of a

⁶⁰ This first public act was very convincing. As part of the National Catholic Workers Movement, Dehon's group was deeply involved in that meeting. *"Le 17 août est un jour inoubliable. C'est le grand pèlerinage des Cercles catholiques d'ouvriers à Notre Dame de Liese. L'oeuvre des Cercles était dans son premier épanouissement. M. de Mun et M. de La Tour du Pin avaient voulu en faire une oeuvre de restauration sociale. Le succès paraissait assuré.... Nous étions là avec nos jeunes gens."* L. Dehon, *Notes sur l'histoire de ma Vie*, vol. V, p. 165-166.

great entrepreneur. He cared nothing for himself. In the months that followed he was more concerned with providing jobs and security for his workers than building his factory. He rented a factory at Neuville and transported most of the workers there during the week. On Sundays he brought them back to their families in Val-des-Bois.

On October 23-25 1876, Dehon organized a diocesan congress in Saint Quentin which was attended by priests, lay people, and Leon Harmel. There were 250 people. The congress bore immense fruit. Everyone had been convinced of the need for action and the establishment of Catholic associations.⁶¹ Many important persons supported this congress: the bishop of Soissons, Comte Albert de Mun, Léon Harmel, mgr. De Segur, etc. The congress sent a telegram to Pope Pius XI. The Pontiff responded on November 30, 1876 filled with words of paternal kindness.⁶² But Dehon noted that the Pope thought only about the association for the boys and the young men. The Holy See was not yet oriented toward social and democratic action although the congress went beyond youth groups. It also dealt with circles, mutual aid societies, the press, etc. Leo Dehon highly appreciated the respond from the Holy Father, but he expected something new. He wanted that the Church paid more attention for the workers.

⁶¹ Dehon wrote in his autobiography, *"Tout cela faisait de cette réunion comme un autre cénacle, d'où chacun sortit en s'écriant: 'Il faut agir! Il faut organiser l'association catholique.'"* L. Dehon *Notes sur L'histoire de ma Vie*, vol VI, pp. 212-213.

⁶² L. Dehon, op.cit. pp. 238-239.

From that experience, it was now clear to him that the attention to the workers and their families drew many people to the church not only for mass but also for their participation in parochial life.⁶³ It was a good sign for the Church.

c. Le Conservateur de L'Aisne

Dehon thought that it was necessary to publish a journal in order to spread his thoughts and to build a Christian community. There had been many journals in Saint Quentin, but there was none with a Christian spirit. The *Journal de Saint-Quentin*, which he considered the best, as far as ideas were concerned, was too liberal. It contributed almost nothing to the work of social and religious renewal in the city.⁶⁴ Dehon wanted to publish a conservative Catholic and monarchist journal.⁶⁵

Leo had grown up in a rural middle class atmosphere, one that was characterized by faithfulness to tradition and a hierarchical view of society. The

⁶³ Dehon was convinced that the Church should never neglect service to the workers. The French revolution made a clear prove whenever the church was too tight connected to the high ranking class: the rich, the political power etc, and neglected service for the workers which were the most desperate society in that era, the church loose her base. So, the best way to revive or to revitalize the Church was paying attention to the workers. The Church should never leave the workers which were the majority of the population. "*Je voyais bien que l'Eglise de France ne pouvait se relever que par l'apostolat ouvrier. Il faut que le clergé de France arrive à le / comprendre.*" L. Dehon, *Notes sur l'histoire de ma Vie*, vol. VII, p. 146.

⁶⁴ L. Dehon, *Notes sur L'histoire de ma Vie*, vol VI, p. 58.

⁶⁵ We don't know exactly why Dehon wanted to publish a monarchist journal. It would be better if the journal was a catholic journal to support his social (workers) movement. May be he wanted to raise sympathy from the aristocrat, so that they could support his movement. Dehon found out that there were many aristocrats in Saint Quentin who were favorable and support his journal. L. Dehon, *op. cit.* p. 59.

owners and rulers had a moral responsibility toward their dependents. It was a sincere Christian response, its social concerns marked by paternalism. Its watchword was legitimism – an attitude that harked back to the Restoration and tried to undo the work of the Revolution, which it was too quick to see as diabolical. Later we shall see how Dehon, once he was influenced by the ideas of Leo XIII, no longer remained a conservative or monarchist.

He had many financial difficulties. In his letter to his parents (February 4, 1874), he asked them for help but they refused it. Finally with the help of his friend (M. Julien), he published his first number of his journal, *Le Conservateur de L'Aisne*, on December 1874.⁶⁶ He was satisfied with his journal, although he lacked money. He said that his journal “*Catholic affirmation in this journal is very good.*”⁶⁷

This journal took much of his attention because of the problems surround it: the financial burden, the journalists, and sometimes the editorial staff leaned too far to the right and offended the majority in Saint Quentin. His journal lasted for 10 years and finally it merged with *Le Journal de St-Quentin*. What mattered to him was that the paper accomplished some good, and continued to do so after its merger with *Le Journal de St-Quentin*.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ R. Prélôt, op. cit. p. 62.

⁶⁷ My translation from R. Prélôt, op. cit. p. 62.

⁶⁸ L. Dehon. op. cit. p. 60.

d. Animator of social movement in the diocese of Soissons

In 1874 Mgr. Dours, bishop of diocese of Soissons, set up a diocesan office for apostolate activities and associations. He named Leo Dehon secretary. To know the social situation in the Diocese of Soissons, Leò Dehon made a survey on the worker's condition and the worker's association in the diocese of Soissons.⁶⁹ He sent his questionnaire to all of the priests in the diocese on December 4, 1874. He was disappointed, because of the lack of enthusiasm from the priests to answer the survey. There were almost no worker's organizations in the diocese.⁷⁰ His sadness was even greater because of the lack of religiosity in most of the parishes in the diocese.⁷¹ It was a hard challenge for him to start a new apostolate for the workers.

⁶⁹ This survey was authorized by the Bishop so it was an official survey. "*Avec l'autorisation de Monseigneur, je commençai une grande enquête sur l'état des oeuvres et des associations dans le diocèse.*" L. Dehon, *Notes sur l'histoire de ma Vie*, vol. VI, p. 36.

⁷⁰ In his autobiography, he expressed his bitter experience regarding the survey. "*L'ensemble des réponses fut navrant. Il n'existait presque rien Comme associations et partout on signalait l'indifférence ou l'irréligion des hommes.*" (L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 37). Some parish priests were even hopeless to go further in founding social organization or social association. One of the parish priest wrote to Dehon "*Nous n'avons pas d'associations chrétiennes et je ne vois pas qu'il soit possible d'en fonder.*" L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 57.

⁷¹ Not many priests responded the survey, only one-third. In some forty parishes (out of the one-third that answered) expressed their discouragement and hopelessness regarding the parish life. The results of this survey were discouraging "*Il est excessivement rare que quelques jeunes gens ou quelques hommes assistant à la messe le dimanche. Il y a dans cette paroisse l'indifférence la plus complète et la plus invincible en matière de religion. Excepté aux principales fêtes de l'année, il n'y a guère que cinq hommes à la messe le dimanche et les/mêmes ne viennent pas deux dimanches de suite.*" Another parish priest wrote, "*Il n'y a plus de sève, plus de vie religieuse dans les pauvres âmes de nos contrées, autrefois si riches en associations corne en monuments religieux... Les hommes les plus chrétiens ne remplissent pas le devoir pascal.*" Another parish priest wrote, "*Si l'on entend par chrétiens des hommes qui s'approchent des sacrements, je ne pense pas qu'il y en ait dans ma paroisse.*" Un autre encore : "*Dans une paroisse où pas une femme n'assiste aux vêpres, y a-t-il lieu à des associations de jeunes gens ou d'hommes?*" L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 55-56.

The first thing he wanted to do was to find the main cause of this sad situation. From the answers of the survey, he concluded that it was caused by the French revolution, egoism, materialism, Gallicanism and Jansenism.⁷² Because of the bad social condition, most of the people thought only to get money to support their families.

Faced with the above situation, Dehon as the animator of the social movement in the Diocese of Soissons, extended his worker's association which he had founded in Saint Quentin into the diocesan level. He made contact with other animators of the diocesan office and other organizations such as Leon Harmel, La Tour du Pin, Albert de Mun etc. After participating in the congress in Notre Dame de Liesse, he held 2 important congresses to foster the development of worker's associations in the diocese: a congress in Saint Quentin (1876) and one in Soissons (1878).

The congress of worker's association in Notre Dame de Liesse (1875) gave him a great inspiration. In this congress Dehon gave 3 speeches. At the end of the congress, there were some conclusions drawn:⁷³

⁷² Some priests wrote that the people were so fragile that they were easily influenced by many things, "*L'esprit révolutionnaire compte trop d'adeptes et même de propagateurs ici... L'égoïsme et l'amour de l'argent sont de grands obstacles.*" L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 55. At the end of the report of the survey, Dehon wrote, "*Triste situation! Fruit du gallicanisme et du jansénisme. En mettant la religion en dehors de la vie politique et sociale, on en a éloigné les hommes d'abord, puis la population presque entière.*", L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 58.

⁷³ R. Prélôt, op. cit. p. 69.

- The congress invited those who dedicated themselves to the workers to spread the brochures of Léon Harmel to the industrial center to prepare Catholic worker's organizations.
- The congress insisted that all of the diocesan offices for the workers set up organizations of women workers and young workers.

Dehon wanted to follow up the congress in Notre Dame de Liesse, so he held the congress in Saint Quentin. There were about 300 participants including Leon Harmel. Among many others things, the congress in Saint Quentin (1876) insisted on:⁷⁴

- setting up an organization for Catholic Shop owners,
- educating the workers,
- respecting weekly rest on Sunday and to practice religion.

The next congress was in Soissons in 1878. Dehon organized this congress for the entire ecclesiastical province of Rheims to which Soissons belong. Most of the participants were lay people, but also included the bishops of Rheims, Chalons. Beauvais, Amiens, and Monaco.⁷⁵ Unfortunately there was no adequate report from this congress because Dehon was sick.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ R. Prélôt, op. cit. p. 70.

⁷⁵ L. Dehon, *Notes sur L'histoire de ma Vie*, vol. VII, p. 94.

⁷⁶ In his autobiography, Dehon wrote, "*Je ne m'étais pas réservé de rapport, j'étais trop occupé et souffrant. J'allai plusieurs fois pendant les séances vomir le sang à pleine cuvette dans ma chambre. Je pris cependant un peu part aux discussions, mais bien modérément.*" L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 95.

As an animator of the diocesan office, he participated in many congresses and visited the workers organizations regularly to give support and instruction so that they could manage the organization better.

He wrote many books and held many conferences to spread his ideas. In the social area, the main works of Leo Dehon were: *Manuel Social Chrétien*, (1894) with ecclesial approbation by Bishop of Soissons, and foreword by B.M. Cardinal Langenieux (Archbishop of Rheims) and Léon Harmel. This book was presented to the Pope by Cardinal Rampolla.⁷⁷ This book was a big success. The first edition had 3,000 copies. It reached the 5th edition. Some of Dehon's other works are *Catéchisme Social* (1898), *L'usure au Temps présent* (1895), *Directions Pontificales Politiques et Sociales* (1897), *La Rénovation Sociale Chrétien*, (1900).

⁷⁷ In his letter to Leo Dehon July 6 1895, Cardinal Rampolla wrote, "... J'ai présenté au Saint-Père l'exemplaire du Manuel social chrétien que vous m'avez envoyé dans ce but. Je suis heureux de pouvoir vous dire que Sa Sainteté en a agréé l'hommage et qu'Elle vous accorde de tout coeur la bénédiction apostolique. Je vous remercie, pour ma part, de l'exemplaire que vous m'avez offert et vous exprimez les sentiments de sincère estime avec lesquels je suis,"

III. THE MEANING OF WORK ACCORDING TO LEO

JOHN DEHON

1. HUMAN VALUE

Dehon's thoughts about work were spread and scattered almost in all of his social writings. He was the son of his century, where the questions around work and the workers were dominant in society. Based on the objective of the work, Dehon divided the work into 3 part: ⁷⁸

- a. Physical work corresponds to the development and fulfillment of physical needs.
- b. Work of the human spirit corresponds to the development of spirit, intellect and personality.
- c. Work of Divine Spirit corresponds to the development of Divine way in human being.

For Dehon the role of these 3 kinds of works for human life was very important. It is the law of human being. In his book *Catéchisme Social* he wrote, "How must we evaluate labor and its role for human life? Work is the law of human being. The creator made work as a common condition of life."⁷⁹

⁷⁸ L. Dehon, *Oeuvres Sociales*, vol. VI, Edizioni Dehoniane Roma, 1993, p. 124

⁷⁹ My translation from Leo Dehon, *Catéchisme Social*, Librairie Bloud et Barral, Paris, 1898, p. 31. This book was reprint in *Oeuvres Sociales*, vol III. The pages of quoted work refer to this edition.

Being a human being in the world, man and woman has a duty to create a better condition of life, where God has entrusted the world to them to be dominated. By their ability to think and to create, they are called to work to improve their material life and to perfect their intellect.⁸⁰ So it is normal that man and woman work according to their ability and capability and share the fruit of their work with others.⁸¹

Dehon goes further to explain that work for human being is a necessity. Work is the sole means by which men and women can provide for their vital needs.⁸² Without work, the abundant natural resources are a raw material, which can not be useful and helpful for human life.

a. Human dignity

Men and women were created as images of God. The dignity of humankind lies in maintaining this image free from disorder. Among many other things, the capacity to think and bring it into reality by work is an element by which men and women can maintain their identity as an image of God. God is working and

⁸⁰ "L'homme cherche le développement de sa vie matérielle et l'épanouissement de son intelligence. Il recueille le long de sa course les actes de ses vertus qui sont les fruits de sa vie morale." L. Dehon, *Catéchisme Social*, p. 3

⁸¹ L. Dehon, *Manuel Social Chrétien*, La Commission D'études Sociales du Diocèse de Soissons, Paris, 1894.p.17. This book was reprint in *Oeuvres Sociales*, vol II. The pages of quoted work refer to this edition.

⁸² "Sa nécessité. – Le travail est le seul moyen par où l'homme puisse pourvoir aux besoins de sa vie. La terre contient en puissance de quoi satisfaire aux besoins sans cesse renaissants, mais ses richesses ne peuvent passer à l'usage que par le travail. Culture de la terre, création de l'industrie, pêche, chasse ou cueillette, c'est toujours le travail." L. Dehon, *Manuel Social Chrétien*, p. 16.

creating and so are men and women. Men and women have to work toward developing their intellectual lives.⁸³

By working, men and women can pursue their dignity and their perfection,⁸⁴ because by exercising their mind and power, men and women develop their personal integrity and personalities. In their creative work, men and women have the capacity of creating something to express and build their personalities which is useful for the welfare of others.

For the reason of human dignity, which is more than merely productive factors, Dehon thought that the 'division of work in a single workplace' is a degradation of the workers.⁸⁵ What he meant by 'division of work in a single workplace' is a division into a specialized work that the workers had to do in order to be efficient.

For example: in an Arms company, the workers are specialized. They make different parts: bullets, ammunitions, etc. Those who make bullets, are expert in making bullets, but their expertise is narrowly limited in making bullets, and no more than that. If the company closes, those poor workers have limited access to other work because they only know only how to make bullets. They have to find somebody or a company that want to employ them as bullet makers. This

⁸³ L. Dehon, *Oeuvres Sociales*, vol. VI, p. 124.

⁸⁴ "Le travail.... Il a pour but véritable l'entretien, le perfectionnement et la diffusion de la vie humaine intégrale..." L. Dehon, *Oeuvres Sociales*, Vol. VI, p. 124.

⁸⁵ L. Dehon, *Manuel Social Chrétien*, p. 18.

division is advantageous economically, however, it is a degradation of human dignity.

Dehon wrote, "... *there is another division which takes place within a single workplace... The advantages of such a division are the reduction of work to very simple movements, sometimes mechanical; the easiness of allocating tasks according to the workers' ability; the saving of time which would otherwise be spent in changing tasks... But this division causes moral and physical degradation of the workers... The race is deteriorating.*"⁸⁶

For the reason of human dignity, Dehon opposed the application of free market competition for the waging system. In the free market competition, the amount of the salary that a worker received, depended on the supply and the demand. If the demand was bigger than supply the worker got was a larger amount of money, but if the demand was smaller than supply the workers got a smaller wage. Applying the free market system to wages meant reducing the workers to merchandise.⁸⁷ It was a very big mistake to see it in such a light. It was a wholly materialistic conception.

Work as the implementation of human activity is not merchandise but it is a part of the personality because the entire person takes part, body and soul, intellect and hands.⁸⁸ Work is part of being human and it has personal character because

⁸⁶ My translation from L. Dehon, *Manuel Social Chrétien*, p. 18.

⁸⁷ L. Dehon, *Oeuvres Sociales*, vol. VI. p. 343.

⁸⁸ "Le travail est l'exercice de l'activité humaine. Toute la personne humaine y prend part, l'âme et le corps, l'intelligence et les bras. A un certain point de vue et dans certaines limites, c'est une marchandise soumise

physical strength is the property of the one who exercises it.⁸⁹ That is why it is not a superfluous to say that work is not merchandise which can be traded.

*“Work is often considered as merchandise. In the name of human dignity, one has to protest against such identification. It has to be distinguished between merchandise which is a material object and the work which is something of the man himself.”*⁹⁰

In another paragraph, he wrote how the works condition can degrade human dignity: *“Yes, in a certain case, the work which is not well regulated leads to the destruction of domestic life, abandonment of the children, and transform the women and mothers into a living machine, transforms the fathers and husbands into stupid machines to produce the money.”*⁹¹

b. The means of getting a living

*“God created human beings because of his goodness. He gave them a present day life as a heritage and the future life as an expectation.”*⁹²

aux fluctuations de l'offre et de la demande. Mais c'est aussi et avant tout un acte humain, qui a un autre but que la production. Il doit procurer à la personne dont il émane des moyens convenables d'existence. Il y a là un élément qui ne doit être perdu de vue, ni par le travailleur, ni par l'employeur.” L. Dehon, *Catéchisme Social*, p. 32.

⁸⁹ *“Le travail a un double caractère. Il est personnel, parce que la force physique est la propriété de celui qui l'exerce.”* L. Dehon, *Manuel Social Chrétien*, p. 19.

⁹⁰ My translation from L. Dehon, *Oeuvres Sociales*, vol. VI, p. 343.

⁹¹ My translation from L. Dehon, *Oeuvres Sociales*, vol. VI, p. 345.

⁹² My translation from L. Dehon, *Catéchisme Social*, p. 3.

Dehon built his thought about salary and private property based on that affirmation. People's life is not only for present day but also for the future. So everybody has the right to secure their future to give security to his own life and their family economically.

Work is the common and the just way to give security to the present and the future life economically. Dehon went further and said "*Work is the sole means by which man can provide for his vital needs.*"⁹³ By working, men and women offer part of their essence to the employer and get the remuneration of their work by a salary.

*"Work is not only a duty for man, it is also the means by which he must provide for his subsistence, the renewal of his strength, and the resources for raising his children. But since the development of industry, the wage system has become the most widespread form of remuneration of labor. It is therefore essential that the worker find in his wage the benefits..."*⁹⁴

The duty of obtaining a sufficient salary is not only a personal affair but it is a natural duty that flows from the nature of work. It has to be honored by both sides: the workers and the employers.

⁹³ My translation from L. Dehon, *Manuel Social Chrétien*, p. 16.

⁹⁴ My translation from L. Dehon, *Manuel Social Chrétien*, p. 19.

"Work has a double character:

- Personal, because physical strength is the property of the one who exercises it.*
- Necessary, because man needs the fruits of his labor to preserve his existence.*

*These two characteristics can not be separated. If the work is purely personal and free, the worker could, if he wishes, stipulate a sufficient wage. But the workers find themselves confronted with a duty which he can not escape: he must preserve his life, and it is through his wages that he must obtain what is essential for his subsistence. Any agreement which goes contrary to this is injurious to natural equity."*⁹⁵

To get sufficient wages was the right and the duty of everybody. It was important to preserve their own lives and to maintain their human dignity. That was why Dehon opposed the notion of just wages which was based merely on the contract between the worker and the employer. What happened in the contract was that the workers had no freedom and often they had to accept the contract because they had no other choice. *"A contract requires the freedom of the contracting parties. That is true. And that is one of the problems of the social question. The worker submits to a labor contract which he only accepts out of necessity. He is dissatisfied with his situation. He says so in his own way. He cries out rather loudly."*⁹⁶

⁹⁵ My translation from L. Dehon, op. cit. pp. 19-20.

⁹⁶ My translation from L. Dehon, *Oeuvres Sociales* Vol. I, p. 130.

c. As a moral value

People had the obligation to work in order to develop their physical, spiritual, and psychological life.⁹⁷ Although work was an obligation, one had to do it freely: free from oppression, free from fear, and free from the high risk of his body. With his freedom to work, he could enjoy the work and he could develop his personality. Remuneration of work (wages) was not everything.⁹⁸ Both the workers and the employers have to have a good working conditions; both have to have a mutual relationship because the two sides need each other.

From this perspective, the workers were so vulnerable that they could easily be exploited. *"So it was important to respect the workers:"*⁹⁹

1. *Respect for the worker's wages, as we have defined it.*
2. *Respect for the strength and health of the worker, by limiting hours of work and through hygiene in the workplace.*
3. *Respect for the worker's soul by observing Sunday as a day of rest and by implementing the conditions of organization and supervision which the moral order of the workplace requires.*
4. *Respect for the home life of the worker.*

⁹⁷ L. Dehon, *Oeuvres Sociales*, vol. VI, p. 124

⁹⁸ L. Dehon, *Oeuvres Sociales*, vol. II, Edizioni Dehoniane Napoli, Napoli, 1976, p. 332.

⁹⁹ L. Dehon, *Oeuvres Sociales*, vol. II, p. 333. Translation and numeration are mine.

5. *Respect for women and children by placing just limitations on the duration and nature of their labor, as befits their age and sex.*
6. *Respect for the worker's stability; he must not be dismissed arbitrarily at the whim of a foreman or manager. Such are the sacred rights of the laborer".*

As I mentioned above, Dehon divided the work according to the object of work into 3 parts: work of the body, work of the human spirit, and work of the Divine Spirit. The work of the human spirit included the work in morale dimension. This division, though, is a conceptual division and it can not be separated in practice.

What Dehon meant by the work of morality was the work which has the object of the development of moral life.¹⁰⁰ Each one of us as individuals or as collective human being had the duty to do it either directly or indirectly. These works were:¹⁰¹

- "a. education in a family where the children have to be formed.*
- b. religious education in catechism.*
- c. the instructions which are given by the church.*

¹⁰⁰ "Ce travail moral consiste à développer le faible bien moral qui est en nous et à combattre le mal moral." L. Dehon. *Oeuvres Sociales*, vol. VI, p. 223.

¹⁰¹ My translation from L. Dehon, op. cit. pp. 223-224.

d. the spiritual reading which are practiced by the saint and which is suggested by the Church."

In this case we need God's help in order bear fruit. One can get God's help through prayers, holy sacrifices that God did for the sake of the men and women, and through the sacraments which are the source of all graces.¹⁰² This was not easy and we need prudence. *"Work that is not regulated will not bear serious fruit."*¹⁰³

d. As a social value

The social aspect of humanity was strongly underlined by L. Dehon. Almost in all of his writing, he stressed it. *"Man is essentially a social being.... The very nature of man makes his social tendency a necessity and a law."*¹⁰⁴ In pursuing their perfection in every day life, the social aspect never ceases. Dehon saw that human struggle in earth was difficult and God gave social institution (family, state, etc) as helps for them:

"God created human beings out of pure benevolence. He gave them a legacy of earthly life.... Human beings seek improvement in their material lives and the perfection of their intellect. Throughout their lives, they reap the fruit of

¹⁰² L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 224.

¹⁰³ My translation from L. Dehon. op. cit. p. 224.

¹⁰⁴ My translation from L. Dehon, *Manuel Social Chrétien*, pp. 4. 6.

their actions which are based on the virtues of their moral lives.... The earthly struggle is indeed a harsh one. God did not see it as desirable for men and woman to experience it alone. He gave them the help of the family, the association, the state."¹⁰⁵

Work as an essential element of being human had an important social dimension. The work that people did in their life was not only fruitful and important for their own but for the welfare of others. So it was a normal situation that man worked together. Work in 'togetherness' was a grace for human beings, because the effectiveness of their work had the greater value than if they worked alone.

Dehon translated this thought in his era by encouraging the workers to form associations. In his first year of the priesthood in Saint Quentin, he founded St. Joseph Youth Club. "*Association. It is a natural right.*"¹⁰⁶ Dehon saw that the interdiction of forming associations in his era was the wrong fruit of French Revolution.¹⁰⁷ The French Revolution struggled for more freedom (*liberté*), but at the IIIrd Republican government suppressed the right to form associations.

The social dimension of work also means that work had to be shared with others. "*Work must be shared and apportioned. In this infinite variety of occupations, each individual can put his/her talents to work with greater pleasure and utility.*"¹⁰⁸ In the era of specialization, everyone of the society did not have to

¹⁰⁵ My translation from L. Dehon, *Catéchisme Social*, p. 3.

¹⁰⁶ My translation from L. Dehon, *Manuel Social Chrétien*, p. 10.

¹⁰⁷ L. Dehon. op. cit. p. 10.

¹⁰⁸ My translation from L. Dehon. op. cit. p. 17.

produce everything for his life. It was impossible to be self-sufficient. It was enough for them to do a part of the production process and offer it as part of his contribution to the society. *"The various professions render reciprocal services to one another. ... In this way, the social bond in which God unites man/woman become one big family, becomes a place where works and benefits are exchanged."*¹⁰⁹

In the light of this, the divisions of works caused professions. The divisions of work could create economic development and help it became more efficient. With competition and efficiency, the producer had to produce goods which were competitive in the market. But one had to be more careful in doing the divisions of work in order not to fall into a new kind of slavery. Dehon gave a firm warning, *"But this division, so rationally economical, results in the moral and physical degradation of the worker. This kind of work, reduced to a few simple movements, kills initiative, deforms the body, and makes its functions difficult. Our race is deteriorating."*¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ My translation from L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 17.

¹¹⁰ My translation from L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 18.

2. SPIRITUAL VALUE

It is true that work is human activity, but that is not all. Work is a spiritual reality also because the entire human person takes part in it with body, soul, and intellect.¹¹¹ Only human beings can work; animals or machine can not because they do not have what the human beings have.

Human beings who have the intellect, spirit, and freedom can discover, develop, and dominate the power of nature and transform it for their own use. All of the activities of human work, also in the simplest form of work, always bring the stamps of spirit, intellect, and freedom.

a. As co-worker of God's creation

God created the universe and gave human being the authority over it for the benefit of human kind. (Gen. 1: 29-30). Although man and woman can use everything in the world, not everything is ready to be used. Men and women are given the strength and the brains to transform it according to their needs through work. *"The Natural riches themselves: raw materials, springs, forests, prairies, quarries, mines, water power, only become useful through the work which uncovers them and exploits them."*¹¹²

¹¹¹ L. Dehon, *Catéchisme Social*, p. 32.

¹¹² My translation from L. Dehon, *Manuel Social Chrétien*, p. 16.

So in this case, work is a human activity whose aims is "to perfect God's creation"¹¹³, to give a new utility to something. It is valid for all kind of work, include services that is to know nature, find out the law of nature, systematize it, and use it. Certainly God can make everything ready to be used by men and women, but God has created the universe as it is so that men and women can use their strength and brain to discover and to manage it by working.¹¹⁴ All of these activities can be source of joy and happiness.

God has created the universe and gave it to human beings to be managed. So God created the universe not only to be contemplated but also to be perfected. In the act of perfecting the universe though work, men and women have to realize that their duty is not only to know God's intention in and with nature, but also to realize that they work together with God.

*"Without God's intervention and accompaniment, the work will be sterile. Work would not reach its end who is God and it would not have the supernatural value that only God alone could give it and only God alone can commensurate to a fine supernatural end."*¹¹⁵

¹¹³ What I mean with "to perfect God's creation" is to transform something according to the will and needs of man. It does mean that God's creation is not god, because God's creation is good, "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good." Gen 1:31. So in this case the perfection is measured with the man's needs.

¹¹⁴ L. Dehon, *Oeuvres Sociales* vol. VI, p. 230.

¹¹⁵ My translation from L. Dehon *Oeuvres Sociales*, vol. VI, p. 224. Dehon went further to describe how this awareness can be obtain. There are 3 ways:

- a. Through the prayer and especially through the mental prayers that we unite to God intimately who is the source of all sanctity.
- b. Through the Holy Sacrifice which is oblation made for God.
- c. Through the sacraments which are the source of the sanctity.

To support his thoughts that only God who creates while men and women are co-worker of God's creative work, Dehon cited the Psalm 127: 1 - 2 ¹¹⁶

"Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it work in vain. Unless the LORD guards the city, the guard keeps watch in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives sleep to his beloved."

Dehon said that in front of God who is still creating, all of single work which men and women do, even the smallest, has a creative meaning, honorable, and meritorious.¹¹⁷ Human work, which is the transformation of something in the universe, is the human participation in the development and evolution of the world. This development and evolution of the world are possible only by God's creative work itself in the universe and men and women participate in it. This participation is not merely a passive one, but an active participation, because God is creating through and with them.

b. As a sanctifying activity

As we have seen in the previous chapter, work is a necessity for human beings, both biologically and psychologically. The important expression of Man's

¹¹⁶ L. Dehon, *Oeuvres Sociales*, vol. VI, p. 229.

¹¹⁷ L. Dehon, *Manuel Social Chrétien*, p. 17.

entity is to work. Through it they can proceed toward perfection.¹¹⁸ The fatigue of manual or spiritual work helps to purify their spirit because with their work, men and women can manage and master their personalities and adapt them to the will of God.

So, for Christians, work is not only a mere means to make a living, but it has a deeper meaning; it is a means of sanctification.

*“Devoting himself for 30 years to a manual labor, and for three years to the labors of preaching, the Man-God gave true dignity to work. Thus, whether it is simply manual, intellectual, or artistic work, one is sanctified through it; it leads man to God, and it is always honorable or meritorious.”*¹¹⁹

The fact that God became flesh and took the human form with all of its suffering in work, indicated that the human suffering in work is not in vain. Work gets a new meaning, because all of the work and life of Christ has a redemptive meaning. He saves human beings through his work, his preaching, and all of his being which culminates in his suffering, death, and resurrection. Briefly, all of his work is the work of redemption and the work of sanctification.

In God-become-Man, human beings do not work alone, but they work with and in God. All of the good work which Christians do, can be their participation in the redemptive work of Christ, the work of sanctification. Christians can unite their

¹¹⁸ “*Le travail... Il a pour but véritable l’entretien, le perfectionnement et la diffusion de la vie humaine intégrale.*” L. Dehon, *Oeuvres Sociales*, vol. VI, p. 124.

¹¹⁹ My translation from L. Dehon, *Manuel Social Chrétien*, p. 17.

suffering in working with the redemptive suffering of Christ and they can offer it to the sanctification of human kind.¹²⁰

God invites all of humans being to work with Him, to perfect His creation, but human beings certainly have to accept this invitation freely. In their freedom, every single good work that they do with and in God, has the sanctified meaning for human beings and for themselves.¹²¹ In their freedom everyone can participate in God's work of redemption and in the sanctification of themselves and all human beings.

c. As an act of reparation

First of all, I want to explain what the meaning of reparation for Fr. Dehon is. Dehon drew a lot of inspiration from the Revelation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to St. Margaret Mary Allacoque in Paray-le-Monial. But since then, the word 'reparation' has developed many meanings. Reparation since St. Margaret Mary Allacoque has meant a share in the sufferings of Christ and a making up to Him for the lack of love He experienced among religious and Christians in general. This participation takes place through union in and with Christ. It could be passive as in

¹²⁰ L. Dehon, *Manuel Social Chrétien*, p. 67.

¹²¹ L. Dehon, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

accepting all that life sends my way or active as in the mortification and penances taken upon oneself.¹²²

In the first Constitution¹²³ for his congregation no. 4, Dehon expressed the cause of reparation: the refusal of God's love. Dehon was very sensitive to sin which weakens the Church, especially when 'consecrated people' are involved. He was aware of social evils; he had studied carefully their human causes, both individual and social. But he saw the refusal of the love of Christ as the deepest cause of this human misery. Caught up in this often unrecognized love, he wanted to respond to it by being intimately united to the Heart of Christ and by establishing His Reign in individuals and society.

After describing the cause of reparation, he proceeded to explain the meaning of reparation in no. 23 – 25, which I can summarize as follows:

1. As a 'welcome to the Spirit'.
2. As a 'response to Christ's love for us'.
3. As a 'communion in his Love for the Father'.
4. As a 'communion in His work of redemption in the midst of the world'.

¹²² David Nagel, *Building the Notion of Reparation*, in *Dehoniana*, No. 67, SCJ Studies Centre, Rome, 1987, p. 33.

¹²³ The first SCJ Constitution which was written by Leo Dehon (1885) emphasized the reparation as consoling the sad and suffering Christ because of the injuries which were done by the people, as I will explained further. In further Constitution, the emphasize of reparation was changed and that emphasize did not appear directly. In this writings I speak only the first constitution which was published in the same era with our topic.

Sometimes the reparative life will be lived out by offering sufferings borne with patience and abandonment even in darkness and loneliness, as a pre-eminent and mysterious communion in the suffering and death of Christ for the redemption of the world.¹²⁴ So, the reparation done by men and women are lived in union with Christ's reparation, by participating in the mission of the Church in the world, because Christ's reparation to the Father is being continued in and by the Church in the world. In other words, the purpose of the reparation is for the perfection and salvation of humankind.¹²⁵

As we have seen before, human work is a means of perfection and sanctification. The work that men and women have done, is useful and fruitful not only for themselves, but also for others because all of human work has a social meaning.¹²⁶ With love and the good work that men and women do, they can help others to reconcile themselves to God. That is why Dehon asks his followers to be the prophets of love and servants of reconciliation.¹²⁷

The theological concept of reparation assumes theological sin. Briefly, for Leo Dehon, the essence of sin is the refusal of God's love.¹²⁸ God loves human kind so much, but God receives so little response for his love from them. He is very sad because of this situation. His sadness is even greater whenever the refusal is done

¹²⁴ G. Manzoni, *Dehonian Reparation today*, in *Dehoniana*, no. 68, SCJ Studies Centre, Rome, 1987, p. 182.

¹²⁵ G. Manzoni, *Dehonian Reparation today*, p. 183.

¹²⁶ L. Dehon, *Oeuvres Sociales*, vol. II, p. 17.

¹²⁷ SCJ Constitution No. 7.

¹²⁸ SCJ Constitution No. 4.

by those whom God loves so much, that is the consecrated men and women. God wants those who live as consecrated men and women to pay more attention to Him and respond to His abundant love. But what God receives is only indifference and ingratitude from the people.

With mortification, good work, and prayers, which men and women offer to Him, they can console the suffering God and make reparation of the injuries done by other people.

In this frame of thinking, Dehon wrote:

“Christian work:

*Since the original sin, work has taken the character of atonement. Thus it has a new value. If because of original sin, work becomes a punishment, now it has become a form of reparation, a remedy, and a preventive for sin as meritorious as it is salutary.”*¹²⁹

The ideal situation for men and women in Eden was broken by the sins of Adam and Eve. God punished them and they had to labor hard to get food and clothing (Gen. 3 : 17 – 19). By the coming of Christ who became man and who took the human experience in all of its form including work, the meaning of work was changed. He did manual work for 30 years with Joseph his father and then he continued to work to announce the Kingdom of God.¹³⁰ It means that work is no

¹²⁹ My translation from L. Dehon, *Oeuvres Sociales*, vol. II, pp. 16 – 17.

¹³⁰ L. Dehon, op. cit. p. 17.

more a punishment, because Christ has no sins, so the Father doesn't punish him. Hence the work of Christ must have another meaning than of punishment.

The work of Christ is the work of reconciliation, the work of salvation, the work of reparation of the sins done by Adam and Eve and all of their offspring. Sins ruin the good relation between God and humanity while the work of Christ reconnects it by the sacrifice that he made on the Cross. Sins cause death for human beings but the work of Christ brings life to them.

Human work, as a participation of Christ's work, does the same thing as that of Christ but in a different level: making reparation for the sins and atonement to the Father and rebuild good relation with the Father.¹³¹

¹³¹ L. Dehon, *op. cit.* p. 17

Part Two

POPE LEO XIII

I. BIOGRAPHY OF LEO XIII

Leo XIII (Vincenzo Gioacchino Pecci) was born on March 2, 1810 in Carpineto Romano, near Frosinone, from a rich, religious, and noble family. His father (Domenico Ludovico Pecci) was a colonel in the Army of Napoleon I. His mother was Anna Prosperi Buzzi. He was the 6th of 7 children. He had 3 brothers (Carlo, Giovanni Batista, and Giuseppe). The latter, Giuseppe, was appointed cardinal and had a big influence on Vincenzo's life. There were many 'ecclesiastical princes' in the Pecci family. When Pope Martin V had to find refuge in Siena, his family welcomed him and lent the pope 15.000 florins of gold in order to guarantee that the pope had the city of Spoleto.¹³²

When Vincenzo Gioacchino Pecci was 8 years old, he was sent to the Jesuit College in Viterbo to study grammar and human sciences.¹³³ The same years that his mother died (1824), he was sent to Rome to study in the Roman College.

¹³² --- *Léon XIII et le Vatican*, Oudin Frères de Poitiers, Paris, 1880, p. 1.

¹³³ One of his teachers in the college, P. Ballerini SJ, wrote in *Civiltà Cattolica* to give witness, "tout le monde admirait déjà sa vive intelligence et son exquise bonté ." --- *Léon XIII et le Vatican*, p. 5.

Because he was very intelligent, he was asked to be a co-professor to teach in the German College. In the third year, he argued publicly about indulgences, the sacrament of priesthood, and the sacrament of extreme-unction.¹³⁴

Then he entered '*Accademia dei Nobili Ecclesiastici*' like many other of his family, where he studied ecclesiastical diplomacy, politics, economics, biblical controversies, and many foreign languages. When he finished at the Accademia, he entered the University of La Sapienza (1832 – 1837) where he studied civil law and canon law and graduated in Theology.¹³⁵

On March 16, 1837 Pope Gregorius XVI appointed him domestic prelate, before his ordination.¹³⁶ Vincenzo Gioacchino Pecci was ordained on December 25, 1837. Afterward he was appointed governor of Benevento, a neglected and forgotten province but which was in danger of being occupied by the kingdom of Naples and Sicily. He succeeded in overthrowing them.

Then Mgr. Pecci was appointed governor of Perugia, an important province. As the governor, he soon organized better the administration of the province. He knew the burden of citizens' everyday live very well, so he reduced the taxes, built hospitals and schools, fought against usury, founded the Bank of Perugia (*Cassa di Risparmio di Perugia*) and developed the economy and built roads. He was near to the poor and the miseries.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ --- *Léon XIII et le Vatican*, p. 6.

¹³⁵ Eduardo Soderini, *Il Pontificato di Leone XIII*, vol I, A.Mondadori, Milano, 1932, p. 86.

¹³⁶ --- *Léon XIII et le Vatican*, p. 7.

¹³⁷ E. Soderini, op. cit. p. 105.

The city of Perugia was also well known as the base of secret society, a clandestine movement against the social order and the Church. But during the time of Mgr. Pecci, he was able to maintain the order and stability, so the big province prison has no prisoners inside.¹³⁸

Six years after his ordination (1843), he was consecrated titular archbishop of Damietta and was sent to Belgium as nuncio. He also visited London, Cologne, and Paris where he came into contact with industrialized countries. As a nuncio he often participated incognito in the worker's political meetings.¹³⁹ He saw the defect of capitalism and the suffering of the workers because of exploitation. He also supported the Belgian bishops and Catholic politicians in opposition to Prime Minister Nothomb, who wished to confer on the government the right of naming members of "*University Juries*."¹⁴⁰ The king was discontented because of the defeat of this project, so he demanded the recall of the nuncio whose attitude had helped check "unionism," an entente between moderate liberals and Catholics.

When he returned to Perugia and was nominated archbishop of Perugia (January 19, 1846), he had undergone changes in his point of view regarding social issues. Actually when Gregory XVI appointed him archbishop of Perugia, Mgr. Pecci was also nominated Cardinal, but it was reserved '*in petto*'. Unfortunately

¹³⁸ --- *Léon XIII et le Vatican*, p. 9.

¹³⁹ John Molony, *The Worker Question, A new historical perspective on Rerum Novarum*, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1991, p. 12.

¹⁴⁰ Actually there were many problems between the Catholic Church and the kingdom of Belgium, but the decisive problem was the dispute in the University of Louvain: Who had the right to appoint the university jury. E. Soderini. op. cit. p. 86.

Pope Gregory XVI died the same years without announcing the nomination publicly. Only on December 9, 1853 was his nomination made public by Pius IX.¹⁴¹

As archbishop of Perugia, he wanted to develop the education of the priests, especially culturally. He founded a Seminary in Perugia, which was one of the best seminaries in Italy.¹⁴² The seminarians not only studied "sacred courses" but also studied social courses and popular literature.¹⁴³

When he was elected pope on February 20, 1878, he had spent 35 years as bishop and 25 years as cardinal with the mature experience in human life. Actually the time of his papacy was a hard and difficult period of church history. John Molony describe it as follows:

*"The Papal States were a thing of the past; Capitalism, liberalism, freemasonry, socialism, and burgeoning democracy were the modes of the day and the papacy seemed, to some, an anachronism."*¹⁴⁴

In politics, Leo XIII had to face problems with the kingdom of Italy concerning the relationship between the former papal states and the kingdom; with Germany, the Pope had to deal with Bismarck who wanted to subordinate the church under his power.

Even though in a certain sense Leo XIII was in continuity with his predecessor, Pius IX, he was also a renewer. He created a new orientation for the

¹⁴¹ --- *Léon XIII et le Vatican*, p. 14.

¹⁴² E. Soderini, op. cit. p.173.

¹⁴³ E. Soderini, op. cit. p. 174.

¹⁴⁴ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 14.

church. Unlike his predecessor, who condemned modern society, Leo XIII encouraged dialogue and understanding with it. Although he made intense and varied diplomatic approaches to many countries, he also wanted to be more of a moral power than political power.¹⁴⁵ In his private life, he was simple. The life of the pope was not like the life of a prince anymore but in the official ceremonial of the papacy, he was full of dignity in his simpleness.¹⁴⁶ He also paid more attention to science and history. He opened up the Vatican Archive to historians (1880) to promote scientific research in the history of the church.¹⁴⁷ He made new approaches to the Anglican Church and made dialogues with them.¹⁴⁸

He paid a great attention to social problem¹⁴⁹ so that since the first years of his pontificate (December 28, 1878), he published his first social encyclical, *Quod Apostolici Muneris* where he condemned the errors of socialism and suggested that the workers form unions under the guidance of the church.¹⁵⁰ This encyclical got wide attention and appreciation from believers and unbelievers.¹⁵¹

The most famous and significant encyclical in his pontificate was the encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. It was the most comprehensive encyclical which dealt

¹⁴⁵ --- *Encyclopaedia Universalis*. Vol. 13, France SA, Paris, 1995, p. 610.

¹⁴⁶ --- Léon XIII et le Vatican, p. 54.

¹⁴⁷ --- *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol VIII, The Catholic University of America, Washington, 1967, p. 648.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid p. 648

¹⁴⁹ He learned the social questions not from the first circle of his pontificate, because in that time, Italy was not an industrialist country. The industry in Italy had not developed yet, but he studied much from the countries where he visited and lived as Nuncio, such as Germany, France, and Belgium. J. Molony, op. cit. p. 17. See also Giovanni Antonazzi and Domenico Tardini, *L'Enciclica Rerum Novarum, Testo Autentico e Redazioni Preparatorie dai Documenti Originali*, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, Roma, 1957, p. 7

¹⁵⁰ J. Molony, op. cit., p. 17.

¹⁵¹ --- *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol VIII, p. 648.

with social questions. He published *Rerum Novarum* on May 15, 1891. It was a *Magna Charta* of Christian work which flowed from a bright mind.¹⁵² Although Leo XIII did not leave many handwritings, his personal views and influence in this encyclicals was enormous.¹⁵³

The encyclical *Rerum Novarum* was not an encyclical which was written suddenly, but it had matured in his mind through his long journey of thinking and direct involvement in social issues. Although *Rerum Novarum* was not the first social encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* was the most important and decisive stepping stone for Catholic social teaching.

Besides the encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, Leo XIII published numerous social encyclicals: two encyclicals concerning the abolition of slavery: *In plurimis* (May 5, 1888) and *Catholicae Ecclesiae* (November, 1890); four encyclicals concerning the relation between the Church and the state: *Diuturnum* (June 29, 1881), *Immortale Dei* (November 1, 1885), *Libertas* (June 20, 1888), *Sapientiae Christianae* (January 10, 1890); the encyclical *Graves de Communi re* (January 18, 1901) about Christian Democracy.

¹⁵² Giovanni Antonazzi and Domenico Tardini, op. cit. p. 3.

¹⁵³ Mgr. Tardini stated that in the Vatican archives there are many hand writing of the popes, but hardly from Leo XIII. His Secretaries wrote almost everything. Leo XIII gave them the outline and ideas and they wrote it and after that they gave it to the pope. They often revised it for many times before the publication. See Giovanni Antonazzi and Domenico Tardini, op. cit. p. 3.

II. THE BACKGROUND OF RERUM NOVARUM

1. Social Conditions in Europe

The world within the last two centuries had changed a lot, especially after the English Industrial Revolution (1760 – 1840) and the French Revolution (1789) which marked the world with amazing development in many areas of life, especially economically. International commerce developed rapidly. Many European countries colonized and controlled many countries and even continents.¹⁵⁴ Science and technologies also developed along with new world-views and philosophies.

The key factor in industrial development was the cotton industry and the coal industry. The English succeeded in controlling overseas commerce and so the demand of the cotton industries was rapidly growing. In order to meet this demand, they mechanized their factories.¹⁵⁵ The mechanization created a new class in society, the class of proletariat workers, because industry needed the workers to run the machines. There were many men, women, and children who came from villages who worked in the cotton industry.¹⁵⁶

Free market enterprise and the ideology of capitalism were introduced and soon became the model of the economical life in many western countries. The

¹⁵⁴ John Desrochers, *The Social Teaching of the Church*, Centre for Social Action, Bangalore, 1992, p.35.

¹⁵⁵ J. Desrochers, op. cit, p. 35-36

¹⁵⁶ Piere Bigo, *Chiesa Rivoluzioni Sociali e Terzo Mondo*, Città Nuova, Roma, 1976.

ideologies were spread because they promised a new structure of social order and happiness because of the wealth that they achieved¹⁵⁷. Within decades there was an accumulation of riches in some of the European countries, lead by the English. Briefly, the industrial revolution succeeded in transforming economic life, especially in some European countries.

Although the economic development was tremendous, it was not evenly distributed. The capitalists and the bourgeoisie were very rich but the majority of the people were poor. The workers were exploited and lived in miserable conditions. They were poor and neglected. They had to work for 14 – 15 hour a day without any vacation weekly. Their salaries were not enough to support their most essential daily needs.¹⁵⁸ In many places, children of 4 - 5 years of age had to work for 12 to 16 hours a day in underground mines and were paid scandalously low wages. The working day varied from 14 – 18 hours for children under 14 years of ages in other areas of employment.¹⁵⁹

The French Revolution which took place in 1789 changed the way in viewing the human reality. With the slogan *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, the French Revolution succeeded in changing the mentality of people step by step. People's

¹⁵⁷ J. Descrochers, op. cit. pp. 36-37.

¹⁵⁸ For example. The salary of a worker in a cotton industry in the city of Saint Quentin in 1835: a man got 1.50 – 3 franc daily; a woman got 0.90 – 1.25 franc daily; a child got 0.50 – 1.25 franc daily. The daily food for a worker who drank only water cost 0.75 franc. Robert Prélôt, *L'Oeuvre Sociale du Chanoine Dehon*, Édition Spes, Paris, 1936, pp. 47 – 48. See also Cesare Crespi and Giuseppe Cardone, *Dalla Rerum Novarum alla Mater et Magistra*, Massimo, Milano, 1963. p. 15.

¹⁵⁹ J. Desrochers, op. cit., p. 36.

right as citizens were acknowledged and in the name of those rights they rejected any and every form of tyranny imposed on them.

The workers who were aware of their rights and oppressed conditions—although slowly—started to rebel. Between 1789 – 1848 was the period of the social revolution which was set into action by the social thinkers and revolutionaries especially the socialist and communists like Robert Owen, Saint Simon, Charles Fourier, Etienne Cabet etc.¹⁶⁰. The working class started to organize itself in trade-unions, co-operatives, educational societies and political movements. The worker's movements culminated in 1848 when Karl Marx and F. Engels proclaimed the '*Communist Manifesto*'.

The political and financial rulers in some western countries realized that new problems had arisen. For many decades, the workers were always silent or showed no significant resistance against the oppressing power, but in these decades, it ended.¹⁶¹ Social unrest rose at an alarming rate; furthermore the political situation in most of the western countries was not stable because of the friction in the internal affairs and international affairs.

The main struggles of the worker's organization were almost the same: the right of employment, just wages, days off, shorter working hours, improvement of human condition in the workplace, etc.

¹⁶⁰ J. Descrochers, op. cit. p. 40.

¹⁶¹ J. Molony, *The Worker Questions*, p. 7.

In other words: the 19th century was marked by immense prosperity and development of many things in the western society: economical and social development, population¹⁶², techniques etc. But also there was dark side: the exploitation of the workers by the capitalists and the strife to get the rights for the workers. The workers realized their role in the production and the capitalist didn't give them their rights easily. Ideologically, there were 2 dominated ones: Liberalism and Socialism/Marxism.

2. Ecclesiastical conditions

"The Church remained on the defensive during these centuries of socio-economic, political and ideological transformation." ¹⁶³ For many centuries, the Church in most of European countries was involved directly and deeply in the politics and especially deeply entrenched in the feudal society of middle ages. She held enormous political and economical power. She was very rich, the biggest landowner and the hierarchies belonged to the nobility. In such condition, it was very hard for the Church to criticize unjust social condition.

¹⁶² The population of Europe, including European Russia, doubled to four hundred million between 1800 and 1900 (J. Molony, op. cit, p. 8).

¹⁶³ J. Desrochers, op. cit. p. 47.

The situation was changed after the Reformation. There was much opposition and persecutions against the church¹⁶⁴ which made the Church change her approach to the 'world'. But the changes didn't come soon. It came only at the late of 19th century. As a whole, the Church had a little contact with the birth of proletariat in 19th century.¹⁶⁵

*"The Church of the nineteenth century was a stranger and sometimes an enemy to the metamorphosis that was going on in the society of the day. It was incapable of allowing itself to be affected by the class struggle and the workers movement and introduce changes in its own structures, simply because it failed to understand or even recognize these phenomena for what they were.... Throughout this period it was in the position of subculture threatened at all times by the rising class, first the bourgeoisie and then the workers."*¹⁶⁶

The social consciousness in the Church was started by Catholic individuals and groups. In France, 1822 Abbé Félicité de Lamennais and François René de Chateaubriand exposed the miserable condition of the workers and condemned the misery caused by industrial capitalism. 1833 Frederic Ozanam founded the Society of St. Vincent de Paul which opened the eyes of many people concerning the poor

¹⁶⁴ In many countries, anti-clerical and anti Roman feeling spread throughout Europe. Many kings (French, Belgium, Prussia etc) were against the Church. In French, after the French Revolution many churches were transferred into government buildings, the massacre of priests and religious, suppression of seminaries and convents etc. Inside the Church there were also many frictions. There was also a great gap between lower clergies and bishops, and among the bishops themselves. Many times Popes were imprisonment (Pope Pius VI and Pius VII) and the Pope (Pius IX) was put to flight from Rome. In 1870 the temporal power of the Pope was finally ended by the fall of the Papal States. J. Desrochers, op. cit. pp. 47-48.

¹⁶⁵ J. Desrochers, op. cit. pp. 48.

¹⁶⁶ J. Desrochers, op. cit. pp. 48.

condition of the workers. Count Albert de Mun and Marquis René de la Tour du Pin, noblemen and officers in the French army, moved by the miserable condition in Paris after the war, founded the Catholic Workingmen's Club in 1871 and Catholic Association of French Youth in 1886.¹⁶⁷ Léon Harmel joined the Workers' Circle in 1884. He had a great influence on the Social movements in France. He combined the religious and social action in his family factory since 1854. He convinced that "everything (should be) for the good of the workers, but never without them and, a fortiori, never against their will."¹⁶⁸

In Germany the Catholic social movement was initiated by Baron von Ketteler (1811 – 1877), bishop of Mainz, who was aware of the danger of the numerous poor people around his diocese who were attracted to Marx's ideology.¹⁶⁹ In 1848 he delivered his address in a meeting of Catholic Congresses. It became the stepping stone for the social movement in Germany. "The German Catholic Congress had their origin in the society called the Piusverein, which was founded by Professor Kaspar Riffel and his friend Lennig for the defense of religious liberties."¹⁷⁰

In England, the movement was initiated by Cardinal Manning (1808 – 1892) who wrote numerous letters to support worker's demand for protective legislation.¹⁷¹ He published *The Dignity and the Right of Labour*. He opposed the

¹⁶⁷ Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick, *Official Catholic Social Teaching, in Readings in Moral Theology, No. 5*, Paulist Press, New York, 1986, p. 12.

¹⁶⁸ J. Desrochers, op. cit. p. 48.

¹⁶⁹ Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick, op. cit. p. 9.

¹⁷⁰ Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick, op. cit. p. 18.

¹⁷¹ Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick, op. cit. p. 16.

workers exploitation, specially child workers and woman workers. Another Catholic prelate who wrote on social problems was Bishop Edward Bagshawe of Nottingham.¹⁷²

In Austria, Baron Karl von Vogelsang (1819 – 1891) in 1875 came into contact with the publication of the Austrian fédéralist, *Der Vaterland*, to publish his idea of a Christian Social-reform movement. He fought against capitalism and usury.¹⁷³ He thought that capitalism was inherently unjust. He proposed a social system entitled “corporatism” based on coordination of cooperative association of workers and owners, similar to the medieval guilds. From Germany and France, The Catholic social movement gradually also spread in other western countries such as, Spain, Switzerland, Belgium, Ireland, etc.

The situations in the English speaking world such as United States, Canada, Australia, were different. In the countries of European continent, although the attention and concern of the Church were genuine and great, the large masses of the Catholic workers had already been alienated from the church.¹⁷⁴ Because of the burden of work for hours, it weakened the hearts and bodies of the workers so that they didn't give attention to the religious life. The situation was getting worse because the Church stood removed from their plight and often she took the side of

¹⁷² J. Molony, op. cit. p.23 – 24.

¹⁷³ J. Molony, op. cit. p.30 – 31.

¹⁷⁴ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 49.

the masters or employers because many of the priests and bishops came from the noble families.

In the English speaking world, large numbers of the Catholics were not alienated from the Church. It was because most of their priests and bishops came from the poor immigrant families so that the bad condition of the workers was their condition everyday. The priests and the bishops got the real experience of the poor condition from the first hand.¹⁷⁵ It gave a different approach to the view of the social problems and the improvement of the workers' condition. In the English speaking world, they didn't have complicated theories of improving condition, but a real actions. Albert Métin, a French visitor to Australia, called it *Le Socialisme sans Doctrine*.¹⁷⁶

From the United States, Henry George, editor of The San Francisco Times, cried out for the bad condition of the workers. He worked together with Edward McGlynn, a parish priest of St. Stephen, an important parish in New York,¹⁷⁷ to expose the bad conditions of the workers so that it got attention from the public. Because of their activities they got into many difficulties with the Vatican.¹⁷⁸ Another prominent figure from the USA was James Cardinal Gibbons (1834 – 1921), Archbishop of Baltimore. His influence in the local church and in Vatican was great.

¹⁷⁵ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 50.

¹⁷⁶ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 50.

¹⁷⁷ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 51.

¹⁷⁸ J. Molony, op. cit. pp. 53 – 59.

The first Church's teaching concerning the social problem certainly was not *Rerum Novarum*. In 1840 the French Bishops Conference issued a pastoral letter to respond the situation which was caused by industrial revolution. P. Giraud, Bishop of Cambrai (France) paid much attention to the moral and religious condition of the workers. He insisted improvement of the worker's condition by asking the rich, to be more generous by giving them days off, days off for the woman workers who give birth, and the child catechesis for the child labor.¹⁷⁹

In 1845, Mgr. Rendu, bishop of Annecy, sent a letter to Charles Albert who had an industrial factory. Mgr. Rendu was very concerned by the worker's situation and their living conditions. The workers lived like slaves and Christian principles were not practiced. In his letter, Mgr. Rendu asked the King to make a law so that the workers would not exploited. Mgr. Rendu proposed to the leader of the government to exercise the Christian principle in the government offices. He also proposed that priests included in the government so they could supervise the Christian principles. It was characteristic of the medieval age where the state (catholic state) was the church's partner or serving the church in the society.¹⁸⁰

Briefly, there were many social movements and social actions to protest the poor condition of the workers. There were many actions of the Church to improve the workers' conditions, but until now there was no comprehensive official teaching

¹⁷⁹ F. Fiorentino (edit), *I Cento Anni Della Rerum Novarum*, ESD, Bologna, 1990, p. 21.

¹⁸⁰ F. Fiorentino, op.cit. p.22.

from the Pope to answer the question around the social question. Many Catholic leaders above mentioned and lay people asked the Pope to issue the authoritative statement.¹⁸¹ “*They wanted an authoritative statement from the pope partly because it would be a powerful support to all who were protesting against the exploitation of the workers and partly because it would make Catholics less likely to adopt the more ‘extreme’ views put forward by various champions of the working classes.*”¹⁸² The birth of *Rerum Novarum* was also pushed by the pilgrimage of French workers lead by Leon Harmel on 16-20 October 1889.¹⁸³

For the Catholic social activists – both clergy and lay people – who had been involving in social movements, *Rerum Novarum* gave great encouragement and support to continue their activities and to draw Catholic people to be more involved in social issues. *Rerum Novarum* had the long-term effect of greatly increasing the number of such committed activists. Although *Rerum Novarum* was at first largely ignored by many of the people with whom it was most directly concerned, finally it got great appreciation from them and also from non-Catholic.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ D. Dorr, op. cit. p. 13.

¹⁸² D. Dorr, op. cit. p. 13.

¹⁸³ For the extensive description of the pilgrimage, see. Georges Guitton, *Leon Harmel*, Edition Spes, 1927. pp. 202 – 226.

¹⁸⁴ D. Dorr. op. cit. p. 15.

III. HUMAN WORK ACCORDING TO RERUM NOVARUM¹⁸⁵

First of all, it is important to notice that in *Rerum Novarum* Leo XIII didn't have any intention of giving a direct theological tract on work. *Rerum Novarum* was written to protest against the harsh and poor conditions of the workers, the exploitation of the workers by the capitalists,¹⁸⁶ and to fight against developing ideologies in that era: Liberalism and Socialism. The basis for defending the workers was based on human dignity. The primary focus of the encyclicals was directly on the workers. Hence the theological investigation about work has to be made in the framework of the workers. The key to understanding the concept of work in *Rerum Novarum* is not the work in itself, but the defense of human (worker) dignity.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ In all of this reflection, I use the English translation of *Rerum Novarum* in John Molony, *The Workers Question, A New historical Perspective on Rerum Novarum*, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1991, pp. 165 – 203. Since Molony's translation does not have paragraph numbers of the document, I make reference in numbering to the authorized edition of *Rerum Novarum* : Leo XIII, *On the Condition of the Working Classes*, St. Paul Books & Media, Boston, 1942. When I refer to the number of *Rerum Novarum*, I mean the number of *Rerum Novarum* in this edition.

¹⁸⁶ D. Dorr, op. cit. p. 13.

¹⁸⁷ Hernán Fitte, *Lavoro Umano e Redenzione*, Armando Editore, Roma, 1996, p. 22.

1. HUMAN VALUE

a. As human activity

Due to the nature of work, Leo XIII stated that "*Work is a human activity which has as its goal the provision of the necessities of life, and, especially, its preservation.*"¹⁸⁸ By stating that work was human activity, Leo XIII wanted to underline the dignity of work. In a previous paragraph of *Rerum Novarum*, Leo said that "*The great privilege of the human person, which is fundamental to his being and which distinguishes him from brute creation, is to be able to use his intelligence or, more exactly, his power of reason.*"¹⁸⁹

Work is not merely bodily activity, but it includes the most distinguished essence of man -- his intelligence and freedom. The work of human beings can never be placed on the same level as the forces of nature, animals, machines, etc, because animals and machines don't have intelligence and free will. Human work is a free and conscious human activity, an expression of the personality of the workers.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 191; *Rerum Novarum* No. 62.

¹⁸⁹ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 168; *Rerum Novarum* No. 11.

¹⁹⁰ Jean-Yves Calvez and Jacques Perrin, *Église et Société Économique, L'Enseignement Social des Papes de Léon XIII à Pie XII*, Éditions Montaigne, Paris, 1959, p. 252.

At work people use their intelligence to transform material things from one form into another so that people not only use what is available, but also they can improve and transform it according to their needs. Leo XIII stated: *“Precisely because he has this power (intelligence), a man must be granted more than the mere use of those material things which are common to the animal kingdom.”*¹⁹¹

Work is tied in the essence and the nature of humans. As long as man is a human being, he works regardless of his state of grace or sins. Leo XIII refused a negative concept of work where work was regarded as a punishment by God because of the first sin. *“Insofar as manual labour is concerned, a man in the very state of innocence itself would not have remained idle.”*¹⁹²

All human beings are God’s image, since God has created man in his own image (Gen. 1:27). The image and the likeness of God are not superficial, but deeply rooted in man’s nature so that there is no man who is not God’s image. This image and likeness of God bring about a consequence that man always works because God always works. When man works, he exercise God’s commandment to dominate the earth (Gen. 1:28) and at the same time he perfects human nature as God’s image in creating (perfecting) the earth. *“The image and likeness of God is sculptured in the soul and therein resides that sovereignty by virtue of which man is*

¹⁹¹ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 168; *Rerum Novarum* No.11. I added the word in bracket.

¹⁹² J. Molony, op. cit. p. 174; *Rerum Novarum* No. 27.

ordered to rule over inferior creatures and to make the whole earth and the oceans useful to him."¹⁹³

The commandment to "make the whole earth and the oceans useful to him" is carried out by human beings in the work they do. It is only human beings who are God's image and only "*homo rationalis*" can accomplish this commandment. For this reason, the Pope stated, "*Truly, the earth provides in abundance all that is needed to maintain and perfect human life, but only to the degree that man cultivates it and expends his care on it. When man uses his mind and body to obtain the goods of the earth, he thereby joins to himself that portion of nature's field which he cultivates.*"¹⁹⁴

b. As a personal value

Leo XIII defended private property by stating that work has personal characteristics. "*Work is personal because the power to work is bound up with the person, to whom it totally belongs and to whom it was given for his own advantage.*"¹⁹⁵

The human beings engaged in work are personal subjects, capable of acting in planned and rational ways, capable of deciding about themselves with a

¹⁹³ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 188; *Rerum Novarum* No. 57.

¹⁹⁴ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 169; *Rerum Novarum* No. 15.

¹⁹⁵ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 191; *Rerum Novarum* No. 62.

tendency to self-development. The fact is that the one who works is a person, a conscious and free subject; so it is he who decides about himself and for himself. The '*vis agens*' of work (the motivation to act) flows from intelligence and the will of man.¹⁹⁶ So the basis for determining the value of human work is not primarily the kind of work being done but the fact that the one doing it is a person.

The dignity of work lies in this subjective dimension, and so work is for person and they have the right over the fruit of their work. Leo XIII underlined this personal dimension and the right of its fruit: "*In so doing (When man uses his mind and body to obtain the goods of the earth = to work), he leaves an imprint of his own personality upon it, so that he is justly able to claim it as his own, and demand from others respect for his ownership.*"¹⁹⁷

Human beings through their works imprint permanently their personalities in the nature. There is a close connection between their beings and the fruit of their work. The possibility of working the universe rested on a first universal connection, (because of God entrusted the universe to man) which passes the simple material relation, who was already seized so that man could work over them. The work was thus interior to the universal relation of the spiritual person to the nature, that was to say interior to a "domain", interior to the property.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ Hernán Fitte, op. cit. p. 24.

¹⁹⁷ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 169; *Rerum Novarum* No. 15 (I added the sentence in bracket).

¹⁹⁸ Jean-Yves Calvez and Jacques Perrin, op. cit. p. 253.

All of man's essence is involved when he is working. This includes all of his strength and power which belong to him. So the fruit of his work in a certain sense is a manifestation of his personality which should not be separated from himself.¹⁹⁹ It is not superfluous that Leo XIII asked people to respect the fruit of work as workers' belongings (Private Property), because the personality character makes for a close relationship between man (worker) and private property which is the fruit of his work. Here the Pope opposed the socialists which wanted to abolished private property.

Because of the personal characteristics of work, the work of human beings can not be placed on the same level as the forces of nature and, therefore, can never be assigned a monetary value as can merchandise.²⁰⁰

The true purpose of the whole process of production is to do or make something for people and the doer or maker is a person. Exploitation in the field of wages, working conditions, and Social Security is wrong precisely because it degrades the person who is working. Leo XIII condemned this degradation by stating, *"Not to treat their workers as slaves, but to respect the equality of their personal human dignity which is rendered noble by its Christian character.... That which is truly shameful and inhuman is to use men as if they were mere objects of gain."*²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ Hernán Fitte, op. cit. p. 25.

²⁰⁰ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 175; *Rerum Novarum* No. 31.

²⁰¹ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 175; *Rerum Novarum* No. 31.

Since human work is not merely an instrument of production, capital and its increase is objectively less important than the personal subjects who benefit from its increase, namely, the owners of capital and the workers. So actually both side (employers and employees) needed each other and both of them need to have a good mutual relationship. *“Each class (capitalists or workers) has an absolute need of the other; there can be no capital without labour, nor labour without capital. Beauty and good order are the results of mutual agreement, whereas perpetual conflict can only result in confusion and barbarism.”*²⁰²

c. As a necessary means to get a living

What make “work” special if it is compared with other human activities is its ends. Work is a human activity that is not an end in itself but it has another finality: to get a living in order to preserve his life. *“It is necessary because, without the fruit of his labour, a man can not live and nature itself strictly commands that a man do all he can to preserve his life.”*²⁰³

²⁰² J. Molony, op. cit. p. 174; *Rerum Novarum* No. 28. I added the words in bracket. In *Rerum Novarum* No. 30 – 31 Leo XIII proposed a set of duties of the workers and capitalists to assure the good mutual relationship between them. See J. Molony, op. cit. p. 175.

²⁰³ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 191; *Rerum Novarum* No. 62.

The preservation of life is a duty and a task that man has to do, “*The preservation of life is a bounden duty which no one can neglect without grave fault.*”²⁰⁴ Work is a means to perform the duty to conserve his life²⁰⁵ which is natural law and God’s law. So work is a duty for human being. Unlike the animals which could find many things in the world ready to be consumed, man had to work in order to make ready his food.²⁰⁶

The duty to work flows from human nature²⁰⁷ and it is not the punishment for the first sins. Leo XIII stated that in the state full grace (in Eden), man has the duty to preserve his life, so also in that state, he had to work. “*Insofar as manual labour is concerned, a man in the very state of innocence itself would not have remained idle.*”²⁰⁸

God created man in order to work. But certainly before the first sins the burden and the suffering of work which we have now, did not exist because work was performed freely as a pleasure for man.²⁰⁹ But the necessity to work remained the same: as a means to preserve life, because work was indispensable for preserving life. The burden and the suffering of work came, because the work which was freely done, now man had to do to make up for his disobedience. “*The things he would have freely done in that state for his own happiness became necessary*

²⁰⁴ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 192; *Rerum Novarum* No. 62.

²⁰⁵ Jean-Yves Calvez and Jacques Perrin, op. cit. p. 299. 359.

²⁰⁶ Johannes Haessle, *L'Etica Cristiana del Lavoro*, Edizione di Comunità, Milano, 1949. p. 69.

²⁰⁷ cfr. Hernán Fitte, op. cit. p. 25.

²⁰⁸ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 174; *Rerum Novarum* No.27.

²⁰⁹ E. Colom, op. cit. p. 250.

*after his fall so that he might painfully make up for his disobedience; Cursed be the earth in thy work; in thy labour thou shalt eat of it all the days of thy life (Gen. 3: 17).*²¹⁰

Work is the universal means of providing everything man needs for preserving and continuing his life. *"It may be rightly said that the universal means of providing for life is work."*²¹¹ Pope Leo XIII continued to explain the necessity of work, *"To produce these goods the labor of the workers, whether they expend their skill and strength on farms or in factories, is most efficacious and necessary."*²¹²

Because of the personal and necessity characteristics of work for preserving life, when a man works for others, the remuneration of work which man receives, has to be in such a way that it is enough to support their needs. *"If he uses his strength and skill to the advantage of another he does so in order to obtain the necessities of life for himself."*²¹³ So the workers can not ignore the low wages he receives. *"Were we to look at work only from the personal side, it is clear that the worker can agree to a low wage because, since he offers his labour voluntarily he can, if he wishes, be content with a low wage or, indeed, none at all. But we would come to an entirely different conclusion were we to consider both the personal and necessary aspects of work because they cannot be separated from each other. The preservation of life is a bounden duty which no one can neglect without grave fault."*

²¹⁰ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 174; *Rerum Novarum* No. 27.

²¹¹ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 169; *Rerum Novarum* No. 14.

²¹² J. Molony, op. cit. p. 185; *Rerum Novarum* No. 51.

²¹³ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 167; *Rerum Novarum* No. 9.

From this arises the necessary consequence of a right to procure the means to live which, in the case of the poor worker comes down to the wage he is paid for his work."²¹⁴

In order to preserve life well, Leo XIII explained that the wages had to be paid according to the principle of justice. *"His (capitalists') duty is to pay his workers what is demanded by justice."*²¹⁵ What he intended by "justice" was not just a wage that was paid merely according to the contract between capitalists and workers, but a wage that was enough to support himself and his family.²¹⁶

Leo XIII said that the salary which was paid according to the contract, is not always just, because many workers signed the contract under pressure or without free will and free choice. *"Thus, if through necessity or fear of a worse fate, the workers is forced to accept a harsh agreement imposed by an employer or contractor, he is subject to a form of violence against which justice must protest."*²¹⁷

Pope Leo XIII called for both workers and capitalists to sign contracts freely and with full of consent according to the principles of justice. *"Let the*

²¹⁴ J. Molony, op. cit. pp. 191 - 192; *Rerum Novarum* No. 62.

²¹⁵ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 176; *Rerum Novarum* No. 32. I added the word in bracket.

²¹⁶ Johannes Haessle noted that there was no direct references in all of Leo XIII writings that family indemnity was a fundamental right. But from the basis of Thomistic thinking, we can conclude Leo XIII thought that the principle justice of waging had to include his family. This assumption is based on the fact that St. Thomas wrote in his *Summa Theologica*, 2^a 2^{ae}, q. 32, art.6. and the Pope idea that all the workers had the right to have a family and the father of family had to provide the necessary needs for their family, *Rerum Novarum* No. 19 - 20. cfr. *Rerum Novarum* No. 63 and 65. See J. Haessle, op. cit. pp. 256 - 257; Jean-Yves Calvez, op. cit. 140.

²¹⁷ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 192; *Rerum Novarum* No. 63.

*workers and the employer freely enter into an agreement on this matter and give their consent to a specified wage.”*²¹⁸

Furthermore natural justice was more important and more basic than the contract, because the element of natural justice exists before the contracting parties. *“Nonetheless, there is always an element of natural justice which is more ancient and higher than the free consent of the contracting parties; namely that a wage ought to be sufficient to support a frugal and well-behaved worker.”*²¹⁹

In this statement, Leo XIII protested the capitalists’ justification of wages. According to capitalism which was based on the free market of labor, the wage was just if the two sides (capitalists and workers) agreed to the sum amount of wages and they signed a contract; that is all. The workers had no further right to demand any more. For Leo XIII that system was not just. *“It is said that a wage is regulated by free consent so that the employer, once he has paid the wage agreed to, has done all required of him and owes nothing further. It would flow that an injustice would be involved only when the employer failed to pay the whole wage, or if the worker failed to do the work agreed to. As a consequence it is said that, in such circumstances, and only in those, is it right for the state to intervene in order that the rights of each party be preserved intact. A fair-minded person would neither easily not totally agree with this line of argument.”*²²⁰

²¹⁸ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 192; *Rerum Novarum* No. 62.

²¹⁹ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 192; *Rerum Novarum* No. 63.

²²⁰ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 191; *Rerum Novarum* No. 61 – 62.

If work first of all is a human activity which is personal and necessary, so the remuneration of the work can not only be measured by the equivalence of the commodity or merchandise but first of all it has to be measured by its personal character and personal right (=private property).²²¹ These elements motivate and inspire the workers to work *"It is assuredly not hard to understand that the acquisition of private property is the reason which motivates the workers when he engages in his labour."*²²²

The final reason of work is not the wage itself. If workers received enough money to support themselves and their families, they could save in order to guarantee their future with all of their family members,²²³ because *"His consciousness embraces the future as well as the present."*²²⁴

²²¹ Jean-Yves Calves, op. cit. p.139.

²²² J. Molony, op. cit. p. 167; *Rerum Novarum* No. 9.

²²³ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 192; *Rerum Novarum* No. 65. Leo XIII thought that the bottom line of the workers' problem in that era was the private property. If the workers could have properties (especially land), their life would not be exploited by the capitalist and there will be equality distribution of properties. J. Desrochers, op. cit. p. 68.

²²⁴ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 168; *Rerum Novarum* No. 12.

d. As necessary for human dignity

Human dignity is the center of Catholic Social Teaching and its application.²²⁵ Right in the core of *Rerum Novarum* is the defense of human dignity against the exploitation of the workers.²²⁶ Leo XIII proposed that human dignity had to be the norm and standard by which political, social, and economic structure of society should be judged.²²⁷ We could find the defense of human dignity in many parts of the document.²²⁸

Human dignity also has its source in the reality that all people are created equal. Leo XIII underlined this fact when he spoke about the protection of the state for its citizens. "*All men are equal, nor is there the slightest difference between rich and poor, master and servants, monarchs and subjects for the same is Lord over all (Rom. X: 12).*"²²⁹ Again he stressed the equality of all people and he mentioned that the equality of all men are based on natural right. "*Neither more nor less than the*

²²⁵ Enrique Colom, *Chiesa e Società*, Armando Editore, Roma, 1996, p. 231.

²²⁶ D. Dorr, op. cit. p. 17.

²²⁷ John C. Dwyer, *Dignity of Person* in Judith A. Dwyer, *The New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought*, The Liturgical Press, Minnesota, 1994, p. 725.

²²⁸ It was not the first time that Leo XIII defended human dignity in his encyclicals. In a previous encyclical *Inscrutabile Dei Consilio* (June 21, 1878) Leo XIII taught that human dignity had to be respected in resolving economical problems. In the encyclical *Diuturnum Illud* (June, 29, 1881) which dealt with the origin of the political authority, Leo XIII stated that civil obedience should not be forced, but it had to be interiorized in the conscience. In the encyclical *Libertas* (June 20, 1888) which dealt with the slavery, Leo XIII insisted on the abolishment the slavery in the name of human dignity. E. Colom, op. cit. p. 232.

²²⁹ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 189; *Rerum Novarum* No. 57.

*rich, the workers are citizens by a natural right; they are true and living members who, with their families, are part of the body of the commonwealth.”*²³⁰

Work as human activity shows this equality as it verifies that all of humanity has to work as the implementation of God’s command to dominate the world.²³¹ The duty to work flows from human nature so that every man, as long as he is a human, has to work, including Jesus. Jesus Christ is completely God and completely human being. As a human, He worked as other human being worked. He spent the biggest part of his earthly life working to help his father who was a carpenter. *“Despite the fact that He was the Son of God and God Himself, He wanted to be thought of and seen as the son of a carpenter and He even went so far as not to refuse to pass the greater part of His life working as a carpenter. ‘Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary? (Mark 6: 3).’*²³²

Jesus’ work as a carpenter did not degrade his dignity as God-man, because nothing can degrade Him; on the contrary his work elevated the meaning of work as the perfection of the world. The perfection He did was more than the perfection of ordinary people did in the world, because the perfection of ordinary people which they did through the work is only the transformation of one earthly thing to another, while Jesus - through the work of salvation – has transformed human existence to be the children of God – an eternal reality.

²³⁰ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 184; *Rerum Novarum* No.49.

²³¹ cfr E. Colom, op. cit. p.250. J. Molony, op. cit. p. 174; *Rerum Novarum* No. 27.

²³² J. Molony, op. cit. p. 179; *Rerum Novarum* No. 37.

The earthly work of Jesus as a carpenter gave a profound meaning to human work so that all of human work has the deeper meaning for their dignity. Even the smallest and the simplest works have meaning for human dignity. This may be contrary to what many people think about work. Some may think that certain human work can degrade their dignity, such as manual work is seen as having less worth than intellectual work. Leo XIII underlines that "*It is not work that degrades man.*"²³³ On the contrary work elevated human dignity through the work he does. "*In the light of reason and with the eye of faith, it is clear that work ennoble man because, through it, he can earn an honourable livelihood.*"²³⁴

What he meant with 'honourable livelihood' was not richness (because Christians do not have to be ashamed of their poverty)²³⁵ but a life which was not exploited by the capitalists, so he could develop their personality to be himself.²³⁶ The exploitation of the workers reduced human dignity to merchandise. That was why Leo XIII condemned unjust wages and urged capitalists to pay the wages according to the principles of justice. He was aware that the just wage is a necessary condition to maintain human dignity.²³⁷ The ultimate goal of the just wage was to make the workers less dependent upon wages themselves. If he had enough money,

²³³ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 175; *Rerum Novarum* No. 31.

²³⁴ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 175; *Rerum Novarum* No. 31.

²³⁵ Leo XIII said that people did not need to be ashamed of their poverty, because Jesus who is the Son of God freely embraced poor human condition. J. Molony, op. cit. p. 179; *Rerum Novarum* No. 37.

²³⁶ cf. J. Molony, op. cit. p. 168; *Rerum Novarum* No. 12.

²³⁷ J. C. Dwyer, op. cit. p. 725.

he could have a chance to be the owner of property.²³⁸ So Leo XIII thought that if the workers got enough wages, they could save in order to buy a piece of land or other property so that he could work on their land and they were not exploited anymore by capitalists. *"When a worker receives a wage sufficient to support himself and his wife and children in moderate comfort, if he is wise, he will find it easy to be thrifty. Acting on a natural impulse, he will ensure that, over and above his expenses, he will set something aside and thus secure a small piece of property because, as we have already shown, the inviolable right to private property is sacred and, furthermore, indispensable to the solution of the worker question."*²³⁹

If a man works in the freedom and consciousness that his work merits for himself, he can develop his dignity as a full human being.²⁴⁰ So work is the accomplishment of God's calling to exercise their dignity that is God's image in creating and perfecting the world. Only works done freely and consciously will contribute to their dignity, while works which are done without freedom and beyond human power degrade human dignity. *"That which is truly shameful and inhuman is to use men as if they were mere objects of gain, and force them to work beyond their physical and mental powers."*²⁴¹ Work should not reduce human

²³⁸ C. E. Currand and R. A. McCormick, op. cit. p. 38 – 39.

²³⁹ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 192; *Rerum Novarum* No. 65.

²⁴⁰ cf. J. Molony, op. cit. p. 193; *Rerum Novarum* No. 66.

²⁴¹ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 175; *Rerum Novarum* No. 31.

beings to the state of an animal or a machine; on the contrary, work should be a means of education to the human dignity.²⁴²

Human dignity is a gift from God and it is not man's right to impede or to renounce his dignity whatsoever the reason. On the contrary, man has the obligation to develop and to exercise his dignity so that he can step forward as a full human being. *"No one may outrage with impunity that human dignity which God Himself treats with great reverence, or impede in any way that striving for perfection which is consistent with eternal life. Moreover, man himself can never renounce his right to be treated according to his nature or to surrender himself to any form of slavery of the spirit. In this matter it is not a question of rights which a man is free to renounce, but of duties towards God which must be held as sacred."*²⁴³

e. As contributing to personal development

The necessity of human work is not only biological (for preservation of his life) but also psychological. In human nature, there is an intrinsic power to know and to discover in order to develop one's personality. When man contemplates his work, it is soon realized that the work he does, not only transform something to

²⁴² J. Haessle, op. cit. pp. 117 – 118.

²⁴³ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 188; *Rerum Novarum* No. 57.

another, but also transform his inner life.²⁴⁴ This transformation will happen only if work as a human activity is performed with consciousness and freedom, because man has to be the master of his own body.²⁴⁵

Consciousness and freedom of work stimulate motivation to work better which is important for the development of his personality "*When men know they are working their own land they toil harder and more readily.*"²⁴⁶

Leo XIII suggested that work had to be in proportion to the development of one's personality which is to correspond to one's age. In other words, the work of children had to be adjusted with the development of his personality, otherwise it will ruin his personality. "*Insofar as children are concerned, they should not be allowed to start working in factories before an age at which their physical, intellectual and moral powers are sufficiently developed. Those developments which, in childhood, are like the buds of spring, are destroyed by too precocious a growth and make the education of the child impossible.*"²⁴⁷

So, it is evident that work will contribute to the development of man's personality. Man's right and the obligation for developing himself both materially and spiritually can be achieved through work.²⁴⁸ Leo XIII explained further, "*In so doing, he leaves an imprint of his own personality upon it,*"²⁴⁹

²⁴⁴ Luigi Civardi and Pietro Pavan, op. cit. p. 172.

²⁴⁵ cfr. J. Molony, op. cit. p. 168; *Rerum Novarum* No. 12.

²⁴⁶ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 193; *Rerum Novarum* No. 66.

²⁴⁷ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 190; *Rerum Novarum* No. 60.

²⁴⁸ E. Colom, op. cit. 250.

²⁴⁹ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 169; *Rerum Novarum* No. 15.

The development of personality that man can achieve through work, is not secondary because work becomes a constitutive thing for personal formation. *"In the light of reason and with the eye of faith, it is clear that work ennobles man."*²⁵⁰

The difficulty and the sorrow of work that man faces, helps him to shape his personality to be stronger in facing the difficult situation in his life. The fruit of human work is not only for getting food or other private property which is important for preserving his life, but also the richness for his personality:²⁵¹ *"... they learn to love the land they till with their own hands, land which gives forth not only the food they need but an abundance for themselves and those who belong to them."*²⁵²

f. As a social value

Work has social dimensions and social values. It is an organized action together with others and the fruit of work is also useful for others.²⁵³ So there are 2 social dimensions of work: the fruit of work and the way it is carried out.

²⁵⁰ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 175; *Rerum Novarum* No. 31.

²⁵¹ Luigi Civardi and Pietro Pavan, op. cit. p. 172.

²⁵² J. Molony, op. cit. p. 193; *Rerum Novarum* No. 66.

²⁵³ Jean-Yves Calvez and Jacques Perrin, op. cit. p. 305.

The fruits of work

Man is a social being who exists together with others. God gave the universe to the whole human race and not for a single man. *"The fact that God gave the earth for the use and enjoyment of the whole human race..."*²⁵⁴ So the uses of the fruit of man's work is also for other people. *"Although the earth is apportioned out amongst individual owners, it remains at the service and for the benefit of all because everyone receives their sustenance from it."*²⁵⁵ Although the uses of the fruit of work has social characteristics, it does not mean that it is contrary to the private property. Work has a personal character so that the fruits of work belong to those who work.²⁵⁶

Even though man has the right to private property, the use of private property should not prevent him from being generous to another. *"Man should not hold his material possessions as if they were his own, but as common to all, so as to share them without hesitation when others are in need. Whence the Apostle says, 'command the rich of this world... to offer without stint, to apportion largely.'"*²⁵⁷ Leo XIII underlined the social function of the fruit of the work again as he said, *"Whoever has received from the divine bounty a large share of temporal blessings, whether they are of the body, of material things, or the soul, has received them to*

²⁵⁴ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 169; *Rerum Novarum* No. 14.

²⁵⁵ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 169; *Rerum Novarum* No. 14.

²⁵⁶ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 191, *Rerum Novarum* No. 62.

²⁵⁷ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 178; *Rerum Novarum* No. 36.

use for his own perfection, and at the same time, as a minister of divine providence for the good of others."²⁵⁸ So it is not surprised that the use of private property is not parallel to the **right** of private property. The right of private property point out directly to the person but the uses of private property point out also to other persons.²⁵⁹

Leo XIII stressed the social character of private property in order to resolve the workers' questions. He invited capitalists to conversion. Conversion is not only a changing of heart but changing in business practice and standard of behavior in the economic world.²⁶⁰ Briefly, Leo XIII invited the rich to share their property to the workers so that the workers had private property to support their lives. Thus, the workers' problems would be resolved more easily.²⁶¹

Leo didn't see that the cause of the worker's problem lay in the bad social structure in the society, but in the fact that there was no fair distribution of the wealth. The small numbers of citizens were very rich while the majority was poor. So Leo XIII proposed the long-term solution of the worker's question by sharing and using private property for others. Thus, "*the gulf between the classes should be narrowed by enabling as many workers as possible to become owners of property.*"²⁶²

²⁵⁸ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 178; *Rerum Novarum* No. 36.

²⁵⁹ cfr. Jean-Yves Calvez and Jacques Perrin, op. cit. pp. 254 – 257.

²⁶⁰ D. Dorr, op. cit. p. 24.

²⁶¹ *Rerum Novarum* 36.

²⁶² D. Dorr, op. cit. p. 21.

The way work is carried out:

Although man has the power to dominate the world, but as a single person he does not have enough power to exercise it. He needs other persons in order to work better. *"The consciousness of his own weakness moves man to want to unite his efforts with those of others. Sacred Scripture says, It is better that two should be together than one; for they have the advantage of their society. If one fall he shall be supported by the other."*²⁶³

The consciousness to work together brings the necessity to work in a group. Leo XIII defended the view that all of the workers had the right to form private institution to defend their right and to make better their work.²⁶⁴ Leo XIII warned that not all associations were good for the workers, so he proposed that all of the workers pay attention in order not to enter a dangerous association²⁶⁵. It was better to enter Catholic associations because, *"The Catholic associations would solve the problems of so many of these workers and bring great benefits to them. They would do so by holding out their arms to the workers as they stand hesitant to join and, once within their embrace and under their protection, the workers would become conscious again of their great dignity."*²⁶⁶

²⁶³ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 195; *Rerum Novarum* No. 70.

²⁶⁴ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 195; *Rerum Novarum* No. 72.

²⁶⁵ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 197; *Rerum Novarum* No. 74.

²⁶⁶ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 202; *Rerum Novarum* No. 81.

g. As the most important element in the process of production

Work is the most important element in the process of production. *"Indeed, it is a manifest truth that their work is so essential that only through it can States grow wealthy."*²⁶⁷ The essential factors of production are (raw) material, capital, and work.²⁶⁸ The two external factors (raw material and capital) can be reduced its importance, but not the work.²⁶⁹ Work is always most essential in the process of production. There is no process of production without human work.

Also when machines 'substitute' human work, it doesn't mean that human work is not useful anymore because machines only substitute the hard, difficult, and dangerous part of human work. It still needs human work to operate the machines. There are no machines that can substitute human work completely.²⁷⁰

The fruits of work depend on the manpower behind the machines and the capital. The machines could be sophisticated and the capital could be abundant, but if the man-power behind production process is incapable, the fruit will be worse. On the contrary, although the machines are simple and the capital is limited, if the manpower is skilled, professional and qualified, the fruit will be better. *"In order*

²⁶⁷ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 185; *Rerum Novarum* No. 51. For the extensive explanation of this element, see Vincenzo Mangano, *Il Pensiero Sociale e Politico di Leone XIII*, Edizione Athena, Milano, 1931, p. 211.

²⁶⁸ J. Haessle, op. cit. p. 299.

²⁶⁹ Vincenzo Mangano, op. cit., p. 199.

²⁷⁰ V. Mangano, op. cit. pp. 200 – 201.

that we may be provided with these goods, the labour and skill of workers is absolutely indispensable, whether they are engaged in agriculture or industry."²⁷¹

Pope Leo XIII knew this point very well²⁷², so when he saw that the capitalists tried to subdue the importance of the work and exploited the workers, he protested in this encyclical.²⁷³

Because human work is the most important element in the process production, it can not be used without limitation. It has to be kept fresh so that it has to be renewed regularly in order not to be exhausted. The amount of rest had to be in proportion to the strength that is used. *"The amount of rest necessary for the worker should be in proportion to the amount of strength he uses up in his work, because what is used up must be restored by rest."*²⁷⁴

Leo XIII went further to explain, *"There are bounds beyond which a man cannot go because his strength"*²⁷⁵, *like his nature, is limited. His strength is developed by use and exercise provided, however, that he rests in order to recover from his labour.... The length of periods of rest should depend on the kind of work done, on the time and the place and on the health and strength of the workers."*²⁷⁶

Leo XIII regarded rest as essential to preserve life, to maintain health, and

²⁷¹ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 185; *Rerum Novarum* No. 51.

²⁷² V. Mangano, op. cit., p. 211.

²⁷³ D. Dorr, op. cit. p. 17.

²⁷⁴ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 190; *Rerum Novarum* No. 60.

²⁷⁵ What Leo XIII intended with the "strength" is not only muscular strength, but human strength as a whole. *"That which is truly shameful and inhuman is to use men as if they were mere objects of gain, and force them to work beyond their physical and mental powers"* J. Molony, op. cit. p. 175; *Rerum Novarum* No. 31. Emphasis is mine.

²⁷⁶ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 190.; *Rerum Novarum* No. 59.

productivity.²⁷⁷ Life and health are man's properties that he has to be responsible for its preservation. The responsibility is a double direction: To God and to the law of nature.

Pope Leo XIII stated that the means to the renewal of strength of the workers is weekly rest (Sunday rest) which he sees not only to get money from another source, but a time to be consecrated to God. *"From this flows the need to cease work on Sundays and feast days. Such rest is not to be understood as mere idleness or, as many would want it, a chance to engage in vice and to squander money. It is rather to be seen as a time consecrated by religion."*²⁷⁸

2. SPIRITUAL VALUE

Human work is a spiritual reality, because only man can work. Although in a daily life one can say that animals and machines work, but they do not work as man work. All kinds of human works - whether manual or intellectual work - are always related to human spirituality, because in all of his work man uses his intellect, freedom, and spirit.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ V. Mangano, op. cit. p. 233.

²⁷⁸ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 189; *Rerum Novarum* No. 58.

²⁷⁹ Luigi Civardi and Pietro Pavan, *Il Lavoro*, Coletti Editore, Roma, 1963, p. 167 - 168.

a. As a humans' participation in God's creative work

In the beginning, God created the universe and gave it to human beings to dominate and to use it according to their needs. But the universe was not ready to supply all of human needs unless man transforms it through his work. Some of the transformations happened automatically according to law of the nature, but many of them happen with human intervention.²⁸⁰ Work, thus, is a free human intervention to God's creation to continue to bring creation to perfection.

The creation which is the fruit of the creative work of God is perfected by human work so that the world become more suitable to human needs and human home.²⁸¹ *"Truly, the earth provides in abundance all that is needed to maintain and perfect human life, but only to the degree that man cultivates it and expends his care on it. When man uses his mind and body to obtain the goods of the earth, he thereby joins to himself that portion of nature's field which he cultivates."*²⁸²

For the Christian, the dignity of work is nobler because human's work is a participation in God's creation. God as the first Creator, creates abundant richness of the creation with all of its power and let men to find its law so that they can

²⁸⁰ Luigi Civardi and Pietro Pavan, op. cit., p. 169.

²⁸¹ Pietro Pavan, *La Dottrina Sociale Cristiana*, Roma, 1958, p. 17.

²⁸² J. Molony, op. cit. p. 169; *Rerum Novarum* No. 15.

continue and perfect God's creation.²⁸³ That is why for Christians work is elevated to noble position because its connection with God's creative activity.²⁸⁴

In this case, work became a realization of God's command to dominate the world (Gen. 1: 28). Man who is the image and likeness of God has an authority over the world and God wants that man works according to the pattern that God had started.²⁸⁵ *"The image and likeness of God is sculptured in the soul and therein resides that sovereignty by virtue of which man is ordered to rule over inferior creatures and to make the whole earth and the oceans useful to him."*²⁸⁶

Even though God can make everything ready to be used by man, He made the universe in such a way that man can exercise their dignity, to use their brain, freedom and power. In doing so, man can enjoy the happiness of his work because he knows that he does God's commandment.

In performing God's commandment, man has to be faithful to the design of God when he created the universe which is expressed in the Gospel. The failure of implementing God's design causes *chaos*. Leo XIII saw that the conflict between capitalists and workers lay in the ignorance of the Gospel teachings. So he called all parties to be more faithful to it. *"If they (capitalists and workers) obey the law of the Gospel, the two classes will not only be joined in a simple form of friendship but*

²⁸³ Luigi Civardi and Pietro Pavan, op. cit. p. 49.

²⁸⁴ Jean-Yves Calvez and Jacques Perrin, op. cit. 295.

²⁸⁵ Jean-Yves Calvez and Jaques Perrin, op. cit. p. 295.

²⁸⁶ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 188; *Rerum Novarum* No. 57.

they will also want to embrace each other in brotherly love.”²⁸⁷ In this line, Leo XIII thought that only Church could resolve the conflicts between capitalists and workers.²⁸⁸

b. As the expiation of sin

Rerum Novarum was written to answer the workers question on their sad and exploited conditions. Leo XIII said that it was impossible to eliminate sorrow from the world. After the first sin, sorrow came to the world, because the consequences of sins are bitter. *“In like manner, sorrow will never be absent from the world because the due consequences of sin are bitter, harsh and difficult to bear and they will accompany man to the tomb. It is therefore, the lot of humanity to suffer and endure. Strive as much as he likes, no force or artful dodge will ever succeed in banishing human suffering. Those who say they can achieve this, and who hold out to sorrowing humanity a promise of a life free of pain and trouble, full of peace and enjoyment, delude the people and lead them on a path which will result in even worse evils than the present ones.”*²⁸⁹

Although Leo XIII said that it was impossible to eliminate sorrow in the world, his view on human suffering was not pessimistic. The human suffering while

²⁸⁷ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 179 - 180; *Rerum Novarum* No. 39. I added the words in brackets.

²⁸⁸ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 173; *Rerum Novarum* No. 24 - 25. 29.

²⁸⁹ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 174; *Rerum Novarum* No. 27.

working was not a punishment from God, but it was because of sins which make labour as a free and conscious human activity now become a necessity.²⁹⁰ It was impossible to eliminate sorrows. Leo XIII invited all the people to accept this condition as a means to compensate for man's disobedience. "*The best thing to do is to accept the reality of the human situation and to look elsewhere, as we have said, for a remedy to its woes.*"²⁹¹

In the previous paragraph, Leo XIII expressed clearly that human suffering for the Christian can be a expiation of his sins. "*but certainly what his will at that time would have freely embraced to his soul's delight, necessity afterwards forced him to accept, with a feeling of irksomeness, for the expiation of his guilt.*"²⁹²

For the Christian, the sorrow and the pain of working could be a path to happiness, also in this world, if it is united with the Christ's suffering. "*The various trials and sorrows which interwoven into our human lives were not taken away by Jesus Christ when He redeemed us with plentiful redemption. What he did was to turn them into opportunities for the practice of virtue so that we may gain merit from them.*"²⁹³

²⁹⁰ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 174; *Rerum Novarum* No. 27.

²⁹¹ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 174; *Rerum Novarum* No. 27.

²⁹² *Rerum Novarum* No. 27.

²⁹³ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 177; *Rerum Novarum* No. 33.

Part Three

I. COMPARATIVE STUDY

Leo XIII and Leo Dehon were the sons of the time when the social questions, especially regarding the exploitation of the workers emerged strongly in society. The church realized that her mission was not only to proclaim salvation for eternal life but she also cared for the earthly life because when Christian spirituality was observed integrally, it also fostered prosperity in the world. *"Let it not be believed that the care of the Church is wholly and uniquely concerned with the salvation of souls, in such a way as to neglect earthly and mortal needs."*²⁹⁴

Her care and attention to the prosperity of earthly life flowed from the Message of the Gospel and it has manifested itself throughout the history of the Church through her members. *"Here we are reminded of the societies, confraternities and religious orders of all kinds that have arisen with the authority of the Church, and through the piety of the faithful. Right into our own day, history tells us how much good they have done for the human race."*²⁹⁵

²⁹⁴ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 181; *Rerum Novarum* No. 42.

²⁹⁵ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 196; *Rerum Novarum* No. 73.

The concern of the Church for the earthly human condition at this time was even growing greater through many clubs and organizations. Unfortunately not all of the organizations in that era had a Christian spirit.²⁹⁶ So the Pope once again restated that the Church's concern was first of all for the benefit of the oppressed and the poor workers. *"She especially wants the workers to emerge from their depressed state and better their condition and, indeed, she strives for this."*²⁹⁷ Based on the same common ground, Leo XIII and Leo Dehon struggled to defend the workers and to elevate the fate of the workers.

It is not surprising that there were many similarities in ideas between Pope Leo XIII and Leo Dehon although certainly there were some real differences. Let us investigate this more closely.

1. HUMAN VALUE

a. Human dignity

Leo XIII and Leo Dehon agreed that work was important for human dignity. The source of human dignity lay in the fact that man was created by God in his image and in his likeness. Both of them saw that human dignity was the center

²⁹⁶ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 197; *Rerum Novarum* No. 74.

²⁹⁷ J. Molony, op. cit. p. 181; *Rerum Novarum* No. 42.

of social teachings of the church. But their ideas were developed in rather different directions.

Rerum Novarum developed the idea of human dignity in theological and philosophical reflection. First of all it was stated that work was a human activity whereby humans used their intelligence; all human beings are equal and all human beings had to work, including Jesus who was fully human. He had to work and his work gave a deeper meaning to human work; how man could re-gain his dignity by having his own private property. After long reflection Leo XIII mentioned some concrete examples which could degrade human dignity.

Leo Dehon developed his idea of defending human dignity by referring to the concrete practices which could degrade human dignity: Specialization of the workers in simple work (there were workers who made only bullets, only ammunition etc.); a system of salary which was based on the free market system (=based on supply and demand); capitalists who treated workers as merchandise; and work hours which were too long so that the workers didn't have any time for their family and religion.

These different perspectives can be explained by the fact that Leo Dehon wrote his books "*Manuel Social Chrétien*" (1894) and "*Catéchisme Social*" (1898) as an effort to 'translate' the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* to a concrete situation in

France.²⁹⁸ Dehon got the message from Pope Leo XIII on September 6, 1888 when he came to Rome to thank to the Pope for his decree which permitted Dehon to found a new congregation. In this meeting, Pope Leo XIII asked Leo Dehon to preach his encyclicals. "Preach my encyclicals." said the Pope. He held to this mission until his death.²⁹⁹ Certainly the message to preach the pope's encyclicals was valid not only for *Rerum Novarum*, but also for all encyclicals. Dehon paid attention especially to *Rerum Novarum* because it dealt with a concrete situation he faced everyday in the diocese of Soissons and the city of St. Quentin. Furthermore, *Rerum Novarum* dealt with new issues which were still relevant in his time, such as democracy, socialism, capitalism etc.³⁰⁰

b. The means to get a living

Almost in all of his descriptions about work as a means to earn a living, Leo Dehon had the same perspective as Leo XIII. Both of them mentioned that work was the sole and the universal means to earning a living, work was necessary to

²⁹⁸ G. Manzoni, *Histoire du Fondateur, Leon Dehon et la Rerum Novarum*, in *Dehoniana*, XIX, No. 77, Centre Général d'Etudes SCJ, Rome, 1990, pp. 26 – 27.

²⁹⁹ L. Dehon, *Notes sur L'Histoire de ma vie*, vol 8, Centro Generale Studi SCJ, Roma, 1983. G. Manzoni, op. cit, p. 24.

³⁰⁰ Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* at first didn't get enthusiastic responses from the workers, industrial workers and even some Church men. (D. Dorr, op. cit. p.15). The same thing happened in France. There were only 13 Bishops out of 89, who mentioned the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* in their letter of lent. (G. Manzoni, op. cit. p. 25).

preserve life, the just wage based on natural justice, etc. In a certain description, Leo Dehon copied literally from *Rerum Novarum*. In this case, both Leo XIII and Leo Dehon dealt with the concrete issues on workers' welfare. *Rerum Novarum* was explained clearly enough so when Dehon 'translated' *Rerum Novarum* to a concrete situation, he didn't have to make many changes.

c. As Social Value

Leo XIII and Leo Dehon had the same perspective -- that work has a social value. Both of them based their opinion on the notion that all men were created equal, and they developed their ideas that men had social characteristics: existing with others, to be with others, and work together with others. The uses of the fruit of work also had a social function: private property is used for the welfare of others.³⁰¹ But the thinking behind this statement was different.

Leo XIII believed that the source of social unrest lay in the unequal distribution of wealth: a few people were very rich the majority was poor. Leo XIII invited the rich to repent and share their wealth generously with the poor workers by giving the workers wages according to the norms of justice. If the workers had

³⁰¹ The notions of private property and its social function in *Rerum Novarum* is based on St. Thomas. (*Summa Theologica*, 2a – 2ae, q. lxvi. art. 2). *Rerum Novarum* copied it literally. (*Rerum Novarum* No. 36). So actually it is not a new teaching.

enough money, they could save and, thus, they could be shareholders of the company or they could buy a piece of land on which to work. This way, the workers could live with human dignity and there wouldn't be any social unrest because there wouldn't be any more exploitation.

Leo Dehon also believed in that way of thinking, but he had another means to elevate the workers' miserable condition. He believed in the power of education (both formally and informally). He could not set aside his original ideas to work for the higher education of priests. He applied his original idea to help the workers out of their miserable situation. When he was appointed chaplain in Saint Quentin, he founded St. John College. In addition, he was the first director of the college until he left the college on November 20, 1893 because of his growing responsibility as the superior of his new congregation.³⁰² He strongly believed that through good education (both formal and informal) for the children, the workers could be elevated from their miserable conditions and be saved from exploitation. Leo Dehon founded the St. Joseph Youth Club and many other clubs to educate informally young people to become aware of their situation and foster their struggle to defend their dignity.

³⁰² G. Manzoni, *op. cit.* pp. 25 – 25.

2. SPIRITUAL VALUE

a. As co-worker of God's creation

In this case, there is no significant difference between Leo Dehon and Leo XIII. Both of them stated that God created the universe and He commanded human beings to dominate and to use it. But the universe, with all of its contents is not always ready to be used by human beings. Men have to work in order to transform the universe according to their needs.

Human work is not separated from God's work, because only in the union with God's work, can human work have the deepest meaning as the co-workers of God's creation. In the union with God's creative work, human work can bring sanctification to those who work if they unite their sorrows and suffering to Christ's redemptive suffering. Humans' suffering can be the expiation of their sins.

b. As an act of Reparation

This notion is a particularly evident in Dehon's spirituality. God loves all human beings very much. His love is so great that He sent his only Son to be born among us and to redeem us from the slavery of sins. But human beings don't

respond adequately. In some cases human beings refuse his love. God is 'sad' because of this. His sadness is even greater if the refusals are committed by those whom He loves very much: priests and religious.

Reparation is making up for the sins which are committed by oneself or by others and responding to God's love of human kind. In doing so, Dehon offered the sorrows of his work as a reparation for sins. United with Jesus' sacrifice, human suffering becomes a means of reparation. For Christians, "*work become a form of reparation, a remedy for sins as meritorious as it is salutary.*"³⁰³

This point of view came from Dehon's personal spiritual experiences. The Catholic Church (especially the French Catholic Church) suffered a lot since the French Revolution. Leo Dehon expressed the religious situation in his time as "the Godless Society" where religion was viewed as anti-revolution and out of date. Anti-clerical movements spread out everywhere and they became a real danger to the Church. The French government opposed the Church and there were many efforts to eliminate the Church and her influences in society. Certainly this situation made the people indifferent to religion and the Church.

This situation was even worse among the workers. They were exploited and had to work all day beyond their capacity. For decades, the Church did not make real efforts to defend them. So the workers deserted the Church.

³⁰³ L. Dehon, *Oeuvres Sociales*, vol. II, p. 17.

This sad experience influenced Dehon's spiritual journey in the priesthood. Furthermore, he knew well the revelation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to St. Margaret Marry Alacoque at Paray-le-Monial when Jesus asked her to make reparation of sins. The combination of his personal experience and the revelation of the Sacred Heart made Dehon view work as a means of reparation.

Globally, the value of work in *Rerum Novarum* has a deeper philosophical reflection than in Leo Dehon's writing. This is because Leo Dehon didn't have a formal higher education of social science. He graduated in Civil Law, Canon Law, theology, and philosophy. First he wanted to work in higher education for priests, but he changed his mind when he was appointed chaplain in Saint Quentin (November 16, 1871).³⁰⁴ His greatest attention to social issues came from his heart rather than his head. He studied on his own. Although he didn't have an advanced degree in social science, he did marvelous work in social issues by organizing workers movements, directing social action, organizing and participating in many social meetings, etc; he wrote many articles and books concerning social issues.

³⁰⁴ L. Dehon, *Notes sur l'Histoire de ma vie*, vol. V. p. 90. Pierre Pierrard, *Leone Dehon Giovane Sacerdote A San Quintino*, in Y. Ledure (ed), *Leone Dehon e la Rerum Nvarum*, EDB, Bologna, 1991, p. 15.

II. CONCLUSION

Work as man's activity has existed since the start of human existence. Its value for human beings is different from time to time, depending on those who see it and the ideology behind those who see it. In the Catholic Church, the value of work for human beings also developed a different accent from time to time. Globally it developed into two poles: negative value (as a punishment of the first sins) or positive value (as human participation of God's creation, necessary to get a living, necessary for human dignity etc.). The ultimate reflection on human work points to the positive value for human beings. Now, there can be no theologian who regards human work negatively. Human work is not a punishment from God.

This new inclination is well reflected in the *Rerum Novarum*. Leo XIII and Leo Dehon who lived in the age of social unrest, when the workers were exploited by capitalists, realized these problems. The publication of *Rerum Novarum* opened up a new era of social teaching of the Church. Although at first it was not well accepted by many of the people with whom it was most directly concerned, it finally gave a new spirit to the workers and gave new guidance to many people.

The new tendency to see human work positively in *Rerum Novarum* was stressed by stating that work was a human activity which had a personal character. It was necessary to earn a living. Because the one who worked was a person, they

could not be exploited or degraded to a lower level. It is man, who was the image of God.

Leo Dehon who 'translated' *Rerum Novarum* into concrete condition, agreed with that notion. But he didn't stop there. He added some other ideas according to his spiritual journey – work particularly as a means of reparation.

One of the great contributions of *Rerum Novarum* and Leo Dehon to general Catholic Social Teaching can be thought of as the close line they drew between human work and human dignity. In the era of industrialization, defending human dignity against exploitation of the workers was a light in the midst of darkness.

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