

AGAIN ROME HAS SPOKEN

The Church's Ruling on the Moral Obligations of Catholics. Extracted from the Papal Encyclicals and arranged by

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FOREWORD

This is a companion booklet to ROME HAS SPOKEN and sets forth the official ruling of the Church on matters of opinion as well as action on certain moral questions of present-day importance and controversy.

The previous pamphlet dealt with a selection on social and economic problems.

D. B.

THE DUTIES OF CATHOLICS IN PRIVATE AND PUBLIC LIFE

[From the Encyclical "Immortale Dei" of Leo XIII, 1st November, 1885]

"Liberties."

IF IN THE difficult times in which our lot is cast Catholics will give ear to Us, as it behoves them to do, they will readily see what are the duties of each one in matters of opinion as well as action. As regards opinion, whatever the Roman Pontiffs have hitherto taught, or shall hereafter teach, must be held with a firm grasp of mind, and so often as occasion requires, must be openly professed.

Especially with reference to the so-called "liberties" which are so greatly coveted in these days, all must stand by the judgment of the Apostolic See, and have the same mind. Let no man be deceived by the outward appearance of these liberties but let each one reflect whence these have their origin and by what efforts they are everywhere upheld and promoted. Experience has made us well acquainted with their results to the state, since everywhere they have borne fruits which the good and wise bitterly deplore. If there really exist anywhere or if we in imagination conceive a state waging wanton and tyrannical war against Christianity and if we compare with it the modern form of government just described, this latter may seem the more endurable of the two. Yet, undoubtedly, the principles on which such a government is grounded are, as We have said, of a nature which no one can approve.

In Private and Public Life.

Secondly, action may relate to private and domestic matters or to matters public. As to private affairs, the first duty is to conform life and conduct to the Gospel precepts and to refuse to shrink from this duty when Christian virtue demands some sacrifice difficult to make. All, moreover, are bound to love the Church as their common mother, to obey her laws, promote the honour, defend her rights, and to endeavour to make her respected and loved by those over whom they have authority. It is also of great moment to the public welfare to take a prudent part in the business of municipal administration and to endeavour above all to introduce effectual measures, so that, as becomes a Christian people, public provision may be made for the instruction of youth in religion and true morality. Upon these things the well-being of every state greatly depends.

National Politics.

Furthermore, it is in general fitting and salutary that Catholics should extend their efforts beyond this restricted sphere and give their attention to national politics. We say *in general* because these Our precepts are addressed to all nations. However, it may in some places be true that, for most urgent and just reasons, it is by no means expedient for Catholics to engage in public affairs or to take an active part in politics. Nevertheless, as We have laid down, to take no share in public matters would be equally wrong (We speak in general) as not to have concern for, or not to bestow labour upon, the common good. And this all the more because Catholics are admonished, by the very doctrines which they profess, to be

upright and faithful in the discharge of duty; while if they hold aloof, men whose principles offer but small guarantee for the welfare of the State will the more readily seize the reins of government. This would tend also to the injury of the Christian religion, forasmuch as those would come into power who are badly disposed towards the Church, and those who are willing to befriend her would be deprived of all influence.

The Genuine and Public Good.

It follows therefore clearly that Catholics have just reasons for taking part in the conduct of public affairs. For in so doing they assume not the responsibility of approving what is blameworthy in the actual methods of government, but seek to turn these very methods, so far as is possible, to the genuine and true public good and to use their best endeavours at the same time to infuse, as it were, into all the veins of the State the healthy sap and blood of Christian wisdom and virtue. The morals and ambitions of the heathens differed widely from those of the Gospel, yet Christians were to be seen living undefiled everywhere in the midst of pagan superstition, and while always true to themselves, coming to the front boldly wherever an opening was presented. Models of loyalty to their rulers, submissive, so far as was permitted, to the sovereign power, they shed around them on every side a halo of sanctity; they strove to be helpful to their brethren, and to attract others to the wisdom of Jesus Christ, yet were bravely ready to withdraw from public life, nay, even to lay down their life, if they could not without loss of virtue retain honours, dignities and offices. For this reason Christian ways and manners speedily found their way not only into private houses but into the camp, the Senate and even into the imperial palaces. “We are but of yesterday,” wrote Tertullion, “yet we swarm in all your institutions, we crown your cities, islands, villages, towns, assemblies, the army itself, your wards and corporations, the palace, the senate, and the law courts.” So that the Christian faith, when once it became lawful to make public profession of the Gospel, appeared in most of the cities of Europe, not like an infant crying in its cradle, but already grown up and full of vigour.

The Duty of Catholics.

In these our days, it is well to revive these examples of our forefathers. First and foremost it is the duty of all Catholics worthy of the name and wishful to be known as most loving children of the Church, to reject without swerving whatever is inconsistent with so fair a title; to make use of popular institutions, so far as can honestly be done, for the advancement of truth and righteousness; to strive that liberty of action shall not transgress the bounds marked out by nature and the law of God; to endeavour to bring back all civil society to the pattern and form of Christianity which We have described. It is barely possible to lay down any fixed method by which such purposes are to be attained, because the means adopted must suit places and times widely differing from one another. Nevertheless, above all things, unity of aim must be preserved, and similarity must be sought after in all plans of action. Both these objects will be carried into effect without fail, if all will follow the guidance of the Apostolic See as their rule of life, and obey the bishops whom the Holy Ghost has placed *to rule the Church of God* (Acts xx. 28). The defence of Catholicism indeed necessarily demands that in the profession of doctrines taught by the Church all shall be of one mind and all steadfast in believing; and care must be taken never to connive, in any way, at false opinions, never to with-stand them less strenuously than truth allows. In mere matters of opinion it is permissible to discuss things with moderation, with a desire to searching into truth and without unjust suspicion or angry recriminations.

Consistency Always.

Hence, lest concord be broken by rash charges, let this be understood by all, that the integrity of Catholic Faith cannot be reconciled with opinions verging on Naturalism, or Rationalism, the essence of which is utterly to sterilize Christianity and to install in society the supremacy of man to the exclusion of God.

Further, it is unlawful to follow one line of conduct in private and another in public, respecting privately the authority of the Church but publicly rejecting it: for this would amount to joining together good and evil and to putting man in conflict with himself; whereas he ought always to be consistent and never in the least point nor in any condition of life to swerve from Christian virtue.

But in matters merely political, as for instance, the best form of government, and this or that system of administration, a difference of opinion is lawful. Those therefore, whose piety is in other respects known and whose minds are ready to accept in all obedience the decrees of the Apostolic See, cannot in justice be accounted as bad men because they disagree as to subjects We have mentioned; and still graver wrong will be done them, if—as We have more than once perceived with regret—they are accused of violating or of wavering in the Catholic faith.

Let this be well borne in mind by all who are in the habit of publishing their opinions, and above all by journalists. In the endeavour to secure interests of the highest order there is no room for intestine strife or party rivalries, since all should aim with one mind and purpose to make safe that which is the common object of all—the maintenance of Religion and of the State.

If, therefore, there have hitherto been dissentions, let them henceforth be gladly buried in oblivion. If rash or injurious acts have been committed, whoever may have been at fault, let mutual charity make amends and let the past be redeemed by a special submission of all to the Apostolic See.

In this way Catholics will attain two most excellent results: they will become helpers to the Church in preserving and propagating Christian wisdom, and they will confer the greatest benefit on civil society the safety of which is exceedingly imperilled by evil teachings and bad passions.

DEFINITION OF THE RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF HUSBAND AND WIFE

[From the Encyclical “Arcanum Divinae” of Leo XIII, 10th February, 1880]

FIRSTLY THERE HAS been vouchsafed to the marriage union a higher and nobler purpose than was ever previously given to it. By the command of Christ it not only looks to the propagation of the human race, but to the bringing forth of children for the Church, “fellow-citizens with the saints, and the domestics of God” (Eph. ii. 19) so that “a people might be born and brought up for the worship and religion of the true God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” (*Catech. Rom. c. viii*).

Husband and Wife.

Secondly, the mutual duties of husband and wife have been defined, and their several rights accurately established. They are bound, namely, to have such feelings for one another as to cherish always very great mutual love, to be ever faithful to their marriage vow, and to give to one another an unflinching and unselfish help. The husband is the chief of the family, and the head of the wife. The woman, because she is flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone, must be subject to her husband and obey him; not indeed as a servant, but as a companion, so that her obedience shall be wanting in neither honour nor dignity. Since the husband represents Christ, and since the wife represents the Church, let there always be, both in him who commands and in her who obeys, a heaven-born love guiding both in their respective duties. For “the husband is the head of the wife; as Christ is the head of the Church . . . Therefore, as the Church is subject to Christ, so also let the wives be to their husbands in all things.” (Eph. v. 23, 24).

WOMAN’S DIGNITY IN MARRIAGE

[From the Encyclical “Casti Connubii” of Pius XI, 31st December, 1930]

BY THIS SAME love it is necessary that all the other rights and duties of the marriage state be regulated as the words of the Apostle: “Let the husband render the debt to the wife, and the wife also in like manner to the husband” (I Cor. vii. 3) express not only a law of justice but of charity.

Domestic society being confirmed, therefore, by this band of love there should flourish in it that “order of love,” as St. Augustine calls it. This order includes both the primacy of the husband with regard to the wife and children, the ready subjection of the wife and her willing obedience, which the Apostle commends in these words: “Let women be subject to their husbands as to the Lord, because the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church.” (Eph. V. 22, 23).

Mother and Companion.

This subjection, however, does not deny or take away the liberty which fully belongs to the woman both in view of her dignity as a human person, and in view of her most noble office as wife and mother and companion; nor does it bid her obey her husband's every request if not in harmony with right reason or with the dignity due to wife; nor, in fine, does it imply that the wife should be put on a level with those persons who in law are called minors, to whom it is not customary to allow free exercise of their rights on account of their lack of mature judgment, or of their ignorance of human affairs. But it forbids that exaggerated liberty which cares not for the good of the family; it forbids that in this body which is the family, the heart be separated from the head to the great detriment of the whole body and the proximate danger of ruin. For if man is the head, the woman is the heart, and as he occupies the chief place in ruling, so she may and ought to claim for herself the chief place in love.

Again, this subjection of wife to husband in its degree and manner may vary according to the different conditions of persons, place, and time. In fact, if the husband neglect his duty, it falls to the wife to take his place in directing the family. But the structure of the family and its fundamental law, established and confirmed by God, must always and everywhere be maintained intact.

These then are the elements which compose the blessing of conjugal faith: unity, chastity, charity, honourable noble obedience, which are at the same time an enumeration of the benefits which are bestowed on husband and wife in their married state, benefits by which the peace, the dignity, and the happiness of matrimony are securely preserved and fostered. Wherefore it is not surprising that this conjugal faith has always been counted amongst the most priceless and special blessings of matrimony.

ON THE INDISSOLUBILITY OF THE MARRIAGE BOND AND THE EVILS OF DIVORCE

[From the Encyclical "Arcanum Divinae" of Leo XIII, 10th February, 1880]

A Torrent of Evil.

WHEN THE CHRISTIAN religion is rejected and repudiated, marriage sinks of necessity into the slavery of man's vicious nature and vile passions, and finds but little protection in the help of natural goodness. A very torrent of evil has flowed from this source, not only into private families, but also into states. For the salutary fear of God being removed and there being no longer that refreshment in toil which is nowhere more abounding than in the Christian religion, it very often happens as from facts is evident, that the mutual services and duties of marriage *seem* almost unbearable; and thus very many yearn for the loosening of the tie which they believe to be woven by human law and of their own free will, whenever incompatibility of temper, or quarrels, or the violation of the marriage vow, or mutual consent, or other reasons induce them to think that it would be well to be set free. Then, if they are hindered by law from carrying out this shameless desire, they contend that the laws are iniquitous, inhuman and at variance with the rights of free citizens; adding that every effort should be made to repeal such enactments and to introduce a more humane code sanctioning divorce.

Now however much the legislators of these our days may wish to guard themselves against the impiety of men such as We have been speaking of, they are unable to do so, seeing that they profess to hold and defend the very same principles of jurisprudence; and hence they have to go with the times and render divorce easily obtainable. History itself shows this, for, to pass over other instances, we find that, at the close of the last century, divorces were sanctioned by law in that upheaval, or rather as it might be called, conflagration in France when society was wholly degraded by the abandoning of God. Many at the present time would fain have those laws re-enacted, because they wish God and His Church to be altogether exiled and excluded from the midst of human society, madly thinking that in such laws a final remedy must be sought for that moral corruption which is advancing with rapid strides.

The Evils of Divorce.

Truly, it is hardly possible to describe how great are the evils that flow from divorce. Matrimonial contracts are by it made variable; mutual kindness is weakened; deplorable inducements to unfaithfulness are supplied; harm is done to the education and training of children; occasion is afforded for the breaking up of home; the seeds of dissension are sown among families; the dignity of womanhood is lessened and brought low, and women run the risk of being deserted after having ministered to the pleasures of men. Since then, nothing has such power to lay waste families and destroy the mainstay of kingdoms as the corruption of morals, it is easily seen that divorces are in the highest degree hostile to the prosperity of families and States, springing as they do from the depraved morals of the people, and, as experience shows us, opening out a way to every kind of evil-doing alike in public and in private life.

The Teachings of Experience.

Further still, if the matter be duly pondered, we shall clearly see these evils to be the more especially dangerous because, divorce once being tolerated, there will be no restraint powerful enough to keep it within the bounds marked out or pre-surmised. Great indeed is the force of example, and even greater still the might of passion. With such incitements it must needs follow that the eagerness for divorce daily spreading by devious ways, will seize upon the minds of many like a virulent contagious disease, or like a flood of water bursting through every barrier. These are truths that doubtlessly are all clear in themselves; but they will become clearer yet if we call to mind the teachings of experience. So soon as the road to divorce began to be made smooth by law, at once quarrels, jealousies and judicial separations largely increased; and such shamelessness of life followed, that men who had been in favour of these divorces repented of what they had done, and feared that if they did not carefully seek a remedy by repealing the law, the State itself might come to ruin.

The Romans of old are said to have shrunk with horror from the first examples of divorce; but ere long all sense of decency was blunted in their soul, the meagre restraint of passion died out, and the marriage vow was so often broken that what some writers have affirmed would seem to be true—namely, women used to reckon years not by the change of consuls, but of their husbands.

In like manner, at the beginning Protestants allowed legalized divorces in certain although but few cases; and yet, from the affinity of circumstances of like kind, the number of divorces increased to such extent in Germany, America, and elsewhere, that all wise thinkers deplored the boundless corruption of morals, and judged the recklessness of the laws to be simply intolerable.

Even in Catholic States the like evil existed. For whenever at any time divorce was introduced, the abundance of misery that followed far exceeded all that the framers of the law could have foreseen. In fact, many lent their minds to contrive all kinds of fraud and device, and by accusations of cruelty, violence and adultery, to feign grounds for the dissolution of the matrimonial bond of which they had grown weary; and all this with so great havoc to morals that an amendment of the laws was deemed to be urgently needed.

A Baneful and Calamitous Result.

Can anyone, therefore, doubt that laws in favour of divorce would have a result equally baneful and calamitous were they to be passed in these our days? There exists not, indeed, in the projects and enactments of men any power to change the character of tendency which things have received from nature. Those men therefore show but little wisdom in the idea they have formed of the well-being of the commonwealth, who think that the inherent character of marriage can be perverted with impunity, and who, disregarding the sanctity of religion and of the sacrament, seem to wish to degrade and dishonour marriage more basely than was done even by heathen laws. Indeed, if they do not change their views, not only private families, but all public society will have unceasing cause to fear lest they should be miserably driven into that general confusion and overthrow of order which is even now the wicked aim of Socialists and Communists.

Thus we most clearly see how foolish and senseless it is to expect any public good from divorce, when, on the contrary, it tends to the certain destruction of Society.

[On the same subject quoted from the Encyclical “*Casti Connubii*” of Pius XI, 31st December, 1930]

Reasons Alleged for Divorce.

THE ADVOCATES OF the neo-paganism of today have learned nothing from the sad state of affairs, but instead day by day, more and more vehemently, they continue by legislation to attack the indissolubility of the marriage bond, proclaiming that the lawfulness of divorce must be recognised, and that the antiquated laws should give place to a new and more humane legislation. Many and varied are the grounds put forward for divorce, some arising from the wickedness and guilt of the persons concerned, others arising from the circumstances of the case; the former they describe as subjective, the latter objective; in a word, whatever might make married life hard or unpleasant. They strive to prove their contentions regarding these grounds for the divorce legislation they would bring about by various arguments. Thus in the first place, they maintain that it is for the good of either party that the one who is innocent should have the right to separate from the guilty, or that the guilty should be withdrawn from a union which is displeasing to him and against his will.

In the second place, they argue, the good of the child demands this, for either it will be deprived of a proper education or the natural fruits of it, and will too easily be affected by the discords and shortcomings of the parents, and drawn from the path of virtue. And, thirdly, the common good of society requires that these marriages should be completely dissolved, which are now incapable of producing their natural results, and that legal separations should be allowed when crimes are to be feared as the result of the common habitation and inter-course of the parties. This last they say must be admitted to avoid the crimes being committed purposely with a view to obtaining the desired sentence of divorce for which the judge can legally loose the marriage bond, as also to prevent people from coming before the courts when it is obvious from the state of the case that they are lying and perjuring themselves—all of which brings the court and the lawful authority into contempt. Hence the civil laws, in their opinion, have to be reformed to meet these new requirements, to suit the changes of the times and the changes in men’s opinions, civil institutions and customs. Each of these reasons is considered by them as conclusive, so that all taken together offer a clear proof of the necessity of granting divorce in certain cases.

Others, taking a step further, simply state that marriage, being a private contract, is, like other private contracts, to be left to the consent and good pleasure of both parties, and so can be dissolved for any reason whatsoever.

The Unalterable Law of God.

Opposed to all these reckless opinions, Venerable Brethren, stands the unalterable law of God, fully confirmed by Christ, a law that can never be deprived of its force by the decrees of men, the ideas of a people or the will of any legislator: “What God hath joined together let no man put asunder.” (Matt. xix. 6). And if any man, acting contrary to this law, shall have put asunder his action is null and void, and the consequence remains, as Christ Himself has explicitly confirmed: “Everyone that putteth away his wife and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.” (Luke xvi. 18). Moreover, these words refer to every kind of marriage, even that which is natural and legitimate only; for, as has already been observed, that indissolubility by which the loosening of the bond is once and for all removed from the whim of the parties and from every secular power, is a property of every true marriage.

Let that solemn pronouncement of the Council of Trent be recalled to mind in which, under the stigma of anathema, it condemned these errors: “If anyone should say that on account of heresy or the hardships of co-habitation or a deliberate abuse of one party by the other the marriage tie may be loosened, let him be anathema” (*Conc. Trid.*, Sess. xxiv, cap. 5); and again: “If anyone should say that, the Church errs in having taught or in teaching that, according to the teaching of the Gospels and the Apostles, the bond of marriage cannot be loosened because of the sin of adultery of either party; or that neither party, even though he be innocent, having given no cause for the sin of adultery, can contract another marriage during the lifetime of the other; and that he commits adultery who marries another after putting away his adulterous wife, and likewise that she commits adultery who puts away her husband and marries another; let him be anathema;” (*Conc.*

Imperfect Separation Allowed.

If therefore the Church has not erred and does not err in teaching this, and consequently it is certain that the bond of marriage cannot be loosed even on account of the sin of adultery, it is evident that all the other weaker excuses that can be and are usually brought forward, are of no value whatsoever. And the objections brought against the firmness of the marriage bond are easily answered. For, in certain circumstances imperfect separation of the parties is allowed, the bond not being severed. This separation which the Church herself permits, and expressly mentions in her Canon Law in those canons which deal with the separation of the parties as to marital relationship and co-habitation, removes all the alleged inconveniences and dangers (*Cod. iur. can.*, c. 1128, sqq.). It will be for the sacred law and, to some extent also, the civil law, in so far as civil matters are affected, to lay down the grounds, the conditions, the method and precautions to be taken in a case of this kind in order to safe-guard the education of the children and the well-being of the family, and to remove all those evils which threaten the married persons, the children and the State. Now all those arguments that are brought forward to prove the indissolubility of the marriage tie, arguments which have already been touched upon, can equally be applied to excluding not only the necessity of divorce, but even the power to grant it; while for all the advantages that can be put forward for the former, there can be adduced as many disadvantages and evils which are a formidable menace to the whole of human society.

An Amount of Good and a Train of Evils.

To revert again to the expressions of Our predecessor, it is hardly necessary to point out what an amount of good is involved in the absolute indissolubility of wedlock and what a train of evils follows upon divorce. Whenever the marriage bond remains intact, then we find marriages contracted with a sense of safety and security, while, when separations are considered and the dangers of divorce are present, the marriage contract itself becomes insecure, or at least gives ground for anxiety and surprises. On the one hand we see a wonderful strengthening of goodwill and co-operation in the daily life of husband and wife, while on the other, both of these are miserably weakened by the presence of a facility for divorce. Here we have at a very opportune moment a source of help by which both parties are enabled to preserve their purity and loyalty; there we find harmful inducements to unfaithfulness. On this side we find the birth of children and their tuition and upbringing effectively promoted, many avenues of discord closed amongst families and relations, and the beginnings of rivalry and jealousy easily suppressed; on that, very great obstacles to the birth and rearing of children and their education, and many occasions of quarrels and seeds of jealousy sown everywhere. Finally, but especially, the dignity and position of women in civil and domestic society is re instated by the former; while by the latter it is shamefully lowered and the danger is incurred “of their being considered outcasts, slaves of the lusts of men.” (Leo XIII: *Arcanum divinae sapientiae* Feb. 10, 1880).

Opposed to the Well-being of Family and State.

To conclude with the important words of Leo XIII, since the destruction of family life “and the loss of national wealth is brought about more by the corruption of morals than by anything else, it is easily seen that divorce, which is born of the perverted morals of a people, and leads, as experiment shows, to vicious habits in public and private life, is particularly opposed to the well-being of the family and the State. The serious nature of these evils will be the more clearly recognised, when we remember that, once divorce has been allowed, there will be no sufficient means of keeping it in check within any definite bounds. Great is the force of example, greater still that of lust; and with such incitements it cannot but happen that divorce and its consequent setting loose of the passions should spread daily and attack the souls of many like a contagious disease or a river bursting its banks and flooding the land.” (*Arcanum divinae sapientiae*).

Thus we read in the same letter, “unless things change, the human family and State have every reason to fear lest they should suffer absolute ruin.” All this was written fifty years ago, yet is it confirmed by the daily increasing corruption of

morals and the unheard of degradation of the family in those lands where Communism reigns unchecked.

THE CHURCH CONDEMNS CONTRACEPTION

[From the Encyclical "Casti Connubii" by Pius XI, 31st December, 1930]

AND NOW, Venerable Brethren, we shall explain in detail the evils opposed to each of the benefits of matrimony. First consideration is due to the offspring, which many have the boldness to call the disagreeable burden of matrimony and which they say is to be carefully avoided by married people not through virtuous continence (which Christian law permits in matrimony when both parties consent) but by frustrating the marriage act. Some justify this criminal abuse on the ground that they are weary of children and wish to gratify their desires without their consequent burden. Others say that they cannot on the one hand remain continent nor on the other can they have children because of the difficulties whether on the part of the mother or on the part of family circumstances.

A Shameful and Vicious Deed.

But no reason, however grave, may be put forward by which anything intrinsically against nature may become conformable to nature and morally good. Since, therefore, the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children, those who in exercising it deliberately frustrate its natural power and purpose sin against nature and commit a deed which is shameful and intrinsically vicious.

Small wonder, therefore, if Holy Writ bears witness that the Divine Majesty regards with greatest detestation this horrible crime and at times has punished it with death. As St. Augustine notes: "Intercourse even with one's legitimate wife is unlawful and wicked where the conception of the offspring is prevented. Onan, the son of Juda, did this and the Lord killed him for it." (St. Augustine: *De coniug. adult.*, lib. ii, n. 12; Gen. xxxviii. 8-10).

Since therefore, openly departing from the uninterrupted Christian tradition some recently have judged it possible solemnly to declare another doctrine regarding this question, the Catholic Church, to whom God has entrusted the defence of the integrity and purity of morals, standing erect in the midst of the moral ruin which surrounds her, in order that she may preserve the chastity of the nuptial union from being defiled by this foul stain, raises her voice in token of her divine ambassadorship and through Our mouth proclaims anew: any use whatsoever of matrimony exercised in such a way that the act is deliberately frustrated in its natural power to generate life is an offence against the law of God and of nature, and those who indulge in such are branded with the guilt of a grave sin.

An Admonition.

We admonish therefore, priests who hear confessions and others who have the care of souls, in virtue of Our supreme: to allow the faithful entrusted to them to err regarding this most grave law of God; much more, that they keep themselves immune from such false opinions, in no way conniving in them. If any confessor or pastor of souls, which may God forbid, lead the faithful entrusted to him into these errors or should at least confirm them by approval or by guilty silence, let him be mindful of the fact that he must render a strict account to God, the Supreme Judge, for the betrayal of his sacred trust, and let him take to himself the words of Christ: "They are blind and leaders of the blind: and if the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit." (Matt. xv. 14).

False and Exaggerated Arguments.

As regards the evil use of matrimony, to pass over the arguments which are shameful, not infrequently others that are false and exaggerated are put forward. Holy Mother Church very well understands and clearly appreciates all that is said regarding the health of the mother and the danger to her life. And who would not grieve to think of these things? Who is not filled with the greatest admiration when he sees a mother risking her life with heroic fortitude that she may preserve the life of the offspring which she has conceived? God alone, all bountiful and all merciful as He is, can reward her for the fulfilment of the office allotted to her by nature, and will assuredly repay her in a measure full to overflowing.

Holy Church knows well that not infrequently one of the parties is sinned against rather than sinning, when for a grave cause he or she reluctantly allows the perversion of the right order. In such a case, there is no sin, provided that, mindful of the law of charity, he or she does not neglect to seek to dissuade and to deter the partner from sin. Nor are those considered as acting against nature who in the married state use their right in the proper manner although on account of natural reasons either of time or of certain defects, new life cannot be brought forth. For in matrimony as well as in the use of the matrimonial rights there are also secondary ends, such as mutual aid, the cultivating of mutual love, and the quieting of concupiscence which husband and wife are not forbidden to consider so long as they are subordinated to the primary end and so long as the intrinsic nature of the act is preserved.

We are deeply touched by the sufferings of those parents who, in extreme want, experience great difficulty in rearing their children.

God does not demand Impossibilities

However, they should take care lest the calamitous state of their external affairs should be the occasion for a much more calamitous error. No difficulty can arise that justifies the putting aside of the law of God which forbids all acts intrinsically evil. There is no possible circumstance in which husband and wife cannot, strengthened by the grace of God, fulfil faithfully their duties and preserve in wedlock their chastity unspotted. This truth of Christian Faith is expressed by the teaching of the Council of Trent: “ Let no one be so rash as to assert that which the Fathers of the Council have placed under anathema, namely, that there are precepts of God impossible for the just to observe. God does not ask the impossible, but by His commands, instructs you to do what you are able, to pray for what you are not able that He may help you.” (*Conc. Trid.*, Sess. vi, cap. II).

ABORTION CONDEMNED BY THE CHURCH

[From the Encyclical “Casti Connubii” by Pius XI, 31st December, 1930]

BUT ANOTHER VERY grave crime is to be noted, Venerable Brethren, which regards the taking of the life of the offspring hidden in the mother’s womb. Some wish it to be allowed and left to the will of the father or the mother; others say it is unlawful unless there are weighty reasons which they call by the name of medical, social, or eugenic “indication.” Because this matter falls under the penal laws of the State by which the destruction of the offspring begotten but unborn is forbidden, these people demand that the “indication” which in one form or another they defend, be recognized as such by the public law and in no way penalized. There are those, moreover, who ask that the public authorities provide aid for these deathdealing operations, a thing, which, sad to say, everyone knows is of very frequent occurrence in some places.

The Direct Murder of the Innocent.

As to the “medical and therapeutic indication” to which, using their own words, we have made reference, Venerable Brethren, however much we may pity the mother whose health and even life is gravely imperilled in the performance of the duty allotted to her by nature, nevertheless, what could ever be a sufficient reason for excusing in any way the direct murder of the innocent? This is precisely what we are dealing with here. Whether inflicted upon the mother or upon the child, it is against the precept of God and the law of nature: “Thou shalt not kill.” The life of each is equally sacred, and no one has the power not even the public authority, to destroy it. It is of no use to appeal to the right of taking away life for here it is a question of the innocent, whereas that right has regard only to the guilty; nor is there here any question of defence by bloodshed against an unjust aggressor (for who would call an innocent child an unjust aggressor?); again there is no question here of what is called the “ law of extreme necessity “ which could even extend to the direct killing of the innocent. Upright and skilful doctors strive most praiseworthy to guard and preserve the lives of both mother and child; on the contrary, those show themselves most unworthy of the noble medical profession who encompass the death of one or the other, through a pretence at practising medicine

or through motives of misguided pity.

Impure Gratification.

All of which agrees with the stern words of the Bishop of Hippo in denouncing those wicked parents who seek to remain childless, and failing in this are not ashamed to put their offspring to death: “ Sometimes this lustful cruelty or cruel lust goes so far as to seek to procure a baneful sterility, and if this fails the foetus conceived in the womb is in one way or another smothered and evacuated, in the desire to destroy the offspring before it has life, or if it already lives in the womb, to kill it before it is born. If both man and woman are party to such practices they are not spouses at all; and if from the first they have carried on thus, they have come together not for honest wedlock, but for impure gratification; if both are not party to these deeds I make bold to say that either the one makes herself a mistress of the husband, or the other simply the paramour of his wife.” (St. August. *De nupt. et concupisc.* cap. xv.)

What is asserted in favour of the social and eugenic “indication” may and must be accepted, provided lawful and upright methods are employed within the proper limits; but to wish to put forward reasons based upon them for the killing of the innocent is unthinkable and contrary to the divine precept promulgated in the words of the Apostle: “ Evil is not to be done that good may come of it.” (Rom. iii. 8).

Those who hold the reins of government should not forget that it is the duty of public authority by appropriate laws and sanctions to defend the lives of the innocent, and this all the more so since those whose lives are endangered and assailed cannot defend themselves. Among whom we must mention in the first place infants hidden in the mother’s womb. And if the public magistrates not only do not defend them, but by their laws and ordinances betray them to death at the hands of doctors or of others, let them remember that God is the Judge and Avenger of innocent blood which cries from earth to Heaven. (Gen. iv. 10).

STERILISATION CONDEMNED BY THE CHURCH

[From the Encyclical of Pius XI on Christian Marriage “*Casti Connubii*,” 31st December, 1930]

An Unlawful Usurpation.

FINALLY, THAT pernicious practice must be condemned which closely touches upon the natural right of man to enter matrimony, but affects also in a real way the welfare of the offspring. For there are some who, over-solicitous for the cause of eugenics, not only give salutary counsel for more certainly procuring the strength and health of the future child—which indeed, is not contrary to right reason—but put eugenics before aims of a higher order, and by public authority wish to prevent from marrying all those who, even though naturally fit for marriage they consider according to the norms and conjectures of their investigations, would through hereditary transmission, bring forth defective offspring. And more, they wish to legislate to deprive those of that natural faculty by medical action despite their unwillingness; and this they do not propose as an infliction of grave punishment, under the authority of the State for a crime committed, nor to prevent future crimes by guilty persons but against every right and good they wish the civil authority to arrogate to itself a power over a faculty which it never had and can never legitimately possess.

Those who act in this way, are at fault in losing sight of the fact that the family is more sacred than the state, and that men are begotten not for the earth and for time but for Heaven and eternity. Although often these individuals are to be dissuaded from entering into matrimony, certainly it is wrong to brand men with the stigma of crime because they contract marriage, on the ground that, despite the fact that they are in every respect capable of matrimony, they will give birth only to defective children, even though they use all care and diligence.

Public magistrates have no direct power over the bodies of their subjects; therefore, where no crime has taken place and there is no cause present for grave punishment, they can never directly harm, or tamper with the integrity of the body, either for the reasons of eugenics or for any other reason. St. Thomas teaches this when, inquiring whether human judges for the sake of preventing future evils can inflict punishment, he admits that the power indeed exists as regards certain

other forms of evil, but justly and properly denies it as regards the maiming of the body. “No one who is guiltless may be punished by a human tribunal either by flogging to death, or mutilation, or by beating.” (*Summ. theol.*, 2a, 2ae, q. 1080 a 4. ad 2um).

Furthermore, Christian doctrine establishes, and the light of human reason makes it most clear that private individuals have no other power over the members of their bodies than that which pertains to their natural ends; and they are not free to destroy or mutilate their members, or in any other way render themselves unfit for their natural functions, except when no other provision can be made for the good of the whole body.

CATHOLICS SHOULD DEFEND THE FAITH

[*From the Encyclical “Sapientiae Christianae” of Leo XIII, 10th January, 1890*]

An Obligation on All.

AMID SUCH reckless and widespread folly of opinion it is, as We have said, the office of the Church to undertake the defence of truth and uproot errors from the mind, and this charge has to be at all times sacredly observed by her, seeing that the honour of God and the salvation of men are confided to her keeping. But when necessity compels, not those only who are invested with power of rule are bound to safeguard the integrity of faith, but as St. Thomas maintains, “Each one is under obligation to show forth his faith, either to instruct and encourage others of the faithful, or to repel the attacks of unbelievers.” To recoil before an enemy or to keep silence when from all sides such clamours are raised against truth, is the part of a man either devoid of character, or who entertains doubt as to the truth of what he professes to believe. In both cases such mode of behaving is base and is insulting to God, and both are incompatible with the salvation of mankind. This kind of conduct is profitable only to the enemies of the faith, for nothing emboldens the wicked so greatly as the lack of courage on the part of the good. Moreover, want of vigour on the part of Christians is so much the more blameworthy, as not seldom little would be needed on their part to bring to naught false charges and refute erroneous opinions; and always by exerting themselves more strenuously they might reckon upon being successful. After all, no one can be prevented from putting forth that strength of soul which is the characteristic of true Christians; and very frequently by such display of courage our enemies lose heart and their designs are thwarted. Christians are, moreover, born for combat whereof the greater the vehemence, the more assured, God aiding, the triumph: “Have confidence. I have overcome the world.” (John xvi. 33). Nor is there any ground for alleging that Jesus Christ, the Guardian and Champion of the Church, needs not in any manner the help of men. Power certainly is not wanting to Him, but in His loving kindness He would assign to us a share in obtaining and applying the fruits of salvation procured through His grace.

Open and Unflinching Profession of Faith.

The chief elements of this duty consist in professing openly and unflinchingly the Catholic doctrine, and in propagating it to the utmost of our power. For, as is often said and with the greatest truth, there is nothing so hurtful to Christian wisdom as that it should not be known, since it possesses, when loyally received, inherent power to drive away error. So soon as Catholic truth is apprehended by a simple and unprejudiced soul, reason yields assent. Now faith, as a virtue, is a great boon of divine grace and goodness; nevertheless, the objects themselves to which faith is to be applied are scarcely known in any other way than through hearing. “How shall they believe Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? Faith then cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.” (Rom. x. 14, 17). Since then faith is necessary for salvation, it follows that the word of Christ must be preached. The office indeed of preaching, that is of teaching, lies by divine right in the province of the pastors, namely, of the bishops whom *the Holy Ghost has placed to rule the Church of God* (Acts xx. 28). It belongs above all to the Roman Pontiff, Vicar of Jesus Christ, established as head of the Universal Church, teacher of all that pertains to morals and faith.

No one, however, must entertain the notion that private individuals are prevented from taking some active part in this duty of teaching, especially those on whom God has bestowed gifts of mind with the strong wish of rendering themselves

useful. These, so often as circumstances demand, may take upon themselves, not indeed the office of the pastor, but the task of communicating to others what they have themselves received, becoming, as it were, living echoes of their masters in the faith.

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