

MORALITY AND PROBLEMS OF OVERPOPULATION

Alarm signals are being hoisted everywhere in the popular press, warning of an imminent onslaught of world overpopulation.¹ Even discriminating readers must be wondering how serious the threat is, and what steps ought to be taken. Pressure for compulsory birth control is building up. Catholic opposition appears unreasonable because contrary to the common good.²

This paper will try to establish four points to your satisfaction,

¹ The Population Reference Bureau of Washington, D. C., has a number of able writers on its list who issue widely printed news releases, enter articles into such large circulation periodicals as *Time*, *Redbook*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Newsweek*, *Nation's Business*, *Fortune*, *Look*, *Scientific American*, and others. They follow the alarmist trend. The Planned Parenthood Federation, with headquarters in New York, is quite outspoken in its efforts to popularize birth control and to refute the stand of the Catholic Church. *The Reader's Digest* of December, 1958, carried a pessimistic article by Julian Huxley; *What's New* of Abbott Laboratories carried a similar one by Sir Charles Darwin in the late winter issue of 1959; it also presented an opposing view of the present writer in the spring issue; Kingsley Davis follows the alarmist trend in *The New York Times Magazine*, March 5, 1959; *Newsweek* featured a short article entitled "The Avalanche of Babies" on April 27, 1959. The tone of newspaper reports tends toward pessimism, and so does that of a spate of books on the reading stand.

² Many non-Catholic writers have adopted a moderate attitude in their criticism of the Catholic Church's stand: some suggest ways in which the Church could escape gracefully from what they suppose to be a dilemma. Most recognize that the Catholic position packs power. "Since about a fourth of the U. S. adults are identified with the Roman Catholic Church, its doctrines are important to fertility trends," wrote Freedman-Whelpton-Campbell in "Family Planning in the U. S." (*Scientific American*, April, 1959, pp. 50-55). "The problem is," Karl Sax of Harvard is quoted as saying in *Newsweek* (April 27, 1959, p. 68), "that Catholic opposition constitutes an organized formidable power, creating serious obstacles to the promotion of any rational birth-control program in the densely populated Catholic and non-Catholic areas of the world." Alvah Sulloway, in his book *Birth Control and Catholic Doctrine* (Beacon Press, 1959) writes: "The Catholic Church is the one so far insuperable obstacle to the solution of the world's population problems. On a reversal of its attitude may hang the survival of our own society."

namely, that efforts to stop the "population explosion" are unnecessary, because it is already destined to end from natural causes; second, that contemporary living conditions are visibly on the mend throughout the world; third, that the spectre of an eventual shortage of standing room is a creation of the imagination rather than of reasoned thinking; fourth, that the Church has a satisfactory solution for overpopulation, which is superior in every respect to any form of birth control.

"POPULATION EXPLOSION" TO END NATURALLY

World population is now estimated at 2.8 billion people. It has a yearly growth of almost fifty million, which amounts to an astounding annual increase rate of 1.6 per cent.³ Accounting for this is the amazing spread between fertility and mortality rates: about 34 infants per thousand people are born every year, whereas only 18 persons per thousand die.⁴ The situation will probably remain with us for several generations, not because crude birth rates have increased, but because death rates are depressed. Multifarious benefits of modern life enable the average person to postpone death ever longer, and average life expectancy expands phenomenally from decade to decade. In the year 1900 the average male infant born in the United States could expect to live 48 years; his counterpart born in 1950 could expect 65 years. An Austrian male infant increased expectancy from 39 to 62 years during the same period; a Belgian from 45 to 62; an Englishman from 49 to 66; a German from 45 to 65; and Indian from 23 to 32; a Dutchman from 51 to 71.⁵

The phenomenon of improved mortality rates or longer average life spans coincides with a country's economic, social, civic, hygienic, and nutritional progress. When peoples make the transition from rural subsistence economies with high mortality, to highly industrialized patterns of production with low mortality, the gross repro-

³ *Demographic Yearbook 1957* (United Nations), p. 1. The latest estimate of world population is that of mid-1957, namely 2.790 billion; see *Population and Vital Statistics Report* (UN), April, 1959, p. 3.

⁴ *Demographic Yearbook*, p. 1.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

duction rate slides into a gradual decline. Empiric evidence bears this out to be a fact, and temporary deviations from the general pattern are easily explained. The reasons leading to the decline are not as clear as the fact itself; however there is much to be said for the explanation that this is a normal and natural development arising from requisites for carrying on good family life under the changed circumstances.

First of all, for obvious physical and psychological reasons, conceptions tend to occur with less frequency when more of the children survive. The marriage age tends to rise because of schooling, longer job training, and the higher degree of maturity required. The economic necessity and desirability of having children becomes less imperative in the new economy, when children are more of a burden and less of an asset than on the farm. The rapid pace of urban life may operate adversely upon the chances of conception; for example, there is a higher incidence of sterilizing endometriosis. The literacy of the new population, together with deepening cultural and social interests makes inroads upon the former concentrated attention upon sex. Perhaps a smaller percentage of the new generation of women can have large families than of the old, because practically all of them survive to maturity, whereas formerly only the more robust overcame the diseases of childhood. Other known factors whose influence is difficult to determine operate in the same direction, and perhaps important unknown factors remain to be evaluated.

The net reproduction rate, which is a genuine long-term indicator of a population's real growth, tends to rise during the initial phases of improved mortality. This, together with the crescendo of lengthening lives which strongly affects the persons above the period of child-bearing, as well as those in it, and children, accounts for a tremendous temporary increase of population. Eventually the net reproduction rate reverts to earlier levels. The population is then well on its way toward aging and a gradual decrease of the spread between birth rates and death rates. Of twenty-six countries for which statistics are given in a U.N. study entitled *The Aging of Populations and its Economic and Social Implications*, there is not one exception to the general pattern described above, although they are in all stages of transition. All of them have a smaller percentage

of children age zero to fourteen in 1950 than in the earlier part of this century, and all have a higher percentage of people in the post-child-bearing ages of forty-five and above.

The margin of growth which is expected to continue after the populations have matured promises to be quite manageable. Economists are not greatly concerned with problems of overpopulation in the post-transition period, characterized by highly capitalized industrial production. Empiric evidence also indicates that population growth itself may halt completely should genuine overpopulation ever occur in the distant future. During the depression years of the 1930's all gains from the birth rate stopped in the United States, although the population increased by 8,825,536 persons because of former high birth rates and from lengthening life cycles.⁶ In most European countries the net reproduction rate fell below actual replacement levels for a period longer than ten years. In the light of these considerations it is erroneous to extrapolate present population gains into the distant future. It is a good mathematical exercise to say that 2.8 billion persons increasing by 1.6 per cent annually will equal 290 trillion persons after 730 years, leaving only five square feet of land for each to stand on, but it does not make sense from a demographic viewpoint.⁷

The same reasoning explains why peoples of European stock multiplied faster than Asians and Africans for at least a century and a half, whereas the Asians forged into a position of leadership about two decades ago.⁸ Earlier industrialization launched the Europeans upon the great expanse before the Asians and Africans; now European growth is waning because populations are beginning

⁶ See *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1958* (U. S. Dept. of Commerce), pp. 7, 61, 91. The net reproduction rate of 1930-35 was 0.972; that of 1935-40 was 0.957; data based on census samples. In the *Demographic Yearbook 1954*, pp. 456-61, the U. S. rate for those years are sometimes above unit, sometimes below, with an average of just about unit; many European countries remained below unit replacement until after World War II; Western Germany was still below unit in 1952; Spain and Portugal were only slightly above in the latest data presented; France, Finland, Denmark were improving slowly.

⁷ The earth has slightly over 52 million square miles of land, excluding Antarctica.

⁸ See Woytinsky and Woytinsky, *World Population and Production* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1953), p. 35.

to age; Asians, on the contrary, have just entered into the flush of fullest expansion. Their growth can be expected to follow our pattern after an intervening time lag. Africans will probably be the last to achieve demographic maturity.

By some juggling of our present meager population statistics, we should be able to arrive at a rough estimate of world population after the expansion of life cycles has been fairly completed. If the 95 million children now born every year should reach the average age of eighty—which is highly unlikely—they would total 7.6 billion persons after the eighty year period. If allowances for a positive net reproduction rate are added, the ceiling must be raised higher still; the maximum possible under the most ideal circumstances can hardly exceed 12 billion in all. The 7.6 billion figure is probably closer to the future reality.

These skyrocketing statistics may occasion reactions of panic in one who fails to survey the whole situation. When population grows, production ought to be increasing as well. For in the long run, hungry mouths cannot multiply faster than pairs of hands to feed them, and heads to devise methods of production.

Statistics gathered from the whole world by the United Nations Secretariat and affiliated agencies inform us that the average world citizen is enjoying a better life now than a decade ago, or three decades ago, or perhaps than at any period in the long history of the human race. Nutrition available to him is now six per cent more plentiful than before World War II,⁹ and its quality is improving. The poorest nations are beginning to share in this abundance. In India, for example, the average person had only 1,620 calories daily ten years ago, whereas he has almost 2,000 today.¹⁰

⁹ Exclusive of Eastern Europe, U.S.S.R., and Mainland China, for which reliable figures are not available. The *per caput* food production index stood at 101 in 1934-38, at 98 in 1948-52, and at 107 in 1956-57, with 1948/49-1952/53 as base years. The preliminary report for 1957/58 indicated a slight decline to an index of 105. From *The State of Food and Agriculture 1958* (Rome: FAO), p. 12. Agricultural output increased by 38 per cent between 1934-38 and 1957-58 (p. 199).

¹⁰ See *The State of FAO 1957*, p. 166; also *Monthly Bulletin of Agricultural Economics and Statistics* (FAO), April, 1959, p. 5. The trends given lead the writer to calculate that the present sum is about 2,000.

A rise of market incentives evokes a ready response in the form of greater farm output, showing that a vast potential remains to be tapped. India and China have resources enough to produce surpluses worse than those of the United States, pending introduction of improved methods on a mass scale.¹¹ Immense stretches of South America, Africa, and Oceania are still virgin earth, awaiting the first tillage from hoe or plow.¹²

Production of mines and factories now increases about four times as fast as population. Since 1948, population increased 16 per cent, industrial production 62 per cent. Since 1929, the population increase was 40 per cent whereas industry's growth was 134 per cent. Percentagewise industrial growth is faster in the demographic hot spot of East and South East Asia than in the maturer economies.¹³

All this gives a fairly reliable picture of the gradual improvement in the living level of the human race. Indians aspire to reach the level of the Japanese; these in turn emulate Europeans; and they aim for the high standard of the United States.

¹¹ See, e.g., Coale and Hoover, *Population Growth and Economic Development in Low-Income Countries* (Princeton, 1958), who write that on the basis of their findings for India, with the programs now in operation or planned, "We find it not unreasonable to look for an approximate doubling of total crop output within the next twenty-five years. . . . This rate of development exceeds the most rapid population growth we envisage . . ." (p. 80). The Indian Government proposes to double agriculture production during the twenty year period of 1951-71 (see Ministry of Food and Agriculture, *Proposals for the Second Five-Year Plan, Agricultural Sector, May, 1955*, p. 1). Since the present rice yield is but one-fourth of Japan's, whereas the land is richer, and could produce several crops under irrigation, agronomists estimate that a tenfold increase could be realized under methods now in use elsewhere.

¹² The overall population density of the huge areas averages less than three per cent as great as in Japan. Even so, more than three-fourths of Japan consists of uninhabited mountains. The points were developed in the writer's "Overpopulation," *A Study of Papal Teachings on the Subject with Special Reference to Japan* (Washington: Catholic University Press, 1957), pp. 157-73.

¹³ Figures from *Statistical Yearbook 1956* (UN), p. 141; and from *Monthly Bulletin of Statistics* (UN), February, 1959, pp. VIII ff. The figures compiled are weighted arithmetic averages of country group indexes, and include production of coal, metal minerals, petroleum and natural gas, food, beverages, tobacco, clothing and footwear, wood products, furniture, paper and paper products, chemicals, petroleum and coal products, non-metallic mineral products, basic metals, and metal products.

From decade to decade the average world citizen enjoys improvements in clothing, housing, heating, transportation, education, medical care, reading material, household appliances, social life, and recreation.

Vehement expressions of dissatisfaction, now so freely ventilated by people of humble living conditions, should not make us jump to the conclusion that overpopulation is thickening. Such complaints may be healthy signs of new vitality and optimism, awakened by communications with more advanced peoples, and nourished by experiences with successes already achieved. A sudden revolution in expectations drives them to await quick results without adequate efforts, and to seek for expensive or impossible short cuts. A sense of realism, a spirit of Christian moderation, and the reception of needed assistance from foreign countries will help them to curb their impatience.

EVENTUAL WORLD OVERPOPULATION?

We can reasonably assume that the human race will continue to expand at a moderate rate after its violent growth has subsided, at least during normal times and in the foreseeable future. We assume this because the net reproduction rate tends to be above unit during normally prosperous times. The question therefore arises of how long the race can expand before it grows too large for the planet.

We know that immense living spaces remain to be exploited on the earth. If South America were to support as many people per square mile as Java is doing now, that continent alone would harbor two times the present world population and more.¹⁴ Java's production can easily be tripled by applying methods now in use elsewhere. Colin Clark, a world renowned agricultural economist, estimated that if methods now employed by Dutch farmers in their small country were applied to all of the world's good farm land, 28 billion people could be supported at one of the best diets known in the world, leaving ample lands to be used for recreational and other

¹⁴ At Java's density of 1,100 persons per square mile, South America would have 7.5 billion people.

purposes. When we use his figures, and substitute Japanese standards of farming and nutrition instead, we find that the world would support 95 billion persons. In both countries the efficiency of farmers is still improving at a substantial rate.¹⁵ With less than 3 billion persons on the globe now, the time of overcrowding seems remote indeed.

We have little more reason for anxiety than Adam and Eve had when they launched an expanding race upon our limited sphere. We don't know whether the race has inner vitality to increase forever; perhaps the fertility of our genes is going through a cycle including an eventual condition of exhaustion. Paleontology reveals a similar history of animals now extinct. Perhaps some other fate awaits the race. At any event, if and when living space becomes scarce, we can reasonably expect spouses to desist from begetting children destined to perch upon their shoulders until they surrender a plot of standing room. Such poverty would certainly justify the use of periodic abstinence. It is irrational to be anxious now about a very conjectural event of the unforeseeable future, which can be solved reasonably in its own time should it ever materialize.

NATIONAL PROBLEMS

National imbalances between population and living resources tend to deteriorate if an international flow of migration, trade goods, and capital fails to develop in proportion to changing needs. Natural and artificial barriers to this international economic circulatory system tend to create serious overpopulation problems in local areas, and sometimes do so very quickly. For example, it did not take many years before the economic stagnation occasioned by the depression of the 1930's and the accompanying policy of isolationism raised bitter cries for *Lebensraum* across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

The countries apt to suffer most from international economic doldrums are those which are poorly endowed by nature with the

¹⁵ See Colin Clark "World Population" in *Nature*, Vol. 181 (May, 1958), p. 1236. Japan has only about 12.5 million acres of crop land, on which she raises about 80 per cent of her nutritional requirements. See "*Overpopulation*," by writer, pp. 6 ff.

supply of resources needed for daily living, especially if they have large and growing populations. Japan, for example, would be hopelessly lost if importation of oil, iron ore, cotton, lead, aluminum, tin, coking coal, salt, food, and fibers were suddenly cut off. Even now, its chronic under-employment problems will not be solved very soon without an increase of trade or emigration. Other countries, such as India and Latin American Republics, have an abundance of many natural resources, but have not yet developed the capital and skills to exploit them. An intense desire for better levels of living among the growing populations can spawn political instability. Disaster stalks them at close range, and may move in unless critical help arrives from abroad.

MORAL PRINCIPLES INVOLVED

The late Pope Pius XII of happy memory underlined three basic moral principles in relation to solving overpopulation problems, namely, that the goods of the earth were created primarily for the use of all men, that economic activity has social responsibilities toward all mankind, that closely associated countries must endeavor to remove the glaring inequalities of living levels existing between them.

In his first Encyclical, *Summi Pontificatus*, he spoke of the earth as the habitat of all mankind, "of whose resources all men can by natural right avail themselves to sustain and develop life."¹⁶ In *Sertum Laetitiae* he declared that: "The fundamental point of the social question is this, that the goods created by God for all men should in the same way reach all, justice guiding and charity helping. . . . God does not wish that some have exaggerated riches while others are in such straits that they lack the bare necessities of life."¹⁷ In the magnificent address of Pentecost, 1941, he reaffirmed that "every man as a living being, gifted with reason, has in fact from nature the fundamental right to make use of the material goods of the earth." He went on to state that private ownership and state sovereignty over these goods are elements of

¹⁶ *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 6 (1939), p. 426.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 642.

the natural order deriving their validity from God, but that they are secondary and subordinate rights, which must yield precedence to the first purpose of earth's treasures.¹⁸ From this we must conclude that such secondary titles lose validity when they seriously hinder major portions of the human race from obtaining the fundamental necessities of life.

Secondly, Pius XII declared that, because men are social by nature, they must share economic advantages and successes with their fellow men. They may not cling to them so selfishly that they would permit closely associated people to live in degraded poverty, nursing smoldering resentment. In an address to an international trade convention, he stated:

Economic life means social life. The essential scope of economic life—to which individuals are all bound to help in the different spheres of their activity—is to assure in a stable manner for all members of society the material conditions required for the development of cultural and spiritual life.¹⁹

Applied to overpopulation problems, this principle obliges economically advanced countries to share their advantages with those less fortunate.

The same Pope criticized the perpetuation of glaring inequalities in national living standards, because it violates the virtues of justice, charity, and prudence. "Solidarity among nations," he proclaimed in the Christmas Message of 1952, "demands the cessation of glaring inequalities in living standards and so also in financial investments and in the degree of productivity of human labor."²⁰ In the Christmas Message of 1953 he urged men to "oppose the cause of division reigning among them in the discrepancy of the standard of living and productivity."²¹ A year later he returned to the same point, admonishing the free nations that they would jeopardize their unity if "one group were to engage, without con-

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 8, p. 199.

¹⁹ *Discorsi e Radiomessaggi di Sua Santità Pio XII* (Vatican Polyglot Press), 10, p. 12.

²⁰ *AAS* 20, p. 38.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 21, p. 14.

sideration or regard for others, in a ceaseless increase of production, and a constant raising of their own living standard. In such a case an upsurge of resentment and rivalry on the part of neighboring peoples would be inevitable."²² The moral principle involved therefore requires so much sharing of economic advantages that the differences in national levels of living will tend to diminish rather than to increase.

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

International migration contributes to the solution of overpopulation problems in several ways: families caught in an economic squeeze at home are able to find new living spaces, thus realizing their God-given right of making use of the earth in order to obtain a decent living; national economies, laboring from chronic under-development and an excess of non-productive consumers, are given a breathing spell to speed formation of capital; additional living resources of the earth, now lying idle, are gradually exploited for the service of the human race; bases for international trade and economic co-operation are established and consolidated.

A state which erects anti-migration barriers for disproportionate reasons is abusing the secondary title of state sovereignty to frustrate the primary purpose of the earth's created goods, namely, the service of all men. Since it thereby violates existing rights of needy families, of overpopulated nations, and perhaps of the race itself, it offends against the virtue of justice. General justice is probably in question rather than commutative justice, because the claimants are not yet in possession of the greater living spaces.

It is difficult to assess boundaries of grave matter in this area of claims and counter claims, of alternate solutions, of a mass of intangibles and probabilities. I would suggest as a starting point that a nation faced with inevitable choice between submitting to gravely sub-human levels of living or practicing birth control wholesale fashion, unless many families can emigrate, is in grave need when emigration is made impossible. Other countries which perpetuate this grave inconvenience through laws which are not neces-

²² *Ibid.*, 22, p. 21.

sary for the protection of similar values co-operate in a grave crime against humanity.

Pius XII called upon the nations to relax the web of migration restrictions which he considered to be too strict, too much based on false values, and causing grave harm to multitudes of families. "Too many vain pretexts are being used to void this natural right of man to immigrate and emigrate," he said in the Christmas Message of 1952. Letters pouring into the Vatican demonstrate how many consciences are troubled by a society which "mercilessly suppresses and disregards the problems which personally and intimately affect them in their moral life."²³ A restoration of reasonable freedom and a promotion of international migration is part of a Christian solution of overpopulation.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Since people cannot always migrate to where they can obtain the goods of the earth, many goods must be transported to where the people live. By means of international trade, nations which have an inadequate supply of certain materials from domestic sources, can obtain what they need from elsewhere. In return, they give of their own superfluities or of their labor. Thus national living levels throughout the world can rise and remain at proper levels, and families can find sufficient gainful employment. When an interchange of goods is not developed adequately, or is choked off artificially, multitudes of families may be deprived of that minimum use of the earth's goods to which they have a title in justice.

Nations therefore have a duty in charity to develop international trade adequate for other national economies, and a duty in justice not to erect trade barriers which cause serious inconvenience to others without proportionate reason. Serious inconvenience is experienced by persons who cannot marry and achieve the aim of married life because of inadequate international trade, and by countries whose whole people must desist from achieving the natural aim of married life in order to prevent overpopulation. Unnecessary trade barriers which create or perpetuate such conditions are

²³ *Ibid.*, 20, p. 41.

therefore seriously wrong. For what belongs to all cannot be withheld from all without violating justice.

Restrictions which do not create the serious inconveniences mentioned above may still be the cause of glaring differences in levels of living between closely associated nations, thereby violating charity and prudence, if not justice.

Pope Pius XII called for a removal of unnecessary trade restrictions, and for a gradual, methodic, well-planned development of trade on a regional and world basis, sufficient to stabilize and to maintain economic equilibrium among nations. "We are still far from a normal state of things, wherein exchanges of goods between states is . . . the necessary complement of the national economies," he said in 1948.²⁴ The second part of a Christian solution to overpopulation is adequate international trade.

CAPITAL ASSISTANCE

Underdeveloped countries are apt to find themselves floundering in a quagmire of subsistence agriculture and low productivity of labor just when the so-called population explosion occurs. Unless critical help arrives from abroad they can make but slow progress toward developing resources adequately and forming capital to increase labor's productivity. With sufficient help during this critical period they should eventually achieve the strength to maintain economic viability and move toward industrial maturity on their own power, since capital has a tendency to snow-ball. Hence the importance of initial assistance offered by capital-rich nations to poor ones. Pius XII spoke to the point:

Peoples favored by nature or the progress of civilization are in danger of being rudely awakened one day if they do not take the trouble henceforth to secure for the less fortunate the means to live in accordance with human dignity and to develop on their own account.²⁵

The unequal division of the gifts and treasures of nature gives to men the moral obligation to aid each other, each ac-

²⁴ *Discorsi* 10, p. 11.

²⁵ *L'Osservatore Romano*, November 12, 1955.

ording to the understanding and strength he has received. This obligation constantly increases in proportion to the increase in the power at the disposal of the social or national group.²⁶

Aid can take the form of gifts, of long term credit, of investments, of technical assistance, of critical materials, of student exchange programs, and others.

The obligation to extend aid to a needy country in order to help it overcome an overpopulation problem is one of charity, and often of prudence. In rationing out aid, a country may consider the possibility of success, the existing need, and the nature of the ties which unite it with the other.²⁷ Direct grants should be generous enough to cover very urgent and temporary needs. Investments and other aid should be sufficient to enable the living levels of the countries involved to tend to approach each other instead of becoming even more divergent. Foreign aid is important in a Christian solution of overpopulation.

THE INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

Within the framework of a political organization of the world, whose power and integrity merit the respect of all, an adequate flow of migration, trade, and capital can be achieved and maintained with less difficulty than under present divisive circumstances. Under the rule of law, international solidarity will tend to increase.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, April 14, 1958. See Catholic Association for International Peace, *News*, May, 1958.

²⁷ See Leon H. Janssen, "Duties to Underdeveloped Countries" in *Social Order*, May, 1958, pp. 197-205. Perhaps a normal development in this field, worthy of our encouragement, is a trend toward generous banking rather than giving grants; it would help to eliminate waste, and direct a larger flow of capital toward worthy causes. Public loans would be almost necessary to increase risk capital, and development of public utilities. Outright grants can gradually be reduced to emergency situations. Samuel C. Waugh, president of the Export-Import Bank, observed in relation to Latin America that "Huge sums of both private and public capital from the United States are needed together with technical know-how. But, on the other hand, without the establishment of sound internal fiscal policies and the creation of better planning for economic development . . . it may well be that the extension of excessive credits will prove to be a disservice." *Newsweek*, April 27, 1959, p. 63.

Exaggerated fears concerning immigration, foreign trade, and the safety of capital investments will become even less meaningful. Savings from reduced defense expenditures can be diverted into the productive economy.

Pope Pius XII pointed out that various developments make the world organization a special necessity of the twentieth century; that this body is the natural fruit of an intrinsic law of development in human institutions; that the very necessity of protecting state sovereignty urges the several states to form a supranational community; that technological progress has helped to awaken the desire to establish "a higher community of men, willed by the Creator and rooted in the unity of their common origin, nature, and final destiny."²⁸

The virtue of social justice, which prompts individuals and subordinate communities to develop and foster institutions needed for the welfare of all, likewise binds mankind to work toward an orderly evolution of a suitable international political community. Various forms of the community would be able to satisfy essential requirements. The fourth factor of a Christian solution of overpopulation is the formation of, and co-operation in, a worthy political organization of the world.

"RHYTHM" NO CHRISTIAN SOLUTION

Some Catholics are probing the possibility that "rhythm" may be a legitimate solution for overpopulation.²⁹ We must distinguish. We know that the Church looks with sympathy upon the family which has serious reasons existing within its bosom to employ this method of family limitation. The boundaries of legitimacy in its usage are very wide.³⁰ When many spouses of a given area

²⁸ AAS 20, p. 794. Papal teachings on international migration, trade, and capital assistance, as well as on the international political organization are presented and analyzed in the writer's *Overpopulation*, pp. 133-249. For shorter discussions of the same, see his articles in *Apostolate*, Spring, 1959, pp. 8-24, and in the *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, June, 1958, pp. 868-74.

²⁹ Reference to some of these attempts are given in *Overpopulation*, p. 90.

³⁰ So said Pius XII in an address to the Italian National Congress of the "Family Front" and the Association of Large Families on November 26, 1951. See AAS 18, p. 859.

endure oppressive poverty, "rhythm" may be employed so extensively that national demographic trends will be affected as a by-product. Thus periodic abstinence serves indirectly to impede national growth. This is not an ideal situation sought by the Church, however, nor a lame way out of a dilemma. The Church's answer to an economic problem is to urge an enlargement of the economy, not to encourage a diminution of human beings. Just as a sensible mother will not think of starving her youngster to prevent him from outgrowing his trousers; she will feed him well, and proudly fit him with larger trousers when he is ready for them.

The use of "rhythm" must be confined strictly to solving problems of a family circle, and cannot be endorsed as a direct policy for the solution of a national overpopulation problem. Pope Pius XII has not stated this principle in so many words, but the implications of his teachings, if I understand them correctly, are perfectly clear on the point. He said, for example, in the Christmas Message of 1952:

Certainly We would not deny that this or that region is at present burdened by a relatively excess population. But the desire to solve the difficulty with a formula that the number of inhabitants should be regulated according to the public economy, is equivalently to subvert the order of nature and the entire psychological and moral world which is bound up with it. What an error it would be to blame the natural law for the present miseries of the world, when it is clear that these derive from the lack of mutual solidarity of men and peoples.³¹

To midwives employed in overpopulated Italy he said in 1951:

Very often ideas and remarks prevail which regard children as a great "burden." How opposed is such a frame of mind to God's plan and the language of Holy Scripture and even to sound reason and the sentiment of nature. . . . Cases of "force majeure" do not authorize the perverting of ideas, . . .³²

In 1947 he expressed his concern before the College of Cardinals in the following terms:

³¹ *AAS* 20, p. 42.

³² *Ibid.*, 18, p. 841.

It is only true heroism, sustained by the grace of God, that is capable of keeping in the hearts of young married people the desire and joy of having a large family. What a humiliation for the world to have fallen so low, into a social condition so opposed to nature.³³

He congratulated Italy's large families warmly in 1951 as follows:

Since too, the primary purpose of matrimony is to be at the service of life, the expression of our greatest joy and paternal gratitude goes to those generous mothers and fathers who, for love of God and with trust in Him, courageously raise a large family.³⁴

On January 19, 1958, he delivered a classic address on the Church's attitude toward large families. Some of the passages follow:

Only the divine and eternal light of Christianity gives full life and meaning to the family and this is so true that right from the beginning and through the whole course of its history, large families have often been considered as synonymous with Christian families. . . .

The so-called problem of overpopulation of the earth is partly real and partly unreasonably feared as an imminent catastrophe for modern society; but undoubtedly the rise of this problem and the continued failure to arrive at a solution of it is not due to some mixup or inertia on the part of divine Providence, but rather to disorder on man's part—especially his selfishness and avarice. . . .

The earth can promise prosperity to all those who will dwell on it for a long time to come. . . .

So overpopulation is not a valid reason for spreading illicit birth control practices. It is simply a pretext used by those who would justify avarice and selfishness. . . .

It would be more reasonable and useful if modern society would make a more determined universal effort to correct its own conduct, by removing the causes of hunger in the overpopulated or "depressed areas," through a more active use of modern discoveries for peaceful aims, a more open political

³³ *Ibid.*, 14, p. 262.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 18, p. 859.

policy of collaboration and exchange, a more farseeing and less nationalistic economy; above all, by reacting to all suggestions of selfishness with charity, to those of avarice with a more concrete application of justice. . . .

God is not going to ask men for an accounting of the general destiny of mankind; that is His business; but He will demand an accounting of the single acts that they have deliberately performed in accordance with or against the dictates of conscience. . . .

With good reason, it has often been pointed out that large families have been in the forefront as the cradles of saints. We might cite, among others, the family of St. Louis, the King of France, made up of ten children, that of St. Catherine of Siena who came from a family of twenty-five, St. Robert Bellarmine from a family of twelve, and St. Pius X from a family of ten. . . .

He went on to congratulate his listeners because they had not succumbed to that godless aberration of modern society which regards fruitfulness in marriage as a "social malady." He approved the healthy reaction of the Italian Republic whose constitution pays "special attention to large families," and he praised Italian doctors for their rising opposition against birth-control practices.³⁵

These and other documents of the Holy See³⁶ have convinced

³⁵ *L'Osservatore Romano*, January 22, 1859. Translated by Rev. Austin Vaughan in *The Pope Speaks* 4, 4 (Spring, 1958), pp. 363-70.

³⁶ Thirteen documents of Pius XII are discussed in "*Overpopulation*," pp. 89-103. On August 25, 1957, he also spoke to 30,000 Young Christian Workers in similar vein: "False prophets insinuate their way into these depressed groups. . . . On the pretext that the world's natural resources will not suffice to feed a growing human population, attempts are made even upon the dignity of marriage and the family. . . . Those economic and social problems which arise from the increase of world population . . . cause some people to feel misgivings and pessimism. The young, on the contrary, are convinced that these problems can and must be solved through the collaboration of all men of good will."

Cardinal Montini (then Monsignor) sent a study of the teachings of Pius XII at his behest to Cardinal Siri for the Italian Social Week at Palermo on Sept. 26-Oct. 4, 1951. In it he noted that the Pope called for an increased development of national economies and a freer circulation of peoples, trade goods, and capital, around the globe. He also wrote: "Efforts to reconcile the equilibrium between growing population and means of livelihood are therefore not to be directed toward violation of the laws of life or interference with the

me that "rhythm" cannot be recommended as a Christian solution for overpopulation. In my opinion Rome has spoken and the case is settled. For we are not allowed to promote the ideal of a small family in a nation, in opposition against the Church's ideal of the large family. But "rhythm" could not be promoted as a means of solving a national overpopulation problem without setting up the small family as a new ideal for that nation. Nor could it be recommended as a solution for world overpopulation, without opposing large families throughout the world.

OBJECTION ANSWERED

A common objection raised against the principle stated above is that the common good takes precedence over private goods; therefore spouses are not allowed to beget many children if this aggravates an overpopulation problem of the larger community.

The fallacy of this argument lies, first of all, in its false concept of the common good of society. Families are prior to the larger social organization in the order of time and causality. Families organize into a social group primarily to create and maintain conditions suitable to their welfare. "The state and politics," said Pius XII in 1945, "have, in fact, precisely the office of securing for the families of every social class those conditions which are necessary for them to evolve as economic, juridical, and moral units."³⁷ The

natural course of family life. Such an attitude of renouncement of life indeed, kills the noblest aspirations of the spirit; while a declining birth-rate, aimed at by such systems, has always proved sooner or later to be, in the history of the nations, a sign of defeat and of doom." *L'Osservatore Romano*, September 28-29, 1953. Translation of *Catholic Documents* (London: Salesian Press), November, 1953, pp. 34-7.

Noteworthy also is a letter of the Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith, which reads in part:

"The Catholic Church has never advised an individual, much less a whole nation, to use the rhythm method. . . . The organizations that recommend birth limitations on a large scale, no matter under what form, are relying upon the erroneous opinion that the family is for the state." *International Fides Service*, Rome, March 8, 1952.

³⁷ *AAS* 12, p. 294. Nothing could be clearer in the documents of Pius XII than the doctrine, repeatedly emphasized, that man and the family are by

common good of the community therefore necessarily includes social conditions which make it possible for spouses to rear a normal flock of children under fairly decent circumstances. If the common welfare would prohibit the rearing of normal sized families, it would be self-defeating, destroying initially the very good which it claims to defend. For the state has no absolute end or purpose of its own, no common good separated from the welfare of the individuals and families who belong to it, as state totalitarianism falsely dogmatizes.³⁸

Secondly, the objection wrongly presupposes that large families necessarily aggravate national overpopulation problems. It is true that children are economic liabilities for fifteen, twenty, or more years, consuming more than they produce. When a nation's population pyramid is rejuvenated with a wider base, consumers may be multiplying faster than producers for some time. In the long run, however, the children will also enter the labor force and augment production proportionately. Moreover, experience seems to favor the view that expanding populations and rising national prosperity are often seen together. High demographic indexes accentuate the rise of economic indicators.³⁹ One reason suggested is that growing

nature anterior to the state, and that state must therefore serve man, not primarily, man the state. For the same reason, he reminded states of the duty to direct the national economy to the welfare of family life, recommending family holdings of land; family sized shops where feasible; co-operatives; a family sized wage; housing fit not only for families with one or two children, but for those with a normal, more numerous progeny; medical and obstetrical care; emergency aid; employment agencies; public works when needed; and other public services. He condemned the excessive rigidity of national and international society which too often deprives the family of the opportunities to seek light, air, and space to develop normally. Various documents are cited and quoted in "*Overpopulation*," pp. 76-89.

³⁸ See especially the Christmas Address of Pius XII in 1945. He called the totalitarian state a modern monster which "lowers man to the position of a mere pawn in the game of politics, a cipher in economic relations. . . . By divine right it is not the will or the power of fortuitous and unstable vested interests, but man in the framework of the family and of society, who by his labor is lord of the world." *AAS* 13, p. 23.

³⁹ The United States has had, for a long time, a very rapid population increase; it has also achieved and maintained the highest living level of the

consumer demands spur still greater production. Parents of large families work harder, and teach their youngsters to join them. Again, healthy, literate, energetic, optimistic, youthful laborers easily accelerate an underdeveloped economy's transition from subsistence agriculture to industrialization, thus increasing the productivity of labor and raising the average level of living.

Finally, the objection implies that spouses derive obligations in regard to begetting children from the needs of society which change with times and circumstances. The question then arises whether God really imposes such obligations upon spouses through the medium of social needs; in other words, whether God reveals anything at all to conjugal partners about a duty to beget offspring, or freedom from such a duty, through the community's need of children or absence of such a need. We suppose that they use the marriage act habitually at least during the sterile period.

The disastrous consequences of this theory demonstrate, I believe, that the good of the community has absolutely nothing to do with imposing obligations upon married folk to beget children, or with exonerating them from such duties. The truer explanation, I believe, is that God and nature enjoin this onus upon spouses directly through a habitual use of the marriage act in the married state,⁴⁰ unless they can show serious reasons to the contrary touch-

world; before the white man's arrival, the Indians multiplied slowly, and were poor. Japan had little or no population increase during the two and a half centuries of the Tokugawa Era (1614-1867); there were famines, abject poverty. After 1868, population multiplied rapidly, and at the same time the living level rose so much that infanticide was abandoned, famines ceased, and the nation attained the highest level of the Far East. Some of the European countries which have been slow in population growth, or have suffered losses, such as Ireland, have also made a poor economic showing. The contrast between East and West Germany is another lesson in point.

⁴⁰ This is the burden of a paragraph in the address of Pius XII to Italian Catholic Midwives, although one might wish that the matter had been stated more explicitly: "The marriage contract which confers upon husband and wife the right to satisfy the inclinations of nature, sets them up in a certain state of life, the married state. But upon *couples who perform the act peculiar to their state, nature and the Creator impose the function of helping the conservation of the human race*. The characteristic activity which gives their state its value is the *bonum prolis*. The individual and society, the people and the state, the Church itself depend for their existence in the order established by God on

ing either themselves or their children. The community and its common good are left completely out of this private family circle until after the children are born. Only thereafter, in *actu secundo*, can society plan for the common good with the citizens it has received from families. It can also oblige parents to educate the children becomingly.

If a couple had to consult the common good of society before making use of the marriage act during the fertile period, there would be no end of absurd consequences. First of all, no one has a right to sin and to demand sin of a marriage partner. How would spouses have a right to demand the marriage act during the fertile period if neither of them could perform it without sinning against the community? Thus the validity of many marriages would come into question, and also the right of a human being to enter into the married state.

Again, the common welfare of a community is subject to great differences of interpretation, so that spouses could offend against it in a multitude of ways by having children. Perhaps the community should have more egg heads, fewer trench diggers, imposing corresponding obligations and restrictions upon parents of different social standing. Perhaps the commonweal would require discrimination along religious and political lines; Communist spouses, for example, might harm the common good of a Christian and democratic community by rearing Communist youngsters. Perhaps the community is overpopulated, and permission to bear children would have to be rationed to exceptionally promising parents, or to such as would agree to have children emigrate elsewhere.

The community would presumably have the right to impose necessary legislation and sanctions upon married couples. Thus the social group would finally usurp the most intimate and inalienable

fruitful marriage. Therefore, to embrace the married state, continuously to make use of the faculty proper to it and lawful in it alone, and, on the other hand, to withdraw always and deliberately with no serious reason from its primary obligation, would be a sin against the very meaning of conjugal life." The underlined sentence merits quotation in the original: Ora ai coniugi, che ne fanno uso con l'atto specifico del loro stato, la nature e il Creatore impongono la funzione di provvedere alla conservazione del genere umano. *AAS* 18, p. 846.

rights of man. The only alternative to this impossible situation is that spouses, in begetting children, are responsible to God, to each other, and to their children, but not to the community and its common welfare. In educating them, however, they are also responsible to the community.

CONCLUSION

No method of birth control is an acceptable solution for overpopulation. Family limitation is a disappointment when examined by principles of science, of natural law, and of authoritative teachings of the Church. The Christian solution is an increase of economic production, not a strangulation of life. Christianity urges man to create such economic well-being as will defeat overpopulation thoroughly, thereby enabling spouses to achieve the true purpose of conjugal life with room to spare.

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