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SOCIAL REGENERATION



Wilfrid Parsons

The Catholic Hour

SOCIAL REGENERATION

By

REV. WILFRID PARSONS, S.J.

Two addresses delivered in the nationwide Catholic Hour (produced by the National Council of Catholic Men, in cooperation with the National Broadcasting Company), on May 16 and May 23, 1943.

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National Council of Catholic Men
1312 Massachusetts Avenue, N. W.
Washington, (5), D. C.

Printed and distributed by Our Sunday Visitor
Huntington, Indiana



Nihil Obstat:

REV. T. E. DILLON

Censor Librorum

Imprimatur:

✠ JOHN FRANCIS NOLL, D. D.

Bishop of Fort Wayne

THE HOUR OF REPARATION

Address delivered on May 16, 1943

Once again we recall to our minds that in this month of May twelve years ago, the late Pope Pius XI, in his great Encyclical *On the Reconstruction of the Social Order*, gave us a picture of a world even then rushing rapidly to disaster. It was a gloomy picture. The crash of finance and industry had engulfed the whole world. Millions of people had lost their hard-earned security, millions more lived not very far from starvation. The wealth of the earth, which we had falsely estimated in terms of money, dissolved before our very eyes.

In that Encyclical the great Pope diagnosed our social ills and gave us a program of reconstruction based on economic truth and social wisdom. But his wisdom was greater than that of most of us, who, it seems to me, were only too eager to see in the crisis of the 1930's a purely economic trouble, a passing difficulty brought upon us by the greed and stupidity of our financial and industrial leaders, a mere physical entanglement which a little patience and a little boldness would unravel for us, if only

we were patient enough and sufficiently bold.

Pius XI never believed that our troubles of that time were purely economic. Even that early he saw the human race dividing itself into two camps, for God and against God, and he warned us that it was getting ready for a bitter war between the two. In another Encyclical, written a year later, he used these solemn words:

"In this conflict there is really question of the fundamental problem of the universe and of the most important decision proposed to man's free will. For God or against God, this once more is the alternative that shall decide the destinies of all mankind in politics, in finance, in morals, in the sciences and arts, in the state, in civil and domestic society. In the East and in the West, everywhere this question confronts us as the deciding factor because of the consequences that flow from it" (*The Sacred Heart and World Distress*, NCWC, p. 11).

These last four years have given tragic proof that the Pope was right. The lights went out in Europe, and soon all over the world.

There was left only the lurid and smoky glare of burning cities, the awful spread of racial and national hatred, the tears and blood and sweat of whole peoples transported in bitter exile from their homelands to distant and inhospitable deserts. There was the deliberate attempt to wipe out whole peoples, like the Poles and the Jews. There was the blowing up of billions of dollars' worth of wealth created by the capital of the rich and the labor of the poor. There was the killing and maiming of many millions of healthy and vigorous young soldiers in every part of the globe.

This terrible disaster which has overtaken us is much more, as Pope Pius XI warned us, than a mere breakdown of our material resources. It is our souls which were sickened and enslaved, and we are now paying the penalty of our folly.

The present Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, in his radio broadcast last December 24, spoke two solemn words which give us the key to our dilemma. "Today," he said, "the hour has come for reparation." Tomorrow will be the hour of liberation, when all the generous souls of the world will join together, as once in the Crusades, to free men from the slavery of their errors. (Cf. "1942 Christmas

Message," *Catholic Mind*, pp. 53-54, January, 1943).

Today is the Hour of Reparation. Yesterday on the desolate beach of Guadalcanal, today in the sands and mountains of Northern Africa, tomorrow on the beaches of Western and Southern Europe, our young men gallantly give their lives in reparation for our errors of the past. In our homes over here, mothers and fathers are silently suffering the absence and the danger of their sons on battlefields, on the seven seas, in the far-flung reaches of the air—in reparation for our errors of the past. In thousands of factories throughout the land, men and women have given up the production of the goods of peace and turned to making shining instruments of war whose sole purpose is to be expended in the business of killing—in reparation for our errors of the past. In countless homes and schools, starry-eyed youngsters are impatiently awaiting the day when they too will be ready to take their places in the line of battle to kill or be killed—in reparation for our errors of the past.

Today is the Hour of Reparation. What, then, is our need of reparation? What have we done that our sins should be visited with such terrible retribution? What con-

fession can we make which will render our reparation acceptable in the eyes of our Creator? Let us seek in the sincere acknowledgment of our mistakes the strength to prepare for the Hour of Liberation.

Our first error was that we measured our civilization in terms of money. It is true that the riches of this earth were given to us by our Creator to exploit for our own benefit. He wishes that we use every means in our power to apply human ingenuity to natural forces and thus supply mankind with that "certain amount of comfort which is necessary to the practice of virtue," to use the words of St. Thomas Aquinas. But money is not wealth; it is only the by-product of wealth, the means we are to use to exchange wealth. Yet we had set up money almost as a god. We measured all human values by it. We thought things worth nothing unless they were worth money. We estimated beauty and pleasure and honor and power all in terms of money. And money is a blind and terrible master. "The lives of all citizens were subordinated to the stimulus of gain" (Pius XII, *loc. cit.*, p. 48).

As a result of this error, we committed an even more terrible one. In the words of Pope Pius XII,

we "isolated the workers" of the world. We put them in a separate class, and we allowed conscienceless men to teach them with every appearance of truth that their interests were different from those of the rest of society, and that only by the strife of one class against another could liberty and security come again into the world. And so there arose that horrible vision of millions of faceless men marching, marching inexorably, under the violent urging of unscrupulous agitators, to a blind doom at the unknown end of an interminable road.

Then came the other error: we did not spare the fathers, why should we spare the children? In our schools we took away from their innocent minds the natural knowledge of their Creator, and so we never allowed to grow up in them the love of law and of that liberty which flows from the possession of a spiritual personality. We perverted our schools into halls for learning about purely material things—how to get on in the world, how to get ahead of our fellows, instead of how to bend the glorious inventions of the human spirit to moral and spiritual purposes, which alone are worthy of him who is "a little less the angels." Is it any wonder that we put into the hands of the dictators

the fearful weapon of materialism with which they hope to enslave the world?

These errors we may now bewail, and for them we are making reparation. But a grosser and more formidable error lay behind. We took the political state, whose authority comes from God, whose end is the common good, whose ministers are intended to be the ministers of both God and the community, and we turned it into a merely human invention. We looked on human rights, not as inalienable possessions of mankind flowing from that law of nature which is the law of nature's Creator, but as the mere creation of the human mind, useful perhaps at certain times, but to be taken away whenever the taking away suits the purposes of the omnipotent state and those who have captured its administration. And some of us even fancied that the Church itself could be the natural ally of this ruthless engine of power, and that it could protect by arms the Church's liberties, when the only result of such an alliance could be, as it always has been, the enslavement of the Church to the purposes of human ambition.

So the Church itself did not escape the errors of our society. A state which acknowledged no su-

perior had no place for a Church which claimed that its superior is God and the Law of God. We often spoke of "separation of Church and State" when what we really meant by separation of the Church from the State was the divorce of public conduct from the laws of morality as taught by the Church. And so the Church was shunted off into an impotent and meaningless obscurity, where its face could not be seen on the highways of the world and its voice could not be heard in the public places of our cities. And thus the conscience of the community was too easily stifled, and the community itself was too easily made the victim of those who hate liberty and love and loyalty and social justice.

Finally, our last and most disastrous error followed naturally in the train of all the others. Pius XII mentioned this error in his last Christmas broadcast. Let us hear him again: "Is it not true," he asked, "is it not true that deep thinkers see ever more clearly in the renunciation of selfishness and national isolation, the way to general salvation, ready as they are to demand of their peoples a heavy participation in the sacrifices necessary for social well-being in other peoples?" (Pius XII, *loc.*

cit. p. 56). This national isolation of which the Pope spoke, this nationalism which refuses to acknowledge any responsibility to other countries, or indeed any responsibility of a nation's government for its actions in the world at large, this nationalism—which is purely selfishness—has been the last and most disastrous error of them all. It is this nationalism which most easily turns into imperialism, as we see even now in our days. It is this national selfishness, which we preached and others practiced, which has given the dictators the pretext for their aggressions.

These are the errors for which we are now making a grim and fearful reparation. Let us not think that Hitler is the sole cause of all our tribulations. Hitler is a part of our modern world, as all of us are. It is our social order that is at fault, that social order which Pius XII said, "has given such tragic proof of its ineptitude as a factor for the good of the people" (Pius XII, *loc. cit.*, p. 58). It is the "moral and material degeneration" of this social order which has brought our troubles upon us. "What is this world war,"

the Pope asked, "what is this world war . . . but the crumbling process, not expected perhaps by the thoughtless, but seen and deplored by those whose gaze penetrated into the realities of a social order which hid its mortal weakness and its unbridled lust for gain and power behind a deceptive exterior or the mask of conventional shibboleths?" (*Loc. cit.*, p. 58).

No, the dictators practiced what we preached. They took our own philosophy and made a system out of it with which to crush us and the rest of the world. Our punishment is that we have to fight it and destroy it now by the sacrifice of countless lives and uncounted billions of wealth.

This is the Hour of Reparation. This is the hour in which our young men are doing penance for the sins of their elders. This is the hour in which the elders are suffering anxiety and the cruel loss of their beloved. This is the hour in which our material wealth is being poured out like water to defeat our enemies. But behind the murky cloud of reparation lies the Hour of Liberation. That hour, please God, will come with victory and peace.

THE HOUR OF LIBERATION

Address delivered on May 23, 1943

Last Sunday I reminded you that Pope Pius XII called these times through which we are passing the Hour of Reparation. Our Sons and brothers are risking their lives on land, on sea, and in the air—in reparation for our errors of the past. But I also recalled that the Pope promised us that behind the murky cloud of reparation lies the shining Hour of Liberation. That hour, I said, will come with victory and peace.

In a true sense, of course, reparation *is* liberation. In the Sacrament of Penance, when we have acknowledged our sins, when we have confessed them and been truly sorry for them, when we have humbly asked for absolution and promised to do penance for them, then, at the word of God's minister, we have really been set free, for our sins had really made us slaves. It is that happy moment of being set free, the Hour of Liberation, that I would like to imagine with you in this address.

But it is not only freedom for individual souls that will come after we have made reparation. I am talking of nothing less than freedom for the whole world—the

freedom of our nation, of the friendly nations, of the enemy nations. It is true that many great and small peoples, in Europe and in Asia, are this very day weeping the bitter tears of slavery, after inhuman war machines have ruthlessly rolled over them. But it is also true that, even before that, Italy and Germany and Japan themselves went into captivity, when their captors first held up before their eyes the tempting vision of making captives of all the others.

And what about ourselves, the nations that still are free? It is true that we have political liberty, that we still have the means of governing ourselves. But we, too, are held in the iron necessity of doing reparation for our errors of the past. Those errors, which also held us captive, will not dissolve until, in the Hour of Liberation, we shall have cast them behind us, and set up a resplendent New World in which such errors shall have no place. We may not forget that it was those very same errors which our enemies took and fashioned into chains for the enslavement of the world. The slav-

ery of wealth, the slavery of labor, the slavery of the schools, the slavery of the State, the slavery of the Church, the slavery of all the nations—all these slaveries we of the free nations in our innocent ignorance preached, and sometimes practiced. But we preached them, and our enemies practised them, by putting them into execution in a form that filled even us with horror that they should be so ghastly.

If we have seen ourselves, as if deformed, in the mirror which our enemies have held up to us, and if through our sons and brothers lying dead on the field of battle we shall have made reparation for the errors of the past, is it possible that, after the lights come on again all over the world, we shall return again to the old ways that brought disaster to us? God forbid! It will be no Hour of Liberation that will await us, but the old hour of slavery, to be followed in its turn only by another hour of reparation.

Our leaders of the free nations have set before us the Four Freedoms—freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from fear, freedom from want; and they have also given us an Atlantic Charter in which these freedoms are more fully expressed. But may I be bold enough to say that, precious as

these freedoms are, fully worth fighting for as they are, they still are only the first chapter in the story of a free world? Freedom of speech will give us the power to have our rulers govern us in our own interest—if our governments are organized in the spirit of freedom. Freedom of religion will guarantee the worship of our Creator—if the governments of the world acknowledge a Creator. Freedom from want will make money our servant—if the governments of the world are not themselves the servants of money. Freedom from fear will make peaceful our days and our nights—if the world itself is organized in a spirit of divine charity and not in a spirit of force.

Let us try, then, to imagine together the happy moment of the coming of the Hour of Liberation.

First of all, it will be the hour at which the unholy din of crashing guns and whistling bombs will cease to torture the sick ears of our boys on the battle line and those of women and children crouching in a noisome shelter in the ground. It will be the hour at which the defeated enemy will straggle back, sheepish and afraid, to his homeland which he will wish he had never left. It will be an hour of starvation, in which both the cap-

tive countries and the vanquished captor will hold out their trembling hands to the victor in supplication for milk and bread. It will be an hour of magnanimous victory, in which the victor will try to lead both the vanquished and his erstwhile captive back to a way of living that will be something like the kind of life their Creator wanted them to have.

But what about the victor? Besides bread and milk, will we have something more to offer both the vanquished and the liberated captive? Will we be able to assure both the deluded followers of the dictators and the abused victims of their tyranny something better than the old worn-out social order that led them and us to such a holocaust of bloodshed and destruction? If we will not, God help us. The Hour of Liberation will be a will-o'-the-wisp. It will be a cruel deception, and the boys and girls of this war will see their children led into another, even as their fathers did.

It is something more than bread and milk that we must offer both the vanquished and his erstwhile captive. And what we will have to offer them will be the vision of ourselves changed into new men and a new society. They practised

what we preached. Let us, in God's name, not preach it any more.

There are those even now who tell us that we have no alternative: Either we must go back into the old selfishness which they called by the name of individualism—or, sometimes, free enterprise—or we must yield ourselves up to a new collectivism which may be a new kind of Fascism or the old and discredited Communism.

If that is the only choice that lies before us, then I repeat, God help us. Because, before God, either we will have to fight another war to liberate us from tyranny once again, or we will have yielded to the tyranny without the necessity of fighting another war. The old individualism will certainly bring us to another war, but if we accept collectivism in advance, there will be no need to fight another war, for we will have lost it before the guns begin to fire.

The Hour of Liberation, then, must mean two things, or it will mean nothing. It must mean that we will be set free from the old error of selfishness at home within the nations, and it must mean that the nations themselves must be set free from selfishness as well. Never forget that our enemies have led their own people captive by painting selfishness in the fair and lying

colors of liberty and security—for themselves. We of the free nations cannot disappoint the anguished hopes of the world by enacting such another tragic comedy as that.

Before all, then, we must have peace at home before we will be able to promise peace to the world. We cannot go back to the old idea that free enterprise means nothing more than war, a desperate war for survival—war between industry and industry, war between company and company, war between employer and worker. Neither, on the other hand, can we adopt a new idea—Fascist or Communist, as you will—that war within society can be conjured away by subjecting everybody, worker as well as employer, to the omnipotent State. That would be peace indeed, but it would be like the peace of death. The human spirit would be enslaved by it just as surely as it was by the old individual selfishness.

No! Let them not tell us that we have only to choose between individualism and collectivism—as if there were no other choice. That would be like saying that we can have anarchy or tyranny—an anarchy that leads to tyranny or a tyranny that is ordered anarchy.

Social peace is neither of these

things. Social peace is liberation—liberation from selfishness, liberation from greed and unbridled power, liberation from exploitation, whether it be exploitation by the public authority or by private individuals. Most of all, social peace, as Pius XII told us last December, “must prevent the worker, who is or will be the father of a family, from being condemned to an economic dependence and slavery which is irreconcilable with his rights as a person. Whether this slavery arises from the exploitation of private capital or from the power of the State, the result is the same.”

No, social peace is the fruit of justice, and justice means a decent regard for the rights of all, whether they be rich or poor. Social peace will not be attained by confiscating private property, but neither will it be attained by continuing to restrict private property to the few. We of the United States will be able to come before a post-war world with a clear conscience and with clean hands only when we have organized our own social order on the basis of justice and of peace.

And what about that post-war world? When its women and children creep out once again from the cellars of their ruined homes, and

when its tired soldiers trudge wearily back to find employment once again in their ruined factories and their ravaged fields, will we solemnly instruct them, with tragic irony, that the nations also have now to choose only between the old international anarchy that always led to wars and a new international tyranny that will be like the peace of death? No! We cannot return to the old national selfishness that called itself sovereignty, but really meant that a nation did what it pleased in the world without regard to the rights of other nations. But neither can we forge upon the nations the chains of an international slavery that will destroy their existence.

International peace must be like social peace. It, too, is liberation—liberation from selfishness, liberation from fear, liberation from the crushing burden of military service. International peace, like social peace, means liberation by

cooperating for the common good instead of being rivals in a common suicide. So we of the United Nations, after victory and peace, will have within our hands the terrible responsibility of handing the world the choice of peace or war. If we learn to cooperate with each other, and if we have the magnanimity to raise even the vanquished nations up to a place of cooperation with us, then we shall be offering the nations peace.

This is the Hour of Reparation. But God will not be always angry with His people. When the Hour of Reparation comes upon us, it is a sign that the Hour of Liberation cannot be far behind. If we but approach our Creator with faith and hope and love, like naughty children that sinned through ignorance and weakness, then the Hand of God will reach into human hearts and into human society, and give us peace.

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.

89 CATHOLIC HOUR STATIONS

In 38 States, the District of Columbia, and Hawaii

Alabama	Birmingham	WBRC	960 kc
	Mobile	WALA	1410 kc
Arizona	Phoenix	KTAR	620 kc
	Tucson	KVOA	1290 kc
	Yuma	KYUM	1240 kc
Arkansas	Little Rock	KARK	920 kc
California	Fresno	KMJ	580 kc
	Los Angeles	KECA	790 kc
	San Francisco	KPO	680 kc
Colorado	Denver	KOA	850 kc
District of Columbia	Washington	WRC	980 kc
Florida	Jacksonville	WJAX	930 kc
	Lakeland	WLAK	1340 kc
	Miami	WIOD	610 kc
	Pensacola	WCOA	1370 kc
	Tampa	WFLA-WSUN	970-620 kc
Georgia	Atlanta	WSB	750 kc
	Savannah	WSAV	1340 kc
Idaho	Boise	KIDO	1380 kc
Illinois	Chicago	WMAQ	670 kc
Indiana	Fort Wayne	WGL	1450 kc
	Terre Haute	WBOW	1230 kc
Kansas	Wichita	KANS	1240 kc
Kentucky	Louisville	WAVE*	970 kc
Louisiana	New Orleans	WSMB*	1350 kc
	Shreveport	KTBS	1480 kc
Maine	Augusta	WRDO	1400 kc
Maryland	Baltimore	WBAL	1090 kc
Massachusetts	Boston	WBZ*	1030 kc
	Springfield	WBZA*	1030 kc
Michigan	Detroit	WWJ*	950 kc
	Saginaw	WSAM	1400 kc
Minnesota	Duluth-Superior	WEBC	1320 kc
	Hibbing	WMFG	1300 kc
	Mankato	KYSM	1230 kc
	Rochester	KROC	1340 kc
	St. Cloud	KFAM	1450 kc
Virginia	WHLB	1400 kc	
Mississippi	Jackson	WJDX	1300 kc
Missouri	Kansas City	WDAF	610 kc
	Springfield	KGBX	1260 kc
	Saint Louis	KSD*	550 kc
Montana	Billings	KGHL	790 kc
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	Helena	KPFA	1240 kc

89 CATHOLIC HOUR STATIONS

In 38 States, the District of Columbia, and Hawaii

Nebraska	Omaha	WOW	590 kc	
New York	Buffalo	WBEN	930 kc	
	New York	WEAF	660 kc	
	Schenectady	WGY	810 kc	
North Carolina	Charlotte	WSOC*	1240 kc	
	Raleigh	WPTF	680 kc	
	Winston-Salem	WSJS	600 kc	
North Dakota	Bismarck	KFYR	550 kc	
	Fargo	WDAY	970 kc	
Ohio	Cleveland	WTAM	1100 kc	
	Lima	WLOK	1240 kc	
	Zanesville	WHIZ	1240 kc	
Oklahoma	Tulsa	KVOO	1170 kc	
Oregon	Portland	KGW	620 kc	
Pennsylvania	Allentown	WSAN	1470 kc	
	Altoona	WFBG	1340 kc	
	Johnstown	WJAC	1400 kc	
	Lewistown	WMRF	1490 kc	
	Philadelphia	KYW	1060 kc	
	Pittsburgh	KDKA	1020 kc	
	Reading	WRAW	1340 kc	
	Wilkes-Barre	WBRE	1340 kc	
	Rhode Island	Providence	WJAR	920 kc
	South Carolina	Charleston	WTMA	1250 kc
Columbia		WIS	560 kc	
Greenville		WFBC	1330 kc	
South Dakota	Sioux Falls	KSOO-KELO	1140-1230 kc	
Tennessee	Kingsport	WKPT	1400 kc	
	Nashville	WSM	650 kc	
Texas	Amarillo	KGNC	1440 kc	
	El Paso	KTSM	1380 kc	
	Fort Worth	KGKO*	570 kc	
	Houston	KPRC	950 kc	
	San Antonio	WOAI	1200 kc	
	Weslaco	KRGV	1290 kc	
Virginia	Norfolk	WJAR*	790 kc	
	Richmond	WMBG	1380 kc	
Washington	Seattle	KOMO	950 kc	
	Spokane	KGA	1510 kc	
West Virginia	Clarksburg	WBK	1400 kc	
Wisconsin	LaCrosse	WKBH	1410 kc	
	Madison	WTBA	1310 kc	
HAWAII	Honolulu	KGU	760 kc	

* Delayed Broadcast

(Revised as of April, 1943)

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