

The Role of the Moral Adviser in Professional Associations

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Article abstract

The author first outlines the reasons that induce professional associations, who draw inspiration from the Church's doctrine, to take on a moral adviser for their members. However, he points out that socio-economic action, even if it is inspired by the Church's doctrine, is and remains the business of laymen. He then studies the true rôle of the adviser in the employers' and workers' associations, his rights, his duties in the sphere to which he is assigned: this rôle is essentially a sacerdotal one.

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In several countries, employers and workers have formed professional associations which have drawn their inspiration from the Church's social doctrine. They have done so because they were convinced of the value and the efficacy of this doctrine to put into labour relations more justice and charity and to build a world in which the priority of the human being would be safeguarded.

These associations of a secular character, since they operate in a secular sphere, have, ordinarily, priests who fill the rôle of advisers to them and to their members.

Why do professional associations who wish to follow the Church's doctrine have a moral adviser ?

The Church's social doctrine has an intrinsic and universal value. The Church, through the Sovereign Pontiffs, Bishops and social theologians has drawn it up. It is offered to all mankind and it is a particular duty of Catholics to study it, to understand it and to put it into practice. This doctrine belongs to all men, Catholics and non-Catholics, laymen as well as clergy, employers as well as workers. The putting in force of this doctrine cannot and must not be the monopoly of any particular social class. The Church offers it to all and it is the same for all.

Because it is not the doctrine of the workers or that of the employers, but the doctrine of the Church, the latter has the right to watch over its integrity, to teach it and to guide those who make use of it. In the Church, it is the Pope and the Bishops who have the responsibility of keeping the sacred trust of the

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truth. However, as they cannot do everything themselves, they delegate priests to take their place.

The presence of an official moral adviser in a professional association does not engage the responsibility of the Church in regard to the acts of this group; nor does it signify that everything the group does is always in conformity with the social doctrine of the Church in its slightest details. But the presence of an official moral adviser gives a certain security, as much to the Church itself as to the public. Security to the Church in the fact that its teachings have a chance of being given completely; security to the public because, as long as the moral adviser stays with the association officially, either the group is following the general direction of conformity to the social doctrine of the Church or at least the religious authorities still entertain hope that they will so conform.

The rôle of the moral adviser in an employers' or workers' association is determined by the mission of the Church in the socio-economic sphere and by the nature itself of the group concerned.

Under the authority of his Bishop, the moral adviser does not work for his own advancement nor for that of his group, but for the Church itself. He cannot be compared entirely either to a lawyer, an engineer or any other professional; these are in the service of those whom they advise; they attempt to find ways of carrying out a policy established in advance or to find a way out of a situation in protecting the interests of those they are looking after. The moral adviser is always and only in the service of the Church; and the Church in the social sphere does not look for its own interests but only for the teachings of Jesus, justice and charity.

The fact, that in his work, the moral adviser usually looks after one category of people, either employees or workers, does not incorporate him in a particular class. He remains always a priest of God, of the Church and of souls.

The moral adviser, in addition to teaching, must help the people in his care to form practical judgments. He cannot be satisfied with transmitting general principles or limiting himself to common ground which is not compromising. In the light of the doctrine of which he is, by the mandate of his Bishop, the guardian and the interpreter in the sphere to which he has been assigned, he must apply these principles to concrete situations.

The work of the moral adviser is, therefore, to educate, to guide, to uphold, to direct the group which he is looking after and its members.

Socio-economic action, even if it is inspired by the Church's doctrine, is and remains the business of laymen. These and their associations do not involve directly the responsibility of the Church. It is therefore laymen who must take the initiative and carry the responsibility. The moral adviser must not make propaganda for the group nor must he be an instrument to be used to obtain ends, honest in themselves, but which belong to laymen. His discreet action must never become a dictatorship nor must it smother personalities.

In questions where morals are not concerned, in purely technical problems, if his opinion is asked, it has no other value than that of a technician who may or may not possess knowledge and experience.

After the moral adviser has helped those for whom he has the task of forming their conscience, that he has placed their duty in front of them, he can go no farther. The success or the failure of the realization of the Christian social order rests squarely on the shoulders of laymen. It is their responsibility and their mission. They must have the courage to accept the burden as well as the honour.

The rôle of a moral adviser in professional associations is essentially a sacerdotal one: to be among men to try to raise them up unto God and to help them organize society in such a way that it be a reflection of the perfections of the Creator. *

* This is a digest of a more complete article appearing in the French section of this issue.

SEVENTH INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS CONVENTION

Wages and Prices

The seventh Industrial Relations Convention will take place in Quebec City, at the Chateau Frontenac, next April 21st and 22nd. Every year, nearly 500 delegates come together in the meeting-rooms of the Chateau. These two days of study are an occasion for everyone, not only to listen to very instructive speeches, but also to exchange opinions either with the speakers and the experts or with others in the audience.

1952 will be the Centenary of Laval University. This convention will be an eloquent affirmation that our University is at the service of the whole nation. In view of this, we extend a very pressing invitation to industrialists, union leaders and government employees to give consideration to one of the most serious problems which the whole nation must face: the adjustment of prices and wages in an economy menaced with inflation.

Will the spiral of prices and wages come to an end? What causes the increase? Who are the victims? Are there any cures? These are all questions that we ask ourselves. In order to know of all the aspects of the inflation problem, we have asked the universities, employees' and employers' associations and financial institutions to give their support assuring us of the cooperation of their speakers and experts. The subjects to be covered at the seventh Convention will lend themselves to some very lively debates. As in the past, we are counting on an active cooperation as much by your presence as by your participation in the forums.*

* A summary of the topics together with the programme of the Convention are published in page 113 of this review.