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Religion and...

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RELIGION AND ECONOMIC LIFE



CATHOLIC HOUR

REV. BENJAMIN L. MASSE, S.J.

Religion And Economic Life

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BY

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THE RIGHT AND WRONG OF IT

Talk given on April 4, 1948

Years ago, I read something in the *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius of Loyola which deeply impressed me.

It was to this effect: Man is made for God; everything else on the face of the earth is made for man, to help him return to God.

At first sight, this statement seems innocent enough. One might even be tempted to ask: what is so earth-shaking about that? Why, to anyone who believes in God, the Saint is talking nothing more exalted than common sense. To tell the truth, he sounds a good deal like the first page of the old penny catechism.

I agree. In stressing man's subordination to God, and the subordination of everything else to man, Saint Ignatius is talking nothing more than common sense, but it is the kind of fundamental common sense that has turned, and can again turn, the whole world upside down. Once we consider it, penetrate and realize the truth of it, this simple statement explodes in our minds like a revelation from

on high. It is the very stuff of which revolutions are made: spiritual revolutions in the secrecy of human hearts; historic revolutions in the soul and body of society.

Of course we are made for God; otherwise life has no meaning and we are doomed to despair. Small as the human heart is, its capacity for love and happiness is literally boundless. Only God Himself can fill it and make us satisfied. "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our hearts shall never be at rest save in Thee." These words of the great Augustine enshrine the experience of the human race. They are the beginning of all wisdom, and the end of. They testify that the perfect happiness for which we constantly thirst belongs not to this life but to the next one. They sing of immortality.

And since we are made for God, of course everything else in the visible creation is made for us. All the creatures about us—the minerals in the bowels of the earth, and the growing and the creeping things upon it

—are the means God intended us to use in order to return to Him. Though we are pilgrims on the earth and have here no lasting home, we must eat and drink, cover our bodies against heat and cold, rear homes and schools and churches, build cultures and civilizations; for these activities satisfy our human needs. They reflect the dignity and intelligence with which our Maker endowed us.

The whole business, then, of producing and distributing wealth is a sacred affair, as men who lived in other times understood better than we do. Read some day the inspiring story of the merchant guilds and the craft guilds of the Middle Ages. There you will meet people—ancestors of ours—who understood thoroughly why the Master, without incongruity, included in the loveliest of all prayers the earthly petition: “Give us this day our daily bread.” They knew that the business of making a living is part of the much more important business of saving their immortal souls.

The Church, therefore, as the institution founded by Jesus Christ to teach, guide and assist men in their journey back to God, cannot be disinterested in

the use made of the material world. Poverty, like suffering and sickness, can help us to serve and love God. But it can have and frequently does have the opposite effect. Instead of detaching men from the passing fancies of this life and freeing their souls for contemplation of eternal things, it embitters and crushes them; it chokes the spiritual aspirations which are normal to human hearts. Saint Thomas Aquinas was no twentieth-century materialist; yet he pointed out that it was difficult for a man to lead a healthy religious life unless he could count on a minimum of material goods. In his encyclical, “On Reconstructing the Social Order,” the late Pope Pius XI developed the same thought in these unambiguous words:

For then only will the social economy be rightly established and attain its purposes when all and each are supplied with all the goods that the wealth and resources of nature, technical achievement and the social organization of economic life can furnish. And those goods ought indeed to be enough both to meet the demands of necessity and decent comfort and to advance people to that happier and fuller condition of life which, when it is wisely cared for, is not only no hindrance to virtue but helps it greatly.

In vindicating the right of all God’s children to access to the

rich resources of nature, the present Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, has been no less energetic than was his predecessor. He told a group of Italian workers in 1943: "Woe to him who forgets that a true national society incorporates social justice and demands a just and fitting sharing by all in the goods of the country."

If the Church is concerned lest individuals lack the material means helpful to virtuous living, if she is concerned, that is to say, that natural resources serve the purpose intended by the Creator, she is no less concerned with the spiritual effects of economic activities. It is not sufficient that the goods produced by human industry satisfy the material needs of all; it is also necessary that the *manner* in which goods are produced and distributed contribute to the spiritual perfection of those engaged in the process. If we survey with our mind's eye the whole wide world—if we see a banker at his desk in London, a mechanic on an assembly line in Detroit, a coolie in the rice fields of the Orient, a wheat farmer of Australia and a cattleman of the Argentine—we shall realize how true it is that men

spend half their working time in the hard work of making a living. Surely, God did not intend that all this time should be useless for eternity. "Be ye perfect," Our Blessed Lord admonished us, "as your heavenly Father is perfect." This is our supreme goal in life, to which everything else must be subordinate. Can it possibly be true, then, that we tend toward this goal only when we engage formally in prayer and worship? That all the rest of our waking hours is wasted? That in following God's command to earn our daily bread in the sweat of our brows we are not tending toward Him, serving Him and loving Him?

These questions our Lord Himself has answered. "And he spoke also a parable to them," we read in St. Luke's Gospel, "that we ought always to pray." On this theme the Apostle to the Gentiles played variations that are familiar to all of us. "All whatsoever else you do in word or in work, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him" (*Colossians*, 3:17). And again: "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory

of God" (1 *Corinthians*, 10:31).

To recall this important truth to the busy minds of men, beset by problems of the present and anxieties for the future, is clearly the duty of the Church. The clerk behind the drugstore counter, the stenographer at her typewriter, the doctor in the operating room, the farmer plowing his fields, the painter and the candlestick maker, the president of the corporation and the last office boy hired—all must be reminded that their work has an eternal significance, that it brings them closer to Christ or takes them away from Him, that it must be done for the glory of God as well as for monetary reward, or some other lesser good.

Does this sound quixotic? Do we find ourselves saying that of course we would never think of criticizing St. Paul, but all the same if he had to perform our job, he might sing a different tune. If this, indeed, is our reaction, then it is a dismal commentary on how far modern economic life has drifted from the religious principles which should inspire it. It explains, perhaps, why Pope Pius XI could write in 1931: "Unbridled ambition for domination has

succeeded the desire for gain; the whole economic life has become hard, cruel and relentless in a ghastly way." Those are harsh words, but who will say they are not justified? What a different place the marketplace would be if, with St. Paul, whatever we did there, as lenders or borrowers, as buyers or sellers, as employers or employes, we did in the name of Christ and for His greater glory!

For yet another reason, the Church cannot wash its hands of what goes on in the marketplace. It is not enough that she remind us that the resources of nature are meant for the support of the whole human race, and that in developing these resources we must pursue at the same time our spiritual perfection. She must also explain and have reference to the moral laws which apply to economic activities. Most employers and most workers are men of good will: they want to do the right thing, the socially-approved thing, the thing that squares with their consciences. But what the right thing is often remains obscure. Men need the same sort of moral guidance for economics that they already enjoy for education, marriage, and other

human activities. This the Church is duty-bound to supply. Is there, for instance, any moral justification for private property? Is public ownership of the means of production in accord with moral principles? How about the wage contract, is it essentially just? What are the ethical criteria for wages, for prices, for profits? Have workers any obligation toward their employers? It is right to take interest on non-productive loans? And that very important question, so pertinent today, what are the rights and duties of the State with regard to economic life?

These questions, and many more like them, need to be answered if an economic system is to fulfil the purpose intended by God. They cannot very well be answered independently by millions of self-interested individuals, for in that event we would have in the marketplace not order but something close to chaos. An authoritative voice is wanted, and that voice can only be the Church founded by Christ to teach the moral law.

In their various pronouncements, then, on economic life, the Popes have not been concerned with purely technical

matters. For these they neither have nor claim special competence. Christ established His Church to save souls, not to direct business corporations or to administer labor unions. But within the field of morals, the Popes do claim jurisdiction; they insist on their God-given prerogative to say what is right and wrong in the use of property. They reject the slogan, popularly attributed to a great industrialist, that whatever is good business is also good morals; they see in it only a modern application of the hoary pagan principle: "Might makes right." For more than fifty years, they have pleaded for a change of hearts, a reform of morals; they have warned against greed for gain and lust for power. They have reminded us that there is a divine plan for economic life as there is for everything else, and that we can ignore that plan only at our peril.

During the past thirty years we have tried many schemes to solve the so-called economic problem. We have tried them mostly in vain. As we look about the battered world today and note the social strains, the ugly spirit of class warfare, the

swelling tide of blind and brutal revolution, it is clear that some new and different remedy must be tried. Such a remedy the Church these many years has tried to supply. To busy, worried moderns in the marketplace,

she offers, indeed, something new and something different. She offers a good dose of old-fashioned Christian morality. To a world desperate for reform, the Church offers justice tempered by love.

IS PROPERTY PRIVATE?

Talk given on April 11, 1948

Last September I visited the annual convention of the British Trades Union Congress at Southport in England. There I found the delegates engaged in a lively debate over the immediate nationalization of the steel industry. A resolution to that effect was defeated, but the debate still goes on. The debate goes on in other countries, too — in France, Holland, Italy and Western Germany. In countries behind the Iron Curtain the debate, unfortunately, has become academic. There ownership of productive property has been largely and forcibly nationalized. The question is not unknown in this country. From time to time someone demands that steel be nationalized, or coal, or the railroads. And, of course, many of our utilities have been publicly owned for years.

What is the moral right and wrong of this great issue? Do private citizens have a right to own productive property? If so, what is the nature of this right and whence does it come? Or, is public ownership of the means of production demanded by the

moral law which God has imprinted on human nature and which we call the natural law? According to the Catholic Church, what does Christian tradition teach about this very timely, very practical and very difficult question?

We saw last week that God created the natural resources of the world for the support of the human race. To each one of us He gave a mind and a pair of hands whereby we can develop these resources and use them for our material needs and comforts. Evidently He intended that every man should have access to the wealth of nature, for in no other way can human life be sustained. All of this is obvious enough. Difficulties arise only when we ask ourselves, how did God intend that men should develop and distribute the riches of the world? Through private property? Through public ownership? Through a combination of both?

More than a half-century ago Pope Leo XIII gave an authoritative answer to these questions. He said that man had a natural

right to private property, and by private property he meant the means of production as well as consumer goods. In his historic encyclical, "On the Condition of the Working Classes," he wrote:

"Every man has by nature the right to possess property as his own . . . There is no need here to bring in the State. Man precedes the State and possesses, prior to the formation of the State, the right of providing for the sustenance of his body."

In a statement issued on February 7, 1940, the American Catholic bishops emphasized the same doctrine.

"The Church (they said) has always defended the right to own private property and also to bequeath and to inherit it. We have vindicated this right even to the point of being falsely accused of favoring the rich against the poor. The Church teaches that the right to own property is based on the natural law of which God Himself is the author."

Clearly, then, the Church defends the right of private property. It teaches that ownership is natural to man; that it corresponds to human needs and befits human dignity; that it promotes peace and progress. The experience of the human race, Pope Leo said, in all times and in all places, confirms this doctrine.

And to the same effect have spoken all his successors on the throne of Peter.

To avoid a common misunderstanding, we must now ask ourselves what is the nature of the property rights which the Church defends. In these days when the anarchy in men's minds is so often reflected in their language, it is necessary to define our terms. A good many people, for instance, espouse democracy today who obviously do not agree on the meaning of that word. So it is with the right to private property. Over the significance of this phrase, over the nature of this right, a great deal of confusion exists in the modern world, and the Church has taken special care to prevent its position being misunderstood. On the fifth anniversary of the outbreak of World War II, Pope Pius XII broadcast a plea for postwar recovery and reform. After re-affirming that the Church could not accept a social order in which the right to private property is denied, he added immediately:

"But neither can it accept these systems which recognize the right to private property according to a completely false concept of it and which are, therefore, opposed to a true and healthy social order.

“Accordingly, where, for instance, “Capitalism, is based on such false concepts and arrogates to itself an unlimited right over property, without any subordination to the common good, the Church has condemned it as contrary to the natural law.”

And His Holiness continued:

“In defending, therefore, the principle of private property, the Church pursues a high ethico-social purpose. She does not intend to defend absolutely and simply the present state of affairs, as if she saw in it the expression of God’s will, nor to defend as a matter of principle the rich and the plutocrat against the poor and the indigent. Right from the beginning, she has been the defender of the oppressed against the tyranny of the powerful, and has always sponsored the just claims of all classes of workers against every injustice.”

As the Church defines it, the right to private property has a social as well as an individual character. She denies that individual owners are free to use their property in any manner they please. In addition to their personal interests, she insists that they must always bear in mind the needs of society. If this were not so, the Church points out, the purpose for which God created property would result not in a reasonable distribution of wealth but in

a concentration of economic power that would deny ownership to the majority of men. Instead of social stability, private property would be a cause of social strife. It would divide men, as indeed it has divided them in too many modern countries, into two classes, property holders and proletariat, and set them at one another’s throats.

To avoid abuses of ownership, to see that property is linked to social responsibility, to provide for its fair distribution is the duty of public authority. As Pope Pius XI said in the encyclical “On Reconstructing the Social Order.”

“It follows from the two-fold character of ownership, which we have termed individual and social, that men must take into account in this matter not only their own advantages but also the common good. To define in detail these duties when the need occurs and when the natural law does not do so, is the function of the government. Provided that the natural and divine law be observed, the public authority, in view of the common good, may specify more accurately what is licit and what is illicit for property owners in the use of their possessions.

To those who reject even this limited degree of state intervention, the Pope issued a stern warning. He said that by adjust-

ing "ownership to meet the needs of the public good" government "acts not as an enemy, but as a friend of private owners." It prevents them from rushing to their own destruction. I dare say there are many people in Europe today who regret that they did not take these words to heart when Pope Pius XI spoke to them in 1931.

Besides insisting on social control of private ownership, the Church recognizes a field for public ownership. By their very nature some forms of property are so closely connected with the general welfare or involve such great economic power that their possession by private individuals is a constant danger to the general welfare. A good example, and one very much in our minds today, is uranium, from which atomic energy is produced. In such a case public ownership is clearly indicated.

Similarly, whenever the concentration of capital blocks the just distribution of property, and other remedies are ineffective, the State has the right to expropriate the owners, giving, of course, due compensation. This follows from the duty of government to ensure that productive property fulfills its social purpose.

But in defending this restricted amount of public ownership, the Church warns against regarding it as a panacea for all social ills. Nationalization has its disadvantages, too, for both workers and the general public. It should be adopted as a means of social control only when the less drastic remedies available to the State are inadequate to remove dangers and abuses.

In an ideal social order, there would be, according to the mind of the Church, widespread distribution of effective, responsible private ownership. In industries which require huge accumulations of capital, and where ownership is frequently anonymous and essentially irresponsible, the Church would provide social control by enlarging the area of democracy. She would give to the employees of big corporations a more intimate and responsible share in their life than is now the case. If under modern conditions many workers can never hope to own productive property, why should they not be given some participation, at least, in its values and benefits?

Almost everywhere today the institution of private property is under sharp attack. To this onslaught the Church serenely

opposes her traditional doctrine. But she is not content to repel the enemies of private ownership; she would save it also from its friends. With the wisdom of centuries she knows that what makes men dissatisfied and ready for any desperate venture is not private property but its abuse. Reform, then, not ruin is the solution she proposes; reform based on the Divine plan for the use of material things. To a world that largely ignores God and disregards His designs for economic life, the Church recalls the great, fundamental truth that all human ownership is stewardship. She reminds property holders that some day the Maker of all things will demand of them a solemn accounting of their trust.

Have we forgotten that "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" (*Psalms* 23:1)? That ownership is neither absolute nor unlimited? That our possessions are not meant to be used selfishly, for ourselves alone, but also for the well-being of society? Have we made a golden god of property, becoming so absorbed in the scramble for wealth that we neglect to store up treasures in heaven, "where neither the rust nor moth doth consume, and where thieves do

not break through nor steal" (*Matthew* 6:20).?

If we cannot say "No" to these questions, we are just as truly the enemies of private property as those are who have sworn to destroy it. Property holders who ignore their social responsibilities, who imagine that they can use their wealth in any way they desire, simply because it is theirs, who object to every effort made by public authority to curb abuses and promote reforms are the best allies revolutionaries have. They are preparing the way for the collapse of an institution which we serve neither wisely nor well.

This is the time, then, to talk little about the rights of private property and much about its duties; to re-examine our attitudes toward ownership in the light of Christian principles; to weigh economic activities in the scales of eternity. Some day all of us must die, and dying leave behind the material goods we have accumulated. As we lie there breathing out the last life that is in us, we shall not be comforted by the stocks and bonds, the farms and factories we have managed to acquire. If in those last solemn moments we are able to think at all, the only peace

and security our property can give us will be the knowledge that we amassed it and used it in a manner pleasing to God. Then only shall we be happy if we have merited to hear the

praise of Jesus Christ: "Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many; enter into the joy of thy lord" (*Matthew 25:21*).

THE MORALITY OF WAGES

Talk given on April 18, 1948

For their livelihood, the vast majority of people in this country are wholly dependent on wages. Should income from this source stop, they can exist for a while on unemployment insurance supplemented by their savings. When these are exhausted, they can go on a little longer, perhaps, by asking help from their relatives and friends, and by begging credit from the butcher, the grocer and the landlord. But sooner or later they reach the end of the road; they face the bitter choice of starving to death or accepting public charity.

In all the industrialized countries of the world, the situation is the same. Never before have so many people been so completely dependent on income from wages. It seems clear that this dependence is the most characteristic note of modern, industrial society. Better than anything else, it explains the sense of insecurity, the restlessness, the dissatisfaction which are so prevalent today. In a notable degree it is a cause of bad relations between workers and employers: a

festering source of social discord and even of revolution. In short, such complete dependence on wage income, particularly when these wages do not allow the workers to provide properly against sickness and old age, is one of the devils which must be exorcised from the body economic before this tired, frightened world of ours will ever again know real peace.

In various statements on economic matters, the Church has pleaded for reforms that would enable the masses of workers to become owners. Such reforms she regards as central to the whole social question. But in thus striking at the roots of economic insecurity, the Church has not neglected the wage contract itself. After all, regardless of reforms, millions of men will continue to be wage earners. They, too, must be given some of that sense of security which we associate with ownership. Furthermore, in the ordinary course of events, it is only through the wage contract that most workers have any hope of ever becoming owners. How else,

indeed, can they acquire property except through savings from their current wages?

Toward social peace, then, nothing contributes so practically today, and so immediately, as a wise and just system of wages. Until we have such a system, most other social problems will either remain unresolved or will be solved in a partial and imperfect manner. If the history of the past half-century teaches us anything, it is this: the key to all modern economic reform is the just wage.

Fortunately, over all other suggested reforms, the just wage has one tremendous advantage. It is accepted by just about everybody, by employers as well as employees. I daresay that no one in this listening audience has ever heard anybody advocate or defend an unjust wage. And the reason is obvious. The payment of an unjust wage is nothing more than a form of theft, and while the moral sense of many moderns has been blunted somewhat, it still condemns robbery as a sin against society and against Almighty God.

The difficulty begins when we ask ourselves what, from a moral point of view, constitutes a just wage. One classical reply has it that a just wage is whatever

wage is freely agreed on by an employer and an employe. A second answer emphasizes purely economic factors, calling that wage just which results from the operation of the law of supply and demand. Still another school of thought holds that a just wage is one proportioned to the value of the worker's product. All these answers contain some element of truth, but from a moral standpoint not one of them is entirely satisfactory. They ignore a consideration which is surely fundamental to this whole question of wages. They ignore what moralists call the factor of human needs.

What do people usually say when wages fall below a certain level? They say, do they not, that a man cannot live on that? That on such a low wage he cannot possibly get by? Now what do these judgments signify? Clearly they signify that people condemn wages that are too low precisely because such wages are not sufficient for human needs; because they are not wages which enable a man to live in a manner becoming his dignity. According to the judgment, then, of men generally, the first requirement for a just wage, that is, a fair return for honest work, is that it be a minimum living

wage; a wage, that is, which permits a worker to buy adequate food, clothes and shelter, to satisfy essential spiritual and cultural needs, to provide for old age and the normal hazards of life. Exactly how much such a wage should be in dollars and cents varies with time and circumstance, but it can always be determined, at least, in broad, general lines.

That every worker is entitled in justice to at least a minimum living wage is clear from the nature of our life here on earth. More than fifty years ago, Pope Leo XIII said that "the earth, even though divided among private owners, ceases not thereby to administer to the needs of all." But the only way in which the earth can minister to the needs of propertyless workers is through the wage contract. If wages do not suffice for minimum living needs, then God's plan for the material support of human life is being frustrated. As a matter of justice, the minimum equivalent for the full use of the energies of an ordinary adult workingman is a minimum living wage. An employer who can pay such a wage but who refuses to do so becomes objectively guilty in God's sight of a serious sin. He cannot plead in

excuse the law of supply and demand, or argue that he did no wrong because the employee agreed to work for less than a living wage. On this latter point, Pope Leo spoke very strongly. He said:

"Let the workingman and the employer make free agreements, and in particular let them agree freely as to wages: nevertheless, there underlies such agreements a dictate of natural justice more imperious and ancient than any bargain between man and man, namely, that wages ought not to be insufficient to support a frugal and upright wage-earner. If, through necessity or fear of a worse evil, the workman accepts harder conditions because an employer or contractor will afford him no better, he is made the victim of force, against which justice cries out in protest."

With this much clear about the minimum wage, a second question immediately arises: Is this wage a personal wage or a family wage? Is it a wage sufficient merely for the needs of the worker, or one sufficient also for the support of the worker's wife and children?

When we ask these questions, we have in mind the normal, adult workingman and the average workingman's family. We are not talking about the man who for one reason or another is unable to perform an ordinary

day's work; or about the family which, by reason of a large number of children or for some other cause, is regarded as exceptional. To the question thus understood, there can be only one morally sound answer—the workingman who gives his full time and energies to an employer is entitled to a minimum family living wage. The American Catholic bishops made this unmistakably clear in a statement issued February 7, 1940:

“By the term living wage we understand a wage sufficient not merely for the decent support of the workingman himself but also of his family. A wage so low that it must be supplemented by the wage of wife and mother or by the children of the family before it can provide adequate food, clothing and shelter together with essential spiritual and cultural needs cannot be regarded as a living wage.”

If we keep in mind the standard of human needs, we shall easily see the logic of this fine statement of the Bishops. The average adult workingman is either the father of a family, or is looking forward to becoming one. Among his human needs is the need of supporting a wife and children, and this need is dictated by nature itself. The function of his labor, therefore, is not merely the satisfaction of

his personal wants; it includes also the wants of his family. This is so true that in practice a wage which is not a family living wage is not a personal living wage either. For is it not a fact that a father is driven irresistibly by instinctive love to share what he earns with his wife and children? What father will eat while his dear ones are hungry? Or go warmly clad while they stand shivering with cold? But if his earnings are inadequate for the support of his wife and children, they become, when shared with them, insufficient even for himself.

The minimum family living wage is a moral imperative. It is the first charge on industry, on a par with any claim of the owners to profits. It is the foundation of a just social order.

We have been talking all this time about the minimum wage demanded by the virtue of justice; the least possible wage that can be paid a normal adult workingman without violating the moral law of God. We have not been talking necessarily about a just wage. No wage is a just wage which does not satisfy minimum human needs, but a wage can satisfy human needs and still be unjust. It can fail to represent a proper remunera-

tion for the use of the worker's physical and mental energies. Above the minimum, wages can and should vary according to the skill of the worker, the demand for his labor, the value of his product, the peculiar hardships and dangers of his job. They should vary also with technological progress, since workers have a right to share in the advancing material standards of the community. To a moral estimate of wages, all these factors are essential.

At this point I can easily imagine an employer rising to his feet to register a mild objection. He might express his dissent in these or similar terms: "It is all very well and good for moralists to talk about justice and apply ethical principles to the wage system. We employers do not quarrel with the principles.

"We wish to deal justly with our employes and thus merit the approval of God. But we wish to merit, too, the approval of our stockholders. We are also bound to them by obligations of justice. What should we do, then, when we are unable to pay wages which satisfy the norms of justice? If we bankrupt the enterprise, everybody will suffer, including the workers, who will lose their jobs."

To this sincere difficulty Pope Pius XI gave a detailed answer in his encyclical, "On the Reconstruction of the Social Order." He said that in fixing wages the condition of the business must always be considered. When a firm cannot pay just wages without losing money, the reason for this unhealthy state of affairs must first be ascertained. If the cause is found to be managerial inefficiency, the employer is still bound to pay a just wage. The workers should not be asked to subsidize by their sacrifices an inefficiency that can readily be corrected. When, however, the cause of inability to pay is beyond the power of the employer to remove, he is obviously excused from the obligation to give a just wage, since no one is bound to do the impossible. But in this case, Pope Pius insisted, the employer is obliged to join with other businessmen and with his employes in a concerted effort to eliminate the evil; and if businessmen acting together, and assisted by their employes, cannot accomplish this, the power and authority of government should be invoked as a last resort. Any other answer would involve a resignation to injustice: a confession that economic life cannot or should not be made

to harmonize with moral principles. This the Church will never admit, since the same God, Who gave us moral laws, created the earth and ordered us to cultivate it in the sweat of our brows. He cannot contradict Himself.

At the present moment the problem of wages is a primary source of unrest and dissatisfaction. It is complicating, both here and abroad, an international situation which is already delicate and dangerous. In the interests of domestic peace and of world peace, it should be solved quickly and peacefully. Admitted-

ly, there exists no easy answer to the wage problem. Certainly the Church knows of none. But she does suggest that an emphasis on the morality involved might help men of good will to reach agreement who otherwise might fail. She suggests that, having tried just about everything else, we might be well advised to place on the bargaining table, side by side with legal codes and economic studies, the moral law of God. For a wage contract which merits the approval of God would no doubt be acceptable to men.

TOWARD INDUSTRIAL PEACE

Talk given on April 25, 1948

One day in the spring of 1945, several thousand Italian workers gathered at St. Peter's in Rome to ask the advice and blessing of His Holiness, Pope Pius XII. Not many miles to the north a tough, stubborn German army was locked in desperate struggle with the advancing Allies. Guns chattered and roared; from the peaceful skies bombs whistled their dread warning of impending death and destruction; on the plains and hills of Tuscany, the youth of a dozen nations fought and bled and died. But Eternal Rome was free at last, Rome and all Italy to the south of it. Happy to forget the past, already men were turning anxious minds to the future. Demoralized by dictatorship, battered by war, even the optimistic among them could see ahead only long years of uncertainty, hardship and toil. Of one thing only were they sure: if they had the chance, this time they would build society on solid ground. They would build an Italy where people could be happy, even the little people, and where fathers and mothers could raise their children in peace and security.

And so these workers have come to the common Father of all, to the Vicar of Christ on earth, to hear from his lips the nature of the grim task which lay before them.

Pope Pius XII spoke to them of the past. He invoked the memory of Leo XIII, who, more than fifty years before, had merited the title: "Pope of the Workingmen." He recalled the deeds of his predecessor, Pius XI, whose sturdy words had brought hope to their weary hearts and notably advanced the cause of social reform. The Church had always understood the workers and protected them; she would do so today.

Then His Holiness spoke of the present. He talked about the hopes of workingmen and women, about their difficulties and problems, about the challenge to their virtue and Christian faith which the postwar world would surely offer. He would have them be apostles to their fellow workers, bringing to them the knowledge of Christ, and to their trade unions the spirit of the Gospel. And what is this spirit of the Gospel? What is it (said the

Holy Father) "but a fight that the principles of justice shall prevail . . . over the purely material force of circumstances; and that love and charity shall prevail over class hatred"? His Holiness did not deny that it is the function of a trade union to represent the workers and defend their interests in labor disputes. But he would have them ambition a higher goal: nothing less than "the unity and solidarity" of all men engaged in economic life. From the crucible of war he saw a new order arising in which the distinction between worker and employer would be less important than the bond which unites them: the common duty of cooperating in production, and working together to satisfy the needs of the community.

This hope of the Holy Father's, like so many of our hopes for the postwar world, has been largely in vain. The suspicion and bitterness engendered by a century of industrial strife have not been buried in our dreams of the future. Both here and abroad they continue to poison relations between labor and management, leading on too many occasions to costly strikes and lockouts. At a time when the free nations of the world ought

to be concentrating on the desperate business of repulsing aggression, their harassed leaders are frequently forced to turn aside and devote their full attention to preserving peace in the marketplace. Even in normal times, this situation would be deplorable. Today it is tragic.

Is there no possibility, one is tempted to wonder at times, of a durable peace between workers and employers in a free society? Must we admit that the price of a system of private enterprise is the persistence of class warfare? Are we forced to agree with those critics who argue that the day of peace and collaboration between labor and management will dawn only when one class will have annihilated the other?

Ever since the time of Pope Leo XIII, the Church has insisted that industrial peace can be realized in a system of predominantly private ownership. She has not taken this stand unrealistically, through ignorance of the factors involved. Even if her head is in the clouds, so to speak, her feet are no less solidly planted on earth. The peace which the Church advocates springs from no uncritical wish to do good; it is not peace at any price. It is rather that tranquility of order which results when

all those involved in some undertaking act from a sense of duty and respect the dictates of justice. It is that teamwork which ought to be one of the finest fruits of the love binding us to Jesus Christ, and through Him to one another. Workers belong to labor, employers to management, but both, the Church insists, belong to the Mystical Body of Christ.

In taking this predominantly moral approach to industrial relations, the Church expresses her unshakable conviction that religion and life cannot be separated, in the marketplace or anywhere else. She testifies to her belief that a good share of the evils which make our pilgrimage on earth a hard journey through a valley of tears arise from within human hearts, not from the circumstances in which we have been placed. She would agree with that great statesman of the last century who, reviewing his arduous life, said that all the difficulties he had been forced to contend with were due in the final analysis to individual sins.

Is this not true in a striking way of industrial relations? After all, what are the causes of labor discontent with management? Do not the workers say

that employers retain too much of the income in the form of profits and pay out too little in wages? Do they not accuse employers of assuming a high-handed, dictatorial attitude? Do they not suspect that employers try to keep them weak and disorganized, so that they cannot defend their interests? And how many workers are convinced that employers are sincerely interested in them as human beings and concerned about their welfare?

Note, my dear friends, that all these questions indicate a moral failure somewhere. They are merely another way of saying that workers charge employers with being greedy, avaricious, inflated with pride and self-importance, cold-hearted and uncharitable. And to the extent that employers are guilty of these un-Christian vices, they must assume responsibility for class warfare in the marketplace. A well-staffed personnel department can do a great deal to promote good labor-management relations, but it is no substitute for a change of heart and a reform of morals. It is also much more expensive.

On the other hand, employers complain at great length about their employes. They say that

workers are lazy, insubordinate, inefficient, uninterested in the well-being of the business, unaware of managerial problems and in general, unappreciative of what is done for them. In too many cases, they feel, unions exist chiefly to get the highest wages possible for the least possible work and to protect their members from well merited discipline and punishment. They are indifferent alike, say employers, to the equity of the stockholders and the expectations of customers. They will talk about their rights until doomsday, but very seldom about their duties. Suspicious, belligerent, domineering, to live in peace with them is impossible.

But what is this unlovely catalogue of employer grievances but a list of moral faults—dishonesty, selfishness, disobedience to lawful authority, sloth and ingratitude? To the extent that workers and unions are guilty of these sins, they, too, must assume responsibility for the bitterness and strife in the marketplace.

How much class warfare would there be, then, if both workers and employers approached their respective tasks in the spirit of the Carpenter of Nazareth? Is this asking too much of workers

and employers who prefer to be Christians? Or do they imagine that they can profess Christianity sincerely and at the same time practice it only when it suits their convenience and self-interest?

At any rate, the fact cannot be disputed. And the fact is that most of the trouble between labor and management arises from practices and habits of mind on both sides which cannot be reconciled with Christian faith and morality. In pointing this out the various Sovereign Pontiffs, from Leo XIII to the present Holy Father, have made a precious contribution to industrial peace. If their program has so far produced relatively small results, their principles cannot rightly be said to have failed. It is rather we who have failed the principles.

In addition to her call for personal reform, the Church has striven to promote peace between workers and employers by stressing their fundamental community of interests. Nothing seems more obvious than the interdependence of labor and capital. Until they are brought together, both must remain unproductive. Everything that tends to divide them hurts them equally. Everything that binds them together

helps them. If one is injured, are not both injured? If one is prosperous, is not the other prosperous, too?

It might be argued that this community of interests stops short of the division of income from production. The more the owners take from the business, the less there remains for the workers, and vice versa. But is not this conflict more apparent than real? Does it not concern short-run gains rather than enduring interests? At the time they receive them, excessively high dividends may be very gratifying to the stockholders, just as excessively fat pay envelopes may be extremely welcome to the workers; but in the long run both excessively high profits and excessively high wages are bad for the business. Excessive profits dry up economic demand and lead to restricted production and low earnings; wages that are too high hinder necessary capital expenditures, which maintain and multiply jobs. If this were more clearly understood by both labor and management, the distribution of the proceeds of production would be less a source of rivalry and division than it is now. There would be less emphasis on today, and more on the long tomorrow.

To emphasize the cooperative nature of the relationship between workers and employers, the late Pope Pius XI recommended that wherever possible the wage contract be broadened in the direction of a partnership contract. This could be done by enlarging the area of collective bargaining, by giving to employes, especially in our large, impersonal corporations, a greater participation in the business than they now enjoy together with enlarged responsibilities. Indeed, with a view to bringing employers and workers closer together, Pope Pius advocated the formation of self-governing councils on which they would be equally represented. Without in any way destroying the identity of participating labor unions and employer organizations, these councils would concern themselves with the healthy functioning of the industry and, on the national level, with the well-being of the entire economy.

The importance of this last suggestion for industrial freedom as well as industrial peace can scarcely be exaggerated. Everywhere today the pendulum is swinging from the excessive individualism of the last century to an equally exaggerated collectivism. If labor-management dis-

putes continue to interrupt production, the government will be obliged sooner or later to restrict the freedom of both workers and employers. Modern industrial society is too complex and interrelated to permit the continuance of class warfare. If peace and order, which are the creation of free men, do not prevail in the marketplace, public authority will have to substitute compulsion. Society cannot live for long on the slopes of an active volcano.

To labor and management, then, the Church says in effect: "Put aside the hatreds and suspicions of the past. Curb the greed that is in all of us, and the lust for power and riches. Let there exist between you no hateful rivalry, for the survival of the fittest is jungle law, not the law of human life. In working together with fraternal affection, in the practice of charity and respect for the dignity of one another, in fulfillment of duties and regard for rights, in concern for the general welfare as well as for your own legitimate interests, you will find at once a fitting material reward for your

joint endeavors and the blessing of Almighty God.

My dear friends, such is the message of the Church to the industrial world of today. It is a simple message. It is an old message. But it is the message of Jesus Christ. If we hear it, it will change the whole face of the marketplace, even as it once changed the face of the entire ancient, pagan world. If we ignore it, God help us! Blinded by our greed, corroded by our hates, weakened by the fighting of brother with brother, we shall stagger to a terrible doom. Even now an enemy stands menacingly at our door. The hour is late, but not yet too late. At the feet of Christ, let workers and employers seek the light and strength to build on these shores an economic society which will fully reflect the sacred faith we profess.

For free labor and free management in America, this is an hour of staggering challenge. Pray God, it may be their finest hour.

God bless you and keep you, my friends, always.

THE PURPOSE OF THE CATHOLIC HOUR

(Extract from the address of the late Patrick Cardinal Hayes at the inaugural program of the Catholic Hour in the studio of the National Broadcasting Company, New York City, March 2, 1930.)

Our congratulations and our gratitude are extended to the National Council of Catholic Men and its officials, and to all who, by their financial support, have made it possible to use this offer of the National Broadcasting Company. The heavy expense of managing and financing a weekly program, its musical numbers, its speakers, the subsequent answering of inquiries, must be met. . . .

This radio hour is for all the people of the United States. To our fellow-citizens, in this word of dedication, we wish to express a cordial greeting and, indeed, congratulations. For this radio hour is one of service to America, which certainly will listen in interestedly, and even sympathetically, I am sure, to the voice of the ancient Church with its historic background of all the centuries of the Christian era, and with its own notable contribution to the discovery, exploration, foundation and growth of our glorious country. . . .

Thus to voice before a vast public the Catholic Church is no light task. Our prayers will be with those who have that task in hand. We feel certain that it will have both the good will and the good wishes of the great majority of our countrymen. Surely, there is no true lover of our Country who does not eagerly hope for a less worldly, a less material, and a more spiritual standard among our people.

With good will, with kindness and with Christ-like sympathy for all, this work is inaugurated. So may it continue. So may it be fulfilled. This word of dedication voices, therefore, the hope that this radio hour may serve to make known, to explain with the charity of Christ, our faith, which we love even as we love Christ Himself. May it serve to make better understood that faith as it really is—a light revealing the pathway to heaven: a strength, and a power divine through Christ; pardoning our sins, elevating, consecrating our common every-day duties and joys, bringing not only justice but gladness and peace to our searching and questioning hearts.

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