


Race - suicide...
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RACE - SUICIDE
AND
BIRTH - CONTROL

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AMERICA

A CATHOLIC REVIEW OF THE WEEK

What Others Think About Us—

Someone has sent me a copy of the issue of AMERICA for February 9, enclosing an editorial commenting on my remarks in the Senate against the secret sessions, in which the Senate indulges when it takes up the confirmation of appointees of the President, and I write to compliment you on your progressive attitude on this subject. I wish more of our editors would point out the dangers of this secrecy system. I think it is indefensible.

Washington.

C. C. DILL,
U. S. Senator.

I have your marked copy of AMERICA of January 26 issue, bearing on the editorial, "A Grave Menace."

I am glad to note that one Catholic publication comes out into the open, unafraid to condemn the idea of contraception. . . .

Brooklyn.

EDWARD P. DOYLE,
Member of Assembly.

Congratulations on the current issue of AMERICA (February 23).

We have been subscribers since the first issue and I do not recall a more interesting number. The editorials, the summary of the Quirinal-Vatican treaty, the articles by Mr. Van Hoek and Mr. Dore, The Pilgrim, and the poetry cannot be bettered, and even that list omits many that should be mentioned. From first page to cover it is splendid.

Baltimore.

MARK O. SHRIVER.

The issue of AMERICA for January 26 contained an article headed "A Defense of Headline English," by Arthur D. McAghon, which I read with the keenest of pleasure. Evidently written by one who knew what he was talking about, its style was sprightly and charming.

I am not a Catholic, but have read your publication with increasing interest for some time. Such articles as "A Defense of Headline English," written with the accomplished skill of this author, are bound to increase your circulation.

Irvington, N. J.

HERBERT J. KELLY.

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RACE-SUICIDE

BY M. P. DOWLING, S.J.

THE subject which we propose to discuss under this title has engaged the attention of the thinking men of our country for many years. The grave offense it connotes against morality and social order has been aptly described by Colonel Roosevelt as race-suicide. Some thoughtless people have made the expression a target for sneer and ridicule, have held up to contempt those who agree with the views of the ex-President, but in their hearts the great mass of God-fearing persons admit that there is in what the phrase stigmatizes, an imminent danger to society. I take up this matter, not as a theologian laying down canons of virtue, not as a preacher declaiming against sin, not as a prophet foretelling dire things to the guilty and repeating the forceful phrase of Nathan to David, "Thou art the man," but as a well-wisher of our race reluctantly treating a grave social problem and trying to solve it according to well-established Christian principles. Those who most need to take the matter to heart will probably regard the subject as on a par with fashion or dress or some other foible; and they will consider that any man who deliberately selects such a topic for public discussion deserves to be laughed at for his pains. Let us see if they are justified in dealing with the matter so disdainfully.

In the beginning God made human kind to His image and likeness. He did more: He divided this type and created man and woman. Then He blessed the parents of our race, saying "Increase and multiply." This was not a commandment requiring all to marry, but a benediction rendering the human race fruitful and showing the end for which marriage was instituted; for He said the same to the birds and fishes which, being irrational, were incapable of receiving any precept.

It is in consequence of this blessing on living creatures that we witness the profusion of being that is revealed by modern science as extending so far into the realms of life that numbers fail to picture to the imagination the species and the individuals. Animalcula so small that millions may exist in a drop of water, are not as was once supposed, mere living specks of organized matter, but beings endowed with perfect form, possessing, like the higher animals, organs of sight, muscles, nerves, teeth, a physical structure as wonderful as that of a huge elephant which swallows them by millions of millions in a single mouthful of water. The soil supporting our forests, the quarries out of which our edifices are built are in many instances vast cemeteries made up of microscopic remains of little beings, millions of which would fill but a cubic inch of space.

Now, if God wishes this multiplication of beings, expressing so imperfectly His life and perfections, how can He be indifferent to the propagation of beings created to His image and likeness? It is because He is not indifferent that He desired the human race to increase and multiply and fill the earth. In response to His blessing they have gone on increasing till their numbers escape all accurate calculation, till we can judge only approximately the number of human beings on the face of the earth, and are content to say that it is about fifteen hundred millions. He wishes this multiplication among pagans and infidels and savages, because even they preserve some relic of their grand origin and noble destiny, because they still reflect the Divine image; that is enough, God wills it. Can He be indifferent to the propagation of Christian families which, by Baptism, have a second time received the image of their Maker?

At three different epochs in human history, the Creator made known His will. Just as to the first man, He said: "Increase and multiply," so a thousand years later to the second father of humanity, to Noe, and to his sons, He spoke a pregnant word, and it bore the same burden, "Increase and multiply and fill the earth"; for so we read in Genesis. Still another thousand years rolled on

and the same blessing was repeated, for the word of the Lord came to Abraham: "Fear not; I am thy protector and thy reward exceeding great." The patriarch answered: "What wilt Thou give me; behold, I have no child." Then God brought him forth out of the tent, saying: "Look up to the heavens and number the stars, if thou canst; so shall thy seed be." The reward of Abraham's faith is paternity.

And after that, from Abraham to the last of the prophets, text on text and example after example, confirm the doctrine that children are the blessing of marriage, no matter what the new gospel of selfishness may proclaim. In the Old Testament curse alternates with blessing: "He who is blessed shall be a father, the cursed shall stand alone." If it is said to the just, "Thy wife shall be like a fruitful vine," (Ps. 127); to the wicked man and the sinner comes the sentence: "In a single generation his name will be blotted out" (Ps. 198).

The New Law introduces no change into the character of the blessing on marriage. "She shall be saved through child-bearing," says St. Paul (1 Tim. ii. 15), "if she continue in love and faith and sanctification." And of widows, he says in the same Epistle (v. 14): "I will therefore, that the younger should marry, bear children, be mistresses of families, give no occasion to the adversary to speak evil." The Church renews and promulgates this doctrine, when at the nuptial ceremony she prays that the bride "May be amiable to her husband like Rachel, wise like Rebecca, long-lived and faithful like Sara, may she be fruitful in offspring, and may they both see their children's children to the third and fourth generation . . ." Beyond a doubt, fecundity is to be considered a precious gift and inheritance for the married.

God said: "Increase and multiply"; man says: "Let us fear to increase and multiply; the earth might become too narrow; the fewer there are to share the good things of life the more there will be for each." So spoke the sages in the little world of Greece and the great world of Rome, when man lived for the State and never thought of his eternal destiny. They considered yearly wars and

frequent epidemics the precious correctives of an exaggerated multiplication of the human species. Being at a loss to rid themselves of the surplus population, they did not hesitate to throttle the ill-formed infant in the name of Lycurgus, if, indeed, they consented to allow it to open its eyes at all to the light of day.

But a time came when alarming symptoms revealed themselves and a profound evil manifested itself to the world. They had been afraid that they might become too numerous, and now, behold! they dare not count their numbers, through fear of finding out how few they were. It became necessary to retrace their steps, to affirm the contrary of what they had hitherto proclaimed as the law of progress, to acknowledge that the misuse of marriage can have no blessing even among a pagan people, that nations inevitably witness the decay of their wealth, their strength and their prosperity, when a decadent family spirit is allowed to undermine the legitimate growth of population. But the new exhortations of the sages did not enjoy the same credit as the old, and laws had to be passed to sustain and make them efficacious. We read with surprise the laws of Augustus intended to discourage abstinence from marriage and to promote the fruitfulness of matrimony. The unmarried were relegated to the last place in the theaters, the circuses and the plays: no inconsiderable penalty when we reflect how much the shows absorbed of the Roman's day and life. In the deliberations of the senate the unmarried gave their opinions last. Everywhere the first place was given to the married man, and he that had most children ranked above the others. By a still more stringent law the celibate could inherit only from his father and mother; he could not receive a legacy or inheritance by will. The law took from him what was his by right of succession and handed it over to his married relative, because it had become fashionable to be burdened with few children in the state of wedlock or out of it. That was the final outcome of pagan morality, and it must ever be the same when only the selfish instincts of mankind are heeded. This is always the way when the law established by the

Creator is abandoned for the law of selfishness, when human providence supplants the Divine.

When Christianity at length became mistress of the world she overturned these false ideas of morality and national progress. But after the lapse of centuries a new paganism undertook to assert itself in the name of reason, and the same wicked principles once more revived. They were followed, however, by the same condign punishment as before, and men saw the necessity of retracing their steps. All this happened within a little more than a century past. "Excessive population must be prudently checked": this was the watchword of the world reformers. England charged herself with the task of giving this doctrine a scientific form. For fifty years there were few books of any importance wherein this formula was not found cited or incidentally recalled. Whether the book treated of commerce, politics, industry, agriculture, medicine, navigation, under some pretense or other, place was found for this axiom: "The population of a State must be prudently calculated and restricted." This theory was placed, too, on the high intellectual plane of national and social well-being, and reasoned out according to the principles of political economy, called by some the "dismal science." Malthus in his book entitled *Principles of Population as It Affects the Future Improvement of Society*, gave the impetus to the movement. He held that the population of the earth increases more rapidly than the means of subsistence, because population advances almost in geometrical proportion, as two, four, eight, sixteen, while the fertility of the land increases approximately only in an arithmetical proportion, as one, two, three, four, five and so on. Hence, the continually increasing population must eventually exceed the capacity of the earth to supply food. What is the conclusion? The increase of human kind must be prudently checked. The only preventive check recognized by Malthus himself was that no man should marry till he could support a family; but others taking up his contention, that undue growth of population is an inevitable and all but insurmountable cause of poverty and misery, drew inferences

he would have repudiated. Unconsciously they abandoned the field of political economy and set themselves up as authoritative teachers of morality, which in their hands assumed a pagan bias. Population must be held back, not merely by restraint of the reproductive faculty, but by means that do not fall short of actual murder. The theory was worked out so as to convince the poor that squalid abodes, low wages, inability to find employment, want and wretchedness, were not the result of misgovernment, intemperance, absence of thrift and a hundred other removable causes, but that all the ills of humanity were due to the fact that there are too many people in the world. Hence, decrease the number by fair means or foul, and put a stop to that continual division of wealth, which is ineffectual, because property is subject to influences as inexorable as the law of gravitation. If the man born into the world is unable to obtain subsistence from his parents, and society has no need of his labor, he has no claim to the smallest portion of food and he has no business in the world. This theory practically addressed the masses thus: "There are too many of you. There is no place for you at the banquet of life; at nature's mighty feast there is no cover for you, and society has no need of your children."

This is the gospel of greed making man an offering on the counter of selfishness. It must be very comforting to the few who monopolize the good things of life, for it says to them: "You are not to blame for the misery festering a block away from your mansions, or groaning in a hovel in the alley behind your barn; it is the fault of the poor; why do they increase?" And so Dives would be justified in shutting out the vision of Lazarus lying at his door.

But the facts are against the theory that the earth is inadequate to support the growth of population. The United States, even with the wasteful methods of farming now in vogue, could feed hundreds of millions. Under different conditions even little Ireland would be capable of supporting three times its present population. Brazil, Peru, Mexico have room for teeming millions within their

borders. Portions of the dark continent of Africa were once densely peopled; so was Asia Minor; and they might become garden spots of the earth once more. There is still plenty of elbow room on the globe. . . .

God makes no mistakes, and for every soul He creates and infuses into a mortal body, He furnishes what is needful for its well-being. History may be reviewed in vain for an instance of any considerable country wherein poverty and want can be fairly traced to the increase of the number of mouths beyond the power of the accompanying hands to fill them. In most cases they can, more properly, be attributed to unjust laws, misgovernment, destructive warfare, decadent commerce, a disregard of the Divine law, vice and crime.

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There is no escaping the fact that the future of our Republic is in the hands of those who rear families, for the child of today is the citizen, the law-giver and the ruler of tomorrow. It is passing strange that the prudential check originally invoked in behalf of the poor, and recommended to those who have not the wherewith to support a family, has latterly been applied chiefly in favor of those who are in a position to rear sturdy sons and daughters, who are best fitted to be the bulwark of the nation. Can it be possible that wealth is the natural enemy of infancy and childhood? And is the instinct of reproduction weaker in the privileged classes, the spirit of self-denial more pronounced? Is it not rather that large families are looked upon with disdain as a plebeian institution, entailing too much sacrifice, debarring the mother from many pleasures she is unwilling to forego? Is it not because every new birth requires the expense account to be overhauled, several chapters of travel to be blotted out, transfers to be made to the side of the nurse and the governess, balls and parties and receptions to be given up?

People sin today by excessive prudence. If families are growing smaller, it is not because there is less natural fruitfulness; if the births do not keep pace with the

deaths, it is not because men and women are attracted by a life of voluntary chastity or are deeply in love with the Evangelical Counsels; but because the designs of God are frustrated by the prosperous classes; and that a period of moral decay is begun. It is because the warm stream of infant life is kept back. It is because instead of guardian spirits parents become the exterminating angels of their offspring. In rigorous simplicity of language, it must be said that too many are engaged in a systematic and deliberate opposition to God, in as far as they can thwart His designs and impede His providential dispensations. Practically, they say to Him: "Let us make a compact; in the law You place before me are certain things which I accept; but the consequences I decline; I will embrace pleasure but reject duty; what agrees with my inclinations and the ideas and decrees of contemporary society, I will obey, but I will carry no cross, make no sacrifices."

But what can be gained by contending against Omnipotence? The Almighty has infinite resources at His command to defeat those who rise up against Him. The punishment will come when least expected, and it will come in such a way as to wring the very fibers of humanity. It will come in the form of ruined health and undermined constitutions, which will invoke in vain the skill of physicians and surgeons. It will come when the single child permitted to enter into the world is snatched away like a delicate flower whose fragrant life was all too short for joy. It will come, when bereft in age, the husband and wife sit lonely by the fireside, with no kindred lips to kiss their faded cheeks and warm them at the fires of love. It will come when they feel that they have wasted their years and substance, that they have played no part in the drama of life, which for them has been a failure, that they have contributed nothing to the race and have moved like ghosts in the energizing world of living men and women.

These considerations do not apply to those Christian spouses from whom, through no fault or wavering trust on their part, God has withheld the offspring for which they yearn and the answering love of childhood sprung

from their own lives. For to them has been reserved another ministry; the poor and the afflicted; the widow and the orphan, the disinherited of fortune are their family. Mankind has been committed to their keeping and handed over to their love. When will men learn that the infusion of a soul belongs to God, that parents are but co-contributors to human life, and that if God did not will fruitfulness, they might plead in vain for offspring, or only win it after long and earnest prayer, as did Anna, the mother of Samuel the prophet.

According to Christian teaching, there is a two-fold Providence in the institution of marriage, one is to perpetuate the species on earth, the other to fill heaven with the substitutes for the fallen Angels. The first is natural, the second supernatural Providence. In the light of that two-fold Providence what a grand mission opens out before the parent! Just as of old the Spirit of God moved over the face of the deep, and made a splendid creation leap forth from dark and barren chaos; just as He separated light from darkness and planted in the firmament the illuminating stars, so the parents soar over the being sprung from themselves and destined for so noble an end. Under their fostering hands darkness is dissipated, harmonies of good rise out of chaos, grand ideas, the stars of the soul, mount up to the firmament of thought, and man is created because his soul lives. Thus are renewed the marvels of the first days of creation, when God wrought His mysteries of power. Will no account be asked if this sacred deposit of duty be squandered, if the treasures of God's house and love have been wasted, if the jewels of God's crown have been lost?

Throughout the whole land, among all ranks and conditions of fortune, the dread of an increase in the family looms up like a presage of evil. This manner of thinking is not only common but in certain circles all but universal. And this view of duty is abetted by the physician, who gives the advice he knows will be acceptable, when he tells the halting wife that another child would spell death for her; by the doting mother who instructs her newly wedded daughter how to avoid the sorrows and trials of mater-

nity; by the itinerant vender of immoral literature which teaches the young more evil than their parents ever knew.

Divorce, also, enters as an abettor of race-suicide. I have never been able to understand why so much outcry has been raised against polygamy by the same persons who regard divorce as permissible. Polygamy exists only in a single remote territory, yet all eyes are turned upon that evil, while comparatively little attention is paid to a still more crying evil spread over the whole land and weakening the marriage-bond even to the snapping point. Is there any difference between the two, but that one is simultaneous and the other successive polygamy? Both must be condemned, because God has forbidden them; but I do not hesitate to affirm that of the two polygamy is less opposed to the natural law than divorce, for instead of frustrating, it promotes the primary end of marriage, which is the continuation of human life on earth. I must be pardoned if, in this matter, I fall back on Christian principles, for I cannot see how one who rejects them can logically oppose polygamy. Deny God and assert unlimited liberty, and where is the wrong of polygamy? Why should not a man have all the wives he wishes, if there is no God and no moral law to forbid it? That plague spot on the body politic can never be removed by infidel principles, and it is only to Christian sentiment and tradition that the unbeliever appeals for its destruction, when he comes between men and women to limit the extent of selection.

It is frequently said to Catholics: "Don't you see that your doctrine on divorce is too hard and rigorous, that you do not take into account the weakness and inconsistency of human nature? You require sacrifices above the strength of man; it is cruel to subject the most tender affections to the rigor of a principle, to rivet together two lives when there is no longer mutual love. When you answer these two beings, longing for separation, with an eternal *never*, you forget all the rules of prudence and provoke despair." And thus divorce has its votaries and apologists and courtiers in the pulpit, the press, the legal

and medical professions, like troubadours of love chanting the praises of a new divinity.

Now observe the process by which public opinion is formed in favor of the severance of family ties. Here are the ingredients: brutal and besotted husband; faithful, beautiful and intellectual wife; jealousy, cruelty, neglect, incompatibility. Collect a half-dozen harrowing cases, true or false, represent circumstances absolutely exceptional as habitual and inevitable; studiously keep in the background the corrigible faults, such as diabolical temper, of which one or both parties may be guilty. Throw in a few stereotyped expressions about the irresistible law of love, the crime of doing violence to affection, sacred impulses before which all must bow; speak of obeying the organization given by nature: insist on the legitimate maladies of the soul: mix all these well, with a dash of sentimentality about womanhood, blasted lives, some little inquisition, rack, thumbscrews, a few piteous appeals to feeling, the tyranny of riveting chains on humanity—and *presto fides* here is your argument for absolute divorce fresh and ready from the hands of the magician! Yet a mere separation fills all the requirements in every case and is precisely the course needed today, when divorces uniformly have in view a new marriage. "Very well," you will say, "the parties are freed from the punishment of living together; but if you forbid them to contract a new alliance, you prevent them from gratifying another passion that their hearts concealed and which may have been the cause of the disgust, unhappiness and discord experienced in the first union. Why not let the parties free, and permit them to follow the feelings of their hearts?"

Here is where the Church shows her deep knowledge of human nature and wins her most signal triumph, while enforcing the law of God. There is a passion in the heart of man exerting a powerful influence on the destinies of his life, often forging chains of misfortune and anguish. This passion has for its object the preservation of the race, and it is found in some form in every living being. In brutes it is an instinct; in man it is a passion, incon-

stant and capricious, because enlivened by the imagination and prone to follow the tortuous path of the free will. It may be the restlessness of fever, the frenzy of madness, the tenderness of love.

There are two ways of dealing with this, as with all other passions, compliance and resistance. According to the first, the passion is yielded to as it advances; an invincible obstacle is never opposed to it; it is never left without hope; a barrier is erected, but with the understanding that if you put your foot upon it, the limit will recede; everything proceeds on the assumption that passion is weakened by indulgence. In the system of resistance, the line is fixed and immovable, on every side there is a wall of brass, nowhere a shadow of hope; the principle that opposes will never change or compromise.

The Church follows the second system. There is an inexorable check to passion at the first step, no hope is given of the dissolution of the marriage tie, a Divine seal consecrates it absolutely and irrevocably, no exception is possible. Passion rages for a while, but when it finds the barrier insurmountable, it soon accommodates itself, and like the angry waves of the sea, falls back at the limit marked out by the Divine law; peace is secured to family, protection to the children of holy wedlock. Once the parties understand that they must live together, or at least can never hope to marry while the life-partner is living, they learn to soften by mutual accommodation the yoke they cannot shake off, they become good husbands and wives by the very necessity of remaining husbands and wives.

It were folly to disguise the truth that the decay of the family precedes and precipitates the decay of the nation; two ruins salute each other, two deaths are linked together. The same pens that have given so dark a picture of pagan society, have also traced the unspeakable degradation of the family. The nation that has Christian families to fall back upon need have no fear of the future, for in the hour of trial and danger she has stalwart sons to defend her. When she needs souls to sustain her and

make sacrifices for her, they come trooping forth from the Christian home.

Yet, when we have said all that we can say, and marshaled arguments that are invincible, we have not accomplished much, unless men and women take to heart the lesson taught them by history and religion as well as by experience. It is not argument that is needed; it is self-sacrifice and a sense of duty. We must get back to Christian principles and mold Christian lives, till the humblest sees that life is not all for pleasure, self-ease and enjoyment, that duty and conscience must play a great part and march in the vanguard of true progress.

CONSCIOUS BIRTH-RESTRICTION

BY PAUL L. BLAKELY, S.J.

ARE we brutes, or have we fallen to the level below the brute, for which there is no name but perversion? A brute may be held in some respects a noble creation, swift of foot it may be, glossy of coat, a delight to the eye. Even your hog with ringed nose tip-tilted above the swell of the mire, is as God made him. He has no rational soul; but he is absolutely true to his instincts. Within his lowly sphere, he fulfils, by the compulsion of nature, it is true, Falstaff's resolution to live cleanly as a gentleman should. For he is no pervert. He has no desire to limit or end his kind. In comparison with the beast which the harpies of modern social progress would make us, he is a ministering angel, kindly, gracious and lovable.

In the pages of certain American newspapers and magazines, this social progress is "gabbling like a thing most brutish." We are regaled with details hitherto confined to the pages of text-books on veterinary science. Whether or not the methods of birth-restriction therein recommended are fit and profitable may be left to the decision of the expert stock raiser. They are intended for brutes, and they may be suited for brutes, but man is not a brute. He has a rational soul. Independently of Divine revelation, he knows the difference between right and wrong, and he cannot free himself from the responsibility attaching to acts freely posited. He differs, therefore, and essentially, from the beast of the field. To apply the methods of stock raising to the human race is a thing more vile and stupid than any plot cooked in the befuddled brain of drunken Caliban, at home in his mud. For Caliban, be it remembered, very like a hog in many respects, like a hog was no perverter of the law of his nature.

According to Section 1142 of the New York Penal

Code, to give information leading to race-suicide is a misdemeanor. "This law," says an apostle of modern progress, "is a disgrace and a scandal." "The most progressive men and women," warns another, "can see the danger to the race in this and similar archaic legislation." "It is a matter of common supposition," adds a third, "that contraceptives are used by the well-to-do and better-educated classes. It is fairly evident that such methods are not being used by the poorest and most ignorant people. Thus the rate of increase is coming fastest from those who, by their physical and mental status and their environment, are least able to bring into the world healthy children, and raise them to be efficient men and women." "Any person with a scientific education," argues a lady, who recently sued for wages due her for advocating, as a disinterested witness for "the uplift," certain moving pictures banned by the New York police, "must believe that this law should be repealed. The knowledge of birth-control should be given to all classes." This is the noisome argument of the "uplifters," most of them, to our shame be it confessed, women, who are endeavoring to repeal or amend Section 1142, the one poor, slender bar which prevents those for whom statute law is the sole norm of morality, from doing what they can to put an end to the human race by frustrating the law of nature.

The ostensible purpose of these vampires of society is to improve the human race. This they will do by popularizing a practice which directly and primarily makes the continuance of the human race impossible. Without restricting marital rights, this practice will relieve the contracting parties of the burden incidental to the rearing of children until such time as husband and wife are able to perform these duties satisfactorily. When this stage, economic, physical or moral, has been reached, it is proposed to allow the laws of nature to operate without interference. It is also plain that a general knowledge of effective contraceptives will be of great value to persons contemplating or sustaining illicit unions.

It may be remarked at the outset, that no proof is offered, or can be offered, tending to show, first, that the

physical organs functioning in procreation, are made fitter for their office by deliberate, habitual misuse; or, secondly, that the moral and psychic changes induced by this practice and affecting the domain of the will, strengthen the individual to assume the necessary burdens of parenthood. But apart from these considerations, and granting for the moment that, year by year, thousands of human beings come into existence diseased and crippled, to fill our foundling homes, or to pass from surroundings of poverty and vice into hospitals, lunatic asylums and jails, let us come to the fundamental point at issue: Can men and women freely posit the act of which procreation is the natural term, and licitly shirk parenthood?

To this question, a negative is the only possible answer. No interference with the law of nature can be tolerated, whether the act leading to procreation be promiscuous, or sanctioned by the bond of marriage. If, in a given instance, valid reasons make the natural result of the union of the generative principles inadvisable, this end must be attained, not by a perversion of the functions of nature, but by abstinence.

This position, championed notably by the Catholic Church, is founded neither upon the arbitrarily chosen basis of man-made morality, nor upon the changing reasons of expediency. It rests upon the natural law, the rule of conduct found in the constitution of our being. It was to this law that Cicero referred when he spoke of that ordination "not written, but born within us; which we have not learned or received by tradition, or read, but which we have sucked in, imbibed, from nature itself." St. Augustine, a master-mind of the ages, defines it "as the reason or will of God, commanding the observance of the natural order and forbidding its violation." St. Thomas, as "the rational creature's participation in the eternal law." It is not given by supernatural revelation; both in being and in point of time, it is prior to revelation, strictly so called. It presupposes, as Kant admits, that knowledge of God which is acquired, not through revelation, but by reason; and its purpose is to guide all contingent beings to their natural end.

A master of jurisprudence, Blackstone, offers the following very illuminating comments upon the natural law: "As man depends absolutely upon his Maker in all things, it is necessary that he should in all points conform to the Maker's will. . . . This will of his Maker is called the law of nature. . . . When He created man and endured him with free will to conduct himself in all parts of life, He laid down certain immutable laws of human nature. . . . He laid down only such laws as were founded in those relations of justice that existed in the nature of things antecedent to any positive precept. . . . These are the eternal immutable laws of good and evil . . . which He has enabled reason to discover, so far as they are necessary for the conduct of human actions. . . . This law of nature . . . is binding all over the globe, in all countries and at all times: no human laws are of any validity if contrary to this."

It is not necessary, then, to invoke supernatural revelation to show that acts militating against the preservation of the human species are in violation of the natural law, for, as Blackstone points out, this law is made known to man "by reason, so far as is necessary for the conduct of human nature." Man has, by his nature, the propensity and power to propagate his kind. This power, unless we are to accept a philosophy of hedonism and anarchy destructive of all society, is not given primarily for the good of the individual, but for the good of the species. Man cannot attain the development suggested by nature without society; society cannot exist if the generative function be perverted. The preservation of the human race, imperatively demanded by right reason and order, can be secured only by the means provided by nature. According to nature's law, the effect of the union of the generative principles is, *de se*, procreation. But the use of contraceptives effectively prevents procreation. It is, therefore, a violation of the natural law, and of its nature, forbidden.

To this argument the following rebuttal has been offered: It is not intended to advise a permanent use of contraceptives. Like every human faculty, the generative

power is to be exercised only under a wise restraint and with full understanding of its consequences to the individual and to society. But the natural law is not defeated by a single isolated act, or, indeed, by a series of such acts, restricted to a given pair. On the contrary, the true purpose of the law, the conservation of society, is best served by producing through selective processes, a stock which will evolve a more highly perfected race.

In reply, it must be said that the time-limits proposed by the advocates of birth-restriction have no bearing on the argument. Common-sense bears witness that the essential morality of an act is determined by its agreement or disagreement with a fixed norm; and this without reference to past conduct or to resolutions for the future. Lying is lying, whether I propose to give over lying after a single isolated infraction of the truth, or whether I have the unalterable determination of lying as long as I have breath. An individual is rightly called a thief, despite his intention to tread the ways of honesty after he has acquired a competency by thieving. Furthermore, it is nothing less than anarchy to sanction a violation of law on the ground that a single infraction does not effectively destroy the general purpose of the law.

Equally outside the question is the avowal of these advocates, that their sole intention is to improve the human race. The end does not justify the means; and it is with their methods, not with their intentions, that the precise issue is raised. The order that is in the essence of things postulates that a faculty attain the end to which its nature impels it, and for which it is primarily and essentially intended. Such interference, then, as effectively prevents the faculty from attaining its end, violates the nature of that faculty. To uphold the contrary of this proposition involves a denial of the existence of the natural law. Now, no argument can obscure the fact that the primary end, intended by the very nature of the generative principles, is procreation; for these principles by their very nature tend to this end and to no other. But the use of a contraceptive directly and effectively prevents the generative principles from attaining the end for

which they are primarily and essentially intended, and is, therefore, an act specifically prohibited by the natural law.

Times have changed from the days when mother, wife, child, were terms which bore about them a sweetness and a sanctity almost supernal. We have thrown God out of our literature, our philosophy, our politics, our schools, our practical lives and now we are taught that it is holy to eliminate Him completely from our very nature. Hence we are brought face to face with that most horrible of corruptions the unnatural rottenness that is worked by fleshly lust unchained. In the first chapter of Romans, St. Paul bears witness to the fearful perversion of a once hardy, virile people. What stands between us and like ruin, if the counsels of these modern apostles of unutterable vileness, "whose very name is a shame to speak," prevail? The truth of the living God, the law expressed in their nature, they made a lie; for this cause God gave them over to shameful affections. It is inevitable. Blot out God, and eternal night descends; and through the reeking vapors, the harpies hasten to feast upon this decadent mass that once was decency, high-mindedness, the purity of womanhood and the honor of man.

BIRTH-CONTROL: AN OPEN LETTER

*To Clare Gruening Stillman,
Secretary Birth-Control League.*

MY DEAR MADAM:—A careful searching of memory and an anxious examination of conscience have not enabled me to discover any act or utterance of mine which would justify you in expecting that I should consider favorably your invitation, which I have received to become a member of the Birth-Control League. I regard the practice which your organization desires to promote as immoral, degrading and stupid. The so-called contraceptive devices are intrinsically immoral because they involve the unnatural use, the perversion of a human faculty. One of the most important human faculties is used in such a way as to frustrate its natural end. Such conduct is quite as immoral as self-mutilation, or the practice of solitary vice. Any person who rejects this fundamental moral principle concerning the wrongfulness of perverting a faculty, must logically hold that there is no such thing as intrinsic immorality, that moral badness is always identical with individual disutility, and that anything is right which any individual thinks is useful for him.

The practice in question is degrading because it perverts conjugal intercourse from cooperation (potential if not actual) with the Creator into a mere means of sensual gratification. It brings husbands and wives down to the level of mutual instruments of indulgence. The disgusting calculation and repulsive artifice which characterize the various contraceptive devices, tend inevitably to diminish conjugal reverence, self-respect and mutual respect. It is doubtful whether any normal man or woman ever began such practices without suffering a severe moral shock, or continued them without serious moral degeneration. It is not surprising that men and women who thus pervert one of the highest functions of life, and the most

intimate relation of marriage, should grow obtuse in their perceptions of the sacredness and exclusiveness of wedlock, and of the binding character of conjugal obligation. It is not a mere coincidence that childless marriages should form such a large proportion of the cases in which divorce is sought on "statutory grounds." Incidentally, I would observe that, so far as I know, physicians are practically unanimous in declaring that all the contraceptive practices are in some degree injurious to health.

These practices are stupid because they are so evidently subversive of the end which the Birth-Control League professes to promote; namely, human welfare. And the advocates thereof are short-sighted and superficial. They have not learned the obvious lessons of human history, nor grasped the fundamental facts of human psychology. They fail to realize the inevitable by-products of the practice. It is probably true that if the poorest laborers could restrict the size of their families, they could raise their standard of living, and increase to some degree their material welfare. But this is only one of the consequences. When we take a comprehensive view of the situation, we find that any group, class or nation that once becomes addicted to the use of contraceptives does not give it up after the immediate material ends have been attained. They are not content to take advantage of these devices merely until they have reached a level of reasonable comfort. They continue them in the interest of ease and luxury. This is what has happened and is happening in those sections of the middle and upper classes that have adopted the abominable vice, and there is no good reason to hope that the poorer classes would fail to follow their example.

Now, the restriction of the number of children to one, two or three for the sake of ease and material satisfaction inevitably produces a disinclination to endure hardship, and inability to put forth painful effort, and a general weakening of moral fiber. This means a decline in every sort of efficiency; for the capacity to endure and the ability to do without, will forever remain the essential conditions of achievement. Talk as we will about "the joy of

work," the sober fact is that every kind of labor involves painful exertion if it is carried on continuously, effectively, and up to the limit of one's capacity. There are few if any active persons who would not find it more pleasant to diminish considerably the amount of time and effort that they spend at their tasks. Now, a social practice, like the use of contraceptives, which aims at a life of ease and a shirking of unpleasant duties, reduces fatally the power of endurance and the ability to carry on sustained and effective labor. It affects the few children that are born even more than the parents; for it deprives them of the necessary training in endurance, and keeps before them the bad example of their luxury-loving elders. They are not only small in quantity but poor in quality; that is, in moral quality, which is the supreme human quality. The social group that has thus weakened its moral fiber inevitably declines in social power and importance. Witness the decadence of the New England strain in our own population; the condition of the French nation, as described and deplored by such authorities as the great economist, P. Leroy-Beaulieu; and the imminent degeneration that threatens certain sections of the English-speaking peoples in more than one country, as set forth in detail by Mr. Beale in his *Racial Decay*.

I have no intentions of denying that large sections of the laboring class have only too much opportunity to cultivate their capacity for endurance. They would be not only more comfortable but more efficient if this opportunity were considerably diminished. But the only safe way to bring about this result is by bettering their condition economically.

The remedy advocated by the Birth-Control League is futile and disastrous, inasmuch as, in the long run, and sometimes in the "short run," it impels its votaries to the other extreme, to the pursuit of ease and luxury, and to the adoption of ideals and practices which inevitably produce moral deterioration and a serious decline in efficiency. Wherever the small family cult is practised, it is both the effect and the cause of a conception of life which regards an indefinite increase of material satisfaction and

sensations as the highest good. It involves the most far-reaching exemplification that the world has ever known of what Carlyle called "pig-philosophy." Why should we be in haste to fasten this curse upon the laboring classes? Until such time as the poorest laborers are put in possession of living wages, they have within their power an entirely innocent means of keeping down the number of their offspring, namely, conjugal abstinence. Those parents who have sufficient moral strength to adopt this means will be in no danger of character-degeneration through the presence of a small instead of a large family. Those who do not feel equal to this sacrifice cannot afford to run the risk of the moral deterioration which follows the use of contraceptives. They need that natural and compulsory form of self-denial which a large family involves. I am well aware that it is easy to find exceptions to the dire consequences that I have attributed to the practices of the small-family cult; but my statements apply to large social groups, and assume that the practice is maintained through two or three generations. In these conditions experience has shown, and continues to show, that the thing is socially disastrous.

Were I a believer in the doctrine that "the end justifies the means," I should, as a Catholic, rejoice in every extension of the nefarious practices advocated by the Birth-Control League. For I should feel assured that every such extension was hastening the day when Catholics would become the predominant element in our population. Already the tendency in this direction has been considerably accelerated through the prevalence of the small-family cult among non-Catholics. Unfortunately, many Catholics have been, to some extent, contaminated by the bad example set in this matter by their separated brethren. Nevertheless, the extent to which Catholics will become addicted to this vice will always remain relatively insignificant. For the Church will ever oppose it as something intrinsically and eternally immoral, and will deprive those who persist in it of access to the Sacraments. In the struggle for existence which the use of contraceptives has created, the Catholic element in our

population will survive because it is the fittest to survive; that is, because the Catholic element will retain and sustain those *moral* qualities that are the chief factor in fitness for survival among human beings. The mass of Catholics will continue to cultivate those qualities which are the only safeguard against the development of rotten hearts and flabby intellects. Catholics will have not only the quantity, the numbers, but the quality as well; for in the nurture of human beings quality cannot be maintained without quantity. The clearest proof of this statement is the fact that, as between, say, one hundred large families of the poor and an equal number of middle-class families who represent the second generation of votaries of the small-family cult, a larger number of efficient and achieving persons will arise out of the former group than out of the latter.

I am invited to send two dollars for membership in the Birth-Control League. I must respectfully decline, with the observation that I had much rather give the money to an organization for the training of prize fighters. It would aid in the development of at least *some* manly and human qualities.

Yours, "more in sorrow than in anger,"
St. Paul.

JOHN A. RYAN, D.D.

THE ABSURDITY OF LARGE FAMILIES

BY PAUL L. BLAKELY, S.J.

“LARGE families,” said the lecturer, “are absurd.” And she glared at the audience. The incident reminded me of a story told by Sir David Hunter-Blair. “I wouldn’t stuff an owl like that,” criticized a visitor. “Oh, you wouldn’t?” parried the taxidermist, looking up from his work. “Well, the Lord would. That owl’s alive.”

I have an idea, an old-fashioned one, I confess, that if husbands and wives try to keep themselves brave and true, they may safely leave the size of their families to the dispositions of an infinitely wise Creator. Of course, if they have no faith in God, they may try to improve upon Omniscience, or do any other foolish thing whatever. But to trust in God is at least as safe as to trust in some harridan peddling birth-control “literature,” or in a lost physician compounding nostrums in defiance of his profession as well as of the law. Fathers and mothers assuredly assume a grave responsibility when children come, but the responsibility does not imply crime, as does the responsibility of decreeing that they shall not come.

Stress is today laid by the advocates of birth-control on the alleged truth that “few children mean better children.” Although I am fairly familiar with books and pamphlets dealing with birth-control, I have yet to see a direct argument in proof, and I am inclined to believe that the assertion is one of those broad generalizations for which proof cannot be obtained. We are all familiar with famous men who have had a small forest of brothers and sisters, and with small families in which nearly every child became anything but a social or civic asset. There is no biological evidence whatever for the “fewer children, better children” assertion. Physiologically the burden of proof goes to show that every contraceptive practise or device may easily, and usually does, become a serious menace to health, and from the standpoint of psychology, it is clear that the character-weakness or malice which prompts the use of contraceptives unfits the individual for

the proper care of the one or two children he may have. Rich or poor, wise parents will wisely provide for a dozen children; and rich or poor, foolish or evil parents will find the care of even one a task to which they are unequal. However, I need not point out that so obvious a violation of the natural law as the prevention of conception would not be justified, even were it generally true that the children of small families are superior in breeding and culture to the children of large families. In the Catholic mind, as well as in the belief of many non-Catholics, artificial birth-control, like lying and solitary vice, which it closely resembles, can be justified by no circumstance whatever, since it is a thing evil in itself.

Yet as an offset against the "fewer children, better children" theory, the accompanying table may prove interesting. It lists fifty famous men and women, and I may add that the names were not "handpicked," but were suggested by the volumes on the shelves of my very modest book-case.

St. Aloysius	1-8	St. Stanislaus Kostka	2-7
Beethoven	12-12	Longfellow	2-8
Monsignor Benson	6-6	St. Ignatius Loyola	13-13
Daniel Boone	6-9	James Madison	1-12
St. Francis Borgia	1-7	Father Marquette	6-6
Carlyle	1-9	John Marshall	1-15
Archbishop Carroll	4-7	Father Matthew	6-12
St. Catherine of Siena ..	25-25	Cardinal Mercier	5-7
S. T. Coleridge	10-10	William Morris	3-9
Curé d'Ars	2-6	Napoleon	4-10
Jefferson Davis	10-10	Lord Nelson	6-11
Dickens	2-8	Cardinal Newman	1-6
St. Vincent Ferrer	4-8	Frederic Ozanam	4-14
"The Little Flower"	9-9	General Pershing	1-11
Franklin	8-10	Cardinal Pole	3-6
Cardinal Gibbons	4-6	Israel Putnam	11-12
Gladstone	1-6	Sir Joshua Reynolds	7-11
Nathan Hale	6-12	St. Francis de Sales	1-13
Nancy Hanks	8-8	Scott	4-12
Mother Hardey	4-9	Shakespeare	3-8
Haydn	2-12	Tennyson	4-12
Washington Irving	11-11	St. Teresa	1-7
Thomas Jefferson	3-10	Cardinal Vaughan	1-13
John Paul Jones	5-7	Washington	1-6
Immanuel Kant	4-9	St. Francis Xavier	6-6

I am sure that a student with a taste for statistics, if set at work in a large library, could produce a far more illuminating tabulation. The second figure gives the number of children in the family, and the first the rank of the distinguished child. A brief examination discloses the following facts: Of these distinguished personages, twenty-three, or forty-six per cent came from families of ten or more children, and forty-one, or eighty-two per cent from families of seven or more children. The fifty families average more than nine and one-half children (9.6), and the fourth child or later (4.7) is the child of grace. The cases are far too few to justify a generalization, but it is interesting to observe that this finding is sustained by Professor Meyrick in the *Hibbert Journal* for October, 1914. He writes:

“Much information exists tending to show that heredity strongly favors the third, fourth, fifth, and subsequent children born to a given couple, rather than the first two, who are apt to inherit some of the commonest physical and mental defects (upon this important point the records of the University of London should be consulted). A population with a low birth-rate thus naturally tends to degenerate.”

According to the claims of some birth-controllers, a large family was not a fit environment for the author of the Declaration of Independence, or the Father of the American Constitution. But Thomas Jefferson was the third of ten children, and James Madison had eleven brothers and sisters. Archbishop Carroll, eminent alike as churchman and patriot, was the fourth of seven children, and a famous successor in the see of Baltimore, Cardinal Gibbons, was the fourth of six. Benjamin Franklin was the eighth of ten children borne by the second wife of the senior Franklin, and the same hospitable roof sheltered seven half-brothers and sisters. Benjamin was the tenth son, and the fifteenth child in an assorted flock of seventeen. It is well for the country that his mother did not think she had done her duty by giving the world only five children. Again Nancy Hanks, the “sweet prairie flower” that blossomed only to give us

Lincoln, was the youngest of eight children. Mother Hardey, the foundress of the Religious of the Sacred Heart in this country, after the Venerable Mother Duchesne, mother of many valiant daughters, and the foster-mother of thousands of American girls, had eight brothers and sisters, herself the fourth of the flock. Nathan Hale, whose beautiful protestation of patriotism is usually omitted in our propaganda school histories, was the sixth child in a line of twelve. Washington Irving, the first who replied to the sneer "Who reads an American book?" was the last of eleven children, and Longfellow, the beloved poet, the second of eight. John Marshall, who first clothed the Supreme Court with supreme authority, had fourteen brothers and sisters, and General Pershing, eleven. Old Israel Putnam did recognizable service against the British, but he was weak in his spelling, thus making him an object of pity to the Sterling-Townerites, and labored under the further disadvantage of having been born the eleventh of twelve children. Jefferson Davis on whose tomb the Old South wrote "American statesman and defender of the Constitution," and whose integrity no man today impeaches, was the last of ten children. Daniel Boone, who opened the gateway to the great empire of the West, and the fiery John Paul Jones, respectively the sixth of nine, and the fifth of seven children, exhaust the present list of Americans. But room must be found for an earlier American, the last of six children, the sweet and gentle yet indomitable Father Marquette, the discoverer of the Mississippi. And in this medley of cataloguing, the Father of his Country, the first of six children, has almost been overlooked!

Of the thirty-three Europeans on the list, probably the most striking is St. Catherine of Siena, one of the most remarkable women of all time, and she was the last, or last but one, of twenty-five children. With her may be placed St. Ignatius, the knightly founder of the Company of Jesus, the youngest of thirteen children, and, by way of contrast, the simple little Carmelite nun, Therese of Lisieux. Sister Therese is likewise a study in eugenics from which we learn that to be of use in the world one

need not be always in the spotlight, or rejoice in the thews of an ox, and the abiding health of a mule. Her mother died of tuberculosis, and her father, always of a sickly constitution, seems to have lost his mind some years before he died. But these good people relied on Providence rather than on pathology, and left the issue to God with distinguished success. The Little Flower herself bloomed for only a few years, and dying spread with singular persuasion throughout the world the lesson the world so sorely needs, trust in God and in His loving Providence. The ninth of nine useful children, she is a splendid example of the absurdity of large families.

FOUR-FIFTHS OF A CHILD

BY JOHN WILTBYE

ANY set of figures attracts my attention, and almost any set leaves me wondering what it is all about. Statistics, I am told, constitute a kind of science these days, and how to read them is an art. It must be like the art of animal-taming, I think, which can be acquired only when one's eye is young and cold and direct, compelling the ones and the twos to perform according to the reader's wish.

It is this weakness of mine which impels me to ask whether I have not misread the figures recently issued by Smith College. Someone with a flair for tabulation has been at work, but just what he or she intended to show, is not evident. It seems that this tamer of figures has been addressing questionnaires to the graduates, 10,843 in all, to find out how many are married and how many, poor wretches, are still coifing St. Catherine's tresses. The compiler does not disclose, at least in the press reports, whether he—or she—is displeased with the results, nor is a key furnished to cause the figures to prove what the reader wishes them to prove. Still, if I set out to establish from the Smith College data that most graduates from our colleges for women marry and raise up a flock of little hostages to fortune, I should be greatly disappointed.

For the figures show that of every two graduates from Smith, one marries while the other continues in chosen or unchosen single blessedness. I speak but roughly. Fifty and one-tenth per cent marry, and forty-nine and nine-tenths per cent do not.

"Well?" you may inquire, with a rising and slightly subacid intonation, "Well, what do you deduce?"

Being hopelessly mid-Victorian and all that, I deduce only a sigh of regret. There are no nunneries to which these poor heretics may get them, and as often as I note

a new grey hair or a thinning spot on my venerable poll, I strike a deeper depth in a conviction that if a woman has no vocation for the consecrated life she ought to marry. Never mind the faggots and the thumbscrew. I should make a poor heretic, and I am far from forgetting a certain decree of the Council of Trent which anathematizes whoever "saith . . . that it is not better and more blessed to remain in virginity or in celibacy than to be united in matrimony." Amen does not stick in my throat when I read that decree. But I am thinking, rather, of those girls with a clear vocation for matrimony who lead a life of celibacy not to please God but to please themselves. God certainly manifests His will by unmistakable signs that some souls should sanctify themselves in the unmarried state; but I do not think that He gives this vocation to practically fifty per cent of our girls.

Sanctity and celibacy is one combination; celibacy and selfishness is quite another. It is all very well to pursue a life of the so-called single blessedness, with your independent income, your self-chosen plans, and a resultant sense of freedom. The world slides along very easily for such, as long as they are young and buoyant. But there can be nothing so dismal, it seems to me, as to sit at another's fireside at the age of forty, without chick or child, or to exist in lodgings where there never was anything so domestic as a fireside, and from which children are barred by the terms of the lease. Better far is it to marry, to live on odds and ends and love, to raise a family and know all the sweetness and the burden of caring for these young images of yourself—to patch Johnny's stockings and cut down old clothes for little Annie, to pinch and even to starve, but to keep on in that struggle for the home and its ideals which is the surest guarantee of stability for civilized society. Better far these years of sacrifice than to go on through life with no one to think of but yourself, and in the end—no one to think of you. You are really alone when nobody cares a straw if you come late to meals or go out in the rain without your galoshes.

Now Smith College, to return to our statistics, is the

Alma Mater of three college presidents, forty-one deans, fifty-five school principals, 1,100 teachers, eighty poets, seventy-five physicians, sixty artists, forty musicians (surely the distinction is invidious), twenty-two lawyers, two ministers, and a third secretary to the American Embassy at Berne. Well and good; let us suppose that to the best of their knowledge and belief these ladies are where they ought to be. But I confess that I should prefer to read of larger nurseries presided over by Smith College graduates.

For the nurseries are absurdly small. They consist of a child and a half.

That number seems insufficient to carry on the race. The one and one-half children will not, even if attaining to majority, replace the father and mother. But not every one or the other one-half (these fractions are perplexing) will attain maturity, in spite of the Sheppard-Towner maternity act and the solicitude of the Children's Bureau. Hence if the human race follows the example of Smith College, we are doomed to speedy extinction. When the family counts three and one-half children it touches the irreducible minimum and sheers close to the margin of race-safety. Back in the middle of the eighteenth century Franklin, I believe, estimated that the average colonial family consisted of eleven persons, nine of them children. Fathers and mothers who live in the fear of God can leave the margin in His hands; but there is a margin, and Smith falls below it.

The actual nurseries, it is conceded, consist of a child and a half; three children to every two married couples. But what of the nurseries that might have been, but are not; the nurseries that the forty-nine and nine-tenths unmarried will never see? "Never" is an over-estimate; probably some will marry later on. But should they marry after the age of thirty, the potential size of the family can be reduced by nearly one-half. In that case, the nursery will be tenanted by about four-fifths of a child.

Figure the sequel for yourself. (I forgot to mention that among her alumnae Smith College also counts one real estate operator in Florida.)

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