

Le Règne Social du Christianisme

François Huet

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François Huet (1814-1869), a French philosopher, sought to reconcile the principles of Christianity with those of socialism. He argues that each person is entitled to the wealth he/she produces and to an equal share of the wealth from natural resources and from artifacts inherited from previous generations. Unlike Colins, Huet holds that agents have the right to give and bequeath wealth that they have created, but no such right with respect to wealth they inherited or received as a gift. (This view was later endorsed and modified by Rignano.)

[To appear at the bottom of the first page] Reprint of chs. VI, VII, and XIII of Book 3 of François Huet, *Le Règne Social du Christianisme*, Paris, Firmin Didot Frères / Bruxelles, Librairie Polytechnique d'Aug. Decq, 1853, pp. 256-275, 346-359. Translated by Guido Erreygers, Marylène Pastides, and Peter Vallentyne. Translation copyright © 2001 by Guido Erreygers, Marylène Pastides, and Peter Vallentyne.

[Ch. VI]

By right, each person is born, lives, and dies free; thus, by right, each person is born, lives, and dies as owner, except by demerit, abuse, or offence on his part.

Occupation being the act by which the right of property obtains, each person, solely in virtue of his nature, must occupy a certain quantity of things. What quantity? It is this issue that we must now examine.

To better clarify a subject that is so important and so rarely deeply examined, we will establish the natural right [to property] first at the beginning of society and then in later human generations. In the first case, we will only take into consideration the general character of humans; in the second the bonds of family and affection must be added.

Most writers who have dreamed of human happiness under more perfect institutions have contented themselves with shaping, according to their wishes, some kind of nascent society in which their genius, being less constrained, would no longer encounter the habits and prejudices of an old civilization. Sometimes they have gone back to the cradle of the world; sometimes they have situated this “new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness”¹ in imaginary locations. But one can implement the natural right in the beginning of a virgin society without losing oneself in the darkness of time, and without accumulating uncertain conjectures about the mores and feelings of primitive humans. One will follow more clearly the simple track of the right by considering humans like us—who come from among us, with precise notions of justice and injustice, and who find themselves by chance in the same relation to things as they would if they had had no ancestors and had just come from the hands of the Creator. Such would be the survivors of a shipwreck, thrown by a storm onto an uninhabited island, where they would have to

settle without hope of returning home. Let us imagine, if you will, that they left to establish a colony, and that only the place and the unfortunate circumstances of their establishment have changed. They are all able and trained in various trades, and each of them has brought a [female] companion.

Nothing was saved from the shipwreck: the ship and all its contents perished. They penetrate the interior of the land, and there discover some traces of civilization, although no inhabitants are to be seen. Soon they acquire evidence that in a fairly recent period another group of castaways was forced, like them, to find asylum on these shores, and had worked, harvested, and built there. Houses, tools of various kinds, land in good condition, and trees full of fruit offer them an abundance of unexpected resources. For these unfortunate people the island and its wealth, without which they would perish, constitute, as ancient Eden did for our first ancestors, the original or divine patrimony. The task is to occupy it in accordance with the laws of justice.

None of these people has any particular claim on these assets, which they owe entirely to Providence. If some of them happen to have reached the shore before the others, they feel that chance does not create any rights, and that their companions, simply by being a few minutes late, have not become their vassals; first or last arrived, each can only invoke his human status. Oh, vain theories of property founded on external facts, labor, occupation, or prescription, what light or rule do you bestow upon these castaways with regard to the division of their common patrimony?

The idea of excluding some for the benefit of others is an invention of rogues that comes to no one's mind. Moreover, the colonists do not envisage defining property by precarious claims, by making each person a tenant of the little State that they make up by

joining together. They do not want a right that is constantly being contested, threatened, or retracted. In order for liberty to be safe in the original occupation, each person must have property in virtue of an inviolable personal claim.

As for equality, our islanders want the real thing. They grasp that, if God were involved in the division [of the assets], he would create parcels of different values so as to allocate them in proportion to the merit and aptitudes of each person. But they also feel that, if they undertook such a task themselves, they would take the dead end path of arbitrariness and tyranny. No one claims the position of judge of the faculties and tastes of his equals. In order to achieve proportional equality, they fix upon absolute equality, which is the shortest path, and the only one that is humanly possible and civilly just. The operation is from this point quickly accomplished. All that is necessary is to take inventory of all the economic wealth (everything that is capable of being owned and sold)—natural or produced—of the island. This includes land along with everything else, and one takes into account differences in quality. The wealth of the island is divided into as many shares as there are people, all of equal value. Once the shares are identified, they are distributed by a lottery, and thus the occupation [of the island] is finalized.

Following this division, amicable exchanges correct any errors of the lottery without difficulty, and ensure that the tools of labor end up in the hands of those who are most capable of taking advantage of them. Each person settles, adapts, and freely associates with the other producers. No one is constrained in his dispositions or vocations. Thus our colonists—without invoking, as the Saint-Simonians did, the despotism of a pope (male or female)—apply the maxim “To each according to his capacities”.

On the island there will be tenants and laborers working under heads of industry. Nonetheless, wage-labor or real slavery will be unknown. All workers remain free, by the mere fact that they are owners. It is of no importance whether one works with one's own capital or with that of another; the important point is that one possess some capital, which one rents out if one does not use it. There lies the supreme condition of independence: the security of life. This allows the producer to wait, to consult others and to associate with them, to discuss his prices, and at last to enjoy industrial freedom. If workers have sufficient assets, they immediately become associates of the entrepreneur, who would be but the first among them. Wage labor does not at all depend on the existence of this or that industrial or commercial function. It arises from the inevitable dependence that is created by extreme inequalities in the possession of capital and assets. Suppress this cause, and you will have emancipated the working class, without restraining industry.

Without any difficulty, the lands of the island were included in the original division [of assets], and as a result they entered circulation and commerce on an equal footing with other valuables. Territorial property has been introduced without monopoly or privilege of any kind. Those who own the most fertile lands occupy smaller lots; since they have paid, for a first time, the *real rent*, they can from then on very legitimately sell or rent out [their lands]. Economists have made too much of the distinction between land and capital as means of production, and they have completely ignored the perfect similarity between territorial and other kinds of property. Land is truly a divine product, a primary capital. And what are secondary capital goods, extracted from the earth by labor, if they are not an extension of the first domain that humans can exploit? But, economists say, nature gave land to everyone; why have some taken possession of it to the exclusion

of others? Nature, it is true, gave land to everyone. But does that mean that it cannot legitimately become someone's property? Is it not sufficient either that it be equitably divided among all (if there are no other assets), or that those who do not get a portion of land receive something of equivalent value (if there are other assets)? In the colony that we are founding, the owner of a field owns it to the exclusion of others. But it is no different for the owner of an ax, of an item of clothing, or of an apple. There is no other way to own things freely.

Mr. Say² asserts that territorial property is the least sacred. On what basis? Is it not the most useful means of production, and the one most worthy of legal protection? He adds that it constitutes a natural monopoly, because one cannot create it at will. But one does not indefinitely create other kinds of products either. This circumstance influences the value of land by limiting its supply, but does not address the question of property. According to Mr. Senior³, "those who have taken possession of natural resources receive compensation under the title of *rent*, without having made any sacrifice. Their role is limited to that of extending their hand to receive the offerings of the rest of the community." "A comfortable occupation!" adds Mr. Garnier⁴. What revolutionary verve for economists! But why this anathema of owners of land? How are they different from other owners in our society? A person obtains land, like everything else, by inheritance, by gift, or by purchase with good money. Would it be the occupation of idlers, denounced by St. Paul, that you also want to stigmatize? Then generalize your observations and conclusions. In any case, stop this little innocent war against territorial property.

Our colonists had finished their arrangements. The island, made fertile by the free labor of equals, was beginning to take a new shape when, as the result of a storm, a new

guest arrives. Fortunately for him, the *law of Malthus* and the privilege of the first occupant were as unknown in these parts as feudal rights. No one speaks of throwing him back into the sea. No one suppresses the voice of justice and pity, which calls out that no division or occupation can abolish human solidarity. “Brother,” says the magistrate of the nascent republic in the name of all, “God, who is sovereign decider of our destinies, gives you the same claim to this island as we have. You have the right, as we do, to a means of production. Starting today, you are the owner of the same capital with which each of us began. All will squeeze in a bit to make room for you. Come and occupy your patrimony, child of the same God.”

Once in possession of their share of the patrimony, our owners and capitalists by natural right will surely soon diverge from the absolute equality that was their point of departure. Some work and accumulate; others love to enjoy the present or, like philosophers, are happy with little. The most active and intelligent will soon have more than the others. That is how proportional equality wants it to be. No vocation has been hampered; no industry plundered. No one can complain of God or of humans.

The years passed, and the moment arrived to complete the system of property by dealing with successions, gifts, and testaments. Some elderly people would soon leave assets vacant. Some would leave more, others less: a few have used up part of their basis, their LAND, and have moved towards wage-labor. Some would have no children; others would leave behind many descendants ready to fill the enlightened ranks of workers. After this point, the island is our world, except that it maintains the spirit of justice, and that Astraea [the Greek goddess of justice], the divine virgin, has not yet abandoned it to ascend towards the heavens:

... Et Virgo ...

Ultima cœlicolûm terras Astraera reliquit.⁵

[Ch. VII]

Although the natural right to property persists over time as at the beginning, the succession of human generations cannot remain without influence on the manner of providing for new arrivals, that is, children. Because they are made in the image of God, members of society, and the pride and joy of their parents, there is no reason to fear that they have less justice to claim than a castaway that fate has thrown on foreign shores.

Children are born with all the rights of humans, including the right of property, but these rights are modified by their condition. Quite definitely they have the right to live, and thus the right to a certain use of things. But as long as they are minors, they cannot claim the free use of the means of production. Until the age of majority, everything for them is focused on the right to education. Now education is the proper task for the family. Equity, in agreement with nature, requires that parents of children—having played, second to God, the principal role in their arrival in this world—also have the responsibility, for as long as the children cannot look after themselves, for their support and for the expenses of their education (at least basic education). It is only in the absence of parents and in exceptional cases, that the expense should fall on others.

At the age of majority, things change. The family has accomplished its mission once it has brought to life a human being and formed a worker. The emancipated child claims the full exercise of natural rights and the independent use of the means of production. The limitation of this use (as is the case today) to the isolated resources and

good will of each family, means that only the sons of rich families will be placed according to their aptitudes. It entails that workers obtain capital only by accident, that the right of property is weakened, and that there is neither equality nor fraternity of occupation, no community of assets, and no material society among humans. In order for emancipation to be real, it must be accompanied by legitimate, free, equal, and fraternal occupation. Emancipation is the moment when each person (except in cases of disability) must provide for his own needs, without expecting his subsistence to come from the hand of a stranger; the moment when the young worker asks to be armed; the moment, so to speak, when he lands on the island and is the equal of the other workers.

Will he find a vacant lot, or must others make adjustments for him? We are thus lead to the determination of the rational law of succession.

When the liberal hand of Providence gave our first ancestors a fertile land with all sorts of natural assets, the aim was not [for them] to squander unproductively such a great capital and to disappear afterwards from a devastated land, taking with them the future of humanity. They received this beautiful PATRIMONY for themselves and their descendants. Strictly speaking, it was not their exclusive property; it was already (by anticipation) owned in common with future generations. The same goes for the island of the castaways. The fact that there will be successors places a limit on the right to use things. The capacity to use things cannot be completely separated from the obligation to transmit them. Suppose some humans know with scientific certainty that they are the last inhabitants of the earth: nothing will prevent them from using the land in a way that destroys even its inherent properties. But place them between their ancestors and their descendants, and morality will denounce such an abuse, and the law, if necessary, will

prohibit and punish it.

The depletion of one's patrimony, of that which one did not create oneself, has always seemed worthy of reproach. The common sense of nations has always distinguished between *patrimonial assets*, which are gratuitously transferred, and *acquired assets*, which come either from personal work or at least from savings of the fruits of the patrimony. For these savings require care, and are also the personal creation of the owner. The natural order requires that one be permitted to consume acquired assets in any way that one wants, but that one be permitted to use patrimonial (or transmitted) assets only for the purposes of conservation and reproduction. The patrimonial assets cannot lose their original character.

The rights over patrimonial assets are thus different from those over acquired assets, but they are neither less respectable nor less sacred. As we have established, they are even prior, and are the source of the other human rights over things. They are also something more than simple rights of usufruct. The worker, as owner, has a personal claim; he has the permanent use of his means of production. He must be able to freely transform and exchange them as circumstances and his aptitudes require.

As real and inviolable as it is, ownership of patrimonial assets does not extend to the frustration of future generations. There ends legitimate use and would begin the most revolting abuse. Basic equity requires that each person leave behind, for use by his successors, at least the equivalent of that which he received from his predecessors. Married or single, father of family or without children, no one is exempt from the [requirement of] faithful transmission of patrimony. Are there any humans who are not connected with the rest of humankind?

An obvious consequence is that one is not permitted to convert patrimonial assets to life annuities, or to dispose of them by inter vivos gift or by testament. These assets are for work; they belong to all workers in perpetuity. To give them away arbitrarily is no more just than to deplete them selfishly. In restricting the right of bequest of fathers, the authors of our laws have partly consecrated this principle. But they fail to recognize its generality when they declare “in the absence of ascendants [i.e., ancestors] and of descendants, inter vivos and testamentary gifts are permitted to use up the entire estate”.⁶ As if, in the succession and solidarity of human generations, a person doesn’t always have natural inheritors!

I conclude that it is in the nature of patrimonial assets that whoever receives some is obliged to transmit some. To whom, then, must such assets revert when they become vacant by the death of the owner? To be sure, if there were no wealth in the world other than primitive or divine patrimony, then the issue would be quickly resolved. No one will deny that all humans should successively receive an equal share. For this wealth, given to humankind without any work and before any work, human nature is incontestably the first and only ground for occupation. It is impossible to imagine a moment at which this would cease to be so, and for each generation all young people should succeed to these assets by equal right—not as members of this or that family, but as members of humanity.

This natural right of succession was not ignored by the inhabitants of our island. The memory of the first division reminded the elderly sufficiently, not only of the origin of their assets, but also of the extent of their obligations. On the island they found an essentially general and common patrimony. They nobly admitted the stranger that chance lead to their shores. Where would they get the idea that an act of their would suffice to

exclude, after their death, some of the children of their brothers [and sisters]? Their law holds without any difficulty that with each death the free shares of the general patrimony revert equally to all young workers.

The socially constituted [system of] succession will thus reproduce with each generation the fraternity of the original division. But in order for the general patrimony to suffice for the increasingly numerous inheritors, it is indispensable that a rigorous justice preside over the transmission of acquired assets, as well as over that of patrimonial assets.

Acquired assets, being the personal fruits of labor and of saving, differ from the others by their destination as much as by their origin. The person who created them has the right to consume them, and in general it is for that purpose that he creates them. But if he can consume them himself, would he not be permitted to relinquish them in favor of others? Would the greatest use of wealth be forbidden to him? With respect to acquired assets, one cannot see on what basis one would contest the capacity to give them away—by inter vivos or testamentary acts. Gifts are clearly a form of fraternity. Who would dare forbid a father to work for his children? Who wouldn't respect the [donation of] savings that a friend intends for his friend or that a generous man intends for cases of misfortune or neglected merit? These liberalities are like particular friendships: within just limits, they serve to strengthen social life.

I assimilate testaments to inter vivos gifts—without ignoring the fact that legal experts have generally denied the natural right to bequeath. It is quite true that a dead person no longer has property rights; and the reason is that, we believe, such rights are tied here below to the union of the soul and the body. But does it follow immediately that the will expressed during life can have no effect after the last moments [of life]? At death

I lose my property rights, but must my right of beneficence be extinguished at the same time? Applied too strictly, this principle would dispossess all donees at the death of the donor. Let us grant nonetheless, although this seems debatable, that natural right does not allow testaments. In practice, it will always be necessary to maintain them, as long as we allow inter vivos gifts to take place. If the capacity to make a gift is intact up to the final hour, one would resort to a thousand frauds to disguise as inter vivos acts that which in the final analysis are really just testaments. This would have the effect to enwrap death beds with worry and intolerable obsessions.

Let us accept that, in order to make gift-giving practical and beneficial, it is appropriate to confer some validity to the will of the donor after death. But is it then absolutely necessary that this validity be perpetual, and that it forever prevent acquired assets from returning to the community of social life by transferring to donees and inheritors the right to arbitrarily transmit in their own turn? Does this not end by reducing the natural right to property to an empty word? Bequeath in perpetuity! What boldness, what a usurpation by an ephemeral being, whose right of property is ephemeral and mortal like him! Can one read these words without being equally struck by the misery and conceit of humanity? [These would be the results of] the terrible dead-hand of individualism, which not only would never permit the general patrimony to grow, but which would soon completely consume it. For, as soon as the products of labor are the object of a perpetual monopoly, so too are the original and natural assets, which are the invaluable basis of these products. Lands, houses, factories, machines, and currency—they all leave society forever; they all are transmitted in the shadows, they become concentrated in a few privileged hands, and the bulk of humanity is excommunicated. In

such a case the world is truly closed to the poor, and Malthus sounds his sinister war cry against the barbarians who menace at the borders.

Such odious consequences show the falsity of this principle. Besides, on what could it be based? Does the idea of gift-giving obviously entail that gifts must be perpetual—that is, always particular to some, and never general or beneficial for all? How strange it would be if gift-giving, which originates in fraternity, could not be both communal and particular, and were incapable of assuming the social character! What? Is it not enough that each person has the right to leave the totality of his acquired assets to his children, parents, or friends—for their use until the end of their lives? Is it not time then for this wealth to return to the community and become part of the patrimonial assets? Certainly, if gift-giving is uncontrolled, it would be better for most of humanity if there were none at all. One would at least have the hope of receiving some part of the patrimony whenever someone dies, and the child of poor person would not be completely deprived.

On the side of the donor, the limitation [of the right to make gifts] is clearly legitimate. No work or merit of his has given him the right of supreme sovereignty over things, which is that more than divine right to withhold things from any social use. Besides, work is incorporated into primary materials, which are originally and essentially communal. Does not the content that comes from God dominate the form that comes from humans?

On the side of the donees and legatees, the limitation [of the right to receive gifts] is legitimated no less naturally. There is one thing that the donor, try as he may, cannot transmit, and that is his attribute of being the producer or creator of the wealth. The

property rights of the donees are therefore based on a different ground than his. That which in his hands was an acquired asset becomes in their hands a transmitted asset, and thus, at their death, the material of succession. The donor is a father like God, and his gift is patrimony. The donee can aspire to the same honor; he is even in a better position than others to become the benefactor of his peers. But if he wants in his turn to transmit, then instead of being liberal with the generosity of others, he should work and save. Otherwise [if he does not work or save], his right is confined to use for life, and everything he leaves when he dies—no matter where he received it from—must revert to the general patrimony and to the next generation.

The same restriction should apply to the investment of acquired assets in life annuity schemes. The new owner [of these assets] would also possess but a patrimonial claim [to these assets]. He may not reinvest these same assets, for his benefit, into a life annuity scheme, any more than he may give them away for nothing. Without this precaution, one could transmit acquired assets indefinitely by specifying a very low annuity payment, and by rolling over such investments one would fall back to the abuse of perpetual bequests. In their current form, life annuities are a savage procedure for leaving nothing behind when one dies. Henceforth they will necessarily retain at least a trace of sociability.

Brought back to their legitimate use, gifts and testaments augment constantly the general patrimony, and become a powerful vehicle of material progress. Special affections are in accordance with humanity. I give to a child, spouse, or friend, but at the same time I give to all humans. Who would not bless such healthy customs? Give or bequeath without any scruples; amass millions for that purpose, and soon a good part of it

will enter into the fertilizing river of the communal succession. That is the true perpetuity of beneficence; for generations and families pass away, but humanity remains, and it is humanity only that one can aspire to serve perpetually.

With a single stroke, the act of giving is joined to succession, the general patrimony is consolidated, and finally the natural right to property manages to show itself in its simplest form. It is the right to benefit from the gift of God and from the fruits amassed by previous generations; it's the right to own things before any work has been done and independently of all material facts; it's originally and always THE RIGHT TO PATRIMONY! We should either erase the image of God in humans and pull the individual from the entrails of humankind that lock us all in, or we should recognize in each of our brothers [and sisters] this natural and sacred right.

Constantly fed by an inexhaustible spring, the general patrimony would be made up, at a given moment, of the old patrimonial assets and of all capital goods, accumulated in each generation, which, being capable of gratuitous transfer only once, would join the mass of the first upon the death of the donees. One would only need to collect each year the portions that death would make available, and divide them equally among all the young people of either sex—for this is their legitimate endowment. What system of succession could be more rational? At the moment when the right of some is extinguished by the end of their mortal career, it starts to shine for others, who are about to join the ranks of labor. The newly arrived take their place in the sun and their share of the capital, without dispossessing or restricting the other occupants.

It would not be appropriate, for the rest, either to put the capital in the hands of the inexperienced, or to retard too much the age at which each child would draw from the

common mass [of assets]; for, if the family has been justly given the responsibility of basic education, in most cases it would not have enough money to support a more advanced education. Nonetheless, if one is to respect natural vocations and truly to establish equality, it is necessary, to the extent possible, that the latter [i.e., an advanced education] become accessible to all. One could thus allow the child from the age of fourteen to benefit, under the supervision of a trustee, from part of his share of the hereditary capital—one third, for example. One would wait until the age of twenty-five years to give him the entire disposition of the rest. Consequently, the first article of the law of succession would read: *Each year the patrimonial assets that have been vacated by death are divided up. All young people of either sex who during this year have attained the age of fourteen or of twenty-five take part in the division. Adults get twice the share of minors.* In practice, for greater equality one would take the average over several years of the product so as to compensate for the random or exceptional fluctuations in the number of births and deaths.

Thus the various members of humanity would, one after the other and twice in their life, sit at the table of the common patrimony, where there would finally be a place set for all. In addition to his rightful share, each child could receive supplemental assets from his parents or from all others, depending only on their generosity.

In restoring the natural order of succession, the right to patrimony consecrates the harmony of property with community, without which there is no society. Each can say to himself: “I am human, and nothing that belongs to humans is foreign to me. Those fertile fields, those powerful wonders of industry, and those sumptuous dwellings, which do not belong to me, will become part of the inheritance of my posterity.” No more room for

envy: wealth itself is granted amnesty, because it is made to serve for the good of future races. No restriction hinders beneficence, and yet hereditary idleness becomes impossible. Each father has the right to transmit to his children the entire fruit of his labor and of his savings. All the noble incentives that can motivate humans to work are conserved, and yet the son of a poor person is always assured of an inheritance. What more can one do for the family? Should humanity then be sacrificed for its sake? In generalizing itself, succession moralizes itself. One knows only too well the temptations to which the current regime exposes needy and hurried inheritors. It turns every inheritance into a prey over which the most vile emotions fight. Alas, who has not detected abominable wishes? Far from assaulting the family, the right to patrimony purifies and strengthens it. It brings security to the family. The fault or poor luck of a father no longer condemns his unlucky posterity to permanent inferiority. Under this truly social regime, there is in fact a general insurance contract among all parents and among all children. From this touching solidarity of particular families the large human family is formed. Today the child of a poor person falls naked on the naked earth, as if he were being born in a state of nature. He is connected to nothing, he has no ancestors! The right to patrimony reintegrates him into humankind. Marvelous agrarian law that—without arbitrariness or violence, without limiting at all the extent of fortunes, without depriving or bothering anyone—affirms forever the emancipation of workers and maintains the whole series of generations at the level prescribed by equality!

(...)

[Ch. XIII]

In social economics no problem is more controversial than that of the division of the product of labor, and yet in the final analysis, when one looks at fundamentals perhaps no problem is simpler. Has justice presided over the distribution of the means of production and over the ranking of workers? If so, then justice comes about automatically in the remuneration. In order for liberty, equality, and fraternity to reign, it suffices to leave each producer his entire product after deducting his share of the communal expenses. This rule extends by analogy to intellectual or other types of work, which are remunerated in accordance with the principle of indemnification. Because the act of remuneration merges with the act of production, the State need not intervene directly.

Work consists of the creation of valuables, or of the provision of services to those who create them. Can there be any doubt about the right of the creator to his creation? What a revolting servitude it would be if he had to obtain the permission of others to make use of the product of his arms and his intelligence! As authors responsible for their destiny, humans must use their dignity to live by their labor. This is the only worthy condition for whomever does not have the misfortune of being disabled or enslaved by wage-labor. The holy Writer celebrates it as one of the blessings of the just: "*For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.*"⁷

This manner of remuneration, which is so simple, is at the same time the only equitable one, and the only one that conforms to true equality. The product is the natural reward for the producer—a reward always and necessarily in proportion to his merit. For here we are concerned both with economic reward and economic merit; the point is not to reward courage, piety, or patriotism. As far as labor is concerned, merit is earned by producing well and in great quantity. Its constitutive elements are good will and capacity

(which includes ability and strength), and its manifestation are the works accomplished. Also, common sense repeats along with the Gospel: *To each according to his works, according to his labor. Secundum opera sua, secundum suum laborem.*⁸ This is just to say: *To each according to his merit, to each according to his good will and his capacity.*

Consider an isolated producer, like Robinson on his island: he has no reward other than his works. Is this not the obvious condition of all of humanity on our planet (island in the immensity [of the universe])?

One may not, by appealing to the benefits procured by the social state, take away any part of someone's products, except for the contribution for the communal expenses. It's true that the social state favors production and renders it more fertile. But everyone contributes to this gain, and contributes exactly in proportion to his merit. What would be the benefit of [forming] a society, if it contained only lazy and incapable people?

Naturally, the law of remuneration applies to professions as it does to individuals; professions that require superior attributes will always be more highly remunerated, for they are truly more productive. Nonetheless, with the abolition of wage-labor, those extreme differences in treatment that today separate professions and laborers will be erased. Only the differences necessary to maintain incentives will remain. In any case, as public opinion becomes more informed, one will learn to distinguish true from false merit; one will only reward the capacity for useful things. Thus, the scandal of those enormous remunerations bestowed upon [female] dancers will disappear.

What alternatives have been proposed to the principle of remuneration in accordance with works? Mr. Proudhon⁹ demands equal treatment of all workers of all kinds, at least if they show equal good will. But why? Because he believes in the

equivalence of all professions, as well as in that of all human talents. Assuming equal capacities, he needs only to take good will into account. He reasons correctly, but from a false premiss. Let him recognize the reality of the facts, and he will come back to the evangelical rule.

Mr. L. Blanc¹⁰ also disapproves of the maxim “to each according to his works”; he even declares it *impious*¹¹. He substitutes this one: “To each according to his needs, from each according to his capacities”. That is to say: to each according to his needs, for all those that do the best they can, since Mr. L. Blanc does not commit himself to feeding the lazy so that they can be idle. Essentially, therefore, he requires that there be good will. Like Mr. Proudhon, he rejects, although in the name of different principles, the right arising from capacities. Following Mr. Cabet¹², he replaces it with the *right arising from needs*: “Needs”, he says, “are the sign that God gives to society of what it owes the individual.”¹³ Thus, Mr. L. Blanc finds it impious to reward capacities, and it is need that he rewards.

Of all the rights that have been recently invented, this one most certainly is the most singular. Mr. L. Blanc tries in vain to appeal to people’s hearts:

“TO EACH ACCORDING TO HIS WORKS! This law of division is so false, so clearly absurd and unjust, that society would become impossible the day one ceased to violate it. Is it the formula “to each according to his works” or is it “to each according to his needs” that a mother practices when nursing her son, whose current works are non-existent, and whose forthcoming works are unknown? Is it the formula “to each according his works” or is it “to each according to his needs” that is practised by a son taking care of

his old father without measuring the care that he renders his father against his present or past works? Is it the formula “to each according to his works” or “to each according to his needs” that the eyes of the soul read on the doors of schools where children are raised, of hospitals where the injured are cared for, of hospices where the elderly are sheltered, and of homes where the demented are fed? Oh inconsequential society, which hesitates to apply logically and completely a principle without which you would let children and the elderly die, and without which you would lose that which was and that which will be, yesterday and tomorrow!”¹⁴

My God! I reply to the author. What non-sequitur, what injustice, and what absurdity do you put up with in order to distinguish the principles of each thing and not confuse all ideas? We ask what the rule is according to which laborers should be remunerated, and you invoke children at the breast or at school, the elderly, the injured, and the demented—all people who do not work, and are unable to work! Helping the sick and disabled is a strict obligation that should be sanctioned by civil law, and for which we will shortly give the *formula* (for there is a formula). But how could such help serve as a model for the just remuneration of labor? Are the conditions comparable? You yourself, do you demand nothing more from healthy workers than from children and the sick? From the former you positively require good will manifested in their works. With respect to their rights, you also say, with Saint Paul: He who does not work does not deserve to eat. Need, in your view, therefore does not protect the lazy, nor, I suppose, the drunk, the wastrel, or the thief?

To be sure, equity requires that each person, after a good and useful employment

of his time, be able to satisfy his needs by means of the remuneration that he receives. The heart and reason would be shocked if it were otherwise. The satisfaction of needs consists in consumption properly understood. In order for the system of justice to be complete, there must be harmony among production, distribution, and consumption. This is what accomplished by remuneration in accordance with capacity and good will. It does not prevent consumption in accordance with need; it prepares and ensures it. In a normal state, there has to exist in each individual an intimate agreement between the aptitudes of the producer and the needs of the consumer. Without this beautiful harmony, humankind would not continue to exist. If in totality humankind had more needs than aptitudes, it would be condemned to perish. The immense majority of workers must thus exhibit this natural equilibrium of needs and capacities—and even something more, so that the disabled may be helped. Therefore, putting aside the cases of ill will and overpowering force, the mere fact that a producer occupies a position in accordance with his aptitudes and is remunerated in accordance with his works ensures that he is able to consume in accordance with his needs.

Nonetheless, the law of justice always leads to fraternity. The more humans become sociable, the more their relations will become communal with regard to distribution as well as with the rest. Friends and collaborators that are united by absolute trust do not divide the fruits of their labors; they leave them in common. Each draws freely from the pool [of assets] in accordance with his needs, since it is known that no one will take more than he brings. In such a case there are no expenses of authority or of accounting: justice rules by love. One does not quite see this in the family, where Mr. L. Blanc searches for the model of his system, because it is the father for all, and not each

child for himself, who judges needs. But one did see this, with a perfect equality, in the admirable and touching Christian community that was the cradle of the Church.¹⁵

Nonetheless, a society of brothers [and sisters] would follow just as much the rule of equitable division in its relations with other people; and, considered as a single individual, it would be remunerated in accordance with the works of its members.

In the absence of such a complete fusion of interests, one can still imagine that co-workers—among whom the division of products is not done by the work itself—modify, in the spirit of fraternity, the rule of proportional distribution and substitute uniform remuneration. It would become too delicate for them to mutually judge and rank each other. It is for a similar reason that in the public sector treatment is generally uniform for each rank—even though there may be people of very unequal merit in each rank. It is nonetheless true that this uniformity weakens incentives; and when the nature of things permits it, one must allow remuneration to be proportional to individual merit.

With respect to remuneration, I reduce *obligatory fraternity* to two points: (1) contribution to the wages of public administrators and to the expenses for the national interest, and (2) contribution to public assistance. Each should be raised by means of a *proportional tax*, which will not alter relative wealth among citizens. In a system of equality, *progressive taxation* would be unjust. It is appropriate only transitionally, as a means to weaken privilege.

Each citizen lives and works under the protection of the government of his country. It is just that he pay the expenses of this protection, in proportion to his wealth. It is no less appropriate that he contribute for his share of the expenses that by their nature are in the interest of the entire country. After all, in providing security for production, are

public servants not the partners of producers? Hence public servants receive what they have earned, without taking anything from others.

No one can exempt himself from paying taxes: for, in virtue of human solidarity, both the person and the assets of all living on the territory must be protected. No one can renounce this protection, except by changing country. A person cannot say: I exempt myself from taxes, and accept the risk of not receiving any help from the public [police] force if I am robbed or attacked. Under no circumstances can the government consent to this. For, in giving free reign to robbers and assassins, it would fail in its duty of fraternity (which it fulfills in the name of all) as well as neglect the interest of general security. And what if the person of the optional taxation proposal became a robber or assassin! One must foresee this case in the deal that he proposes. Optional taxation is logically conceivable only in an individualist theory. Since the bond of humanity is then just a convention, one no longer feels obliged to help those who want to renounce this bond. But that is something which socialism will never recognize.

The second civil obligation which results from the fraternity of remuneration, is to help out when there are involuntary misfortunes, which create a genuine *right to aid*.

Each person who is born or becomes incapable of working, or who finds himself deprived of his means of existence, *because of circumstances independent of his will*, has a positive right to be compensated by others. This compensation takes the form of public welfare. Aid that is not genuine compensation is not in the domain of justice; one may neither impose it nor require it in the name of the law. The right to compensation rests on the principle, already proved, that *involuntary misfortunes must, to the extent possible, be shared among all*.

The principle of compensation gives a firm basis to public welfare, and throws out the arbitrary. The rule of right can be expressed as follows: *To each according the extent of his involuntary misfortune*. It protects the disabled and those who lose the fruit of their labor due to overpowering force—just as the rule “to each according to his works” protects the producer. Taken together they make the system of *distributive justice* complete.

It is important that, in its application, public welfare does not grow abusively; this would render it both impracticable and unjust. One should consider misfortunes involuntary only if they are beyond the ability of the individual to foresee and prevent. Negligence and imprudence do not merit any compensation. Also no compensation is due for the ordinary accidents which are to be expected in the diversity of social conditions—such as bankruptcies, regular unemployment, market fluctuations, mortality, hail, etc. The normal earnings of each profession cover these accidents. Insurance companies and mutual help societies, which develop under state supervision, must take care of the rest. The right to public welfare arises only for completely unforeseen and extraordinary disasters—floods, earthquakes, etc., illnesses that are too long or incurable, unemployment—when they take the proportions of a public calamity. In the name of solidarity, the prosperous regions of the country help those who are in need. The losses are shared, and the natural disasters borne in common. Patriotism grows from the triumph of humanity. Under the rule of true liberty, the able-bodied worker is able to save for his old age, and to ensure that he has an independent existence at all ages. Thus, in itself, old age does not ground a right to aid. But one must grant it to the orphan and the abandoned child, without any prejudice to the right to patrimony.

Those who are helped should receive a share that ensures them the average well-being enjoyed by the other citizens. To deny them the sweetnesses and consolations of the family, and to make them purchase help by seclusion, are remnants of barbarity. Thus, no more public hospitals, except for the insane and for illnesses for which sufficient help could not be assured if the ill were dispersed.

In Mr. L. Blanc's *Organisation* the fund for assistance is taken from profits "after allowance for the expenses devoted to the subsistence of workers, the interest on capital, and the expenses for maintenance and materials".¹⁶ This is a kind of fraternity that does not compromise. Can you believe it! The sick, the injured, and the disabled would live only on the left-overs of the worker; they would come even after capital, and after machines! And if there are no profits? Is this not the public welfare of individualism?

Religion inspires a different system of distribution. One saw it even under Mosaic law, in that saintly and patriotic insurrection of the Maccabean heroes. Intrepid Judas had just beaten the King of Syria's army:

"And [the Jews] took their money [of those] that came to buy them, and pursued them far. (...). So when they had gathered their armour together, and spoiled their enemies, they occupied themselves about the sabbath, yielding exceeding praise and thanks to the Lord, who had preserved them unto that day, which was the beginning of mercy distilling upon them. And after the sabbath, *when they had given part of the spoils to the maimed, and the widows, and orphans, the residue they divided among themselves and their servants.* When this was done, and they had made a common supplication, they besought the merciful Lord to be reconciled with his servants for ever."¹⁷

Reformers of today, you who treat Christianity with such disdain—even while you adorn yourselves with the tatters of its doctrine—flock together on this battlefield blessed by prayer, and lower the conceit of your theories in front of this lesson of fraternity given by soldiers in the flush of victory. No, outside of religion, there never has been, and there never will be, any socialism.

Public welfare is essentially distinct from *alms-giving*. When the legislator has cured, according to his power, the cases of involuntary suffering, there remain the misfortunes that are the result of error, poor conduct, or culpable incapacity, (such as that which would result from a life of dissipation and debauchery). Either one must reject any idea of responsibility, or one must agree that these misfortunes confer no positive right to aid at all. Must, however, the culpable perish from hunger? Is it appropriate for a human being to show himself to be unrelenting towards his fallen brothers? The law has nothing to offer them, but religion seeks them in order to console and save them. It promulgates for all the great law of sacrifice. It cries out to us: Forgive, in order to merit forgiveness. To this celestial call, charity comes running; it generates alms-giving, which is the *work of mercy and sacrifice*; it dries the last tears!

In a free and fraternal society, there would be no hereditary poverty; there would be no poor by birth or by non-merited misfortune. But who would ever prevent there being *poor people by their own fault*? Some people—well-intentioned, I suppose—are worried about Christianity. It preaches mercy, self-sacrifice, and alms-giving; they fear that, if society is perfected too much, there will be no more room to implement the law of sacrifice. With so much progress, how can we preserve a few poor people? Fearing that

there won't be enough, they would almost try to create some. Alas! Let them be reassured. Under the most just government, the seven capital sins are only too good a fertile ground for the creation of poor people. Charity won't be out of work so soon. That which Christian socialism would immediately destroy is *misery*. For given that the number of people who are poor by their own fault is limited, and that everyone can help them, there would nowhere be absolute destitution. Far from dethroning charity, public welfare, on the contrary, paves the way for charity's greatest triumphs. With equality and justice, each gives only what belongs to him; and since fortunes are modest, in giving one deprives oneself. That is sacrifice. Relief of involuntary misery being no longer necessary, one helps those who have no strict right. That is the act of grace and the act of mercy: both are inherent to alms-giving. Without degenerating into the encouragement of vice, alms are given neither to reward virtue, nor to supplement justice. These days it is not always easy for Christians to know if they are carrying out the precept of the Gospel. It sometimes happens that, believing that one is exercising mercy, one doesn't even satisfy justice. The poor too are not affected as they would be if they were to blame for their condition. One hears some of the poor say: It's with our money that the rich give us alms; they take four pennies from us with one hand, and return two with the other.¹⁸

May God save me from esteeming less, for this reason, the rich person who gives abundant alms. He restitutes, says Mr. Proudhon.¹⁹ Be that as it may; at least he does it voluntarily. It is a merit that not all have. Allow me to esteem more the one who restitutes than the one who keeps. Mr. Proudhon gets worked up about charity almost as much as about God. He believes that it is by definition the enemy of justice.²⁰ He does not want it at any price: "I reject charity", he says, "it's just mysticism. ...I reject devotion, it's just

mysticism. ... I know no God, it's again just mysticism".²¹ And yet, it's the same writer who said: "The purpose of social economics is to make charity come out of justice as a flower from its stem."²² It's the same writer who, before disguising God as Satan, implored in Christian language the God of liberty and equality to renew the face of the earth.²³ Could it not be that the *charity* that Mr. Proudhon rejects is just Pharisaism, as his *anarchy* is nothing but the critique of old governments, and as his *atheism* is perhaps nothing but the repugnance for the cult of false gods? But what contempt of people; what forgetfulness of his duties on the part of the writer who inquires into the scandal of these errors, and who in the end makes the same errors himself!

The Christian system has infinite harmony. Religion planted the seeds of social ideas, and now the coming of socialism will make it reign in turn more perfectly than in all other ages. Thanks to the triumph of equality, those divine and supernatural virtues of which religion alone has the secret, will finally shine with immaculate purity.

¹ *II Peter* 3:13. [Translators's note: All Bible fragments are taken from the *King James Version*.]

² Translators's note: The French economist Jean-Baptiste Say (1767-1832). Huet is alluding to a statement in Say's *Traité d'Economie Politique* (Paris, Guillaumin, 1803), p. 344.

³ Translators's note: The English economist William Nassau Senior (1790-1864). Probably Huet is quoting here from the French translation of Senior's *An Outline of the Science of Political Economy* (1836) made by Giovanni Arrivabene and published under the title *Principes Fondamentaux de l'Economie Politique* (Paris, J.P. Aillaud, 1836).

⁴ Translators's note: The French economist Joseph Garnier (1813-1881), author of *Eléments d'Economie Politique* (1845).

⁵ Translators's note: This is a citation from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, I:149-150.

⁶ [French] *Civil Code*, articles 913 and 916.

⁷ *Psalms* 128:2. [Translators's note: Emphasis added by Huet. He mistakenly cites 127:2.]

⁸ *Matthew* 16:27; *Romans* 2:6; *I Corinthians* 3:8; *I Peter* 1:17; *Revelation* 20:12; Cf. *Psalms* 62:12 etc., etc. [Translators's note: Huet mistakenly cites *Psalms* 56:13.]

⁹ Translators's note: The anarchist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865).

¹⁰ Translators's note: The socialist Louis Blanc (1811-1882).

¹¹ *Histoire de Dix Ans*, Vol. III, p. 242. [Translators's note: It is unclear to what edition Huet refers. The five volumes were published originally between 1842 and 1844.]

¹² Translators's note: The socialist Etienne Cabet (1788-1856).

¹³ *Histoire de Dix Ans*, *ibid.*

¹⁴ *Le Nouveau Monde*, December, 1849. Translators's note: *Le Nouveau Monde: Journal Historique et Politique* was a Paris-based journal that began publication in 1849.

¹⁵ Acts, 2:44-45.

¹⁶ *Organisation du Travail*, p. 120. [Translators's note: Huet is referring to the 9th edition of this work, published in Paris in 1850.]

¹⁷ *II Maccabees* 8:25-29. [Translators's note: Emphasis added by Huet. He mistakenly cites 2:25-29.]

¹⁸ The author has heard this statement from the mouth of an indigent person who was a convinced royalist and missed the ancien régime! In what places is Christian socialism hiding itself?

¹⁹ *Système des Contradictions Economiques*, Vol. 2, p. 184. [Translators's note: Huet is referring to the first edition (Paris, Guillaumin, 1846).]

²⁰ *Ibid.* Vol. 2, p. 424.

²¹ *Ibid.* Vol. 1, p. 248.

²² *Système des Contradictions Economiques*, Vol. 1, p. 401.

²³ *Qu'est-ce que la Propriété?*, pp. 312-314. [Translators's note: Huet is referring to a (Paris, 1841) edition of this book, originally published the year before.]