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LEAFLETS FOR THE PEOPLE.

No. III.

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THE  
**Catholicity of Socialism**

(A SEQUEL TO THE 2ND LEAFLET).

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"On the present scheme and principle Work cannot continue. Strikes, mutiny, squalor, rage, and desperate revolt, growing ever more desperate, will go on their way. As dark misery settles down on us, and our refuges of Lies fall in pieces one after one, the hearts of men, now at last serious, will turn to refuges of Truth. The eternal stars shine out again, so soon as it is *dark enough*."—CARLYLE.

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## Queensland Social-Democratic Federation.

### OBJECTS.

1. To publish and disseminate literature on social-economic subjects with a view to educate the people upon the true principles that should govern society.
2. To do such other work as may appear necessary for the advancement of Socialism.

Literary contributions on social-economic subjects will be received and published if approved of by the Committee, Q.S.D.F.

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LEAFLETS FOR THE PEOPLE—No. 3.

## THE CATHOLICITY OF SOCIALISM.

### A SEQUEL TO THE 2<sup>ND</sup> LEAFLET.

MANY of my readers will not have read the preceding leaflet, of which this is the sequel, and on that account, perhaps, I may be pardoned the repetition of its opening sentences, which give, entirely, the aim and scope of the complete essay, and will furnish such readers with the key necessary to enable them to form a just estimate of the arguments advanced in the following pages.

"Objections to Socialism are invariably founded upon misconceptions of it, of almost endless varieties, yet with this one family feature, that they all agree in representing it as a creed confined, confused, and exclusive. Socialists who have cut and dried schemes for the reconstruction of society are muchly to blame for this; indeed, they share in the error, not knowing the full glory of the goal whither their feet are tending. For far from being confined, confused, and exclusive, the glory of Socialism is its catholicity, that is to say, its universality, its oneness, and its comprehensiveness. It is universal, because bounded only by humanity; one, because its basal principle is unity; comprehensive, because it receives all religions and non-religions, all nationalities and politics (affording fullest scope to the mental activities), embraces all, and excludes none. To give Socialism an organic structure, and assign its functions with microscopic detail, as did the old Utopians, is a serious error. For it has, as yet, no definite form; it is a divine idea or spirit, inspiring men to higher things, and gradually assuming shape as men respond to the inspiration. Wise Socialists will give it no more precise definition than this, that its political economy is 'All for all,' its religion is 'Equality,' and its science 'Happiness.' And the way to correspond with the Socialistic inspiration, and to form the future Socialistic State, is to cultivate the spirit of fraternity within ourselves; to be missionaries of the truth in all places and at all seasons; and to aim, by our votes and influence, at gradually substituting the community for the individual in the production and distribution of wealth.

"With false notions of Socialism so prevalent it is little wonder that many people oppose it, imagining its principles to conflict with some of their most cherished beliefs and theories. Accordingly, there are religious objections to it, scientific objections to it, political and social objections to it; each of these broad forms of protest, again, being divided and redivided into many varied modes of dissent. My purpose in this essay is to remove the objections by demonstrating Socialism to be in complete harmony with what is true in these different great domains of thought. Truth is essential to life, no religions or philosophies can

long retain vitality without it; therefore I am going to briefly examine some of the most important beliefs of to-day, discover the seeds of truth within them, and show how Socialism, like a congenial soil, would nourish and fructify these. The beliefs, or modes of thought, I have selected are—Christianity, in religion; Darwinism and Spencerianism, in science; Malthusianism, Land Nationalism, Anarchism, and Capitalism, in politics and sociology."

I then proceeded with the task in hand, but had only disposed of the three first-named beliefs when the limit of my space was reached, and a consideration of the others had to be postponed to the present occasion. Without further preface then, space being still valuable, I will set about the completion of my undertaking.

**Malthusianism.**—Probably no doctrine ever promulgated has done more to retard the true solution of social problems than that to which the reverend T. W. Malthus has given his name. Formulated at a time when, in the midst of newly-attained industrial greatness, wide-spread poverty and misery presented strange phenomena to the British mind, and angry eyes were being turned upon the new power of Capitalism as the cause—a time peculiarly opportune for the clear discernment of social evils, and the effective application of remedies—formulated at such a time, its effect upon the cause of reform was most disastrous, as a brief glance at the history of that period will show.

In the third quarter of the eighteenth century Capitalism as we know it sprang full-armed into existence. The recent inventions of steam and the spinning jenny, and of labour-saving appliances in the great iron industries, had placed a tremendous power in the hands of the wealthy traders who could avail themselves of the new discoveries, and the master journeyman and the small employer, who had previously formed the backbone of England's prosperity and independence, speedily found themselves compelled to seek work in the mills and factories as mere wage-earners. Under the unrestricted operation of that divine "competition" which Adam Smith was then preaching as a new revelation wages quickly sank to starvation level; the labourer could not support his family though he toiled seventy and eighty hours in the week; his wife and his children toiled, too, for their scanty subsistence, twelve and fifteen hours a day in the hot, impure air of the mills, or half-naked in the fouler atmosphere of the coal mines. Colossal fortunes were made, the aristocracy of wealth was founded, but the dawn of the nineteenth century saw the labouring classes plunged in ignorance, vice, and misery, and groaning beneath a tyranny more elaborate and cruel than any ever before imposed upon a people. Abroad, the pulse of Liberty beat high. Oppression there had done its work; the people had risen in their might, and victory had blessed the banners of revolution. The American colonists had won freedom valiantly at the sword's point, and their Declaration of Independence rang gloriously through the world; while in France the starving multitudes had torn down the infamous Bastille, had overthrown with terrible accompaniments the old monarchy, and had held a national convention amidst the fire and carnage of their victorious

vengeance. In England the inspiring influences of these successful revolts against class privilege and domination were soon manifest, and loud demands were made for social and political reform. William Godwin's noble work, "An Inquiry concerning Political Justice," sounded the battle cry of "Human Equality," and keen brains and generous hearts burned to do service in the great Cause. Cobbett, "Junius," and Wilkes stood forth, brilliant champions of the people. Everything seemed propitious for reform. The moneyed and propertied classes trembled with apprehension, the lurid scenes of the French Revolution fresh in their memories. The old, old policy of repression was resorted to; public meetings were suppressed or dispersed; the liberty of the press was ruthlessly trampled upon; orators, writers, editors, and even newspaper printers were flung into prison as common criminals, or ruined by heavy fines. All this, too, made for reform. Coercive measures have generally strengthened the cause against which they were directed, and from a study of the situation at this distance of time, it does not appear that these frantic efforts to crush a popular movement would have formed any exception to the rule. But at this juncture Philosophy hastened to the assistance of Oppression, and the unholy alliance succeeded. It is scarcely too much to say that a mighty movement towards political and industrial freedom was decisively checked, confused, and broken up by a book. That book was the famous "Essay on Population," and its author was the reverend T. W. Malthus. In this work it was pointed out, with seemingly irresistible force, that there is a natural tendency and a constant effort in population to increase beyond the means of subsistence, and that to this fact was to be attributed all the poverty, misery, and vice which had been charged to political maladministration and industrial robbery and greed. Capitalism was exonerated, political incompetency and corruption were shown to be of little moment; the chief cause of the terrible impoverishment of the masses, and of all the evils which poverty brings in its train, was over-population. Ever increasing, population must, if unrestrained, press closer and closer against the limit of subsistence, and the procurement of food for the human family becoming continually more difficult, that degree of poverty must result necessary to keep the population within the limit of subsistence. This theory was supported by statistics and arithmetical illustrations, the fallacy of which have since been demonstrated, but which at that time had a very powerful effect. Such supports, however, were scarcely needed to convince the people for whom the book was mainly written of the truth it taught. To the workingman, slaving at starvation wages, or struggling among his fellows for the too scanty employment, nothing seemed clearer than that the labour market was overcrowded, while in his squalid home there were obviously too many mouths for the food supply.

The effect of this doctrine was like a fusillade of thunderbolts upon the army of discontent, striking panic even into the stout hearts of its leaders. In vain did the stoutest among them attempt to organise a rally. The rank and file were utterly discomfited. It seemed so clear now, that after all they were their own oppressors, or rather,

that Nature's was the fault, cruel mother, who multiplied their numbers too rapidly in her niggard world. Not Capitalism, not the greed of wealth, not the tyranny of law, not any of the high powers they had murmured against was to blame, but that instinct of humanity which had erstwhile been deemed divine and born of a divine command, "Increase and multiply." There were too many men! That was the real evil, and no amount of agitation for social or political rights could cure it.

Although I do not by any means endorse the Malthusian theory, the discussion of the entire subject does not fall within the province of this paper. I must confine myself to the points which touch upon and conflict with Socialistic ideas. In the beginning the whole theory conflicted, and was meant to conflict, with Socialism as to the causes of social evils, but since then Malthusianism has been both developed and modified, and many Malthusians now are Socialists, too. But many still believe that if only the increase of population were restrained, most of the blessings for which social reformers are striving would spontaneously flow therefrom. Even so sensible a Malthusian as Annie Besant seemed to think that if only the principles of the Malthusian League were universally adopted nothing else would be needed to transform hell on earth into a veritable paradise. She writes:—

"If this system . . . were generally adopted, how happy would be the result both to the home and to the State! The root of poverty would be dug up, and pauperism would decline and at last vanish. Where now overcrowded hovels stand would then be comfortable houses; where now the large family starves in rags, the small family would then live on sufficient food, clad in decent raiment; education would replace ignorance, and self-reliance would supersede charity. Where the workhouse now frowns, the busy school would then smile, and care and forethought for the then valuable lives would diminish the dangers of factory and workroom. . . . A full possibility of life would open before each infant born into our nation, and there would be room, and love, and cherishing enough for each new comer!"

Mrs. Besant has, however, recently renounced Malthusianism as being opposed to the principles of Theosophy, so that, unless indeed we are to suppose human happiness itself contrary to Theosophical principles, it is evident that she no longer believes a diminished population would result in all the good things so eloquently enumerated above. Socialists emphatically deny that it would have any such desirable results. They deny that excessive population is responsible for poverty and its attendant evils, and they say that the causes are to be found elsewhere. They affirm that could population be adjusted in conformity with the strictest Malthusian notions, and distributed in the most advantageous manner, there would be no betterment of individual life, no decrease in the proportion of poverty and misery, no increase in the proportion of comfort and happiness; the purchasing power of wages would not rise, food would not be more plentiful, employment no easier of obtainment, wretched hovels would still befoul our civilization, the dangers of factory and workroom would still necessitate State inspectors, and the workhouse would continue to frown. They appeal to experience for support. There is no necessity for abstract reasoning. The question is one of simple fact. It is ad-

mitted, of course, that the Malthusian ideal community has never yet been realised, but there have been, and are now, close approximations to it. Take, for instance, our own fair Australia to-day. Here, surely, population is sufficiently sparse, while there is practically no limit to the wealth which the soil will afford them. Malthusian principles are popular among the young married people. Large families are proportionately few—although, for that matter, it is obvious that in a young and fruitful country large families should be the most prosperous—and the percentage of unmarried adults is higher than elsewhere in the world. Yet even here, enjoying all these advantages, we have poverty in all its horrid aspects, and with all its accompanying evils. It drives men here to sin and crime, and women to degradation, as it does in older lands. It fills our prisons, our pauper houses, and our lunatic asylums. Here, as in older lands, thousands of willing workers seek work they cannot find. Thousands of anxious mothers mourn over their little ones, half-fed and ragged. In Brisbane alone hundreds of families subsist by the scant charity of government. Wages are falling lower and lower; already unskilled and unorganised labour is as cheap as in England, and only by the closest and completest organisation, and the sturdiest opposition to reduction, have the unions maintained wages at the present level. These are facts which none will deny, and whatever differences of opinion may arise as to the causes of this lamentable state of affairs, I am sure that no sane person will lay the fault upon either the parsimony of Nature, or the redundancy of Man.

When we thus find poverty in a sparsely-populated and richly-endowed land, we are justified in looking deeper than Malthusians do for the cause, and a careful consideration of the case in older and more densely-populated countries, where the theory under discussion might seem to receive some colour, will afford us further justification. For although at first blush it may seem palpable that in countries like England and America poverty is due to excessive population, a little reflection will impel us to a very different conclusion. It is certainly true that these two countries are rapidly increasing their populations, and it is probably true that poverty, also, may be on the increase there, but the deduction which Malthusians make therefrom is totally upset by the further fact that wealth, in both these countries, is increasing still more rapidly. Professor Fawcett estimates the increase of England's population at two per cent. per annum, but the growth of her wealth is of much higher proportion, and while the population of the United States is doubling every thirty years, their wealth is more than trebled in the same space of time. The densely-populated Eastern States are richer in proportion than the more sparsely-populated States of the West and South, and the wealth of the Eastern States is excelled in turn by yet more densely-peopled England. And it is true of all civilised communities—as a brief consideration of available evidence will show—that whatever be the rate of increase in their populations, the rate of increase in their wealth is higher still. So that, even if there were not positive disproof of the Malthusian theory in the prevalence of poverty in sparsely-populated Australia, there would still



be abundant negative disproof in the ever-increasing wealth of densely-peopled countries.

This is the first and chief matter of dispute between the Socialist and the Malthusian, as to the cause of poverty—a dispute which, of course, necessarily extends itself to the question of remedies. And now, having argued that Malthusians err as to the cause, and are ineffectual as to the remedy, I am free to admit that they have, nevertheless, placed their fingers upon a real social danger. They have drawn attention to the fact—at a time when the rapid reproduction of the species has been elevated to the dignity of a social virtue—that population increases at an alarming rate, and although they have greatly exaggerated the matter, and although no immediate danger need be feared, there is, beyond doubt, serious reason for apprehension of the future. But Socialists contend that this high rate of increase, far from being natural, is abnormal, and that, instead of being the cause of poverty, it is the effect of poverty; and they argue that the remedy for the evil is only to be found in the reformation of an industrial system which renders poverty the inevitable concomitant of wealth, reduces large masses of the people to a mere animal existence, and denies to them all that is calculated to raise man above the unbridled gratification of animal instincts. The class of Malthusians with whom we are reasoning, following the lead of John Stuart Mill, maintain, on the contrary, that any elevation of the standard of comfort and intelligence would result in a heavier birth-rate; but this argument is in flagrant opposition to well-known facts. Where there are few opportunities for intellectual life, as in new settlements, the birth-rate is notoriously high, and it is in the slums of the cities, and in the hovels of the country, that the children swarm like rabbits. Poverty is a prolific breeder—the “full quiver” and the empty purse have ever been associates in misfortune. Extirpate poverty, and the population problem would solve itself. Want, and the fear of want, being unknown, a fuller and more varied life would open up before all, and the intellectual and spiritual side of man’s nature assuming proper dominion, the law of population would resume that normal operation from which man’s non-compliance with other natural laws has warped it.

**Capitalism, Land Nationalism, and Anarchism.**—I have not grouped these three modes of thought under one head merely to economise space; I discern a sequence of ideas in them in relation to Socialism. The opponents of any great reform are divisible into three broad classes: those who fight it tooth and nail, those who meet it half-way, and those who scorn it for its moderation. So in regard to Socialism, the adherents of Capitalism wage bitter war against it, Land Nationalists compromise with it, and Anarchists ignore it, or trample upon it in their eagerness to get far beyond its goal. Now, each of these three classes of opponents is animated by a great principle, and from the tenacity with which these principles have been held it is evident that they contain within them some of the life-giving germs of truth. The human mind, fortunately, cannot long tolerate anything utterly truthless. I have therefore to show, in accordance

with my undertaking, that these valuable germs would not be destroyed, but would thrive best in the soil of Socialism.

The principles of Capitalism are based upon the essential selfishness of man. It is held that only by allowing full play to this important element of human nature can the business of the world be carried on and progress be accomplished. Greed and self-seeking are declared to be the only sure incentives to industry and genius, and that social system to be the best which offers most inducements to the exercise of these propensities. Under Socialism, it is said, no such inducements would exist, great accumulations of wealth by individuals being impossible. Now, Socialists do not decry man’s selfishness. They, too, consider it to be a valuable trait, although not the most valuable, in human nature. Do they not appeal to selfishness when they point out how infinitely better off the vast majority would be under a system of Socialism? That selfishness is an incentive to effort, they admit, but they point out that selfishness is, even now, discovering combined effort to be the most profitable, and is opening its eyes to the fact that the system of competition to which it has been wedded is, after all, a very unprofitable policy. They point out, further, that capitalists themselves, notwithstanding loud talk of “private enterprise,” find self-interest best served by combination and co-operation, as the rapid aggregation of private businesses into syndicates and trusts amply proves. And, therefore, Socialists urge all men to combine and co-operate as the best method of securing the self-interests of all. Indeed, “private enterprise” is rapidly dying out as Capitalism extends its operations and consolidates its power. Adam Smith’s divine “competition” has resolved itself into cannibalistic warfare. The bigger Capitalist eats up the lesser, only in turn to form a fatter morsel for one stronger than he, who, again, will fall a victim to another yet more powerful, who, again, may find himself dished up for some greedy corporation, which is then, in turn, gobbled up by a stronger and greedier combination—and so one, until, in the end, if persisted in, “competition” will have left none of the capitalistic crowd but a very few millionaire individuals and syndicates, who, respecting each other’s power, will finally devote their undivided appetites to the consumption of the proletarian. I doubt, however, if the warfare will be carried on so long; the little Capitalists will discover their weakness and folly, and will make common cause with the proletarian against the common enemy, the huge capitalistic gormandizer. In doing so, of course, they will be pursuing their self-interests still, as men always do, but more intelligently than before. As selfishness drove them to the folly of warfare, so will it yet drive them to the wisdom of co-operation and peace.

Selfishness cannot be eliminated from the nature of man, nor would it be desirable. But it may be abnormally developed, and to the detriment of higher qualities. This is what happens under Capitalism, which makes selfishness, like Polyphemus, mighty and indefatigable it is true, but brutal, unscrupulous, and unintelligent, inflicting grievous injuries upon itself by over-cunning, defecating its own ends by immoderate greed. Under Socialism selfishness would be

properly proportioned to the other attributes of the complex human organism, and endowed with some intelligence, so that it might pursue its own good without hurting itself. Men would still be self-seeking, but they would have learned the golden wisdom of co-operation; syndicates would still be formed, but they would be national syndicates, and the only thing exploited would be rich old Mother Earth.

Land Nationalism is based upon the principle that all men have an equal right to the use of land; but it allows private property in all things else as the natural reward of labour. Henry George says:—

"The equal right of all men to the use of land is as clear as their equal right to breathe the air—it is a right proclaimed by the fact of their existence. For we cannot suppose that some men have a right to be in the world, and others no right. . . . The right of ownership springs from labour, a man is only rightfully entitled to the produce of his own labour, or the labour of someone else from whom the right has passed to him."

That is the Land Nationalist's creed, very happily summarised, and it is obvious that I am under no necessity here of demonstrating how it harmonises with the faith of the Socialist. For it is more than harmonious—it is identical. The creed of the Georgian is the creed of the Socialist too. It is only when it comes to the application of their common creed to the conduct of human affairs that a difference arises between them. To the one, then, it demands the nationalisation of land *only*, while to the other it demands the nationalisation of labour also. The Socialist reasons that, granted the right of a man to the product of his own labour, it follows that that which cannot be produced without co-operation belongs *equally* to all the co-operators. Now, in our highly-developed system of society, with its vast stores of inherited wealth and knowledge, and its infinitesimal divisions of labour, it is not possible to say that any man, or any set of men, have produced anything worth the having by their own unaided, exclusive exertions. Why, to the production of the very pen with which I write, warriors, statesmen, poets, scientists, miners, smiths, engravers, engineers, and, in fact, all the mental and physical workers of the world from the commencement of human life have, in the last analysis, contributed. It can only be said that the sum total of production results from the sum total of human energy. Nor is it possible, strictly speaking, to assign different values to the separate contributions. All the factors of a given product are *equal*, because without all the product is impossible. Thus 1 contributes as much to the making of 10 as 9 does, because it is equally necessary to the result. So to the product, civilised society, the lowest labourer contributes equally with the highest, and is equally entitled to an equal share in the wealth which results from the co-operated labour of all. But as an universal share-and-share-alike division of all forms of wealth would be as impracticable and undesirable as an actual all-round division of land, Socialists therefore advocate the nationalisation of labour, as a reasonable method of complying with the demands of natural justice. Thus the principles of land nationalism, carried to their logical completeness, lead straight to Socialism, and land nationalists, when experience

shall have demonstrated the inadequacy of their remedy for social evils, will not be slow to recognise this, nor to follow the thread of truth, which, like Theseus, they hold in their hands, until it brings them out of the darksome social labyrinth into the full light, and freshness, and glory of Socialism.

Of Anarchism little need be said. It is the highest of all social ideals—true Anarchism, that is, not the mad perversions of Ravachol, nor the frightful bogies that capitalistic editors conjure up in the service of "law and order." It is higher than the Socialistic ideal, because it substitutes *voluntary* for *compulsory* co-operation, and makes *love* instead of *justice* the basis of human affairs. But it is now generally admitted by Anarchists that the ideal is far too high for human nature as at present constituted, and that only when the purifying and perfecting processes of Socialism shall have evolved nobler forms of humanity can its elevated plains of conduct be reached.

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My task is ended. In this and the preceding leaflet I have endeavoured to demonstrate the Catholicity of Socialism; to show its complete harmony with all that is true in the leading beliefs and theories of to-day, in the different domains of thought. I am conscious of having done scant justice to a great subject—for this far-reaching comprehensiveness of Socialism is a most remarkable note of its own pre-eminent truth—but if I have induced here and there a hostile reader to follow up for themselves the line of inquiry I have been pursuing, my labour will not have been in vain, for such an inquiry must assuredly result in accessions to our strength. The Christian will come to us because our principles accord with the social precepts which his Divine Master inculcated, knowing that only in obedience to them would the spiritual life He enjoined be possible to human weakness; the Darwinist will come to us because Socialism is simply the form which the social organism is assuming under the operation of the forces of evolution, and because the later researches of science tend to show that competition is not necessary to the development of species, as Darwin supposed, but that the progression of life from lower to higher forms is more frequently accomplished through combination and co-operation; Spencerians and other Individualists will come to us because they will recognise ere long that the present system of society is destructive of true individuality, and that under Socialism—freed from soul-debasing struggles for mere food, cleansed from the dissimulation and servility of wagedom, the avariciousness of Capitalism, the callousness of wealthy idleness—the individual will find at last the social environment essential to its proper development; the Malthusian will come to us because under Socialism the population problem will disappear with the up-rooting of poverty; the Capitalist will come to us—wildly improbable though it seem—because the inexorable operations of the system he has made, whereby capital is rapidly getting into fewer and fewer hands, will drive him to Socialism in self-preservation, lest, like Frankenstein, he