

Reviews

THE JUST WAGE, by Michael Fogarty; Geoffrey Chapman; 30s.

The doctrine of the just wage is one of the most important elements in the Church's social teaching. For that reason, we should welcome Professor Fogarty's latest book, in which he offers us not only his interpretation of this vital doctrine but also discusses the existing machinery for wage fixing in this country in the light of the Church's teaching. He reaches the conclusion that the principles which guide wage negotiators come very close to those of Catholic teaching, though with some exceptions. There has, for example, been a reluctance in this country to give due weight to the national interest in particular wage bargains.

Traditionally, there have been two main strands in the Church's teaching on the just wage. First, the worker is entitled to receive the exact equivalence of the service he has rendered. Secondly, the worker is entitled to maintain a certain status, or, in other words, to receive a living wage. From this, Professor Fogarty derives his two principle conditions of wage justice. The first is that workers of comparable skill should receive the same rate of pay, and that rate should be as high as possible (provided it is not artificially inflated by monopolistic restrictions).

If this first condition, based on the idea of equivalence, is quite distinct from the second condition, that the worker should receive an income sufficient to enable him to maintain a certain status, the question arises whether the two criteria may not conflict. Professor Fogarty endeavours to show that although distinct they are compatible, but his demonstration is not entirely convincing. It might have helped if he had shown, for example, that our concepts of an appropriate status (or the living wage) must be based, to a large extent, on the kind of wage level that actually prevails. It would help, too, if he had distinguished between the exact equivalent which an employer is always bound to pay in commutative justice and the living wage which society should enable the individual employer to pay by ensuring the proper organization of economic activity.

Professor Fogarty states three further conditions of wage justice. First, wages must be related to the public good. If they are too low, demand may be inadequate and unemployment result. Alternatively, if wage claims are pushed beyond what the national income will bear, there is the danger of inflation (the problem we face today). Secondly, the wages of each grade of labour should be determined by the common estimate of a *relatively* free labour market. (This is not the advocacy of complete *laissez-faire*. It is intended to rule out deliberate restriction of entry to an occupation in order to keep up wages, or agreements among employers to depress wages.) Thirdly, higher wages should not be

offered in compensation for *avoidable* dangers or hardship; rather these undesirable features of labour should be removed.

Although Professor Fogarty has written an invaluable book, and one which must be essential reading for any Catholic who claims to be a serious student of social questions, there are many points at which his argument will be challenged. This must not be read as an adverse criticism, for it is one of the merits of this book that its author has chosen to set forth what is in many ways a distinctive viewpoint, and has not been afraid of entering realms which are bound to be controversial.

The reader will find a strong egalitarian sentiment running through the book. Professor Fogarty wants not only equal pay for workers of equal *acquired* ability but also, in the long run, equal pay for equal *innate* ability, or, in other words, equal opportunity to acquire skill. Whether this is either a practicable or desirable objective and whether it is a requirement of justice may be open to question.

The same egalitarian sentiment is seen in his treatment of the family living wage. He argues that it is impossible to pay a wage sufficient for the support of the 'normal' family to all adult male workers (and also women, since the principle of equal pay for equal work is accepted). This argument is not convincing, and it could just as easily be argued that if the idea of a family wage for all workers is sound, it follows that the estimates of such a wage used in the calculations quoted are too high. Professor Fogarty goes on to argue that a man's wage should enable him to support whatever family he actually has, and concludes that this can only be brought about by a substantial redistribution of income through family allowances. He suggests, moreover, a scale of allowances that would enable the largest family to maintain the same standard of living as the single man. To argue on these lines is to take an altogether too simple a view of what is meant by status maintenance. Nor is the appeal to the teaching of the Church on sex in support of this view justified. Catholic writers have rarely if ever suggested that the decision to have another child should involve no economic sacrifice, and genuine economic difficulties have been recognized as a sufficient reason for limiting the size of the family by legitimate means. One wonders, too, whether the author's ideas in this field are equally applicable to professional earnings and unearned incomes.

In his treatment of status maintenance, Professor Fogarty also discusses the means of providing the worker with an adequate income at those times when he cannot work—when he is sick, unemployed or retired. This leads to a general discussion of fringe benefits, with a re-statement of the principle of subsidiarity and insistence upon the right of the worker to make the necessary provision for himself. There is also a discussion of the means of reducing unemployment by controlling the general level of demand, by eliminating local pockets of unemployment, and by improving the terms of employment of the manual worker. Unemployment could be greatly reduced without damaging the flexibility of the economy if workers were entitled to a month's notice.

Manual workers, like non-manual workers already, could then move from job to job without a period of unemployment between jobs.

Still under the heading of status maintenance, Professor Fogarty supports the use of 'reserve pricing' by workers in a declining industry to keep their wages in line with those of other workers of comparable skill. It might have been better if he had mentioned that this problem is primarily one concerning workers whose skill is specialized rather than all workers in a declining industry. Although there are probably cases where it is best to keep up wages in this way and to force a more rapid contraction in the industry, there must inevitably be a big fall in the status of those workers who are forced out of the industry by the rapid contraction. Status maintenance in itself does not demand the course recommended here, any more than it demands the course which is criticized, that of allowing wages for all in the industry to fall but numbers employed to remain unchanged until reduced by natural wastage.

J. M. JACKSON

THE RELIGIOUS FACTOR: a sociological study of religion's impact on politics, economics and family life; by Gerhard Lenski; Doubleday; \$5.95.

You turn the pages and begin to shudder: 'Table 50: Comparison of the Relative Discriminating Power of Class and Socio-Religious Group Membership for a sample of Dependent Variables (White Protestants and Catholics only)' or 'Table 40: Percentage of Urban-born Detroiters valuing Personal Autonomy above Personal Heteronomy, by Class and Mobility Status'. But your shudders are premature, if they are not simply prejudiced. For behind the alarming labels Professor Lenski has some very important things stored up; and no doubt the Athanasian Creed sounds strange to the uninitiated.

This enquiry, conducted by the Detroit Area Study, into the social attitudes of Catholics, Jews, negro Protestants and white Protestants, is a serious attempt at inspecting the weight of inherited beliefs in terms of the life of the community at large. And the factor of religion, hitherto regarded as quite peripheral by many American sociologists, is seen to emerge in terrifying strength—terrifying, because it is so often only a further sanction to underline attitudes that are rooted in fear or envy. This is especially true in a community such as that of Detroit, with a large and growing negro population and an economy which is heavily dependent on a single industry.

Professor Lenski's study is based on the usual research techniques, dependent on a sample survey involving interviews and a standardized schedule of questioning. The optimistic claims that are made for the accuracy of this sort of survey can be questioned, but it is plain that an impressive amount of evidence emerges which can throw light on attitudes that are usually only a matter of local gossip or hearsay. It is likely that what is thought to be true of Detroit can be said of other major American metropolitan centres, and it can certainly be said that this detailed enquiry illuminates many of the hidden places of American life.