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Morality of Sterilization

DOCTOR MAHONEY

A Living Wage and Our Immoral Economic Order

An Address Delivered by

IGNATIUS W. COX, S.J.

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The Morality of Sterilization

E. J. MAHONEY, D.D.

*A valuable discussion of a current problem taken from
Thought (New York), Volume III, Number 2.*

OWING to the strenuous opposition which must, on ethical grounds, be maintained against some of the methods advocated by enthusiastic eugenicists, the erroneous notion easily becomes current that the Church has no interest in the problems of degeneracy; that provided people are born in great numbers it does not matter what diseases they inherit; that it is all a part of the mysterious Providence of God who permits these things for a good purpose.

It is quite unnecessary to say that this is a travesty of the Catholic position. It is, indeed, true that the value of a human soul and the beauty of its ultimate destiny in the vision of God far outweigh the sorrows of its short journey on this earth. It is also profoundly true that the delinquencies of degenerates are not imputed to them in the sight of God unless they are formal sins. Yet it would be ludicrous to suppose that, on theological principles, the Church holds aloof from movements designed for the betterment of the race. For the purpose of the Sacrament of Marriage is primarily the procreation of a normal healthy progeny, and the practice of virtue is facilitated by bodily and mental health, and even merely material sin is a deordination to be prevented as far as possible.

Far from quarreling with eugenical movements, as such, the Church positively assists the efforts of the State to further the health of the community, provided nothing contrary to the moral law is promoted as a means to this end. It is a matter of the deepest regret that the eugenicist has become, to a large extent, the exponent of practices which can be demonstrated as ethically wrong.

WRONG INTRINSICALLY AND OBJECTIVELY

We are for the moment concerned with showing that, granted the desirability of restraining the fecundity of cer-

tain types, for the common good of the race, the means advocated known as sterilization is morally wrong, and cannot be employed even when the individual has given consent to the operation. The Christian ethical standpoint is absolutely committed, root, stock and branch, to the doctrine that if an action is wrong intrinsically and objectively, and not merely from positive law, it can never be tolerated for any reason whatsoever. This is, in fact, a commonplace of any ethical theory which is not frankly hedonist in conception, and it is a proposition to which most people would readily assent. The Catholic Church insists on maintaining this principle rigorously and logically, even though it sometimes leads to decisions at variance with many modern views, for any departure from it is the equivalent of the patently immoral doctrine that the end justifies the means.

Everyone, except the anarchical fanatic, agrees that murder, *i. e.*, the direct killing of an innocent person, is never justifiable. When two shipwrecked sailors of the *Mignonette* in 1884 killed and ate their boy companion, even though all three would otherwise have died of hunger, they were sentenced to death for murder. Killing the innocent even in these circumstance was universally regarded as wrong. For exactly the same reasons the Church logically condemns craniotomy. To take another example, everyone is agreed in condemning the un-natural sexual vice of a decadent Roman society as grossly immoral, because sexual pleasure is dissociated from the purpose of the action. For exactly the same reason the Church condemns those methods of birth prevention which secure sexual pleasure while frustrating the natural purpose of the action.

Observe that both these actions are wrong already, with an initial fundamental wrongness antecedent to any purely ecclesiastical precept. The Church did not make the moral law. God made it in creating human nature as we know it to be, and it is beyond the province of any human authority to modify or dispense it. With regard to the attitude of the Church on sterilization there has been no official judgment of the Holy Office corresponding to the decisions on craniotomy and birth prevention. But, on the accepted principles governing the lawfulness of bodily mutilation, there can be little doubt what that judgment would be if it were uttered.

The statement that an action is against the natural or moral law may, perhaps, require a little explanation, for it engages our attention on the ultimate ethical distinction between good and evil, and is the basis of all our subsequent moral judgments. A thing is called good when nothing is wanting to the perfection of its nature or end, *e. g.*, a good piano or a good egg. Actions which perfect human nature are good in this general sense, but, inasmuch as the only thing differentiating men from animals is the fact that human actions are free and deliberate, the particular type of goodness arising from these free actions is called "moral."

An enormous variety of processes, faculties and desires make up our composition. In the free and deliberate use of them we perfect our nature by using individual faculties, each in accordance with its natural purpose, and in using them we must preserve that balance and harmony which reason dictates as issuing in the ultimate good of the whole. In this radical and common-sense concept of morality, it is impossible to leave out God; for the moral law of our human nature is a reflection and a participation in the eternal law of God who created that human nature. In disobeying this law we implicitly act against the Divine law and "the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom."

DIRECT OR INDIRECT APPROACH

In analyzing the immorality of certain actions we can approach the subject directly and immediately, *e. g.*, the "perverted faculty" argument, in demonstrating the wrongness of birth prevention. We can also approach it, but with much less accuracy, indirectly, by trying to forecast, and if possible demonstrate, that a certain line of conduct will issue in a state of things detrimental, in the long run, to human nature. This second or indirect method is more interesting and popular, and it seems sometimes to have absorbed the attention, even of professional theologians, to the exclusion of the first and more direct procedure. For we must insist that the second line of argument, though often useful and of contributory value can very easily lead the mind into serious error. For if a discussion turns on what is, or is not, ultimately good for the human race, there is abundant room for difference of opinion, for example, as to the consequences of contraception on the individual and the race; but there can

be no two opinions as to what is nature's, and therefore God's, purpose in the use of bodily organs. The argument from consequences, therefore, is only of value if it is not opposed to considerations intrinsic to the action under discussion.

It is rather from this angle, it seems to me, that the present subject can most usefully be discussed. The subsequent effects of sterilization, whether viewed medically as affecting the individual, or socially as affecting posterity, or from whatever point of view one chooses to regard it, are so diverse and uncertain that we are not surprised to find that entirely opposite views are held by competent authorities, who are not particularly concerned with the moral aspect of the matter.

From the Catholic point of view the situation is simple. If it could apparently be shown, from reliable statistics, that the results of sterilization are beneficial to the individual and to the race (though this view is decidedly not an established fact), we should still have to maintain that the practice is wrong, and that a more profound and extensive examination of its effects and repercussions would demonstrate its wrongness. *Fiat justitia, ruat cœlum*. On the other hand, once granted its intrinsic ethical wrongness the argument can be supported and elaborated by all the various indications of its bad effects. What one does feel is that rather than chase this will-o'-the-wisp in an endeavor to tread one's way through all the conflicting evidence regarding the alleged results of sterilization it would be more profitable to examine carefully the action as it is in itself, in order to understand the ethical objections to the practice, as such, quite apart from its effects.

TWO PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

To face the subject in this way is not without difficulty, since the inherent immorality of mutilation cannot easily be appreciated by the mind, and the whole subject is simply clogged with a mass of casuistry. We can at least clear the ground by granting two things. Firstly, the operation must be regarded as a grave mutilation. The attempt has been made to sidetrack the issue by maintaining that, at least in the case of a vasectomized man, the operation is so slight as to be negligible. The center of controversy would then

shift from the question of its intrinsic wrongness, and an attempt could be made to plead that the action being no more than venial (like extracting a tooth for no reason), its lawfulness or unlawfulness need not concern us very much. Clearly and obviously the loss of the power of reproduction is a grave loss to any human being whose character is not thoroughly debased, and it is precisely because its gravity is admitted by all that the whole discussion has arisen.

Secondly, we can abstract altogether from the lawfulness of sterilization inflicted legally as a punishment for crime. It would be folly, in theory, to concede to the State the right to take life (a right consistently acknowledged by the Church), and withhold the right to bodily mutilation. On grounds of practical policy, however, since all modern States have abolished the punishment of mutilation, and since it is probably not feared as a punishment by the class of people for whom it is intended, and since it might reasonably be suspected that the principle would be stretched beyond its application to criminals in the strict sense, many moralists hesitate to uphold the practice as lawful in all the circumstances. But, apart from the minutiae of the question, it can be considered as certain that sterilization inflicted as a punishment is not inconsistent with traditional Catholic doctrine.

THE BASIC PRINCIPLES

On these premises, the morality of the operation can be judged by applying the established principles governing the ethics of mutilation. Our bodily members and faculties are entrusted to us for our use, not as property absolutely possessed and completely at our disposal, but as an aid to the well-being of our whole organism; these separate parts exist, not for themselves, but with reference to the whole, to the welfare of which they contribute each in its own degree. Absolute ownership (*dominium*) over our lives and the integrity of our bodies belongs to God who created them. Just as suicide is a perversion of nature and wrong, because faculties are used for the destruction of the body instead of for its preservation, thus violating the prerogatives of God the arbiter of life and death, so also is mutilation.

But there is this difference. It may happen that a member or faculty is causing harm to the whole instead of serv-

ing it, in which case it is not only man's right, but often his duty, as the appointed administrator and custodian of the whole, to destroy a part for the benefit of the whole body: for his members and faculties are given to him for the purpose of preserving the complete organism. Where bodily mutilation is judged necessary for the preservation and well-being of the whole, it is morally right and justifiable, but apart from these circumstances it is an unlawful interference with the rights of God.

Why may we not proceed to a further conclusion and argue that if mutilation is lawful for a physical good it should be lawful for purposes which are on a higher plane altogether, *e. g.*, for the purpose of avoiding sin. The reason why it is lawful in one case and not in the other is a little elusive, but it is worth pondering over, because substantially the same argument is commonly used in establishing the immorality of sterilization for the common good of society, which is admittedly a higher good than the physical well-being of any one individual. The reason is that there is an immediate and *necessary* connection between the health of the individual organism and the mutilation of a member, whereas this necessary connection does not exist between the health of the body and the spiritual good of the soul.

Castration as a means of preserving chastity is a method associated with extreme abnormality in religious practice, and consistently condemned by the Church. There are one or two very curious and isolated instances of saints who have mutilated their bodies in other ways out of misguided zeal for a higher spiritual good, but the exception proves the rule. The most that can be said is that they acted in good faith. Mutilation is wrong for the purpose of the higher spiritual good of avoiding sin, simply because consent to sin is in the will, and there is no necessary connection between this spiritual act and the mutilation of a bodily member. It is unlawful, as St. Thomas says simply, *quia peccatum subjacet voluntati*.

To apply this doctrine to the present question, sterilization is clearly lawful when it occurs as a necessary accompaniment of a surgical operation judged necessary for bodily health. Further, it may quite easily be judged lawful to cause sterilization intentionally and directly as a therapeutic measure. It is maintained by many medical au-

thorities, on whom no suspicion of favoring eugenical sterilization rests, that sexual disorders sometimes assume such proportions that the sedative effect of sterilization is the only method of bringing relief. Of course, there are views for and against this alleged curative effect, and it is no part of a moralist's duty to form medical judgments on the necessity of surgical operations. But, granted the operation has a therapeutic value, it is theoretically certain that it is altogether lawful.

UNLAWFULNESS OF STERILIZATION

We have reached the kernel of the problem. If sterilization is proposed, not for its therapeutic value, but as a eugenical method of purging degenerates from future society, it must be condemned as immoral, whether performed on a willing subject or not, whether imposed by private authority or by the authority of the State. The arguments urged in favor of the lawfulness of the practice turn on the alleged right of the State to safeguard the health of posterity. It is assumed that sterilization is the best and most efficient method of securing this desired effect, it is by some assumed to be the only practical method.

As far as I can envisage the problem, the moral judgment against its lawfulness has a double aspect. In the first place, it must be asserted, as a matter of calm fact, that the hypothesis assuming sterilization to be the only practical method of avoiding hereditary disease is decidedly not verified. There is, in this connection, a certain parity with the subject of birth prevention. Cases exist where pregnancy would be accompanied by extreme danger to the mother's life. In these cases, say some moderate advocates of birth prevention, some method of contraception is morally justifiable, since it is the only way of safeguarding the life of the mother. If this were true, a Catholic would be forced to the conclusion that even the danger of death must be faced rather than commit sexual sin by misusing the faculties of generation for the sake of venereal pleasure. But happily, the hypothesis is not verified, for conception can be avoided by living in continence, naturally difficult, but with God's grace, to which the Sacrament of Marriage gives a title, quite within the power of any married person.

So also, in our present discussion, there are clearly other

methods for preventing hereditary disease, so that the hypothesis assuming sterilization to be necessary is seen to be a pure assumption. Not only is segregation an adequate alternative, but it is the considered judgment of many eugenicists, who are not concerned with the moral question, that segregation is, on the whole, the most practical method of securing the end they have in view. On a parity with the traditional teaching denying the lawfulness of mutilation for avoiding sin, so also in the present problem, sterilization is unlawful for securing a healthy posterity, because there is no immediate and necessary connection between the means and the end.

This argument is good and valid, as far as it goes, but it does not go quite far enough. Supposing we accept, for the sake of argument, the false hypothesis that sterilization is the only means of safeguarding posterity; it could still be maintained, and in my judgment should be maintained, that the operation is unlawful, no matter what good is expected for future generations. For if it is wrong for any individual to mutilate himself for a purpose not connected with his physical well-being, it must be wrong for the State to do so. It is worth while discussing the subject from this point of view, for it brings into relief further and even more necessary arguments against State pretensions in this matter.

Many Catholic authors, who are quite opposed to sterilization on moral grounds, seem to base their opposition solely on the fact that the action is wrong because unnecessary, and unnecessary because there are other more suitable methods. The implication seems to be that were there really no other alternative method, the practice would be morally good. Serious, indeed, would be the logical consequences of such a thesis. For we deny the right of the authorities of the State to mutilate innocent people, for substantially the same reason that we deny their right to kill innocent people, namely, because such an action would be a violation not only of human but of Divine rights.

Otherwise we should be forced to acknowledge that persons suffering from infectious diseases, should isolation prove ineffective, might be killed for the common good. The analogy may appear far-fetched, but apply the situation to a ship's captain, who is equivalent to the head of a little State and who possesses, in certain contingencies, power

over life and death. Suppose a passenger is suffering from a mortal infectious disease, and cannot be isolated in a small ship, and that the infection will inevitably contaminate the whole ship's company. Why is it unjustifiable for the captain to throw him overboard? There is only one answer: no human authority has the right to kill an innocent subject; it is the prerogative of God alone. For the same reason no human authority has the right of mutilation in these circumstances.

It is clearly capable of proof that the civil authority enjoys a mandate from God to punish the wrongdoer by death, and *a fortiori* by mutilation, but on what title does the State claim this prerogative in any other case? It will be answered: on a title of preserving the common interests and health of the community. Just as mutilation is lawful for the health of the individual organism, so is it also lawful for the health of the body politic to mutilate individuals for the common good. Here exactly is the fundamental error. *There is no exact parity between the members of a human body with relation to the whole organism, and the members of a State with relation to the whole State.* For bodily members exist for the good of the individual, but individual men do not exist for the good of the State.

The very reverse is the solemn truth, though it is daily becoming more obscured: the State exists for the good of the individual, to safeguard and defend his natural rights. Once a principle of State interference with the individual bodily integrity of its members is admitted, we are entitled to ask where it is going to end. As it is, the precise limits of cases diagnosed as ripe for sterilization is a matter of considerable doubt and controversy. If the lawfulness of such interference is conceded, it will be stretched far beyond the limits set by its original promoters, very much as the divorce laws are gradually abolishing altogether the institution of marriage.

AN OBJECTION ANSWERED

To return to the idea of segregation, admitted by all as a necessary civic precaution in certain cases. It may very reasonably be urged that even segregation implies taking away a person's rights, and, therefore, on the principle that the individual's rights are antecedent to those of the State,

segregation is essentially just as reprehensible as sterilization. This is, frankly, rather a difficult knot to untie. It could be answered that segregation is not mutilation, and is not open to quite the same radical objections; that we are quite accustomed to various forms of quarantine and compulsory isolation, and that no sane person objects to these as immoral. In fact, all our theological authorities argue that sterilization is wrong because the same good results can be secured by segregation. It requires no great acumen to perceive that these answers merely touch the surface, and if eugenical sterilization is intrinsically wrong, then some intrinsic reason must be given why enforced segregation does not come under the ban.

The solution turns on drawing a distinction between man as an individual enjoying the complete integrity of his bodily faculties, and man as a social unit using his members and faculties for the purpose of intercourse with his kind. No individual is allowed, of his own authority, to mutilate a faculty except for the physical good of his own body, but it is perfectly right and proper for an individual to *forego the exercise* of his functions for the benefit of society, for the non-exercise of bodily members rests with the free will of each person. Those, who on virtuous motives elect the state of celibacy or virginity, choose a higher state of life, not for selfish considerations, but as St. Thomas says so finely, "for the beauty and salvation of the whole human race." In a similar manner, whilst denying that the State enjoys the power of mutilating human members for the common good, we do not deny that individuals may sometimes be required, for the common good, to forego the exercise of certain liberties and functions. It is, indeed, an interference that the subjects of a State are loath to sanction, except for the gravest reasons, and with proper precautions against abuse and tyranny.

But who would deny that for the national safety in a defensive war the civil authority has the right to enlist even married men in the army, thus depriving them of the exercise of their marriage rights? Certainly no Catholic theologian denies it. On the same title of furthering the public welfare the eugenical segregation of undesirable types could not be regarded as an illegitimate exercise of civil authority, since it is the purpose of the State to regulate the social in-

tercourse of its members, and, as the State becomes more complex in its aims and more highly developed, degeneracy might become a social menace of such magnitude as to justify restrictions in the *exercise* of individual functions. But it is an entirely different proposition to suggest that the State can deprive an innocent man of the *possession* of his bodily faculties, for this is his private and individual good which the State must protect.

STERILIZATION NOT EFFICACIOUS

Finally, this ethical doctrine, which we have attempted to give in outline, can be demonstrated as true from the findings of various authorities who are definitely opposed to eugenical sterilization on social and scientific grounds. For any interference with the natural law is bound to have effects which are in the long run detrimental to human society. It would be futile, in this article, to attempt anything like a detailed analysis of the advantages or disadvantages of the operation, or to discuss the cases of disease or mental deficiency which seem to show an *a priori* case for sterilization, still less to criticize the canons used to classify sterilizable cases.

In the United States of America the subject has been very fully discussed from all these aspects, and a certain number of statistics are available. But it might be worth while drawing the attention of American readers to a recent European contribution to the discussion. A contributor to the *Revue de Droit Penal et de Criminologie et Archives Internationales de Médecine Légale* has made what, to the lay mind, appears a most careful survey of all the evidence. The definite conclusion is that the present state of our knowledge of biology, criminal anthropology, and statistics of sterilization, does not justify us in regarding sterilization as an efficacious means of preventing the spread of degeneracy and criminality. Quite apart from the moral issue it is open to serious scientific and sociological objections. This conclusion is practically the same, though the presentation of the evidence by Doctor Verdaeck is more thorough, as that reached by the report of the Central Association for Mental Welfare. Segregation would still be necessary for a large proportion of cases, even after sterilization; only a proportion of mental defectives are the off-

spring of defectives, and there is the insoluble difficulty of deciding who should be sterilized from a eugenical point of view.

In both these statements, it is fair to add, the possibility of fresh scientific knowledge justifying the practice is regarded as possible, but at the present juncture this knowledge has not been obtained, and methods which are open to serious scientific objections cannot be regarded as admissible. With regard to the unfortunate people themselves, it is admitted by all that they are happier under the kindly supervision of an institution. From the ethical point of view this state of hesitancy and doubt is fortunately absent, eugenical sterilization is indefensible.

The only right and sound eugenical precaution is segregation, and, although even this is capable of being imposed unjustly and tyrannically, there is not, and cannot be, the same intrinsic moral objection to the practice as that which must be offered to the compulsory mutilation of innocent persons. For segregation is consistent with a due regard for the dignity of a human being and the rights of God, and its practical application is consistent with the highest motives of Christian charity. It does at least regard the human being, even with the most ghastly defects, as possessing a human soul and individual rights, not merely as a complicated machine of ducts and glands to be regarded uniquely from the point of view of a plumber or of a sanitary engineer.

A Living Wage and Our Immoral Economic Order

IGNATIUS W. COX, S.J.

The fourth in the series delivered over WLWL, New York.

IN my last broadcast I stated that I have been making, whenever the opportunity offered, little personal investigations as to wages paid in various industries. A week ago, I was alone in the elevator of a mid-town building with the man operator. "How much do you earn, boy?" I inquired. The answer was \$22 a week. "Are you married?" I continued. "Yes," was the reply. "Have you any children?" I persisted. "No!" was the curt answer. "We can't live on \$22 a week. My wife has to go to work."

For the last two broadcasts, I have been insisting on the idea that every individual has an absolute right to use of the material goods of this world, in a sufficiency for human, humane and virtuous living. I have tried to bring home to you the idea that virtuous living is the end of man's earthly existence, and that sufficiency of material goods was an instrument designed by nature and nature's God to assist man in virtuous living. I have called attention repeatedly to the fact that our present economic order is immoral because it puts so many in the condition wherein, according to Pius XI: "Vast multitudes can only with great difficulty pay attention to that one thing necessary, namely, their eternal salvation." Of course, an immoral economic order can never justify one sin by a single individual.

In these broadcasts I have repeated and will repeat in season and out of season that the human right to use material goods in sufficiency, as a help and an instrumentality to virtuous living is a right antecedent to and prevalent over any acquired right of property. I have likewise emphasized in the words of St. Thomas that man has a right to private property but that its use should be common in the sense that others through just contracts and especially the wage contract, should have access to the material goods represented by property.

Now, who would say that the elevator operator, working

for \$22 a week, was working under a equitable contract, if the wages paid for his work do not represent that demand on goods for use in sufficiency to which he has a right from nature and nature's God? Who can maintain the thesis that, provided the business for which he works is a sound and profit-making business, the elevator operator is not a victim of an immoral economic order in being forced to accept a wage insufficient to demand goods necessary for the support of a wife and family in decent and frugal comfort?

Listen to the words of Pius XI in his encyclical on "Chaste Marriage." Speaking of the occasions of sin to married couples, arising from straitened economic circumstances, the Holy Father says: "So in the first place an effort must be made to obtain that which Our Predecessor, Leo XIII, of happy memory, has already required, namely, that in the State such economic and social methods should be set up as will enable every head of a family to earn as much as according to his station in life, is necessary for himself, his wife and for the rearing of his children, for 'the laborer is worthy of his hire.' To deny this or to make light of what is equitable is a grave injustice and is placed among the greatest sins by Holy Writ. Nor is it lawful to fix such a scanty wage as will be insufficient for the upkeep of the family in the circumstances in which it is placed."

All this ought to be as clear as the noon-day sun to the Christian and Catholic mind. All this follows from the right of all men, based on the clear intent of nature and nature's God, to a use in sufficiency of the material goods necessary and appropriate for human and humane, decent and virtuous living. On what principle are the higher-ups in a given sound and profit-making industry entitled to enormous salaries, as long as the lower-downs are deprived of a living wage? There is nothing in rational ethics or Christianity that can defend this practice.

And yet we find Catholics so unconsciously the victims of the perverted Capitalistic ideas in which all of us have been brought up that they defend or smooth over or do not vividly realize the utter iniquity and wrongfulness of the situation. When a strike for a living wage was at its height, a Catholic professional man, educated and intelligent, who would never refuse any appeal I made to him in

the name of charity, sat in my room and expressed the opinion, when I was condemning the wages paid to the workers, that they did not deserve any more. "Deserve any more!" I exclaimed. "Can this large industry run its business without the aid of the workers?" This is one of the essential points of this whole matter of a living wage. In the words of Leo XIII, "Capital cannot do without labor, nor labor without capital."

The product of so insignificant a thing as a household pin is the output of a thousand hands all engaged in a social, a coöperative work, to produce goods for the use of all. Capital cannot do without labor and labor cannot do without capital. And in this social and coöperative work in which labor is engaged, the normal able-bodied laborer is entitled as a result of his labor to a demand on goods for use in the sufficiency necessary for human and humane living. Call that demand on goods, wages, or money, or what you will, but if the laborer does not get as a result of his labor, use of goods in a sufficiency, he is being deprived of what is his human right for the part he plays in what is a coöperative and social work. A sufficiency of goods for use in human, humane, frugal and decent living is the due of every laborer working for a going concern. In the words of Leo XIII, "To defraud anyone of wages that are his due is a crime which cries to the avenging anger of heaven."

Let us look into this matter a little deeper. Why is every able-bodied worker for a going concern entitled to a wage which in reality constitutes a demand on goods sufficient for human and humane, decent and frugal living? And here we must examine a difficulty raised by the school of economic liberalism, of *laissez faire* on which our modern perverted capitalistic system is founded. Liberalism and *laissez faire* stand for freedom. If the laborer freely agrees to work for a given wage, even though that wage is not a living wage, has not the employer satisfied all the demands of justice by paying him the wage agreed upon? This age-old and hoary objection is being raised today.

In answer, I say there is a two-fold aspect to labor. One is a personal aspect. If you look at labor as a merely personal thing, the laborer is free to work for any wage, or no wage, or not to work at all. But labor, besides being personal is a necessary thing. It is necessary for man to labor

in order to preserve and develop his life to that perfection demanded by a strict command of the natural law. Without labor man cannot preserve and develop his life physically, intellectually, and morally, and thus glorify God by virtuous living. Hence labor is necessary for man and the reward of this necessary labor is by natural right the necessary material goods without which human development and perfection, especially moral, is normally very difficult.

All this is contained in the words of Leo XIII, answering the principles of economic liberalism or *laissez faire*: "To labor is to exert oneself for the sake of procuring what is necessary for the purposes of life, and most of all, for self-preservation. 'In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat thy bread.' Therefore, a man's labor has two notes or characters. First of all, it is personal. Secondly, a man's labor is necessary; for without the results of labor a man cannot live; and self-conservation is a law of nature, which it is wrong to disobey. Now if we were to consider labor merely so far as it is personal, doubtless it would be within the workman's right to accept any rate of wages. But, the labor of the workingman is not only personal, but it is necessary and that makes all the difference. The preservation of life is the bounden duty of each and all, and to fail therein is a crime. It follows that each one has a right to procure what is required to live; and the poor can acquire it in no other way than by work and wages. There is a dictate of nature more imperious and more ancient than any bargain between man and man, that the remuneration must be enough to support the wage earner in reasonable and frugal comfort. If through necessity or fear of a worse evil the workman accepts harder conditions, he is the victim of force and injustice."

Could anything be more clear cut and convincing than this rebuke by Leo XIII to the perverted capitalism of his day in its denial of a living wage? Liberty of contract in the wage engagement is the cry of the advocate of *laissez faire* and economic liberalism. Liberty of contract in the wage engagement is the very basis and foundation upon which the wrong-thinking capitalist finds it possible to deny a living wage. A denial of a living wage based on liberty of contract is both immoral in such a denial and immoral in the basis and foundation assigned for it.

The acceptance by the worker of a non-living wage in the so-called liberty of wage contract is neither based on the free contract of the workingman nor the free contract of the employer. It is not based on the free contract of the workingman; for the workingman is no more free in the acceptance of a non-living wage than the innocent wayfarer who hands over his purse to a bandit at the point of a pistol. The workingman at the point of the gun of economic necessity hands over the true price and value of his work to the unscrupulous employer, not by a free contract, but because he is forced to do so for fear of a greater evil.

Nor does a denial of a living wage by a so-called free contract represent liberty of contract on the part of the employer. No man is morally free to make an immoral contract. Such a contract is not liberty but license. Liberty unrestrained by moral law and justice is the license of a bandit, not the liberty of a free and moral man. The employer in the wage contract who denies a living wage, when he is capable of paying one, is engaged in the same kind of license displayed by the footpad in holding up an innocent wayfarer. If the individualist hopes to satisfy his own conscience or to defend himself before the bar of righteous public opinion in the persistent denial of a living wage, he will have to think up some better defense than the hoary and exploded myth of liberty of contract.

Pius XI, forty years after Leo XIII, gives us principle after principle by which to demonstrate that the workingman has a right to wages, constituting in fact a demand on material goods in a sufficiency necessary for human and humane and decent living. He shows how States grow rich not only by the toil of employer and employed but also by the beneficence of the Creator in His liberal grant of natural resources. Then he shows how through private property these natural resources are to be for the benefit of all. "Now, the natural law, or rather, God's will manifested by it, demands that right order be observed in the application of natural resources to human needs; and this order consists in everything having its proper owner. Then the Holy Father shows how private property should work to the benefit of all; "Hence it follows that unless a man apply his labor to his own property, an alliance must be formed between his toil and his neighbors property; for each is help-

less without the other. . . . It is therefore false to ascribe the results of their combined efforts to either party alone; and it is flagrantly unjust that either should deny the efficacy of the other and seize all the profits."

After this Pius XI is led to a discussion of the just distribution of the wealth socially created by the coöperation of capital and labor. Listen to the vigorous words of the fearless Pontiff: "Each class must receive its due share, and the distribution of created goods must be brought into conformity with the demands of the common good and social justice. For every sincere observer is conscious that the vast differences between the few who hold excessive wealth and the many who live in destitution constitute a grave evil in modern society. . . . The immense number of propertyless wage earners on the one hand, and the superabundant riches of the fortunate few on the other is an unanswerable argument that the earthly goods, so abundantly produced in this age of industrialism are far from rightly distributed and equitably shared among the various classes of men."

Then Pius XI, from the vantage point of the Vatican, solemnly declares, that unless these reforms are attempted "with all energy and without delay, let nobody persuade himself that the peace and tranquillity of human society can be effectively defended against the forces of revolution." There is the answer to those Catholics who are so ardently tilting against Communism and not at all interested in the reform of our immoral economic order. In what shall the reform consist? Listen to Pius XI: "Every effort must be made that at least in the future a just share only of the fruits of production be permitted to accumulate in the hands of the wealthy, and that an ample sufficiency be supplied to the workingmen."

And how is this distribution to take place? In the mind of Pius XI by a rightful and living wage. Listen to his words: "This program cannot, however, be realized unless the wage earner without property be placed in such circumstances that by skill and thrift, he can acquire a certain moderate ownership. . . . But how can he save money except from his wages and by living sparingly, who has nothing but his labor by which to obtain food and the necessaries of life. Let us, turn therefore, to the question of wages which Leo XIII held to be 'of great importance,' stating and explaining

where necessary principles and precepts." And the principles of Pius XI of course are the same as those of Leo XIII. "Every effort must be made that fathers of families receive a wage sufficient to meet adequately ordinary domestic needs. If in the present state of society this is not always feasible, social justice demands that reforms be introduced without delay which will guarantee to every adult working-man just such a wage."

That it has been feasible in the past and is feasible today for many American industries to pay just such a living wage, I think is self-evident from the high salaries and high profits in many American businesses. That such a wage has not been paid is because our economic and financial order is immoral, is organized not for human need but for human greed. If our American economic and financial order was organized for human need, it would fulfil the ideal laid down by Pius X: "For, then only will the economic and social organism be soundly established and attain its end when it secures for all and each those goods which the wealth and resources of nature, technical achievement, and the social organization of economic affairs can give. These goods should be sufficient to supply all needs and an honest livelihood and to uplift to that higher level of prosperity and culture, which provided it be used with prudence, is not only not a hindrance, but is of singular help to virtue."

It think all will agree with me that here in America we have the wealth and the resources and the technical achievement to develop the better economic order proposed by Pius XI. Instead of that we have developed an immoral economic order which is not only not a help but a hindrance to virtuous living. If we look for the reason, we find selfishness, unbridled and sordid greed, an almost universal departure from sound rational and Christian ideas on the end and purpose of property and economic production. We are not organized economically for production but for profit, not organized primarily for man and morality but for the madness of mere money making. And this false and pagan organization of our economic life, this immoral economic order is the occasion of the pitiable ruin of human bodies and souls alike.

In the words of Pius XI: "How universally has the true Christian spirit become impaired, which formerly produced

such lofty sentiments even in uncultured and illiterate men. In its stead, man's one solicitude is to obtain his daily bread in any way he can. And so bodily labor, which was decreed by Providence for the good of man's body and soul, has everywhere changed into an instrument of man's perversion; for dead matter leaves the factory ennobled and transformed, where men are corrupted and degraded."

If we are to save men's bodies and souls, we must change our immoral economic order by changing the pagan mentality of men with regard to the end and purpose of property and production. I am bold enough to say we must change most radically the mentality of many Catholics and Catholic leaders, and make the mentality of Catholics a Catholic mentality with regard to the purposes of property and production.

In the *Commonweal* I read: "Every Catholic editor is painfully aware of the strong and unfortunately, sometimes bitter divisions among American Catholics on the subject of Social Justice and the papal teaching on that supremely important of all temporal problems." The apostolate of clergy and laity in our present pagan society is an economic apostolate. Therein lies the salvation of souls purchased by the life blood of the heart of Christ. Pius XI urges the clergy to seek diligently and to select prudently and to train fittingly lay apostles for the principles of social reconstruction among workingmen and employers. And he says: "No easy task is here imposed upon the clergy, wherefore all candidates for the sacred priesthood must be adequately prepared to meet it by intense study of social matters."

The end and object of these broadcasts has been to arouse interest in the social teaching of Catholicism. I have received words of encouragement and approval from prelates, priests, the laity and even from non-Catholics. Words of approval have come from Prince Edward Island in Canada in the extreme east and from California in the far west. For this interest I am grateful and by it I am immeasurably encouraged. Let us form a great brotherhood of prayer for Social Justice. No human power can change our immoral economic order. Only God can send us the fearless and wise leadership we need. In the meantime, each of us, you and I, will carry on for God and country. We cannot fail, if we rely on God and true Christian principles.

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