

A LIVING WAGE

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A living wage by John Augustine Ryan

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JOHN AUGUSTINE RYAN

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BY

JOHN A. RYAN, D.D., LL.D.

PROFESSOR OF MORAL THEOLOGY AND INDUSTRIAL ETHICS AT
THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA; PROFESSOR OF
POLITICAL SCIENCE AT TRINITY COLLEGE; AUTHOR OF
"DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE," "ALLEGED SOCIALISM OF
THE CHURCH FATHERS," "THE CHURCH AND
SOCIALISM AND OTHER ESSAYS"; JOINT AU-
THOR WITH MORRIS HILLQUIT OF "SO-
CIALISM: PROMISE OR MENACE?"

*REVISED AND ABRIDGED
EDITION*

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

RICHARD T. ELY, Ph.D., LL.D.



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Archbishop of Baltimore

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PREFACE OF REVISED AND ABRIDGED EDITION

The present volume is little more than half as large as the first edition of this work. The first two chapters of the original edition have been almost entirely omitted because part of the subject matter is no longer as timely as it was in 1906, while the remainder is not absolutely essential. For similar reasons the seven chapters forming the third section of the work as it first appeared, have been left out of the present edition. In the ten chapters that have been retained, a few changes have been made, either for the sake of brevity or in order to bring certain statistical and other statements up to date. In its revised and abridged form, the work is intended primarily for those who wish to obtain a comprehensive idea of the subject in the smallest possible compass. The writer hopes that it will be found to contain nothing superfluous, and yet to embrace everything that the average reader cares to know concerning the ethical, economic and legal aspects of the living wage question.

"A Living Wage" was the first considerable study of the subject published in English. It was one of the first publications in any language to advocate the establishment of a minimum living

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wage by law. To-day the doctrine that the laborer has a moral claim to at least a decent living wage is almost universally accepted by all intelligent and disinterested persons, while the legal minimum wage has found its way into the statute books of countries in three continents. Nevertheless, there is still much hard work to be done before the principle can be fully realized in our industrial system. The present edition is offered to the public in the hope that it may make some small contribution to that desirable outcome.

JOHN A. RYAN.

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA,
October, 1919.

INTRODUCTION

I am glad to have an opportunity to point out briefly the significance of Professor Ryan's book, as it impresses itself on my mind. We have had repeated efforts to stimulate the conscience of the Christian world to a keener appreciation of its duties to the men, women and children who toil for wages. Christian socialism, so-called, has been presented frequently by men of various religious denominations. A greater sensitiveness to right and wrong in economic affairs has undoubtedly been the result of this preaching of righteousness. Enlightenment has, however, not kept pace with good intention. On the contrary, nothing is more noticeable than the confusion of mind which very generally accompanies good intention. The "plain man" of whom we hear so much, has a feeling that our teachers and preachers are vague and indefinite. Is there after all such a thing as a Christian doctrine of wages? The writer of this book, a priest in the Roman Catholic Church and a teacher in St. Paul Seminary, a theological school of that Church, presents to us in the following pages, a clear-cut, well-defined theory of wages, based upon his understanding of the approved doctrines of his religious body. There have

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been attempts in other lands to deduce from the teachings of this Church, clear and precise directions for our industrial life. We recall the works of Bishop von Ketteler of Mainz and the more conservative writings of Professor Charles Périn of the University of Louvain in Belgium. While Cardinal Manning of England some years ago startled the English-speaking world by his enunciation of the right of man to a subsistence as prior to the rights of property as a doctrine of the Church, and while Cardinal Gibbons in the United States has on several occasions expressed himself firmly and positively in regard to the rights of labor, the present work is, so far as I am aware, the first attempt in the English language to elaborate what may be called a Roman Catholic system of political economy. When I say, a Roman Catholic system of political economy, I mean an attempt to show exactly what the received doctrines of the Church signify in the mind of a representative Catholic when they are applied to the economic life. It strikes me as a meritorious performance at the present juncture to endeavor to express as precisely as may be what Christianity has to say about wages.

While members of other religious bodies, Christian and Jewish, cannot receive the doctrine of wages here set forth merely because it is assumed to rest on the approved teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, they are not precluded from an examination of this question: Does or does not this doctrine of wages rest upon broad Christian, religious and ethical foundations? It will be observed that Profes-

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sor Ryan combines economic and ethical arguments with those derived from authority and that it is by no means impossible to receive arguments of the first class, while refusing adhesion to those of the second class. My own feeling then is that this book is to be welcomed as an attempt on the part of a religious teacher to get beyond vague and glittering generalities to precise doctrine, and to pass from appeals to sentiment to reasoned arguments.

While I have ventured in these few words to show what in my opinion is the significance of the present work, it is manifestly altogether beyond my province now and here to express any views of my own in regard to the correctness of its conclusions.

RICHARD T. ELY.

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN,
February, 1906.