

The Liberal Illusion

By

LOUIS VEUILLOT

(1866)

Translated by

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*Of old time thou hast broken my yoke,
thou hast burst my bands, and thou
saidst: I will not serve. — Jer. 2:20.*

BIOGRAPHICAL FOREWORD

A PALADIN, and not a mere fighter,” says Paul Claudel of Louis Veillot. “He fought, not for the pleasure of fighting, but in defense of a holy cause, that of the Holy City and the Temple of God.”

It is just one hundred years ago, 1838, that Louis Veillot first dedicated himself to this holy cause. “I was at Rome,” he wrote as an old man recalling that dedication. “At the parting of a road, I met God. He beckoned to me, and as I hesitated to follow, He took me by the hand and I was saved. There was nothing else; no sermons, no miracles, no learned debates. A few recollections of my unlettered father, of my untutored mother, of my brother and little sisters.” This was Louis Veillot’s conversion, the beginning of his apostolate of the pen which was to merit him the title of “Lay Father of the Church” from Leo XIII; “Model of them who fight for sacred causes” from Pius X; and from Jules Le Maitre the epithet “le grand catholique.”

In the days of the Revolution, the maternal grandmother of Veillot, Marianne Adam, a hatchet in her hand, had defended the cross of the church of Boynes in old Gatinais. “I do nothing more,” said Veillot, fifty years later. He was born in this same village of Boynes, October 13, 1813, of poor, uneducated parents. A meager elementary education, little religious training, a schoolmaster who distributed dirty novels to his young charges, nothing of these early years would seem to point towards his apostolate of the future. He had reached the age of thirteen, when Providence intervened. Thirteen years old! Time to earn his bread! But by what work? The ambitious mother wanted him to be a lawyer. From his almost meaningless elementary education, he had two helpful assets, sufficient spelling skill and a better than average script. With these recommendations, and with a word from a family friend, Veillot was accepted as a clerk in the office of a lawyer of Paris, Fortuné Delavigne, brother of the poet Casimir, then at the height of his literary glory.

His first work was simple, the pay only thirty francs a month, but there was opportunity to educate himself by his reading and his human contacts. Later on, in the memoirs of his youth, he gave thanks to Heaven for three blessings of his life: poverty, love of work, and an

incapacity for debauch. His free time was devoted to reading and reading was learning; books took the place of sleep and no other pleasure took the place of books. He thought of the priesthood and wrote a letter to the Archbishop of Paris, Mgr. de Quelin, asking admission to the Petit Seminaire. Perhaps this wasn't the proper procedure; perhaps the letter never reached its address; at any rate, there was no reply. The Church lost a probable priest, but gained a sure lay apostle.

The year 1831 is a turning point in his life. Eighteen years of age, assistant chief clerk in the same office, one hundred francs a month salary, Veillot began to write. Some of his efforts appeared in *Le Figaro*. Casimir Delavigne praised certain of his poetic attempts and he was thus led to decide on a career in journalism. His first work was with an humble-enough paper, but not without circulation, *L'Echo de la Seine-Inferieure*. "Without any preparation," he says, "I became a journalist." He went on to other papers in the provinces, "feuilles de chou," as the Parisians call them, at Rouen, at Perigueux; he formed his hand in this provincial journalism, shaped his mind, and fostered his bent for appraising men and their ideas. His university was the wide school of clash and contact. But, if he was writing "almost before he had begun to study," as Sainte-Beuve puts it, his study soon caught up with his trade, and at the age of twenty-five Veillot gave sign of possessing that depth of view and breadth of culture which are almost without exception the fruit of the university mind. Veillot was the exception and there was not, as too often there is in the university mind, not even the suspicion of the snob in him.

In 1838, the year of his trip to Rome, Veillot had scarcely anything soundly Christian about him. His conversion was no different than he had described it, but looking back upon it now, after one hundred years, may we not see it as a great divine grace for Catholic France? The apologists of the "eldest daughter of the Church" were choosing to fence with the enemies of the Cross of Christ, whereas the Church needed, as it always does, not a gilt-edge weapon, but a broad-sword. The champions of ecclesiastical France were of the school of "liberal apologists." Veillot returned to France, a soldier, a missionary, a zealot if you will, but of a zeal which resembles that of a Jerome, an Augustine, a Bernard, a Bossuet, a de Maistre. His contemporaries reproached him for his violence, but his reply swept the ground away: "You need make no effort to persuade me that others are more refined than I. I tremble that others do not possess enough of what I have too vigorously . . . I am too ignorant not to be violent; but they lack red blood, hate for a society in which they live, a society where velvet and lace cover up its sins and

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its corruption. They do not know what is happening in the street; they have never set their feet therein; but I come from it, I was born in it, and more than that, I still live in it." And he added, "We are willing enough to have the blasphemers save their souls, but in the meantime, we don't intend to have them imperil the souls of others."

The 16th of June, 1839, Louis Veillot made his first contribution to the *Univers*. It was just a short article, "La Chapelle des Oiseaux," yet it was the beginning of an association which was to continue through forty-five years, to influence thought and action long after his time. On February 2, 1840, he became a regular contributor and, in 1842, Editor-in-Chief. His first editorial declaration is an exposition of his Catholic program: "In the midst of factions of every sort, we belong only to the Church and to our country. With justice towards all, submissive to the laws of the Church, we reserve our homage and our love to an authority of genuine worth, an authority which will issue from the present anarchy and will make evident that it is of God, marching towards the new destinies of France, with Cross in hand."

He thought of his journalism as a "métier" to be studied, analyzed, appraised. He knew its deficiencies, but he sensed too its genius. "The talent of the journalist," he wrote, "is arrow-like swiftness and, above all, clarity. He has only a sheet of white paper and an hour to explain the issue, defeat the adversary, state his opinion; if he says a word which doesn't move straight to the end, if he pens a phrase which his reader does not understand immediately, he doesn't appreciate his trade. He must hurry; he must be exact; he must be simple. The pen of the journalist has all the privileges of a racy conversation; he must use them. But no ornaments; above all, no striving after eloquence."

His journalism was also a mission, a vocation. He thought about it as he knelt before the Blessed Sacrament and he determined early that he must place his tasks above parties, above systems. "A party," he declared, "is a hatred; a system is a barrier; we want nothing to do with either. We are going to take society as the apostles took it. We are neither of Paul, nor of Cephas; we are of Jesus Christ." The history of his career bears out the fact that this was his invariable program. Journalist, yes! But a crusader, an apostle as well.

His pen flashed out in defense of the freedom of Christian education. "You will permit us to open our schools, or you will open your prisons for us," he wrote from the cloisters of Solesmes in a vein that transported Montalembert into enthusiasm. In 1844, he rose to a magnificent defense of the Abbé Combalot, condemned to prison for the crime of lese-Université. And he in turn, for his hardy defense, was thrown behind the locks of the Conciergerie for three months. In 1850,

the Social Question was agitating all of France. "Veillot shed light upon it from on high," said Mgr. Roess of Strassbourg, not many years ago. Albert de Mun could write of his social philosophy: "All of Catholic social Action is contained in his words of fire."

But his social Catholicism was more than a doctrine. It was his very life. "To think that men are my brothers!" he used to ponder. There is beautiful Christian counsel in the letter he addressed to his wife, who was just hiring a new servant: "Make it easy for her to obey, in forcing yourself to possess the virtue of command, which is a virtue of justice, of meekness and of patience. . . . And when you find yourself poorly served, try, before you complain, to realize how you yourself serve God. Then surely your reproaches will be milder and will not wound. It would be a grand thing for us, and for all who are in authority over others, if in our relations with our charges, we should simply be good Christians, if we should simply rid ourselves of the sentiment of our own importance, which makes us proud, imperious, bitter and dissatisfied, as soon as people fail to render us what we think they should." And he himself practiced this virtue, meekness without weakness, patience without weariness. Those who were close to him, who were associated with him, could not but love him. Son, brother, husband, father, friend, his affections were diversified and enduring. There was in him, says Fortunat Strowski, "le frémissement de la tendresse humaine."

He was the champion in France of the declaration of the Dogma of Papal Infallibility. His ardor and enthusiasm brought him into conflict with certain members of the hierarchy. Mgr. Dupanloup denounced him vigorously, but the wound was assuaged by Pius IX in a special audience, when the venerable Pontiff assured him that "le cher Univers" had been splendid in this affair, as in every other.

After the war of 1870, Veillot resumed his apostolate for Church and country. It was under an un-Christian, an un-French leadership that France was marching, and Veillot was indignant: "I, a Christian," he cried out, "a Catholic Christian of France, as old in France as its oaks and venerable as they; I, the son of perspiration moistening vine and grain, son of a race which has never ceased giving to France tillers of the soil, soldiers and priests, asking nothing in return but work, the Eucharist and rest in the shadow of the Cross; . . . I am made, unmade, governed, ruled, slashed at by vagabonds of mind and morals, men who are neither Christian nor Catholics, and by that very fact, who are not French and who can have no love of France." "Happy are the dead," his pen trembled as he wrote the words in 1872, but his faith and courage did not falter long, and the last years of his life found him still the ardent champion of sacred causes. For nearly half a century, he had

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been fighting for the holy city and the temple. He was worn out by the unceasing combat; his pen moved slowly and finally not at all. His hand could hold only the rosary which had been his companion of the years, he told its beads constantly until the end, which came quietly, calmly April 7, 1883. "Since then," said M. Barthou a few years ago, "his reputation has not ceased to grow. Rather, we may say of him with his biographer, François Veuillot: "He continues to radiate," for Louis Veuillot is a flame of truth and devotion, unquenchable because kindled by the divine spark of faith and love for God and country.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

IN selecting for translation Louis Veillot's *L'illusion libérale*, the translator has been guided by what seems to him a great need of our time — a clear refutation of the fallacious slogans of recently resurgent Liberalism.

Rousseauan liberalism was the parent error that spawned Marxian socialism, though it was prone at first to disown and repudiate this disreputable offspring. To-day, however, we see parent and child united in the close, if temporary, alliance of the Popular Front, in which both lay equally unwarranted claims to the much-coveted name of democracy.

Neither of these political ideologies is in harmony with Catholic faith. But while most American Catholics are fully aware that Marxian socialism has been branded with severe condemnation in the encyclical letters of Leo XIII and Pius XI, comparatively few of them are aware that in his Encyclical *Libertas praestantissimum naturae opus* ("Liberty, the highest gift of nature") of May 20, 1888, Pope Leo XIII expressly condemned the equally detestable social doctrine known as Liberalism.

In short, this Encyclical of Leo XIII on Liberalism placed the seal of papal approval as fully upon the contents of Louis Veillot's *The Liberal Illusion* as did the same Pontiff's Encyclicals on the Condition of Labor and Christian Democracy upon the Christian social ethics expounded in Bishop von Ketteler's *The Labor Question and Christianity*.

Pope Leo XIII's Teaching on the Subject of Liberalism

That no Catholic may be an adherent of the French Revolutionary principles collectively known as Liberalism is made clear in almost every line of the encyclical *Liberty, the highest gift of nature*, excerpts from which we quote below:

If when men discussed the question of liberty, they only grasped its true meaning, such as We have now delineated it, they would never venture to fasten such a calumny on the Church as to assert that she is the foe of individual and public

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liberty. . . . But there are many who follow in the footsteps of Lucifer, and adopt as their own his rebellious cry, "I will not serve;" and consequently substitute for true liberty what is sheer license. Such, for instance, are the men, belonging to that widely-spread and powerful organization, who, usurping the name of liberty, style themselves liberals . . . these followers of liberalism deny the existence of any Divine authority to which obedience is due, and proclaim that every man is a law unto himself; whence arises the ethical system which they style independent morality, and which, under the guise of liberty, exempts man from any obedience to the commands of God, and substitutes a boundless license. . . . The end of all this it is not difficult to foresee. For once granted that man is firmly persuaded of his own supremacy, it follows that the efficient cause of the unity of civil society is to be sought, not in any principle exterior or superior to man, but simply in the free will of individuals; that the power of the State is from the people only; and that, just as every man's individual reason is his only rule of life, so the collective reason of the community should be the supreme guide in the management of all public affairs. Hence the doctrine of the supremacy of the majority, and that the majority is the source of all law and all authority. . . . But . . . a doctrine of this nature is most hurtful both to individuals and to the State. For once ascribe to human reason the only authority to decide what is true, and what is good, and the real distinction between good and evil is destroyed; honor and dishonor become a matter of private opinion; pleasure is the measure of what is lawful; and given a code of morality which can have little or no power to restrain the unruly propensities of man, a way is then open to universal corruption. To turn to public affairs: authority is severed from the true and natural principle whence it derives all its efficacy for the common good; and the law determining right and wrong is at the mercy of a majority — which leads by the most direct route to downright tyranny. The empire of God over man and civil society once repudiated, it follows that religion, as a public institution, ceases to exist, and with it everything that belongs to religion.

. . .

There are indeed, some adherents of liberalism who do not subscribe to those opinions, which we have seen to be so fearful in their enormity, and tending to produce the most terrible evils. Indeed many, compelled by the force of truth, do not hesitate to admit that such liberty is vicious and simple license . . . and therefore they would have liberty ruled and directed by right reason, and consequently subject to the natural law and to the Divine eternal law. And here they think they may stop, and

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hold that no man is bound by any law of God, except such as can be known by natural reason. — In this they are plainly inconsistent . . . if the human mind be so presumptuous as to define what are God's rights and its own duties, its reverence for the Divine law will be apparent rather than real, and its own judgment will prevail over the authority and providence of God.

There are others, somewhat more moderate though not more consistent, who affirm that the morality of individuals is to be guided by the Divine Law, but not the morality of the State, so that in public affairs the commands of God may be passed over, and may be disregarded. Hence the fatal theory of the separation of Church and State . . . ; whereas on the contrary, it is clear that the two powers, though dissimilar in function and unequal in rank, ought nevertheless to live in concord, by the harmony of their actions and the fulfillment of their duties.

But this maxim is understood in two ways. . . . Many wish the State to be separated from the Church wholly and entirely, so that in every right of human society, in institutions, customs and laws, in the offices of State, and in the education of youth, they would pay no more regard to the Church than if it did not exist; and, at most, would allow the citizens to attend to their religion in private if they pleased . . . it is absurd that the citizen should respect the Church but the State despise it.

Others do not oppose the existence of the Church . . . yet rob her of the nature and right of a perfect society; and hold that it does not belong to her to legislate, to judge, to punish, but only to exhort, to advise and to rule her subjects according to their consent. But their opinion would pervert the nature of this Divine society . . . ; and at the same time they would aggrandize the power of the civil government to such an extent as to subject the Church of God to the empire and sway of the State.

Common to all these shades of liberal thought is the principle of the State's indifference to any form of religion, whether true or false. Pope Leo XIII tells us that this can be justified only on the supposition "that the State has no duties towards God, or that such duties, if they exist, may be abandoned with impunity; both of which assertions are manifestly false. For it cannot be doubted that, by the will of God, men are united in civil society. . . . God it is Who has made man for society. . . . Wherefore civil society must acknowledge God as its Founder and Parent, and must believe and worship His power and authority. Justice, therefore, and reason forbid that the State be godless. . . . Since then the profession of a religion is necessary in the State, that one must be professed which alone is true, and can be recognized without difficulty,

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especially in Catholic States, because the marks of truth are, as it were, engraven upon it. This religion, therefore, the rulers of the State must preserve and protect if they would provide, as they ought, with prudence . . . for the good of the community.”

It is clear, then, that no Catholic may positively and unconditionally approve of the policy of separation of Church and State. But, given a country like the United States, where religious denominations abound and the population is largely non-Catholic, it is clear that the policy of treating all religions alike becomes, all things considered, a practical necessity, the only way of avoiding a deadlock. Under such circumstances, separation of Church and State is to be accepted, not indeed as the ideal arrangement, but as a *modus vivendi*. Hence Pope Leo concludes:

There remain those who, while they do not approve the separation of Church and State, think nevertheless that the Church ought to adapt herself to the times and to conform to what is desired by the modern system of government. Such an opinion is sound, if it is to be understood of an adaptation that is consistent with truth and justice: in so far, namely, that the Church, in the hope of some great good, may show herself indulgent, and may conform to the times in whatever her sacred office permits. But it is not so in regard to practices and doctrines which a perversion of morals and a false judgment have unlawfully introduced. Religion, truth and justice must ever be maintained. . . .

From what has been said it follows that it is in no way lawful to demand, to defend, or to grant, unconditional freedom of thought, of speech, of writing, or of religion, as if they were so many rights which nature had given to man. For if nature had really given them, it would be lawful to refuse obedience to God, and there would be no restraint to human liberty. It likewise follows, that freedom in these things may be tolerated when there is just cause; but only with such moderation as will prevent its degenerating into license and excess. And where such liberties are in use, men should use them in doing good and should regard them as the Church does. . . .

Again it is not of itself wrong to prefer a democratic form of government, if only the Catholic doctrine be maintained as to the origin and use of power. Of the various forms of government, the Church does not reject any that are suited to the welfare of their subjects. . . . And the Church approves of everyone giving his services for the common good, and of doing

all that he can for the defense, and preservation, and prosperity of his country.

History of Liberalism

Such, then, is the satanic and antisocial error of liberalism: satanic, because it refuses to bend the knee before Divine truth and Divine authority; antisocial, because it is a doctrine of selfish individualism, which gives free rein to greed and egoism at the expense of the common good. What were its historical beginnings?

Its roots lie deep in the paganizing Humanism of the fifteenth century. As Greek men of letters — refugees from Turk-ridden Constantinople — diffused knowledge of the Greek classics in Europe, and as the first excavations brought to light masterpieces of Roman sculpture and architecture, men began to conceive an intense admiration for the pagan cultures of Greece and Rome and to question the spiritual values of Christian culture. In the sequel, the desire to have unhampered liberty and to model life on the licentious lines of Grecian paganism became increasingly general. Men lost sight of the fact that Christian culture had added to pagan beauty of form and color the superior beauty of idea; they likewise failed to appreciate that, in imposing morality, the Church was consulting their own best interests, and was only forbidding what tended to corrupt human nature, not what tended to perfect it either spiritually or physically. Swinburne, in his *Rape of Proserpine*, has eloquently voiced the passionate protest of pagan and neo-pagan against their common kill-joy — Christian morality:

Wilt thou yet take all, Galilean? but these thou shalt not take:
The laurel, the palm and the paeon, the breasts of the
nymphs in the brake,
And all the wings of the loves; and all the joy before death.
Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has grown
gray with Thy breath.

In the next century we have the yet more emancipating ethics of Martin Luther (1483-1546), who found room in his synthesis of current errors for the complete freedom of morals demanded by the paganizing humanists. Man's will-power, he claimed, had been so ruined by original sin that it was useless to struggle against temptation. "Be a sinner and sin boldly," he urges in a letter he wrote in 1521, "but believe

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yet more staunchly and rejoice in Christ.”¹ Like the neo-pagans of Humanism, the Christian, too, might henceforth enjoy full liberty of action. Beyond faith he had no other duties. He might indulge to his fill in sin. If only he retained an unwavering faith that God, in view of the merits of Christ, would not take account of his wicked deeds, he need have no fear on that score as to his salvation. No wonder that Luther, in his *Treatise on Christian Liberty*, exclaims: “The Christian is the freest lord of all things, subject to no one!”

Calvin (1509-1564) appropriated Luther’s principle of the impossibility of meriting salvation by virtuous conduct, and so “Christian liberty” came to Geneva, whence it traveled to Scotland and to newly “reformed” England. Here it received a still more progressive mouthpiece in the person of that forerunner of Rousseau and Smith — Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679). He gave mankind this conception of liberty:

“The right of Nature” . . . is the liberty each man hath to use his own power as he will himself for the preservation of his own nature, that is to say, of his own life; and consequently of doing anything which in his own judgment and reason he shall conceive to be the aptest means thereunto.

By “liberty” is understood, according to the proper signification of the word, the absence of external impediments: which impediments may oft take away part of man’s power to do what he would.²

From Geneva, too, came the real Father of political liberalism, Calvinist Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). In his famous *du Contrat social* (“On the Social Contract”) this man developed Hobbes’s fantasy that Civil society had its origin in a pact. He begins this book with the much-quoted sentence: “Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains.” In the next chapter, he adds:

This common liberty is a consequence of man’s nature. His first law is to attend to his own preservation, his first cares are those which he owes to himself; and as soon as he comes to the years of discretion, being sole judge of the means, adapted for his own preservation, he becomes his own master.³

¹ *Epist. Luth. a Ioh. Aurifabro collectae* I (Jen. 1556) 345.

² *Leviathan*, Ch. XIV

³ *Contrat social*, Bk. I, Chap. II.

Since no man has any natural authority over his fellow men,
and since force is not the source of right, contracts remain as
the basis of all lawful authority among men.⁴

But in order that such a contractual form of association may be legitimate, he argues, the problem will be “to find a form of association which may defend and protect with the whole force of the community the person and property of every associate, and by means of which, each coalescing with all may nevertheless obey only himself and remain as free as before.”⁵

This problem finds its solution in that which, according to Rousseau, is the basis of all civil societies, or States; namely the *social contract* between free and equal individuals in which “each giving himself to all, gives himself to nobody; and as there is not one associate over whom we do not acquire the same rights which we concede to him over ourselves, we gain the equivalent of all that we lose, and more power to preserve what we have.”⁶

The essence of the social contract is: “Each of us puts in common his person and his whole power under the supreme direction of the general will; and in return we receive every member as an indivisible part of the whole.” But what happens when the will of an individual is not the same as *the general will*, when it fails to coincide with the majority-vote? If a law is passed against his will, how can a man be said to be obeying his own sweet will in obeying that law? How can individual liberty have its way when it is overridden by the authority of the general will? How is perfect individualism compatible with a functioning society?

Rousseau undertakes to solve this difficulty. “Indeed,” he admits, “every individual may, as a man, have a particular will contrary to, or divergent from, the general will which he has as a citizen. . . . In order, then, that the social pact may not be an empty formula, it tacitly includes this agreement, which alone can give force to the others, that whosoever refuses to obey the general will shall be compelled to do so by the whole body; which means nothing else than that he shall be forced to be free.”⁷ “Forced to be free,” is a sorry jest. The bald fact is that here the *general will* ceases to be individual liberty and becomes co-ercive authority.

Now, if the general will of the people is to replace God’s authority as the last court of appeal, it follows that it must be as *infallibly right* as is

⁴ Ibid., Bk. I, Chap. IV.

⁵ Ibid., Bk. I, Ch. VI.

⁶ Ibid., Bk. I, Ch. VI.

⁷ Ibid., Bk. I, Ch. VII.

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the will of God, in the authoritarian conception of society. This Rousseau frankly admits: "It follows," says he, "that the general will is always right and always tends to the public advantage."⁸ Yet it is so obvious that majorities and even totalities of voters are *not always* right; it is so clear that mob rule seldom fails to be wrong, that Rousseau is forced to resort to a second piece of sophistry in order to save the situation. He distinguishes between the abstract "general will" and the concrete "will of all." The former, he says, is always right and necessarily points to the public good as a compass needle always points to the magnetic pole. The fact that the concrete "will of all" fails to do this is because, owing to collusions and caucuses among the voters, there is not enough individualism in the social body and so not enough difference of opinion. Any form of association or coherence among the voters tends to impede the faithful expression of the *general will*, because: "The differences become less numerous and yield a less general result." This, of course, is the rankest kind of nonsense; for all *generalization* is based, not upon the *differences* in a given group of individuals, but upon their *similarities or agreements*. Nevertheless, this ridiculous idea leads him to the disastrous conclusion: "It is important, then, in order to have a clear declaration of the general will, that there should be no partial association in the State, and that every citizen should express only his own opinion."⁹

This principle was soon to be reduced to practice by the French Revolution, one of the first acts of which was the decree of Chapelier dissolving workmen's guilds so that the laborer might "express only his own opinion." It led to the disruption of all "partial associations within the State." It portended that tragic achievement of Liberalistic misrule, the dissolution of the occupational groups (the guilds), and even of the domestic group (the family). In conformity with this pulverizing policy, Liberalism has spared no effort to break down all organization within the body politic, to extirpate all social organs and to reduce the social organism to a disgregated chaos of helpless human monads destitute of all coherence among themselves, like so many bird-shot in a cartridge. As though from this incoherent mass of divided individuals, anything like a coherent voice or intelligent vote on anything could ever arise! To the accusing Socialists, we may turn over the prosecutor's task of indicting the arithmocratic Liberal for the fearful social havoc he has wrought in all modern States by putting into practice this heartless, pagan individualism of the *Contrat social*.

⁸ Ibid., Bk. II, Ch. III.

⁹ Ibid., bk. II, ch. III.

Published in 1762, that little book was destined to become the *Bible* of the French Revolutionaries of 1789. Mirabeau, Mme. Rolland, Robespierre, Saint-Just, Babeuf and the rest harkened to it with reverential awe. For all of them, it was the inspired writing of mankind's greatest sage, or, as Thomas Carlyle puts it, "the Fifth Gospel" — "the Gospel according to Jean Jacques;"¹⁰ in all of them it awakened, according to Auguste Comte, an enthusiasm greater "than the Bible or the Coran ever succeeded in winning."¹¹ The declamatory Revolutionary Confession, entitled "La Declaration des Droits de l'homme et du citoyen," and voted in the August of 1789, simply formulates the Revolution's three basic dogmas — the Sovereignty of the people, Liberty, Equality — in texts taken verbatim from the *Contrat social*. Little wonder that Napoleon was led to declare: "But for Rousseau, there would have been no Revolution."

However, the *Contrat social* might never have become the *Bible of the Revolution*, had it not been first the *Bible of Freemasonry*; had not the Lodges popularized its revolutionary gospel of liberty, fraternity, equality throughout the length and breadth of France.

Masonry, so the Masonic historian Mackey tells us, was imported into France from England towards the beginning of the XVIIIth century. Soon after (i. e., on April 27, 1738), French Catholics were warned of the danger threatening them by the Bull *In Eminenti* of Clement XII condemning Masonry.

The warning went unheeded; for nothing was done to obstruct the progress of this conspiracy to overthrow Church and State in Catholic France.

Far from meeting with opposition, the conspirators found the ground well prepared for their evil work. France's prosperity had been ruined by the militarism of Louis XIV (1643-1715), which had saddled the people with an enormous public debt, and by his absolutism, which had broken down the very structure of government itself. In the throes of the depression that ensued during the reigns of Louis XV and Louis XVI, the people became more and more embittered against the King. Hence, they were only too ready to believe the calumnies that the first Grand Master of the Grand Orient¹² circulated about his royal cousin

¹⁰ *The French Revolution*, bk. I, II, ch. VII, p. 44)

¹¹ *Politique positive*, t. III, ch. VII).

¹² As their Grand Master to lead this crusade against royalty and the Church in France, the Freemasons elected Philip, the dissolute Duke of Chartres (afterwards Duke of Orleans). In volume IV of Mackey's *History of Masonry* (New York, 1921) we are told that he was elected Grand Master of the Old Grand Lodge of France on June 24, 1771 (cf. p. 1290), becoming Grand Master of the Grand Orient when this

and the Queen, Marie Antoinette. The resulting popular indignation tipped the scales in favor of revolution as against peaceful reform.

The upshot was the Reign of Terror. Thanks, in large measure, to Masonry, the Revolution was brought about in France and on the Continent. A new social order was set up, in which the State was *secularized* and religion banished from education and from public life.

So much for the political liberalism of Rousseau; we have now to consider economic liberalism, the system of the Physiocrats, of Adam Smith and Ricardo, who saw in Rousseau's principle of unhampered liberty a cure-all for mankind's economic ills.

Economic Liberalism

This system originated with the sect of Rousseau's disciples known as Economists or Physiocrats. François Quesnay (1694-1774) and Jean C. M. V. de Gournay (1712-1759) were co-founders of said sect. About 1750 Quesnay, who was physician in ordinary to Louis XV, became acquainted with de Gournay, and around the two the sect of Physiocrats was formed. The Marquis de Mirabeau (1749-1791) is the only member of this group whom we know to have been in personal correspondence with Rousseau; for there is extant a letter of the latter addressed to the Marquis under date of July 26, 1767. Another important member of the

superseded the Grand Lodge in 1774 (cf. p. 1299). "When," remarks the Masonic historian, "on the death of his father he became the Duke of Orleans, he developed a dislike of the King (viz., Louis XVI), who had refused to elevate him to posts to which his rank entitled him to aspire, but from which he was excluded by his blackened reputation.

"Inspired with his dislike for the King and the Court, and moved by his personal ambition, the Duke fostered the discontents which were already springing up among the people" (p. 1296). Thereupon Mackey feels called upon to offer this word of apology for the action of the Freemasons in setting up such a monster as their first Grand Master: "When he was elected as Grand Master, the Duke of Chartres, though very young (only 26), had already exhibited a foreshadowing of his future career of infamy. Certainly enough was known to have made him unfit for choice as the leader of a virtuous society. But motives of policy prevailed" (p. 1297).

In the sequel, this Grand Master renounced his ducal title, proclaimed himself "Le Citoyen Philippe Égalité" (*Citizen Philip Equality*) and, having been elected to the National Assembly, voted for the death of his cousin, King Louis XVI. Unfortunately for himself, however, he became so enamored with equality that he made the mistake of resigning his Grand Mastership and of repudiating Masonry. This he did in a letter dated May 15, 1793. His indignant fellow Masons anathematized him in solemn conclave and, breaking his Grand Master's sword, declared said office vacant. Five months later this scoundrelly ex-Grand Master was guillotined, viz., on October 31, 1793. (See op. cit., pp. 1303-1304.)

sect was Baron A. R. J. Turgot (1727-1781), disciple of Quesnay and later minister of finance in France.

The system of the Physiocrats, which is set forth in Quesnay's *Tableau économique* ("Economic Situation"), is an agricultural system of economy, which holds the produce of the land to be the sole source of the revenue and wealth of every country. What is distinctively Rousseauan about it is Quesnay's contention that under a regime of perfect liberty, with no restraints imposed, there will be a natural distribution of wealth conducive to the highest prosperity.

De Gournay, too, held that the prosperity of the State would necessarily result from free and unrestricted competition among the citizens. He expressed this view in his famous saying: "Laissez faire, laissez passer, le monde va de lui même" — *Let things alone, let things pass, the world goes on of itself.*

Turgot, laying less stress on agriculture; advocated perfect freedom of commerce and industry as the best means of augmenting public and private wealth; it was his system, known as "le libéralisme économique," which alone won the unqualified approval of Adam Smith (1723-1790); but outside of France proper, it was Adam Smith himself who came to be hailed as the founder of *economic liberalism*.

When Adam Smith visited the Continent (1764-1766), he formed the acquaintance of Quesnay and of several other Physiocrats, such as Turgot and Mirabeau, but de Gournay, of course, was already dead. Rousseau was still alive, but he was not among the liberalistic doctrinaires whom Smith met at Paris. However, Smith's friend, David Hume, knew Rousseau and sheltered him in his own home when the author of the *Social Contract* came as a refugee to England.

In 1784 Adam Smith published his famous work on political economy, *The Wealth of Nations*. In this work, he formulated the basic principle of economic liberalism in these memorable words:

All systems of either preference or restraint, therefore, being thus completely taken away, the obvious and simple system of natural liberty establishes itself of its own accord. Every man, as long as he does not violate the laws of justice, is left perfectly free to pursue his own interest his own way, and to bring both his industry and capital into competition with those of any other man, or order of men. The sovereign is completely discharged from . . . the duty of super-intending the industry of

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private people, and of directing it towards the employments most suitable to the interest of society.¹³

This is that system of *natural liberty*, which has unchained all greed to prey upon all weakness; this is that system of *equal opportunity*, which has produced an increasingly wealthy group of millionaires and an increasingly impoverished multitude of expropriated workers; this is that system of *rugged individualism* that has made human life a war of all against all — a pitiless Darwinian struggle for existence in which the “fit” ruthlessly exterminate the “unfit.” Nor will the chronic social sickness it has brought upon all modern nations ever be cured until the last cankerous vestige of liberalism has been eliminated from human society.

With his “natural liberty” and “removal of all restraints,” Adam Smith gave the freest possible play to “enlightened selfishness.” And by substituting for the *just price* of medieval days a “price settled by competition,” he paved the way for the cruel exploitation of human labor that has characterized our times. Reduced to practice, it enhanced the inhuman horrors of the Industrial Revolution, revolting the Christian soul of the author of *Unto this Last*. And John Ruskin did no injustice to Adam Smith in pillorying him as “the half-bred and half-witted Scotsman who taught the deliberate blasphemy: Thou shalt hate the Lord thy God, damn His laws and covet thy neighbor’s goods.”

However, it is not to the devilish individualism of Smith, but to the even more fiendish individualism of his disciple, David Ricardo, that we owe the “iron law of wages.” This outrage on humanity that strangles all pity for the exploited, that degrades human labor to the level of a subhuman thing, that makes of it a marketable *commodity* subject, like other commodities, to the law of supply and demand, is found in Chapter V of Ricardo’s *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*:

Labor, like all other things that are bought and sold, and whose quantity may increase or diminish, has its natural price and its current price. The natural price of labour is that which is indispensable to the workmen generally for their subsistence and for the perpetuation of the species. The current price is the price really paid, as the natural effect of the relation between demand and supply, labor being dearer when there are few workmen and cheaper when there are many.

¹³ *The Wealth of Nations*, Cannan ed., London, 1904, vol. II, bk. IV, ch. IX, p. 184.

It was the Ricardian law of wages that led straight to the Class War, that tipped with flame the pen of Marx, that made Lasalle a “tribune” of the disinherited!

Religious Liberalism

Here, as is so often the case, the religious question underlies all others; for the plague of political and economic liberalism was born of the godless, soulless, anti-Christian liberalism, which has legislated morals and religion out of public life and relegated them to the privacy of the individual human conscience.

Religious liberalism is the term used to designate that manifold doctrine which, in greater or lesser measure, emancipates man from God, God’s law and God’s revelation; whose practical upshot is the divorce of the eternal from the temporal — the separation of Church and State.

Religious liberalism has three principal forms:

(1) *Absolute* religious liberalism that emancipates human society from religion by subordinating the Church to the State, which it regards as the one supreme power and the sole source of human rights.

(2) *Moderate* religious liberalism whose formula is: *The Church free in a free State*; this emancipates human society by isolating rather than absorbing or suppressing the Church.

(3) *Catholic liberalism* — neither really Catholic nor really liberal — which seeks to reconcile the irreconcilable, religion with irreligion, the supremacy of God with the supremacy of the State.

Rousseau’s religious liberalism was of the first or *absolute* type. He aimed at substituting the State for the Church, by imposing a “civil religion,” which would make “each citizen love his duties.” “Outside of this, the State has no interest whatever in religion.” Accordingly, Rousseau preferred the Pagan to the Christian form of worship, seeing that Christianity, “far from attaching the hearts of the citizens to the State, detaches them from it, as it does from other earthly things. I know of nothing more contrary to the social spirit.”¹⁴

According to Christ, religion’s main function is to procure man eternal happiness in the next world, not temporal success in this — *For what doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?* (Matthew 16:26).

According to Rousseau, religion’s main function is to induce men to confine themselves exclusively to material goals; to reinforce with

¹⁴ *Contrat Social*, bk. IV, ch. VIII.

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conscientious motives an idolatrous performance of their *civic* duties. In other words, the Church is to be subordinated to the State and its existence will be tolerated only in so far as it subserves the temporal prosperity of the State.

Absolute religious liberalism is, in fact, the very foundation-stone of Rousseau's entire political philosophy. As Penty rightly remarks, "Rousseau's ideas on civil religion do not appear until the last chapter, but they provide the key to his whole position. In order to understand Rousseau, it is necessary to read him backwards."¹⁵

It was his absolute religious liberalism, involving complete subjection of the Church to the State, that inspired the French Revolutionaries to enact their notorious *Civil Constitution of the Clergy*, which they proceeded brutally to enforce by means of bloody persecution — by means of mass executions of priests and religious.

That truly despotic "liberalism" provoked a natural reaction. Liberals had to cast about for something not so extreme — for a more liberal kind of liberalism, that would not utterly belie its name. They hit on *moderate liberalism*, which, relinquishing the project of subordinating Church to State, is content to *separate* the twain.

"The Church free in a free State" — the liberal Catholic finds this revised formula most admirable; for to him it expresses the ideal relation between Church and State. What, he asks, has religion to do with politics? They have different fields, different ends, and different means. Keep them apart, then, and do not mix them up. Give Caesar his due as well as God. Did not Christ distinguish His Church from the State when He distinguished the "things of Caesar" from the "things of God"? That He did make this distinction, is very true, but it is also very irrelevant.

In the first place, it is not of *distinction*, but of separation, that the Masonic liberals speak. The words are not synonymous. A man's spiritual soul is not the same as his material body, and so it is wise for him to *distinguish* his soul from his body. But it would be extremely unwise, nay absolutely suicidal, for him to separate his soul from his body.

In the second place, in *Matthew*, 22:21 (*Mark*, 12:17), Christ makes "no distinction of persons," as if one class of persons (private individuals) were subject to God, while another class of persons (public officials) were independent of the Supreme Ruler. He does make, however, a distinction of *things*, in the sense that one class of things (spiritual means, such as prayer, the virtues, the sacraments) subserve

¹⁵ *A Guildman's Interpretation of History*, London, 1920, p. 198.

man's *eternal life* and are therefore called "the things that are God's," while another class of things (material means, such as houses, food, clothes, tools) subserve man's *temporal life* and are therefore called "the things that are Caesar's," Caesar being symbolic of the State, whose duty it is to help men fulfill their temporal destiny.

For man, compounded of spiritual soul and material body, lives a twofold life: the one, his temporal life, which begins in the womb and ends in the tomb; the other, his eternal life, which commencing in time shall never know an ending.

Each of these lives has its own purpose and its own set of means. Nevertheless, the temporal welfare man seeks as his earthly destiny is not an absolutely ultimate end. It is by its very nature subordinate to his eternal destiny, which is to serve God, to save his immortal soul and so enter into the happiness of contemplating Infinite Goodness and Beauty forever.

It is the Church's function to help man on to this eternal destiny; it is the State's function to help him to attain that measure of temporal prosperity without which right living becomes a moral impossibility. These are different functions unquestionably, but from their *difference* it by no means follows that the ideal relation between Church and State is one of *estrangement* — that the two should behave like persons who have quarreled and are no longer on speaking terms with each other.

Finally, common sense will inevitably raise the questions: Did or did not God create Caesar? and if God did create Caesar, how can Caesar be independent of God? If the same God is Author of the State and Founder of the Church, then how can it be His will that His State should refuse to co-operate with His Church?

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, all the Earth is full of Thy glory. — The loftiness of men shall be bowed down and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; and the Lord alone shall be exalted.

The highest civil official rules only with power derived from God and must govern in strict conformity with the divine commands. God is no respecter of persons. The pomp of presidents, emperors and dictators is so much dust in His sight. That is what He plainly tells us on nearly every page of Holy Writ.

Hear, therefore, ye kings and understand: learn, ye that are judges of the ends of the Earth. Give ear, you that rule the people, and that please yourselves in multitudes of nations: For power is given by the Lord, and strength by the Most High, who will examine your works, and search out your thoughts: Because being ministers of his kingdom, you have not judged rightly, nor

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kept the law of justice, nor walked according to the will of God. Horribly and speedily will He appear to you: for a most severe judgment shall be for them that bear rule. For to him that is little, mercy is granted: but the mighty shall be mightily tormented. For God will not except any man's person, neither will He stand in awe of any man's greatness: for He made the little and the great, and He hath equally care of all. But a greater punishment is ready for the mighty. To you, therefore, O kings, are these my words, that you may learn wisdom and not fall from it." (*Wisdom*, 6 :2-10.)

One concluding remark: it may be objected that what Veuillot has written holds true of European liberalism but not of liberalism as the term is understood in America. By the time the reader has finished reading *The Liberal Illusion*, he will know that this is not so. Meanwhile, suffice it to note that Liberalism's cardinal principle, *the secularization of society*, has in the United States nearly two million staunch upholders in the active membership of the Masonic lodges alone, and that Christianity expurgated of Christ is everywhere the so-called "true religion" of Masonry.

Liberal Catholics, too, we shall always have with us; for they are, unfortunately, a universal phenomenon. A friend of the writer calls them "fleshpotters," defining them as those who, born within the embattled sanctuary of the Church, lean longingly from her sacred merlons (as far as mortal hazard may) to gaze with avid eyes upon the reeking fleshpots of unorthodoxy.

Your liberal Catholic invariably has "good friends among the Masons" and, Papal pronouncements to the contrary notwithstanding, can vouch for them individually and collectively as being above reproach. He has never heard of Leo XIII's Encyclical *Humanum Genus*, "On the Sect of the Masons," and would probably deprecate it if he had. But Grand Commander Albert Pike, pundit of American Masonry, not only heard of it, he read it and penned in reply a bitter attack upon the Papacy.

However, even genuine Catholics are apt to think of the American liberal as not being secularistic and godless like his European brother. If such be the case, the "religious" views voiced by a former famous president of Harvard University, Dr. Charles Eliot, will suffice to disillusion them. Expounding his project of a "new" civic religion — which, to tell the truth, is as old as Rousseau, not to speak of pagan antiquity — he says:

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The new religion will not attempt to reconcile people to present ills by the promise of future compensation. I believe the advent of just freedom has been delayed for centuries by such promises. Prevention will be the watchword of the new religion. It cannot supply consolation as offered by old religions, but it will reduce the need of consolation.¹⁶

Now, the atheistic communist is not at all averse to such a statement of the case. He says to the secularistic liberals: "You are quite right in discarding God and the hereafter as outworn superstitions: there is no Heaven for man beyond the grave. Hence, it behooves all of us to get whatever enjoyment we can out of our present existence — *all of us*, I say: therefore, it is high time that this earthly heaven of ours should cease to be monopolized by a few coupon-holding capitalists and become instead the property of the workers, who are far more entitled than wealthy idlers to happiness here below and who cannot look forward to compensation for present privations in a future life."

To this, the liberal may reply with tear-gas or with machine-guns, but he can make no logical rejoinder. Atheistic communism is annihilated by the Christian doctrines of Creation, of original and actual sin, of judgment and the resurrection of the dead, but to all attacks leveled at it from the premises of godless and soulless liberalism, it is absolutely invulnerable.

¹⁶ Charles Elliott, *The New Religion*.

The Liberal Illusion

By

LOUIS VEUILLOT

I

S *MACKING of heresy* . . . Some time ago I had occasion to plumb the truth and depth of this expression, while listening to a lengthy discourse by a man as upright as one could wish, devout, busy with good works, learned, enthusiastic, full of beautiful illusions, but full, alas! also of himself.

He had styled himself a “liberal” Catholic.

Asked to explain the difference between a liberal Catholic and a Catholic pure and simple, who believes and practices what the Church teaches, he replied: “There is no. difference!” Nevertheless, he intimated that the Catholic pure and simple is an unenlightened Catholic. When it was objected that then, from his point of view as a liberal Catholic, the Catholic Church herself must be unenlightened, he met the objection by rushing into certain finical distinctions and confusions between the Church and the Roman Curia. Apropos of briefs — Latin letters and encyclicals published in these latter days — the expression Curia Romana came glibly on his tongue as something right to the point for clearing up the difficulty. However, nothing clear resulted from it.

Urged to say a word in explanation of what he meant by unenlightened, he began to digress on human liberty, on the changes that have taken place in the world, on periods of transition, on the abuses and disadvantages of repression, on the danger of enjoying privileges and the advisability of relinquishing them. . . . In this flow of verbiage, we could recognize various shreds and tatters of the revolutionary doctrines that have been wrangled over or, rather,

bandied about since 1830. They originated with Lamennais and lasted up to the time of Proudhon. But what struck us most forcibly was the insistence with which our liberal Catholic characterized us as intolerant Catholics. Thereupon we stopped him. Forgetting, this time, about the "Roman Curia," he admitted that what he disliked about the Church was her intolerance. "She has always," said he, "interfered too much with the human mind. Upon the principle of intolerance, she set up an even more oppressive secular power. This power served the Church herself more faithfully than it served the world. Catholic governments intervened to impose the faith; this gave rise to the violent measures that have revolted the human conscience and plunged it into unbelief. The Church is perishing by reason of the unlawful support she has seen fit to accept from the State. The time has come for her to change her attitude. The thing for the Church to do is to renounce all power of her own to coerce conscience and to deny such power to governments. No more union of Church and State: let the Church have nothing to do with governments, and let governments have nothing to do with religions, let them no longer meddle in each other's affairs! The individual may profess whatever religion he likes, according to his own personal views; as a citizen of the State, he has no particular religion. The State recognizes all religions, it assures them all of equal protection, it guarantees to each of them equal liberty, this being the regime of tolerance; and it behooves us to pronounce the latter good, excellent, salutary, to preserve it at all costs, to spread it perseveringly. One may say that this regime is of Divine right: God himself has established it by creating man free; He puts it into practice by making His sun to shine alike on the good and the wicked. As for those who disregard the truth, God will have His day of justice, which man has no right to anticipate.

"Each religious denomination, free in a free State, will induct its own proselytes, guide its own faithful, excommunicate its own dissenters; the State will take no account of these matters, it will excommunicate nobody and will never itself be excommunicated. The civil law will recognize no such thing as an ecclesiastical immunity, religious prohibition, or religious obligation; church edifices shall pay taxes on their doors and windows, the theological student shall do military service, the bishop shall serve on the jury and in the National Guard, the priest may marry if he will, be divorced if he will, and re-marry if he will. Neither, on the other hand, will there be disabilities or prohibitions of a civil nature any more than there will be disqualifications or immunities of any other sort. Every religion may preach, publish its books, ring its bells and bury its dead according to its own fancy, and the ministers of religion may be all that any other citizen is eligible to

be. Nothing, so far as the State is concerned, will stand in the way of a bishop's commanding his Company in the National Guard, keeping shop, or conducting a business; neither will anything stand in the way of his Church's, or a Council's or the Pope's right to depose him from his ecclesiastical office. The State takes cognizance of nothing else than the facts of public order."

II

Our liberal Catholic grew enthusiastic in unfolding these marvels. He contended that no exception could be taken to his stand; that reason, faith and the spirit of the times alike spoke in his behalf. As regards the spirit of the times, nobody contested his assertion. When it came to reason and faith, however, he was not let off without objections, but he shrugged his shoulders and was never at a loss for an answer. It is true that outrageous statements and outrageous contradictions cost him no qualms whatever. He always started off on the same foot, protesting that he was a Catholic, a child of the Church, an obedient child; but at the same time a man of the world, a member of the human race arrived now at maturity and of an age to govern itself. To the arguments taken from history he replied that mankind, in its present state of maturity, constituted an altogether new world, in the face of which the history of the past proved absolutely nothing. To the words of the Fathers of the Church he sometimes opposed other words of theirs, at other times he said that the Fathers spoke for their own times and that we must think and act for our times. Confronted with texts from Scripture, he would either tear out of their context seemingly contrary texts, or devise an interpretation calculated to support his own opinion, or, finally, he would say that the texts in question applied only to the Jews and their little theocracy. Nor was he embarrassed to any greater degree by the dogmatic bulls of the "Roman Curia": the Bull *Unam Sanctam*¹⁷ of Boniface VIII caused him to smile; it had been withdrawn, he claimed, or else revised. We pointed out that the Popes had inserted it into the *Corpus Juris Canonici* and that it has always remained there. He answered: "It is out of date and the world has changed since then!" The Bull *In Cœna Domini* and all subsequent bulls he found equally out of

¹⁷ "Urged by Faith, we are obliged to believe and to hold that the Church is one, holy, Catholic, and also Apostolic. We firmly believe in her, and we confess absolutely that outside of her there is neither salvation nor the remission of sins . . . Furthermore, we declare, say, define and pronounce, that it is wholly necessary for the salvation of every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff."

date — they were mere disciplinary formulas, he said, made for their times, but having no reason for existence to-day. The French Revolution had buried these antiquated regulations along with the old world which they formerly oppressed. Repression had been abolished; the man of to-day was capable of liberty and wanted no other law!

“This new order,” he went on to say, “which so disconcerts your timidity, is for all that the very one that will save the Church and the only one that can save her. Besides, the human race is up in arms to impose this order, there is nothing for it but to submit, and this has already been done. Imagine anyone daring to resist this triumphant force! Who would even dream of doing so? Intolerant Catholics, you are more absolute than God the Father who created man for liberty; more Christian than God the Son who does not wish His law to be established otherwise than by way of liberty. On this question, you are now more Catholic than the Pope¹⁸; for the Pope, by approving of modern constitutions — all of which are inspired and permeated by the spirit of liberty — has given them his blessing. I say that the Pope, the Vicar of Jesus Christ, has approved of these constitutions, because he has done just that in permitting you to take the oath of allegiance to them, to obey them and to defend them. Now, liberty for all religions and the atheism of the State are part and parcel of said constitutions. You have to overlook that point, and you do overlook it — of that there can be no doubt.

“For the rest, why do you persist in your opposition? Your resistance is vain; your regrets are not only senseless, they are positively criminal. They cause the Church to be hated and they are the source of much embarrassment to us liberal Catholics, your saviors, in that they cause our sincerity to be suspected. Instead of drawing down on yourselves certain and probably terrible retribution, run to the arms of Liberty, welcome her, embrace her, love her. She will bestow upon you more than you can ever repay. The Faith stagnates under the yoke of a protecting authority: obliged to defend itself, it will reawaken; the heat of controversy will rekindle its spark of life. What may we not expect the Church to undertake, once she is free to take up anything? How can she fail to appeal to the hearts of the people when they see her forsaken by the mighty ones of the world — deserted by the powers that be and forced to live exclusively by her own resources, her own genius, her own virtues? Amid the confusion of doctrines and the corruption of morals, she will stand out solitary — unique in her purity and unique in her

¹⁸ Pius IX.

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affirmation of good. She will be the last refuge, the impregnable rampart of morality, of the family, of religion, of liberty!”

III

Everything has its limits, and so the breath of our orator gave out at last. As he had interested us, if not by the novelty of his doctrines, at least by his frankness in expressing them, we had allowed him to talk on without interruption. Obligated to refill his lungs with air, he interrupted himself. Someone took advantage of the lull to point out the emptiness of his maxims, the incoherence of his reasoning, the groundlessness of his hopes. He listened with the air of a man who is less intent on weighing what is said to him than on finding a way to dispute it.

I must confess that what his opponent said, though sound in reason and full of good sense, did little to reassure me. Unquestionably, he made some telling points that were unanswerable, and there was none among those present who did not heartily agree that he was right. But in spirit I enlarged the audience, so as to take in the general public, and instantly there came upon me the sad realization of the utter helplessness of reason in matters like the present.

For on questions such as these it is the multitude, swayed and determined by sentiment alone, that passes final judgment. Reason is a weight it cannot bear. The multitude obeys its passions, it loves destruction; it applauds whenever it surmises that something is to be torn down. And what can compare with the Church as a thing to tear down! Herein lies the secret of the success of heresies — all of them absurd, all of them refuted by unanswerable reasons, yet all of them triumphant over reason for a certain period of time, which has seldom been of short duration.

Weakened by sin, humanity is naturally inclined to error, and an inclination to error is an inclination to death, or rather error is itself death. This fact alone, evident on every side, proves to the hilt that the civil power itself is under obligation to acknowledge the truth and to defend it with the might that society places in its hands. Only on that condition can society live; it has never so much as undertaken to live on any other terms. No sage of paganism has ever set up as ideal head of a State a type of ruler who was not the armed and resolute defender of truth and justice. Jethro gave this counsel to Moses: “And provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, in whom there is truth, and that hate avarice, and appoint of them rulers of thousands, and of hundreds.”¹⁹ Cicero, at the other end of the ancient world, writes: “A State cannot exist any more than a home, unless the good are rewarded

¹⁹ Exodus, 18: 21.

and the wicked punished.”²⁰ This duty to uphold justice, and by consequence to acknowledge the truth, is of the very essence of government, irrespective of all constitutions and all political forms. God menacing the rebellious people says to them: “I will give thee a king in my wrath, and will take him away in my indignation.”²¹ All of Scripture is full of this light. But of what avail is Divine reason and human reason, when ignorance is in control! From the thick of the multitude there emanates some sort of fog that obscures the mental vision of even the more intelligent, and you meet any number of intellectuals who will never more see clearly except by the light of incendiary fires already broken out. When one studies this phenomenon, it appears so strange and terrifying that one may well recognize in it something of the divine. The divine wrath blazes forth, it triumphs, it punishes the long contempt of truth.

IV

The liberal had recovered his breath, he resumed his discourse. It was plain to see that what he had heard had made no impression on him, if indeed he had heard it at all. He added lots of other words to those he had already spoken in great profusion; but he said nothing new. It was all a hotch-potch of historical arguments against history, of biblical arguments against the Bible, of patristic arguments against history, Bible, Fathers and even against common sense. He showed the same disdain, I ought rather to say the same repugnance, for the bulls of the Sovereign Pontiffs, he lost himself in the same declamations and the same prophecies. He rehashed the same cant about the world being new, humanity emancipated, the Church asleep but soon to wake up and rejuvenate her creed. The dead past, the radiant future, liberty, love, democracy, humanity were interspersed here and there like the false brilliants that the ladies nowadays scatter through their equally false tresses. Nothing was made more clear than the first time he said it. He became aware of this eventually, and told us that we were separating ourselves from the world and from the living Church, too, which would presently repudiate us; he all but anathematized us, and left us, finally, filled with consternation at his folly.

Everyone expressed his regret and advanced certain arguments against the extravagances he had uttered. For my part, I too shared the

²⁰ *On the Nature of the Gods.*

²¹ Osee, 13:11.

regret of the others, to see so fine a man embedded in so great an error. But since that, after all, was a fact, I was not sorry to have witnessed the spectacle and learned from it a lesson.

Up till then I had not seen the liberal Catholic except as lost in the crowd of traditional and integral Catholics, that is to say, “intolerant” Catholics. I had only known the official thesis, which is never complete and which varies with every individual, presenting personal peculiarities that his party may disavow. This enthusiast contrived to give me the esoteric lore along with the exoteric thesis. From then on I understood the liberal Catholic through and through. I knew by heart his sophisms, his illusions, his fixations, his tactics. And alas! nothing of it all was new to me. The liberal Catholic is neither Catholic nor liberal. By that I mean — without any intention of questioning his sincerity — that he has no more the true notion of liberty than he has the true notion of the Church. Liberal Catholic though he fain would be, he bears all the ear-marks of a better-known character — a type only too familiar in the history of the Church. Everything about him betokens the SECTARY: that is his real name.

V

This foe is not one to be despised, even though he be equipped with nothing more formidable than chimeras. There are some chimeras that reason may not safely attack single-handed; for it would be sure to be defeated, not by the chimeras, but by the complicity of human souls.

Human souls are sick, and sick with a terrible disease: they are tired of the truth and afraid of it! In souls that are still Christian this disease manifests itself in a lack of horror for heresy, in a chronic state of complacency towards error, in a certain fascination for snares, often in a shameful eagerness to let oneself be caught. It is not an entirely modern ailment, for it is rooted in the very heart of man. “I love to be caught,” exclaims St. Augustine. Father Faber speaks of it as the characteristic political physiognomy of our time. The liberal siren conceals her poisonous locks, shows her rosy face, and holds the cross in her hand. She easily lures victims to the brink of the abyss; she seduces the eyes, the reason, the heart. Unless the spirit of obedience guards us, we are taken captive. We must be eternally vigilant, in order to remain the same, in order not to become suddenly different.

The siren’s song evokes dangerous echoes. Not a few of the so-called liberal maxims are specious and more than embarrassing for whoever fails to meet them with flat contradictions. Now, the Faith alone

provides us with these victoriously flat contradictions. There is nothing so perilous as shuffling on the matter of words. Treason in words will soon compass the ruin of principles in a secretly tempted soul. Let us not forget that heresy excels in pampering all weaknesses and in turning to account all lusts. Liberal Catholicism is a very convenient garment to wear: it makes a perfect court robe, academic robe, robe of glory; it lends the colors of pride without transgressing the counsels of prudence; it has entree to the Church and it is welcome in all palaces and even in all taprooms.

Great advantages surely, and all to be had at what seems to be quite a low price. Only a few liberal words to be accepted, only a few "intolerant" words to be foresworn — this is all that is required; even less than that, a hurrah for that fellow, a boo for somebody else — the liberal church exacts no other profession of faith. But once a man pronounces the sacramental words, he is already far on the way. This simple shifting of words quickly brings about an enormous shifting of ideas. Along comes a skillful propagandist who knows just how to throw a veil over the nudities of a conscience already hankering to deceive itself, and the liberal thesis triumphs. What is true is found to be false, and vice versa. One can henceforth tolerate and even repeat outrageous statements. One no longer experiences any difficulty in admitting that from a century back everything has radically changed, not only on Earth but even in Heaven; that there is a new humanity on Earth, a new God in Heaven. Sure mark of heresy! For by implication, at least, if not in so many words, every heresy has proclaimed this blasphemy. Let us pause here for a moment.

VI

Let us place ourselves at the door of a church; from among the faithful who come to hear Mass, let us select at random a group of fifty human beings, then let us go back twenty-five or thirty years: we shall find that the majority of our group either were not even men thirty years ago, or were wanderers outside the fold of truth. That by and large is the case with all the living. Speaking in the language of Christianity, we may say of the vast majority of mankind, either that they are as yet unborn, or that they are already dead and serve no other purpose than to transmit death.

This — this multitude of children, ghosts and corpses — this is that humanity which is old enough, which has arrived at adulthood, which is mature and perfect! It is now in full possession of reason,

enlightenment and justice, capable at last of governing itself. And if God still presumes to govern it, He will do well to do so more considerately for the future than He has in the past, either through laws He will directly inspire, or through laws which mankind itself will know how to formulate without His help, and to which, in any case, His old-fashioned Church does not hold the key.

The Fathers have well said that the Church is incapable of growing old — *Ecclesia insenescibilis*; but the Fathers themselves are old and the Church is senile; she is positively decrepit. The Holy Ghost — who no longer thinks what He formerly thought — no longer reveals what He thinks to the Church; she has no inkling of it any more! Therefore the Holy Ghost has changed His ways; therefore the eternal God has become different like humanity, which has likewise become different, so different that God's former directives no longer apply.

Catholic liberalism virtually accepts this more than Protestant view of the vitality of the Sacred Scriptures, of their inspiration and of their interpretation by the Church. It calls upon us to swallow these impertinences, unless we are prepared to see the human race withdraw from us. They set the example, they withdraw. But in separating, it is the Church that they accuse of doing the separating. Another mark of the heretic.

VII

I do not say that the liberal Catholics are heretics. They must first have the will to be so. Of many of them I affirm the contrary; of the rest I know nothing, and it is not for me to judge. On this question the Church will pronounce judgment at the proper time, if there be occasion to do so. But whatever be their virtues and whatever the good intentions that inspire them, I believe them to be introducing among us a heresy, and one of the most out-and-out heresies the world has ever seen.

I do not know whether the world will escape it. I doubt that it will. Catholic liberalism and the spirit of the world are blood brothers; they shade into each other by imperceptible degrees. Amid the great mass of atheists, deists, eclectics, ignoramuses, and would-be inquirers there are a good many feeble consciences that want only a convenient and "tolerant" form of religion. Even within the Church, numbers of tired, tempted, timid souls are to be met with who would shrink equally from open apostasy and from an open break with the world. We see in Italy certain excommunicated priests who obstinately persist in celebrating Mass, but who would have vigorously protested had anyone predicted

five or six years ago their present fall from grace. . . . The heresy that does not quite deny the truth, that does not quite affirm the error, opens a channel for these vain waters: they precipitate themselves into it from the two opposite slopes, and so contrive to swell the torrent.

VIII

When heresy reaches the flood stage, there is only one high ground that cannot be submerged, only one place of refuge, and that is the ROCK. “Thou art Peter . . . and the gates of Hell shall not prevail” — *Tu est Petrus . . . et non prævalebunt*.

It is not, says the Bishop of Tulle, a rolling stone, to-day in one place, yesterday in another place, to-morrow in a third place. Neither is it a plastic rock that men can shape to suit their taste. The rock remains in its place, its matter, its form, all of it is unchangeable. The Rock, on its own part, does not accommodate itself to the times, in order to keep abreast of them — in order to be “of its time.”

People are fond of insisting that the Church ought to be of her time. A silly piece of advice, to say the least. The Church is of her time and will always be so, because she is of all times. If that were all one meant to say, he would simply be wasting words. Unfortunately, in the parlance of liberalism these words have a sense that is literally horrifying. The Church ought to be of her times, even when those “times” do not wish her to be in existence at all; and, by a natural consequence, God too ought to be of His time: that is to say, God ought to run with the hour, but ought not to start with it until the hand of man deigns to reverse the hourglass! In other words, there is no Church and it is man who creates God. Such formulas are a commentary on the age that accepts them. Verily we are embroiled in an orgy of nonsense.

Let us extricate ourselves; let us cling to the unchangeable, so shamefully denied and insulted.

Peter is the Eternal Rock, and this Rock — prefigured in the Scriptures — is the Mountain of Salvation, the Mountain where it hath pleased God to dwell. Our Lord, speaking to Simon and petrifying him into the Rock, says to him: *Thou art*, just as he says of Himself, *I am Who am*. Thou art chosen by an eternal design for an eternal work. It is an accomplished fact. Peter, *Mouth of Christ*,²² speaks eternally the Divine word; Peter is eternally the ROCK that God has placed, the Mountain where God is pleased to dwell. So God has willed, so God has done; and what God has done shall never be undone nor better done.

Now, in what capacity does God dwell upon this Mountain of His own creation, upon this Rock harder and more lasting than all the things of Earth? In the capacity of KING. This leaves Liberalism without a leg to stand on.

²² St. John Chrysostom.

IX

Jesus Christ is the King of the world, He speaks to the world through His Priest, and the decrees of this Priest, being an expression of the royal rights of Jesus Christ, are eternal. They apply not to one time alone, but to all times; not to one society alone, but to all societies; not to some men, but to all men. And since they have been prescribed in accordance with the nature of Humanity by the Creator Himself of Humanity, everywhere human society has need of them, everywhere its instinct calls for them by dint of cries, of sighs, of recurrent troubles, of unutterable pangs; for outside their empire nothing good exists, nor has anything good the fullness and assurance of life. That is the reason why there is no time, no society, no man from whom the faithful of Christ ought not to exact some form of obedience to the decrees of the Priest of Christ the King of the World.

The children of the Christ, the children of the King, are kings. They form an absolutely superior society, whose duty it is to take possession of the Earth and reign over it for the purpose of baptizing all men and of raising them to that selfsame supernatural life, that selfsame royalty and that selfsame glory for which Christ has destined them. They ought to strive for that goal, because the only way of realizing the ideal of universal liberty, universal equality, universal fraternity is to establish the universal reign of Christ. For the liberty that is man's due is liberty to attain his supernatural end, which is union with Christ; and the only society ever known to recognize all men as equals and as brothers is the society of the disciples of Christ.

In the normal order, Christian society is maintained and extended by means of two powers that ought to be distinct — not separated; united — not confused; one above the other — not equal. The one is the head, the other the arm; the one is the supreme and sovereign word of the Pontiff, the other the social power.

Christian society, being firstly and above all Christian, submits wholly to this first law; and it puts all things in their place, because it first of all puts in His place its sole Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

It puts Him in His sovereign place in society, as all the faithful put Him in His sovereign place among souls; and out of this arises order, liberty, unity, greatness, justice, empire, peace.

Thus, across the breaches opened by human passions, by human weakness, and in spite of them, was formed in its magnificent variety that commonwealth of Europe which could be called the Christian Republic or even the Christian Family; a wonderful work, broken up by heresy just when the internal peace and the progress of the arts gave

glorious promise of extending to the entire human race the fruits of the Redemption. Had Catholic unity been maintained until the XVIth century, there would no longer be any infidels, nor idolaters, nor slaves; the human race would be Christian to-day, and owing to the number and diversity of the nations coalescing in the unity of faith, it would be safe from the danger of universal despotism so imminent to-day.

X

These two powers, united, distinct and one above the other, whereby Christian society is ruled, have been called the two swords. For the word would be of no avail, if it could not be at certain moments a sword. The meekness of Christ has willed that there should be two swords, so that the advent of repression might be delayed and the need of it forestalled.

The first sword, the one that cleaves nothing but darkness, remains in the patient and infallibly enlightened power of the Pontiff. The other, the material sword, is in the hand of the representative of society, and in order that it may make no mistake, it is in duty bound to obey the commandment of the Pontiff. It is the Pontiff who bids it come forth from the scabbard and who bids it return thereto. Its duty is to repress aggressive error, once it has been defined and condemned, to shackle it, to strike it down; to give protection to the truth, whether the latter is under the necessity of defending itself, or has need, in its turn, to go on the offensive. The secular arm ought to clear the way for the truth, to assure it liberty of teaching, to guard afar the way of its ambassadors and of its followers. It has been said to the Apostles: "Going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them." It has been enjoined upon us to pray for the coming of the kingdom of God: Thy kingdom come. This commandment implies the duty on the part of all peoples to receive the messengers of Christ, and gives to Christian society the right at least to protect their lives. It is enough that they should endure exile, hunger, toil, insults, that they should die of want, that they should be devoured by wild beasts; the Christian commonwealth has certainly the right to demand that they shall not, besides all that, have to run the risk of falling into the hands of the executioner, and that the persons of their converts, who have entered the family, shall be as sacred as the persons of the missionaries themselves. Such are the duties of the power obedient to the commandment of the Pontiff. It is his part to see that this divine order, which was given to Peter after he was invested with the primacy, is carried out: "Arise, kill and eat." That is to say,

according to the interpretation of the Fathers: Kill error, which is death, and transform it into thy light, which is life.

XI

Whenever we say such things, Free Thought raises the cry of "theocrat !" as it would the cry of "assassin!" It pretends to take fright in a way that frightens us a good deal more than it is frightened itself. By means of this buffoonery, it steps up prudence to a point where it amounts to sheer hysteria, to a point where it amounts to downright betrayal of the truth. It suppresses the assertion, nay, even the bare mention, of the most elementary and necessary Christian right.

Certainly the prudence is not without excuse. For whenever the free-thinkers pretend to be alarmed, they think themselves dispensed from every consideration of reason and justice, and the Church is in for a persecution. The liberal Catholic never fails to play upon this sensitive chord: "Will nothing do you but to preach theocracy? Do you want to have us all stoned?" Yet, just because our opponents are incurably unjust, ought we like cowards to strike our colors, and can it be that not to see any longer, not to know any longer, not to think any longer is the primary condition on which we are to enjoy the liberty that befits us? Let us scorn the trickery of words, and let not all the lackeys and henchmen of the prætorium, where Free Thought presumes to sit in judgment on the Christ, ever cow us into saying: "I know not the man!" We owe obedience to the Church within the limits that she herself has established, and which for the rest are ample enough, so that rebellion and pride may have no lack of leeway. If this obedience is theocracy, those that are sincerely afraid of it are not very much afraid of something else. In public life no less than in private life, there is but one way to escape from the kingdom of the Devil, and that is to submit to the kingdom of God. We have behind us in history, up to the very threshold of the present, and even in the present, lots of examples of the use which human autocracy has seen fit to make of the two swords. One would not have to search very long on the Earth to find the people that would have everything to gain, including in the first place life itself, were the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the spiritual King, able to say to the temporal king: "Put up thy sword into the scabbard."

XII

The Christian is priest, the Christian is king, and he is made for a higher glory. God must reign in us, God must reign through us, in order that we may merit to reign with God. Here we have certain rules of faith that we cannot keep apart from our rules of political life. Our rank is sublime, our dignity is divine; we cannot abdicate our present destiny, we cannot shirk its exceedingly high and exceedingly urgent duties — duties of the public no less than of the private order — without abdicating by that very fact our future dignity. We do not possess wealth, power, freedom, life for the sake of ourselves alone: attached to every gift bestowed on us is the obligation of using it to protect the multitude of our weak and ignorant brothers, both as regards their souls and as regards their bodies. Now, the main way to protect the weak is to enact such laws as will make it easier for them to know God and to be in communion with God. Upon this point we shall be examined and judged, nor does any Christian believe for a moment that, on the day when he is called upon to give an account of the little ones he has contemptuously abandoned, or defended without courage and love, he will be able to excuse himself on Caine's plea: *Am I my brother's keeper?*

XIII

What is the meaning of this argument of human liberty, which is forever cropping up in liberal Catholicism by way of a thousand tortuous and covert paths? Man has the power (or faculty) of doing evil and of not doing good. Who doesn't know that and who denies it? But it is strange folly indeed to conclude that God, in granting man this power, gave him the example and precedent of impartiality between truth and error, between good and evil. The least reflection will bring to mind any number of divine and merciful barriers with which God has curbed the evil exercise of our power to choose and to refrain. He takes away from us the recourse of choosing annihilation and leaves us no choice except to decide between two eternities. To refrain from making that choice is to have already chosen. This is what is called with so much emphasis human freedom!

This miserable *quid pro quo* is the foundation on which the whole doctrine of liberalism is built. There is no such thing as human freedom in this perilous sense; God has not made weak creatures a present of this dangerous gift. God alone is free. To us He has given, not freedom,

but free will. What we are really free to do is whatever we can do with impunity in the sight of an infinitely just God. Well and good, can we then with impunity refuse to obey God, refuse to serve Him, refuse to see to it that, so far as in us lies, God is obeyed and served? Can we with impunity refuse to hear the Church?

This is the question stated in its only true light. All efforts to dodge it, however much they may be applauded, amount to nothing more than futile displays of futile ingenuity.

The appearance of the Encyclical *Quanta Cura*²³ was the signal for a new crop of these shallow quibbles. Various explanations of the Encyclical, more or less respectful in tone, reduced it to a few fundamentals that meant little more than nothing. By the end of a year it became apparent that it was the explanations that meant little more than nothing. We had read in the first days that the Encyclical contained absolutely nothing “but the necessary and legitimate condemnation of *unlimited liberty*.”

The Encyclical does not bother at all about unlimited liberty, which is a folly and a heresy against the governments themselves, and one against which governments know quite well how to defend themselves; it warned Catholics of the danger to which they expose their brothers and themselves, by crying up, in spite of the Church’s teachings, certain rash affirmations which it brands in the aggregate as “the *liberty of perdition*.” Of this liberty the Encyclical traces in outline, the Syllabus in detail, the unmistakable features. Obviously the remarks having to do with the ravings of indifferentism, of infidelity, or of heresy have little or no reference to the faithful. But if one takes the trouble to peruse the errors stigmatized as contrary to the Church’s rights, to her authority, and to the obedience due to her, he will find out what the “liberty of perdition” means.

And this sort of liberty the secular powers do not combat as they do the insanity of unlimited liberty; but, on the contrary, they positively favor it and even enforce it. In so doing, their instinct does not play them false! All that emancipates man from the power of God subjugates him to the powers of this world; the confines over which he vaults in defying the Divine prohibitions are always the confines of Eden.

²³ The celebrated Encyclical of December 8, 1864, which promulgated the *Syllabus*.

XIV

Such being the case in the sight of God, I deny to the Christian — to him who is bound to obey — the right to authorize disobedience to represent him. I deny him not only the right to create, but even the right to accept without protest, a power that sets itself up independently of God.

Liberal Catholicism denies that the civil power can be Christian; I deny that it can with impunity be anything else and that we can with impunity dispense ourselves from doing all our religion commands and commends in order to keep it Christian or to make it become Christian.

The power, which is not Christian and which is without other religion, is diabolical, it is theocracy in reverse. If we are forced to submit to such a misfortune and such a shame, it will be an even greater misfortune and shame for the world than it is for us. We, by the grace of God, will deliver ourselves from it, and we alone have the power to deliver the world from it. But to work for it, to build up with our own hands a government godless on principle, to hold as sacred this preposterous and vile thing, that would be treason against mankind. Humanity would call us to account for it before the tribunal of God. It would accuse us of having extinguished the lamp, of having been accomplices of the darkness in which death resides.

Methinks I hear Tertullian speaking to the Christian maker of idols: “Can you preach one only God, you who make of Him so many? Can you preach the true God, you who make of Him counterfeits? — I make them, you will say, I do not adore them. — The same reason that forbids you to adore them likewise forbids you to make them: in both cases it is the offense it gives to God. But you do adore them, you who make it possible for them to be adored. You do adore them and sacrifice to them your life and your soul; you immolate to them your genius, you offer in libation to them your sweat; for them you enkindle the torch of your thought. You are to them more than a priest, it is your work that gives them their divinity!”²⁴

XV

It is true that Liberalism proclaims the contrary. The lamp, it says, will shine all the more brightly, and it is then that it will succeed in piercing the darkness. Once we have become toned-down Catholics,

²⁴ *De Idolatria*, VI.

modified Catholics, in short, *new Catholics*, we shall convert the world. In dilating on that point, liberal Catholics are inexhaustible. This illusion sets their minds at ease regarding the misgivings of their hearts; they hug it, and the eloquence with which they hold forth on the subject betrays the ravenousness of their Esau's appetite — of their craving for the mess of pottage. Unfortunately for them, the seductive picture of the conquests religion may be expected to achieve as a result of co-operation on the part of the liberal mind, is spoiled by a remembrance all too hard to forget.

At the beginning of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, the Tempter drew nigh to where Jesus had retired in the desert, and perceiving that He was tormented by hunger, said to Him: "Command that these stones be made bread." Jesus answered him: "Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God." Then the Tempter took Him up and set him upon the pinnacle of the Temple and said to Him: "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down, for it is written that He hath given His angels charge over thee, and in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest perhaps thou dash thy foot against a stone." Jesus answered him: "It is written too, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." The Tempter made a last effort, and gave away his secret. He took the Savior up into a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them — "All these," said he, "will I give thee, if falling down thou wilt adore me." Jesus answered him: "Begone. It is written: The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou serve." Satan withdrew, and at the same time angels came and ministered to Jesus.²⁵

Finally, Liberalism utters its last word: I control the world and I will give you the world . . .

But it always imposes the selfsame condition: *If, falling down, thou wilt adore me*. Descend to, fall to, grovel on, the plane of equality with those who have no God, and defer to the people of means whom I shall commit to your charge after they have been put under oath never to cross the threshold of a place of prayer: then you will see how the world will honor you and listen to you, and how Jerusalem will be born anew more beautiful than before.

"The king of nothing," said Saint Gregory VII, "promises to fill our hands. Thus do certain princes of the Earth, who are not assured of so much as a single day, dare to speak to the Vicar of Jesus Christ. They say: We will give you the power, the glory, the riches, if you recognize

²⁵ Matth. ch. IV.

our supremacy, if you make us your God; if, falling down at our feet, you will adore us.”

How often has this form of seduction been tried! To the Popes whom he persecuted, Frederick of Germany promised a vast development of the Faith; Cavour thought to trap Pius IX by means of this mirage; the Parliament of Florence, multiplying insults and robberies, rehashed the same old argument — mockery mingled with stupidity. None of them ever makes the least variation on the original theme: To leave the camp of Israel, to quit the sterile Rock of Rome, to close the ear to the responses of this sacred Ark that never utters new oracles; finally, to fall down, to adore the Liar and to believe him alone!

XVI

What a horrible thing and what a horrible farce! It is to the people of Christ that the proposal is made to accept, to choose for their civil rulers ignoramuses who know not that Jesus Christ is God, or blackguards who know it, yet pledge themselves to govern as if they knew it not. And divine blessings are promised to the men and the societies that are capable of this folly and this baseness! This is not what the Holy Ghost tells them. The children of Israel, having consecrated themselves to Beelphegor, God said to Moses: “Take all the princes of the people, and hang them up on gibbets against the sun: that my fury may be turned away from Israel.”²⁶ There you have a note to enter in the annals of freedom of worship — of religious liberty. It is said besides that “justice exalteth a nation: but sin maketh nations miserable.”²⁷ What does Liberalism make out of this oracle? Does it declare it repealed or is it minded to pretend that the justice in question here is the impracticable art of preserving just the right balance between Jesus, Luther, Mahomet and Joe Smith,²⁸ between God and Belial? Jesus wants no such equilibrium: “He that is not with me, is against me.”²⁹

“Know, Emperor, wrote St. Gregory the Great, know that power has been given you from on high, in order that virtue may be aided, that the ways of heaven may be widened, and that the empire of Earth may serve the empire of Heaven.” This is Bossuet’s translation.

²⁶ Numbers, 25:4.

²⁷ Proverbs, 14:34.

²⁸ Founder of the American sect of the Mormons.

²⁹ Matth., 12:30.

But, undeniably, these are old sayings and old divine ideas. To begin with, the world has changed, and when all is said and done, one has to follow the current.

XVII

“To follow the current,” this is what all these famous discoveries and grand airs of Catholic liberalism come to in the end!

And why, pray, have we to follow the current? We were born, we were baptized, we were confirmed precisely in order to swim against the current. This current of the creature’s ignorance and crime, this current of falsehood and sin, this turbid current that bears men down to perdition, is just what we ought to breast and labor to dry up. Beyond that we have nothing really important to do in the world.

Our history is the record of God’s triumph, through truth disarmed of all the weapons of human statecraft so far as the world and its rulers were concerned. The pagans were liberals. They were very desirous of coming to terms with the Church. They asked of her only to demean her Christ a little, demoting Him to the rank of a particular divinity. Then religious worship would have been free; Jesus would have had temples like Orpheus and like Æsculapius, and the pagans themselves would have recognized His superior philosophy and would have adored Him.

In negotiating this adjustment, and with a view to helping things along, the public authority, egged on by the philosophers, the men of letters, the Jews, the astrologers and the apostates, persecuted the Christians. It came to such a pass, in the provinces, that the persecution arrested at one fell swoop an entire Church. The bishop, the clergy, the faithful, the children, the neophytes were dragged before the proconsul. Frequently the proconsul begged them to dissemble at least for the sake of enabling him to acquit them; he demanded of them nothing more than a sign. Those Christians did not deliberate, they did not say: What will become of the Church and who will serve God if we die? They confessed the One God and they died. That was the way they caused the blade to fall from the hands of the executioner, took the sword out of the hands of the Emperor, and rescued mankind from the abyss. And what they had affirmed when persecuted, they did not deny when victorious. They had affirmed the royalty of the Christ, they established that, and so the cross of the Labarum came to dominate the imperial crown itself.

The Fallen One, the grand artisan of heresy, is called Satan, Adversarius; the adversary of the right, the true, the good; and whatever

he proposes is the thing we ought not to accept. As of yore he proposed absorption, so now, with the same intent, by like means, by the same hostile and lying organs, at one time threatening, at another time seducing, he proposes separation. He said to the first Christians: Give up liberty, enter into the empire. He says to us to-day: Give up the empire, enter into liberty. Formerly: Join; nowadays: Separate. Formerly, a union that would have degraded the Church; nowadays a separation that would degrade society. Neither would that union have been befitting then, because it would have meant absorption; nor would this separation be a good thing now, because it would mean repudiation. The Church does not repudiate human society, nor does she wish to be repudiated by it. She has not lowered her dignity, she will not abdicate her right, that is only another way of saying, her royal liberty. To rob the crown of the cross and the cross of the crown is to act in the interest of the *Adversary*, not in the interest of society.

XVIII

The Christians despoiled pagan society of its weapons and its temples to transform them, not to destroy them. From the temple, they expelled the idol; upon might they imposed right. The foolish idea of abolishing force never even came to them. Force allowed itself to be transposed, allowed itself to be disciplined; allowed itself to be sanctified. Who is so rash as to think he can abolish might? and why, after all, should anyone wish to abolish it at all? Might is a very good thing; it is a gift of God, nay, a very attribute of God: I am the most mighty God of thy father.³⁰

As right is of itself a force, so force can be of itself a right. Mankind and the Church recognize a right of war. From the iron of which it despoiled barbarous force, Christianity made coats of mail for the weak and noble swords with which it armed the right. Force in the hands of the Church is the force of right, and we have no desire that right should remain without force. Force in its proper place and doing its duty, that is the orderly way.

Because in the present world force is not everywhere in its proper place, that is to say at the disposition of the Church; because often, far from serving right, it is abused against the right, shall we therefore say yes to the Illuminati, some of whom decree the outright abolition of force, while the rest ordain that the supreme right shall never have force

³⁰ Genesis, 46:3.

at its disposal, for fear it might hamper the liberty that wants to destroy the truth?

We ought, on the contrary, to be ready to shed our blood in order to restore force to its lawful function, in order to attach it exclusively to the service of right.

Force ought to protect, to affirm, to vindicate the grandest, the noblest, the most necessary right of man, which is to acknowledge and to serve God; it should enable the Church to extend to every man on Earth the benefit of this right. Let us never relinquish this right which liberal Catholicism surrenders, so that it can drift down the current, along with the crowd.

XIX

This suggestion to follow the current is an unworthy one, one repugnant even to an elementary human sense of honor. Verily it is a sad reflection on our times that such a proposal can be made to men who have been signed with the Holy Chrism! Imagine a king driven from his throne, the forlorn hope of his conquered country, imagine such a one all of a sudden demeaning himself so low as to declare that he considered himself to have been justly dethroned and that all he asked for was to enjoy the status of a private individual, on the basis of the common right, under the protection of the despoilers of his people: think of the supineness of such a wretch! Nevertheless, his baseness would be as nothing compared with that to which we are asked to stoop.

This imaginary king would be guilty of an uncalled-for abasement. One would prefer not to believe him. Those to whom he made the offer to sell his rights and his honor would say to him: Fiddlesticks! You a king?

We would be doing something still more shameful, and for this reason people would be even less inclined to believe us. I may add that they would have the best of reasons for not believing us. For as was the case in former times with the jurors of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, we, too, would come to have our quota of repenters and retractors. Now, those who had remained Catholics pure and simple or who had become so again, would have their doubts about the sincerity of the ones who preferred to remain liberal Catholics. And then what stand would the latter take between the orthodox hurling anathemas at them and the unbelievers demanding of them guarantees? This is an eventuality they will most certainly have to face. If the liberal Catholics rejoin the faithful and accept the Church's teaching in her assertion of rights over the whole world, they will have accomplished absolutely nothing. If, on the other hand, they give the guarantees demanded of them by the opposing camp, they decisively cut themselves off and will soon find out that Liberty imposes silence upon dissenters, they will be forced to lend a hand in persecution, becoming at once apostates of the Church and apostates of Liberty.

They can count on it that they will not escape the one or the other of these alternatives:

Repentant liberals — or impenitent Catholics.

XX

I shall make a hypothesis. I shall suppose all of us to be following the current. I say all, except the Pope, for that far the hypothesis may not go. What will be the result? There will be one force gone from the world. What force? Ah! — it will not be the force of barbarism or of brutality.

The force that will be lost to the world is the force by which it has pleased God to conquer the world, and the world up to now is still conquered by it. God triumphs through a small number of faithful; this small number, the little flock, to whom He said: “Fear not!”; this small number He has called the salt of the earth — *If the salt lose its savor, wherewith shall it be salted?*

O prophetic wisdom of the word divine! the grain of sand is God’s sentinel upon the strand and says to the Ocean: *No further!* That grain of sand is the strength of mountains and the fertility of plains.

We turn towards the Crucified of Jerusalem, towards the Crucified of Rome, to His truth forsaken and betrayed; we say to Him: I believe Thee, I adore Thee, I want to be trampled under foot like Thee, turned into an object of derision like Thee; I want to die with Thee! . . . We say that, and the world is conquered.

In no other way will it ever be conquered, in no other way will we ever be able to despoil it of its weapons, to the end of transfiguring them and sanctifying them in ourselves and in their employment to block every way of blasphemy and to level every obstacle interposed between the little ones of this world and everlasting truth.

For it is necessary that every man should know and pronounce these words, this *Credo* which alone can redeem the world, this “Thy kingdom come” which implores eternal peace.

XXI

The first great word of liberty that was ever pronounced, the first great act of liberty that mankind ever saw done, was when those two poor Jews, Peter and John, proclaimed the duty of obeying God rather than men, and went on teaching what error and persecution, under the masks of justice and prudence, would have liked to suppress.³¹ Whoever follows their example is free, free from false judges, free from false thinkers; he enters into the impregnable citadel; his thought, set free

³¹ Acts, 4:19-20.

from cringing terrors, is subtracted from the empire of death; it provides a refuge from slavery for all whom it is able to persuade.

But there are two things to be noted.

In the first place, this act of liberty which the Apostles made towards the powers of Earth is at the same time a great homage of submission towards God, and they were so strong against the world only because they were obedient to God.

In a discourse held at Malines,³² an eloquent discourse, greatly celebrated among the Liberal Catholics, liberty of conscience was traced back to this first and famous *non possumus*, it was said to have been created and promulgated then. But, quite the contrary, according to the remark of an English publicist,³³ it was that day, it was by that very *non possumus*, that the human conscience recognized and accepted the curb of an unchangeable law. It was not a principle of *liberal* liberty to which St. Peter gave utterance: he proclaimed the imperishable, irrevocable duty imposed by God who made it a matter of obligation to preach His Revelation. He did not announce to the world the liberal emancipation of conscience: on the contrary, he put upon conscience the glorious burden of giving testimony to the truth; he did not emancipate men from God. Saint Peter could, on God's behalf, demand of the pagans liberty for the Christians; he did not give nor did he dream of giving the Christians the license to put error on the same footing as truth, with the understanding that they were one day to treat both as equals, or that truth should ever come to acknowledge error as supreme by divine right in such and such a domain, provided truth on its part were left supreme or tolerated in some other domain. For how could such a humiliated and hobbled truth reply effectively to the countless sophisms of error?

In the second place, the Church alone has the mission to teach this truth that sets free, this unique truth, and she brings conviction of it only to souls that are full of Jesus Christ.

Wherever Jesus Christ is unknown, man obeys man and obeys him absolutely. Wherever the knowledge of Jesus Christ is obliterated, truth declines, liberty goes into eclipse, the old tyranny comes back and retrieves its former frontiers. When the Church is no longer able to teach Jesus Christ, whole and entire, when the people no longer understand that we must obey God rather than men, when no voice is

³² Discourse of Montalembert to the *General Assembly of the Catholics of Belgium* in 1863. In it the great orator spoke on two particularly burning subjects: the growing progress of democracy and the relations of Church and State.

³³ *The Relations of Christianity with Civil Society*, by Edward Lucas, discourse delivered before the Catholic Academy of London and published by Archbishop Manning. (*Note of L. Veuillot.*)

raised any more to confess the truth, without disguising it or paring it down, then indeed will liberty have vanished from the Earth and human history be at an end.

XXII

Nevertheless, so long as one single man of perfect faith remains, he will be free from the universal yoke, and he will hold in his hands his own destiny and that of the world. The world will then exist solely for the sanctification of that one last man. And were that last man to apostatize, too, were he, likewise, to say to Antichrist, not that he was right in persecuting the Church, but simply that he was justified in withholding the use of his power to enable God to reign through the Church, the apostate would be thereby pronouncing his own doom and that of the whole world as well. For inasmuch as the Earth no longer paid to divine truth its due of homage and adoration, God would take away from it His sun, and in default of the counterpoise of obedience and prayer, its blasphemy would cease to mount heavenward, it would perish instantly. Of its own accord it would drop back into the abyss.

But the last word of the Church militant will not be one of apostasy. I picture to myself the last Christian standing before the supreme Antichrist, at the end of those terrible days, when the insolence of man will stupidly rejoice at having seen the stars fall from Heaven. They will drag him in bound, amid the jeers of that scum of Cain and Judas which will still go by the name of the human race — and it will, in fact, still be the human race, the human race arrived at the zenith of science, sunk to the nadir of moral degradation.

The angels will salute the only star that has not fallen, and Antichrist will gaze upon the only man alive who refuses to adore the lie and say that Evil is Good. He will still hope to seduce him; he will ask this Christian how he wishes to be treated. What think you that Christian will answer, and what other answer can he make except: "Like a king"? Last of the faithful, last priest, it is he who is indeed King. His is all the heritage of Abraham, his all the heritage of the Christ. In his shackled hands, he holds the keys to unlock eternal life; he can confer baptism, he can give absolution, he can administer the Eucharist; the one he faces can give nothing but death. He is King! And I defy even Antichrist, for all his power, to treat him otherwise than as king, because in fine the very dungeon is for him an empire and the gibbet itself a throne.

To whoever asks them the same question, Catholics should give that same answer. Modern liberalism wants the Church's children to confer

consecration on its unhallowed self and so it speaks to them as the Saracen king spoke to Louis of France: "If you wish your life spared, make me a knight."

The saintly prisoner replied: "Make yourself a Christian."

XXIII

Two powers are at war in our modern world: the Revelation and the Revolution. These powers are incompatible with each other, that is what the whole thing comes to.

The war between them has given rise to three parties:

(1) The party of Revelation, or the party of Christianity. The Catholic party is its head, so high above current ignorances and meannesses, that it might well seem to have no body at all; but, in spite of that, this body, often well-nigh invisible, does exist and is in reality the most powerful one on Earth, because, regardless of number, it alone possesses in very truth that unique superhuman force which is called the Faith.

(2) The Revolutionary party: the schools termed liberal are nothing but protean masks and the term itself is elastic and dishonest.

(3) The Third Party: it professes to take the other two in hand and force them to compose their differences.

The Third Party terms itself Eclecticism, but it is really Confusionism, that is to say, Futilitarianism.

By the very fact that the Third Party espouses the Revolution, it denies Christianity, of which the Revolution is the absolute contradiction and the precise negation. By the very fact that the Catholic party is the affirmation of Christian truth, it denies the Revolution, which is the antichristian lie; it denies both Liberalism and Eclecticism, which are, in most cases, nothing but the glossing over of that lie and, in a few cases, the upshot of being duped by its hoaxes. The Catholic party rejects them all. We reject them as our fathers rejected idolatry, heresy and schism; we reject them, even if we have to perish for it. We do so knowing that even if we do perish in this conflict, we shall not be defeated.

It is under the banner of the Third Party, under the auspices of its confusion and futility, that liberal Catholicism announces its would-be conciliatory compromises, which meet with a bad reception from both sides, being frequently repulsed with positive derision. The Catholics, who have their dogmatic conception and their historical practice of

liberty, will have nothing to do with its schemes, complicated and cock-eyed as they are on no end of counts; the revolutionaries, the liberals and the eclectics, who pretend to share their Christianity, remand the Third Party to their own Church, whose yoke they have not altogether shaken off. They remind the latter that their Church does not allow such fraternization, that she even warns them to be on their guard against it. They give them to understand that the Church of the latter is not theirs; that into theirs no Christians may enter except by the gate of outright apostasy.

XXIV

It is a sad thing to see deserving men, men who have done great things, striving might and main to disseminate among Catholics doctrines that the faithful reject as hostile to the rights and dignity of the Church, when all the while the adversaries and enemies of the Church consistently snub them as being still too much imbued with the Christian spirit. Their formulas, inspired by the spirit of compromise that effaces all boundary-lines, meet everywhere with the same rebuff. They speak of the independence of the Church: that word alone is too much for the revolutionaries, and these enjoin upon them to strike it out; and when they speak, at the same time, from another angle, of the independence of the State, the Catholics notice that under cover of this word, by the very force of facts, they subordinate the Church to the civil power and make the material existence of Christianity dependent upon the benevolence of its enemies who, under all circumstances, show themselves not only indifferent to it but hostile, not only hostile but furious. It is always a question of reconciling the irreconcilable, of obtaining for the Church a favor that those in power are unwilling to grant, of making favors to the Church depend upon conditions that she cannot possibly accept. No wealth of eloquence can hide for long this depth of incurable misery, no words in any language have elasticity enough to harmonize or hold together such contradictions: *Free co-operation, reciprocal independence of the two powers*, and so forth. What is the meaning of that high-sounding cant? What follows practically from the "free co-operation" of the soul and the body, from the "reciprocal independence" of the material and the spiritual?

There are other phrases which are still more unfortunate, in that they have an import far more clear. The proposal made to the Church to relinquish all *privilege* is one of these sayings that do open violence to Catholic sentiment.

In point of fact, the Church has a Divine constitution, she lives by her own right, and not by virtue of privilege. Who, then, could possibly grant her a privilege that does not already belong to her from the very nature of things? The State? If so, then civil society is superior to religious society and has the power to take back from the latter whatever it has condescendingly granted.³⁴ History, in accord with Christian good sense, condemns the false view embalmed in this language. The Church was not made by the State; it was she, on the contrary, that made the State and society; and neither the State nor society ever granted any privileges to the Church; they recognized in her a status antedating their own existence, a right that did not in any sense emanate from them and which they could not modify except by way of an abuse against which the public interest obliged her to protest.

We cannot chime in with the revolutionary ignorance or ingratitude which is at pains to hide this fact. We know that the Church became great in spite of pagan power, that she changed the face of the world, that she is, in a word, the mother and the founder of Christian States and that the superiority of European civilization is the result of her principles and will forever be dependent thereon. We know, too, that the Church could not have accomplished this sublime work, could not have defended it and could not have continued it, were it not for this constitution of hers given her by God, so that she might function in the world in her twofold capacity of Mother and Queen, mistress of the human race alike through her love, through her light and through her authority. And we of to-day dare to characterize the already much too restricted expressions of her maternal and royal supremacy by the ignoble designation of *privileges*, of human concessions that she ought, after all, to renounce!

The Church, at any rate, has far more right to renounce them than has society to abolish them, for society cannot be under any misapprehension as to where they came from and what purpose they are intended to serve. In the presence of the unbelieving or the heretical State, she may forego for a time the exercise of her Divine prerogative; she cannot proclaim that she has renounced it, that she repudiates as evil and superfluous what has been not only conferred, but imposed by God for the good of the world. When the Church concludes a concordat, she does not conduct herself as a subordinate, but as a superior; it is she

³⁴ Elsewhere (*Univers*, Dec. 2, 1851) L. Veillot has well said: "The rôle of the Church in this world is not to die for governments, but to live in peace with them and to survive them, helping them to lead their peoples and exhorting them to procure their salvation."

who grants; she does not receive privileges, she accords them. She accords them with regret, for though she thereby wards off a greater evil, experience proves only too well that concessions of this sort are not at all conducive to the common good, that nothing which tends to weaken the Christian sentiment can possibly redound to the advantage of anybody.

The argument against principles that liberalism seeks to draw from these concessions is unworthy of the reasoning powers of a Christian. In the first place, the Church makes no concession at all on the matter of principles, she signs no treaties in which she does not make reservations as to these. In the second place, being exposed to the blows inflicted by brute force and having no weapons of her own beyond her patience, the Church, according to the profound observation of Joseph de Maistre, “does not refuse to the sovereignty which insists upon it anything that is not bound to create difficulties.”

XXV

The doctors of Catholic liberalism flatter themselves that they explain the famous slogan: “The Church free, in a free State,” in saying that by this they mean “the freedom of the Church founded upon the public liberties.”

That was not the way our forefathers looked at the matter. In promoting the liberties of the Church, as Cardinal Wiseman observes, they believed themselves to be promoting the progress of civil liberties; there is scarcely a charter that does not base its system of emancipation upon the liberty of the Church and the unlimited exercise of her rights. Are we to invert the ancient order of things, and instead of grounding these public liberties upon the Christian social order, make political liberty the foundation of religious liberty? That would be to base the unchangeable upon the changeable. Let us be on our guard against accustoming a whole generation to tolerate ambiguity in matters of vital importance. By praising so extravagantly the fairness with which our enemies are minded to apply certain untenable principles, we are giving our youth anything but the right preparation to fight the good fight and to face persecution.

The contention that the Church can only be free in the bosom of general liberty is ambiguous. But what else can it be intended to convey except that the Church’s liberty depends upon extrinsic causes? And yet the Christian society, existing as it does by the Divine will, and having for its head Jesus Christ, who has guaranteed it an imperishable

duration, must of necessity be free by virtue of its very nature or essence; and this liberty it imparts to every society on which it exerts influence, permeating the latter with its own spirit, like leaven in dough, like the soul in the body.

It is inconceivable that slavery could exist in any society where the Church is truly free; while a society that allows the Church to be bound, will, however free it may appear to be, live to see itself bound hand and foot and, though libertine, will not be really at liberty. The police license many things that responsible liberty would forbid, or rather, refrain from doing, but the licenses given by the police should not be confounded with liberty; they are not and never will be liberty. In a society which restricts the liberty of the Church, the individual will, perhaps, be free to do whatever he wants with his body, and will want to do with it, we may be sure, nothing good; but he will no longer be able to call his soul his own, and presently not even charge of his body will be left to him.

To say that the Church cannot be free, except in the bosom of general liberty, is the same as saying that she cannot be free except on condition of seeing arrayed against her full liberty to give her the lie and to attack her with all the legalized weapons and tactics of offense that such an order of things would put in the hands of her enemies. And inasmuch as it is urged upon her, over and above all this, to relinquish her “privileges” — without which there would have been no such thing as general liberty at all — it follows that she would thus lose the power to impose upon men that interior restraint by virtue of which they become fit for liberty and feel themselves worthy of it. After that, as night follows day, political restraint will increase, and soon the evil hour will be at hand when society shall hear Caesar, with the consent of the “general liberty,” declare himself once more pontiff and god: *Divus Caesar, imperator et summus pontifex* — “Divine Caesar, Emperor and Supreme Pontiff.”

And thus, thanks to the “general liberty” and its invariable corollary, the “suppression of privilege,” religion will come to occupy an even lower position in the world than the one it holds at present.

XXVI

Such is the affinity of one error for another and so inevitable is the drift of particular errors towards the general error, that we see liberal Catholicism, for all its truculent pose of independence, tend spontaneously towards Caesarism just as the Revolution did. And it is in

the name of liberty of conscience that men are verging toward this wholesale subjugation of the human conscience! The principles of Christianity must be brought into conformity with those of modern society; modern society demands this, so there is nothing left for us but to fall into line, to accept all its conditions, to do away with whatever displeases it, to protest against any return to the ideas it no longer likes. But what of those who find modern society to be in the wrong; who think that this capricious, not to say fantastic, personage puts forward sinful and insufferable pretensions? . . . Such persons, be their dignity or their number what it may, will have to knuckle down, to disappear from a world whom their presence annoys. Liberal society, emancipated humanity does not propose to put up with their opposition any longer. The thing to do is to rush pell-mell into that unity in reverse with which Liberalism fondly hopes to frustrate the realization of the unity the Divine Shepherd desires; the thing to do is to accept the unity of Hell, which proposes to place the flock exclusively under the pastoral crook of Caesar! Evidently, the doctors of liberal Catholicism, following the lead of the other doctors of the Revolution, entertain the notion that one and the same mode of life can and should be set up in all European States. As for the differences of race, of religions and political traditions that will have to be demolished and razed in order to bring about such a standardization, they give no thought to them whatever; modern society demands this sacrifice, shall liberty of conscience refuse to make it? Isn't it imperative to go with the stream, to keep in step with "modern society," to save the liberty of perdition?

XXVII

As I pen these lines, the newspapers report the message of Pius IX. His words are fraught at once with sadness, with light and with firmness, and they have a bearing on the subject of my reflections. I interrupt my writing to listen with the respect and love we owe to the Father of Christians.

The Holy Father says that he deplores and condemns the usurpations, the increasing immorality, the hatred towards religion and the Church. He adds this solemn warning:

But even in deploring and condemning, I do not forget the words of Him whose representative on Earth I am, and who, in the garden of His agony and on the Cross of His sufferings, raised towards Heaven His dying eyes and said: Father, forgive

them, for they know not what they do! I, too, in the face of the enemies of the Holy See and of the Catholic doctrine itself, repeat: Father, forgive them, for they know not . . .

There are two classes of men opposed to the Church. The first comprises certain Catholics who respect her and love her, but who criticize whatever emanates from her. They would fain, as one Catholic thinker remarks, reform all the canons of the Church from the Council of Nicaea up to the Council of Trent. From the decree of Pope Gelasius on the Sacred Books up to the bull defining the Immaculate Conception, they find it needful to revamp everything, to revise everything. They are Catholics, they claim to be our friends, but they forget the respect they owe to the authority of the Church. If they do not take care, if they do not come back promptly to their own side, I fear that they will lose their footing on that inclined plane and plunge into the abyss into which the second class of our adversaries have already fallen.

The latter are the more outspoken and the more dangerous. They consist of philosophers, of all those who desire to attain truth and justice with no other resource than their own unaided reason. But they only succeed in verifying of themselves what the Apostle of the gentiles, St. Paul, said eighteen centuries ago: Ever learning and never attaining to the knowledge of the truth. They search and search, and though the truth seems ever to elude them, they are always hoping to find it and to announce to us a new era wherein the human mind will by itself dissipate all darkness.

Pray for these misguided men, you who do not share their errors. You are indeed the disciples of Him who said: I am the way, the truth and the life. You know, too, that the world has not been called to interpret His Divine word, that it does not belong to the philosophers to explain His doctrine, but only to His ministers to whom He gave the mission to teach in saying to them: He that heareth you, heareth me; when you speak to men, it is My voice that they will hear.”³⁵

XXVIII

It would be no use to go on with these remarks, unless we paused to consider that vague monster which people call “modern society,” to inquire whether it really demands all it is said to demand, and whether

³⁵ Reply of the Holy Father to the address of the faithful of different nations gathered at Rome, the 17th of March, 1866. (*Note of L. Veujilot.*)

its material force, quite a different thing from its intellectual force, is so considerable and preponderant as it is made out to be. Good grounds, grounds of fact are not wanting on which to contest the depth of this torrent, for all its noise and violence. We know quite well, we fully understand that it threatens to sweep away the Church and all who dare to defend her integrity. For my part, however, I am inclined to believe that modern society, both in France and in other countries, still contains a sound core of Catholicity, perfect and pure, and that Europe, underneath a layer that has perhaps more of froth to it than solidity, is by no means disposed to abandon Christianity. To me it is incredible that the political, literary, and artistic groups, by whom dethronement of Christ and His law has been decreed, are more deeply rooted in the soil of France and more representative of the national genius than our numerous and glorious clergy, those countless enterprises of charity, that generous and inexhaustible zeal which covers the land with its benefits and memorials. To offset this the scandalous success of a book or of an anti-Christian journal may be urged by way of objection: this success is without doubt deplorable; yet it falls short of being an unanswerable argument. In the years 1864 and 1865, more churches were built in France than there were editions published of the blasphemous books of M. Renan:³⁶ the churches still send up their spires crowned by the cross; the work of the blasphemer has fallen down for good, trampled in the dust under the heedless feet of the faithful. And who in the world has any doubt as to which would cause the greater commotion, the suppression, for instance, of the *Siècle*, or the imprisonment for a religious act of the bishop in whose diocese the *Siècle* has the largest number of readers!

At the beginning of the present century, Joseph de Maistre wrote: "There is in the natural government and in the national ideas of the French people I know not what theocratic and religious element that is forever cropping up."

But I do not care to insist on this point, which is of no consequence so far as the duty of Catholics is concerned. Let us assume that things have come to the worst; let us credit the irreligious torrent with all the power it boasts of having, and grant that its might is capable of sweeping us away: All right, the torrent will sweep us away! That is a small matter, so long as it does not sweep away the truth. We shall be swept away and we shall leave the truth behind, just as those have done who were swept away before us. Despite the torrent, we will hold fast to the truth; come what may, we will cling to this truth which is always

³⁶ Renan's *La Vie de Jésus* ("The Life of Jesus") which appeared in 1863.

new. We came to this land that is called arid. We have known its youth and its fertility. If only our works avail to disseminate the fructifying salt and to augment that grain of sand which sets a limit to the sea; as our fathers preserved this refuge, we, too, will preserve it for generations yet unborn. The world either has a future or it has none. If the end of time is close at hand, then there is nothing left for us but to build for eternity; if long centuries lie ahead, then, in building for eternity, we shall also be building for the time. In the face of fire and sword, in the face of contempt and humiliation, let us be brave witnesses of God's own truth, and our testimony will stand. There is a vegetation that sprouts up unconquerably under the hand of the Heavenly Father. Wherever the seed is planted, a tree strikes root; wherever the martyr has left a bone of his body, there a church springs up. Thus are formed the obstacles that divide and dam up torrents. In these days of sterility, at a distance of fifteen centuries, we still live on the store of grain accumulated in the catacombs.

XXIX

The revolutionary sphinx, under the name of the modern mind, propounds a series of riddles with which the liberal Catholics occupy themselves a great deal more than befits the dignity of children of Christ. Not one of them, however, answers the riddle in a way calculated to satisfy either the sphinx, or themselves, or anybody else, and it is a matter of record, that the monster devours soonest just those who flatter themselves on having guessed its meaning best.

Scant is the self-respect and scant the faith that remains in these last! They come, not without arrogance, to ask, in the name of the sphinx and in their own name, how "intolerant" Catholics can get around the "conquests" of the dissenting mind with its rights of man, its liberty of religions, its constitutions grounded on these principles, etc., etc. Nothing could be easier to answer.

To begin with, the dissenting mind invariably starts off with an unwarranted assumption of its own superiority, which we flatly refuse to recognize. Error is never the equal, much less the superior, of truth, neither can it hope to overawe truth, or ever to prevail legitimately against it, and, by consequence, the disciples of error, infidels, unbelievers, atheists, renegades and the like, are never the superiors nor even the legitimate equals of the disciples of Jesus Christ, the one true God. From the standpoint of unalterable right, the perfect society that constitutes the Church of Christ is by no means on a level with the gang that collects around error. We know right well to whom it has been said: *Going therefore, teach* — a word, we may remark in passing, like

the great *Increase and multiply*, which was spoken at the beginning of things; and these two words are living words despite the ruses and triumphs of death — error has nothing to teach by divine right, neither has it the divine right to increase and multiply. Truth is at liberty to tolerate error, but error is obliged to grant to truth the right of liberty.

In the second place, now that the partisans of error have gotten the upper hand and have enthroned in the world certain sham principles that are the negation of truth and therefore the destruction of order, we leave to them these false principles until they swallow them and die of them, while we hang on to our truths by which we live.

In the third place, when the time comes and men realize that the social edifice must be rebuilt according to eternal standards, be it tomorrow, or be it centuries from now, the Catholics will arrange things to suit said standards. Undeterred by those who prefer to abide in death, they will re-establish certain laws of life. They will restore Jesus to His place on high, and He shall be no longer insulted. They will raise their children to know God and to honor their parents. They will uphold the indissolubility of marriage, and if this fails to meet with the approval of the dissenters, it will not fail to meet with the approval of their children. They will make obligatory the religious observance of Sunday on behalf of the whole of society and for its own good, revoking the permit for free-thinkers and Jews to celebrate, incognito, Monday or Saturday on their own account. Those whom this may annoy will have to put up with the annoyance. Respect will not be refused to the Creator nor repose denied to the creature simply for the sake of humoring certain maniacs, whose frenetic condition causes them stupidly and insolently to block the will of a whole people. However, like our own, their houses will be all the more solid and their fields all the more fertile on that account.

In a word, Catholic society will be Catholic, and the dissenters whom it will tolerate will know its charity, but they will not be allowed to disrupt its unity.

This is the answer that Catholics can, on their part, make to the sphinx; and these are the words that will kill it outright. The sphinx is not invulnerable; against it we have just what is required in the way of weapons. The Archangel did not overcome the Rebel with material weapons, but with this word: *Who is like unto God!* And Satan fell, struck as by a bolt of lightning.

XXX

To sum up, the liberal Catholic party accepts the separation of civil society from the society of Jesus Christ. The separation of the two is in their eyes a good thing and they desire it to be definitive. They believe that as a result the Church will gain peace, and, eventually, even a great triumph. Nevertheless, the prospects of triumph are mentioned to the “intolerant” Catholics alone, and to the latter only in undertones. Let us stick to the peace: can we hope for such a result?

For one thing, this liberal church, a church altogether “of its time,” in order to clear itself of all reasonable suspicion of being obedient to Rome, will have to stop irritating or frightening those generous souls who are resolved, come what may, to cauterize “the Pontifical cancer.” After that, seeing that the Catholics would have thus become indistinguishable from the rest of the world, why should they not enjoy the benefit of contempt! They will be despised, they will live in peace; they can attend to their religion just as they attend to their other affairs: the *Siècle* will have no more occasion to hurl the epithet “clerical” at the parishioner of St. Sulpice than it would at the emancipated sheep of Pastor Coquerel.³⁷

To be nothing, utterly nothing in order to live at peace with all the world, such a hope might seem to be rather modest! Nevertheless, it is hoping too much. Even were the liberal Catholics to succeed, either by way of seduction or by way of pressure, in suppressing the integral Catholics, I assure them that they will never live to see themselves despised so much as they aspire to be. A few considerations will serve to convince them of the solid reasons for this prediction, and to make them appreciate for themselves the illusion they have come to entertain.

I simply pass over the mad and unheard-of notion of creating an atheistic government, in the absence of atheists from the very society that said government is supposed to conduct. I say nothing either about the hardihood of attempting so completely to alienate peoples from the equity, the meekness and venerableness of the scepter, as Christianly conceived, that such rulers as sainted kings should never be seen again. I waive the disdain certain teachers show for the lessons of history and religion which condemn governmental indifference to good and evil and prove such an attitude to be absolutely preposterous. The illusion of the

³⁷ Of the three Pastors Coquerel, who made quite a stir under the Empire, the one of whom Louis Veuillot speaks here is evidently Athanasius Coquerel, who in consequence of a defense of the *Vie de Jésus* was dismissed with much ado by the Protestant Consistory in 1864.

liberal Catholics goes further than that. It has the power not only to falsify history, the Bible and religion, to discolor with its false hues human nature itself; it even deprives its victims of their appreciation of the present as it likewise strips them of their knowledge of the past and their foresight of the future. They cease to see what really happens, they no longer hear what is actually said, they no longer know what they themselves have done; they misread their own hearts as they misread everything else.

XXXI

If there is one thing evident, it is that the non-Christian liberals, who are one-hundred-percent revolutionary, have no more use for the liberal Catholics than they have for the other Catholics. They expressly say so, they chant it at all times and in all keys; on this subject the *Siècle* has made repeated declarations, which leave nothing to the imagination and which certainly do not suffer from any lack of echoes.

More Christianity? Would that there were no more question of it at all! That is the Revolution's cry wherever it is in power. And where in Europe is it not in power? Not a single revolutionary has protested against the ferocious howls of Garibaldi, against the more coldly murderous demands of M. Quinet, urging that Catholicism be "smothered in the mud," against the moronic impiety of those blind partisans who form associations pledged to refuse the sacraments. To date, on the other hand, no revolutionary nabob has been converted by the platforms, the advances, the tendernesses, and, alas! it has to be confessed, the cringings of the liberal Catholics. In vain have they disowned their brothers, despised the Bulls, explained away or repudiated the encyclicals: the lengths to which they have gone have won for them patronizing compliments, humiliating encouragements, but no alliances. Up to the present the liberal chapel lacks a gate of entrance, and seems to be nothing more than a gate of exit from the great Church. The eruption of hate still continues in the non-Christian liberal camp: it ignites in the midst of the world a conflagration of fury not only against the Church, but against the very idea of God. The heads of parties that govern contemporary Europe all vie with one another in an effort to break off all union between man and God. Among the schismatics, among the heretics, and lastly among the infidels, however slight the contact they have with civilization, everywhere the Church is being despoiled. The Moslem State seizes upon the goods of the mosques, as the Christian State in its turn confiscates ecclesiastical

property; the one thing necessary is that God should not, under any name, under any title, possess a square foot of what He has created. That is the world in which the liberal Catholics expect to find defenders, upright and staunch guardians of Catholic liberty!

XXXII

This is not what their own experience should lead them to expect. We are in a position to speak of that experience; we went through it, too, in the same endeavor and with the same sentiments.

The experience was prolonged; the time seemed as favorable as the present day seems unfavorable. Though we were few in number, our unity made us strong. The constitution then in force made it obligatory to reckon with us; it afforded us certain advantages for which we were grateful, it made us certain promises that we wanted to believe and which were of more concern to us than what it withheld. Who were so desirous as we that the Charter should turn out to be true, who else gave it greater support, who else entertained more sincere and ardent hopes on the strength of it? Though upholding our principles against the revolutionary doctrine, what in point of fact did we reject? What more did we demand than the simple right to oppose liberty with liberty?

We did not form an isolated or unimportant party. We had at our head the princes of the Church, one especially who was as eminent for his character and talent as he was for his position: it was Bishop de Langres, who died as head of the see of Arras, beloved of God and honored of men. Mgr. Parisis studied the question of bringing religion and liberty into accord, with less of an eye to seeing what the Church should retain than what concessions it could make. One draft that met with his approval thus summarizes the platform of the Catholic party: The Catholics have said "to the princes, to the doctors and to the priests of modern ideas: We accept your dynasties and your charters; we leave to you whatever you have won. We ask of you only one thing, which is of strict right, even in your eyes: liberty. We will contend with you and convince you on the sole ground of liberty. Cease to subject us to your monopolies, your restraints and your prohibitions; allow us to teach as freely as you do; to form associations for the works of God as freely as you form them for the works of the world; to open up careers for the whole range of beautiful labors, about which all you seem able to do is to impose restrictions or to drive hard bargains. And don't be afraid of

our liberty: it will heal and save yours. Wherever we are not free, no one else is for very long.”³⁸

That is what we demanded. And, without wishing unduly to praise or disparage anyone, our adversaries of that day were more serious, more sincere, more enlightened, more moderate than our adversaries of today. They were the Guizots, the Thiers, the Cousins, the Villemains, the Broglies, the Salvandys, and their leader, King Louis-Philippe. None of these heads of the directorate had any of that irreligious and antichristian fanaticism we have seen so much of since then. Their subsequent attitude gave honorable proof of this. Moreover, they honestly believed in liberty, at least, they had the will to believe.

What did we obtain from their wisdom, their moderation, their sincerity? Alas! the computation is as easy to make as it is painful to tell: we obtained nothing, absolutely nothing, the result that the mathematicians call zero.

A catastrophe occurred; fear proved a more efficacious motive than reason, justice and the Charter. Under the influence of fear, they made some small concessions to us, but with the ill-disguised design of curtailing or abolishing these paltry advantages at the earliest opportunity! The storm blew over. Those of our adversaries who were toppled over by it showed no conspicuous signs of having been chastened by the experience; those who managed to weather it seemed unable to forgive themselves for having been intimidated by the thunder; in general, they all showed themselves more hostile than one would ever have imagined.

Did we ourselves, then, change and take away from the modern ideals the allegiance and practical support we formerly gave them? The liberal Catholics claim as much, but they gratuitously deceive themselves. We said it then, we repeat it now, that the philosophical groundwork of modern constitutions is ruinous, that it exposes society to deadly perils. We have never said that one could or should resort to violence in order to change this groundwork, nor that one should not avail himself of what is guaranteed by these constitutions in cases where it does not conflict with the laws of God. It is a question of a fact wholly independent of our own volition, a state of things in which we find ourselves, in certain respects, like strangers in a foreign land, conforming to the general laws regulating public life, making use of the general rights of the community, but never entering the temples to offer incense. The author of these pages, if it be in order for him to cite his own case as an illustration, has long made use of the freedom of the

³⁸ Author's note on Mgr. Parisis.

press and still insists on enjoying it, without, however, committing himself thereby, or ever having committed himself, to the belief that freedom of the press is an unqualified good. In short, with reference to modern constitutions, we conduct ourselves in much the same way that a person does with reference to taxes: we pay the taxes while demanding that they be reduced, we obey the constitutions while demanding that they undergo amendment. This effectively disposes of the difficulties urged against us on that score; the liberal Catholics are quite well aware of it.

To expect more of us is to expect too much; if we are supposed to pay taxes without ever being allowed to complain of their being too heavy; if we are supposed to transfer to modern civil constitutions our religious faith, so that we may not question their excellence without running afoul of what are virtually dogmatic definitions; if we are not allowed to look forward to any amendment of them except in the form of a yet more drastic elimination of the whole Christian idea, then what sort of liberty have we in prospect, and what advantage can liberal Catholics expect to reap from that liberty, which will be meted out to them in the same measure as to us?

They willingly swear by the principles of the French Revolution; they call them the immortal principles. It is the shibboleth³⁹ which gives entrance to the camp of great Liberalism. But there is a special manner of pronouncing it, and our Catholics are not quite equal to it; hence, in spite of everything, they are coldly received; even the more progressive among them are kept in quarantine.⁴⁰ I congratulate them on it. In

³⁹ Judges, 12:6.

⁴⁰ Said Louis Cardinal Billot, commenting on this paragraph of Veillot's *L'illusion libérale*: "For our dispute is not upon the question of whether it would not be well to bear patiently what escapes our control, but of whether we ought positively to *approve* of that social condition which Liberalism introduces, to celebrate with encomiums the liberalistic principles that are at the bottom of this order of things, and by word, teaching and deed, to promote the same, as do those who along with the name Catholic lay claim to the surname Liberal. And they above all are the very ones who will never succeed at all, because they are lame on both feet, and attempting in vain to hit on some compromise, they are neither acknowledged by the children of God as genuine nor accepted by the children of the Revolution as sincere. They come, indeed, to the camp of the latter with the password of the principles of '89, but, because they pronounce it badly, they are denied entrance.

"We read in the Book of Judges (12:5-6) that when the 'Galaadites, in

order to have the proper accent, one must first have the proper understanding of the thing itself and accept it in its proper sense.

If they once understood the thing, they would never, I venture to say, accept it.

XXXIII

To what do such designations as the “principles” or the “conquests” or the “ideas” of the French Revolution refer? These are three different names already giving expression to as many shades of opinion, or better still, to as many different doctrines on the subject, and there are quite a few others besides. Such and such a Catholic liberal is at pains to draw a distinction between the *principles* and the *conquests*, another accepts both the *conquests* and the *principles*, a third rejects the conquests and principles alike, and admits only the *ideas*.

As for the pure liberals, that is to say, liberals without any admixture of Christianity, they detest these distinctions, which they invidiously brand as “Jesuitical.” Ideas, principles, conquests, all are articles of faith, dogmas, and lumped together they constitute a creed. But nobody ever recites this creed, and if anyone has written it out whole and entire for his private edification, one may safely defy him to reformulate it

their conflict with the Ephraimites, had overcome the latter, they conspired to let no fugitive of Ephraim escape. And the Galaadites secured the fords of the Jordan. And when one of the number of Ephraim came thither in flight, and said: I beseech you, let me pass: the Galaadites said to him: Art thou not an Ephraimite? If he said, I am not: they asked him: Say then, *Shibboleth*, which is interpreted, an ear of corn. But he answered: *Sibboleth*, not being able to express an ear of corn by the same letter. Then presently they took and killed him in the very passage of the Jordan.’ And thus, too, it happens at the gate of entrance to the camp of Liberalism. To those who desire to enter it is said: Say then, *Shibboleth*, which is interpreted the *secularization of society*. It is all-important, however, whether their pronunciation is good or bad. Now, liberal Catholics suffer from a defect of the tongue in this respect, and they are unable to enunciate the sacramental word in the proper manner. Hence, they are not admitted, and they have merit neither with God nor with men because they verify in themselves the dualism whereof the Scripture speaks: ‘One building up and one pulling down, what profit hath he but labor? One praying and one cursing, whose voice will God hear?’ (*Ecclesiasticus*, 34:28-29).” (From the appendix of Cardinal Billot’s *De Ecclesia*.)

without making any alteration, above all one is safe in defying him to find a single one of his brethren in 1789 that did not propose certain suppressions and additions.

Nothing could be more tiresome or fruitless than a voyage of exploration into the principles of the French Revolution. One finds there an abundance of empty verbiage, of banalities and meaningless phrases. M. Cousin, who undertook the task of throwing light on the mysteries bearing the *redoubtable* and *hallowed* name of the principles of the French Revolution, reduces them to three: "National sovereignty — the emancipation of the individual, *or* justice — the progressive diminution of ignorance, misery and vice, *or* civil charity." Tocqueville does not contradict M. Cousin; he merely proceeds to demonstrate, without the slightest trouble, that the Revolution did not originate any of these nor any other good or acceptable thing conventionally credited to it. All of it existed better, in a mature form, in the old French constitution, and the development thereof would have been more general and solid, had the Revolution not put its hand, or rather its knife, to the task.

Before 1789, France believed herself to be a sovereign nation, and, long before that, one catches glimpses of equality before the law as the natural consequence of the still more ancient practice of equality before God. Charity gave proof of its existence in the enormous number of charitable institutions and congregations; public education was more liberal, sound and widespread than it is today.⁴¹ It is certain, too, that the Catholic religion has never had the name of being an enemy of courts of law, of hospitals, or of colleges. When we fought against the monopolistic university, it was in order to open schools and to found universities; when we fought for the liberty of doing works of religious zeal, it was in order that no unfortunate might be left to suffer; we never asked that any right be violated, nor that a single crime should go unpunished out of consideration for the criminal's rank.

If, then, the principles of the Revolution are what M. Cousin says they are, wherein do they clash with the Catholic faith? Liberal and non-liberal Catholics alike have consistently practiced and defended them.

XXXIV

But it is high time to uncover the secret of 1789, and to find out at what point the liberal Catholic faith will have to cease and become either revolutionary or Catholic. There exists one principle of 1789 which is the Revolutionary principle *par excellence*. No one is a

⁴¹ Report of M. de Salvandy, Minister of Public Instruction. (*Note of L. Veillot.*)

revolutionary until the moment that he admits it; no one ceases to be a revolutionary until the moment that he abjures it; in one sense or another, it covers everything; it raises between revolutionaries and Catholics a wall of separation over which the liberal Catholic Pyramuses and the revolutionary Thisbes will never make anything pass but their fruitless sighs.

This unique principle of 1789 is what the revolutionary politeness of the Conservatives of 1830 called the *secularization* of society; it is what the revolutionary frankness of the *Siècle*, of the *Solidaires*⁴² and M. Quinet brutally calls the expulsion of the theocratic principle; it is the breaking away from the Church, from Jesus Christ, from God, from all acknowledgment, from all ingression and all appearance of the idea of God in human society.

To tell the truth, the liberal Catholic principle does not have to be pressed very much to lead that far. It arrives at this point by the same route, the same steps, the same necessities of circumstance, the same promptings of pride that brought the Protestant principle of private judgment to eventual denial of the divinity of Our Lord. The Fathers of the Reformation never set themselves the goal that their posterity has reached by now, and one may affirm that not even the boldest among them would have contemplated this without horror. But what they professed to retain of dogma as being more than sufficient to induce human reason to accept it whole and entire, their children have denied and denied, always denied; they have laid the axe to every point at which the dogmatic sap produced a legitimate, that is to say, a *Catholic*, shoot; and, finally, after laying it to the trunk and finding that the indefectible truth sprang up always the same and always cried out to them that it was necessary to become a Catholic, they have said at length: Let us pull up the last roots and cease to be Christians in order to remain Protestants!

A like fate overtook the philosophical schools of antiquity that sought to withstand Christianity; logic in reverse plunged them back into the absurdities of pagan theurgy, denying all truth, making pretense of believing every folly.

Among us, the separated philosophers go to the extreme of virtually denying morality for the sake of the bright idea of making morality independent of religion. Under Louis-Philippe, the University told us, as if speaking of something beautifully simple: "From three centuries

⁴² A labor organization in Belgium characterized by communist and antireligious tendencies; it specialized in demonstrations staged on occasion of the secular funerals of its members.

back, it has been the effort of the reason of man and of societies to *operate this scission* which the French Revolution definitively opened in our customs and in our institutions.”

Alas! that would be a tragic mistake: the human mind’s great danger is the will to be right, and, whenever it loosens the rein of obedience, this danger becomes imminent peril. *Whosoever committeth sin*, is the servant of sin.⁴³ This is as true of doctrinal sin as it is of material sin.

XXXV

Our liberal Catholics sense the danger of the doctrine of 1789, hence these distinctions by which they endeavor to parry its practical consequences, and to construct a special version of the Revolution for themselves which will make them sufficiently revolutionary while allowing them still to remain Catholics. But it is a question of reconciling good and evil — a feat beyond man’s power to accomplish.

This is why they pronounce the *shibboleth* badly, and why the Revolution does not open its doors to them. The Revolution is fairer to them than they are to themselves. It detects their Catholicity, and it does them the honor of not believing them when they try to convince it that they are no more Catholic than people outside the Church, that nothing will come of their Catholicity, and that they will play to perfection their godless part in that ideal form of government without religion and without God. . . . And who would have dreamt that M. Dupin⁴⁴ would come to unfurl the Liberal Catholic banner, after he had boasted that his regime of 1830 was a government of no religious profession!

But M. Dupin did make his profession, and the Revolution, which had no confidence in him, obstinately refuses to repose confidence in liberal Catholics. It knows what sort of applications it wants made of its own principle, it knows that Catholics will oppose it in this to their dying breath, that sooner or later they are bound to come to their senses, that they will retract and that when it comes to a showdown they will be ready to shed their blood to affirm the very thing they now make pretense to discard.

⁴³ John, 8:34.

⁴⁴ Jacques Dupin, called Dupin the Elder, was president of the Chamber under the Monarchy of July, Procurator General of the Court of Cassation under the Empire, member of the French Academy, and of the Academy of Moral Sciences, an eminent personage in the magistracy and in the State, jurisconsulte écouté . . . and a strong Gallican in questions of ecclesiastical right. This is the man that Lonis Veuillot victoriously refutes in his *Droit du Seigneur*.

The prophet Quinet rules out of liberal society everyone who has received baptism and has not formally repudiated it. This gives evidence of intelligent and accurate foresight; it shows that M. Quinet appreciates the power of baptism and is not unaware of the incompatibility existing between liberal society and the society of Jesus Christ. Hence, liberal society will put the ban on baptism, and, naturally, will do everything in its power to deprive any baptized escaper from the catacombs of an opportunity to speak to the renegades; for, should such a one succeed in speaking to them, the renegades might then and there cease to be deaf. This being so, what hope is there for the liberal Catholics? They will say that they do not understand liberty as M. Quinet understands it. We know that quite well, the whole world knows it well; but the whole world will tell them: it is as M. Quinet understands it that it ought to be understood.

XXXVI

In the face of the impossible, it is superfluous to discuss the impracticable. I do not undertake to bring home to the Liberal Catholic Church the difficulties standing in the way of its installation. If I did, I should seem to be outraging common sense; the contingencies it would necessitate foreseeing, not to mention the memories it would be sure to evoke, would cast on these pages a reflection against which the seriousness of the subject and the sincerity of the men I am opposing would alike protest. I shall mention only the divisions that would be sure to break out in these emancipated churches; the conflicts that would have to be gone through at once and ever after with the dissenters, who would pay no more attention to excommunications than the Government itself, and who would present petitions to have the religious edifices turned over to themselves. Soon it would become necessary to ask the State, as the Protestants had to do, for a civil constitution, which would promptly set up a pontiff and regulations of faith. Then watch the organic articles begin to multiply! Consider only what is happening to-day in Switzerland, where the worthy and saintly Bishop of Basel, persecuted by the Government, is yet more grievously persecuted by a party of his own people, who are all worked up to teach him tolerance.⁴⁵ There we have liberal Catholicism in action. Certainly,

⁴⁵ Bishop Eugene Lachat, of the Congregation of the Precious Blood, Bishop of Basel from September 28, 1868, a learned theologian, whom the Protestants and radicals had already persecuted, and who, even after the

this is the acme of all that is most odious, revolting and ridiculous. But in the liberal system, what remedy is there for such a situation? Either the State, true to its own rôle, will not interest itself in the merits of the quarrel, and the bishop will have either to compromise or get out, while the faithful people fall victims to the oppression of a factious minority; or else the State will intervene, such being its good pleasure, and it will lay down the law like a master — a hostile master at that. Here, then, you have a pontiff not only secular, but heretical, but atheistic. . . I leave it to the reader's judgment whether such an outcome would be long deferred among us.

I will readily admit that liberal Catholicism is an error of the rich. It could never occur to a man who had lived among the people and had seen the difficulties with which the truth has to contend, especially to-day, as it seeks to reach down and hold its own on levels where it stands in crying need of every available protection, but most especially of good example in high places. The people instinctively associate an idea of intellectual superiority with rank, with power, with command. The inferior will not easily allow himself to be persuaded of the necessity of being a Christian when his superior is not such. And the superior himself entertains a somewhat similar notion, for moral elevation in his inferior is distasteful to him, it irritates him and soon becomes odious in his eyes. Hence the zeal, as ardent as it is devilish and insensate, with which so many scoundrels labor in season and out of season to destroy religion in the souls of their subordinates. That the State should officially cease to practice religion, should break up public worship and desist from participating in the ceremonies, that such a thing as this should come to be rumored and remarked: that in itself already constitutes persecution, than which, perhaps, it would be hard to conceive anything more dangerous. The effects might not be immediately noticed in the cities; the rich, for a certain time, might not be aware of them at all; but out in the country it would be a shrieking and disastrous fact. I am saying nothing of the other consequences of godlessness on the part of the State. I am confining myself to the effects of example alone. Let us take into account the significance of this in a country which has been Catholic for so many centuries, and in which, for the first time, the shoulder-belt of the gendarme begins to be something more sacred to the crowd than the stole of the priest.

Council, was exiled from his diocese thanks to the agitations of the "Old Catholics." He died in 1886, Administrator Apostolic of Tessin.

XXXVII

It is only too evident that, considering the present state of the world, liberal Catholicism has no value whatever either as a doctrine or as a means of defending religion; that it is powerless to insure for the Church a peace which would bring her the least advancement or glory. It is nothing but an illusion, nothing but a piece of stubbornness — a pose. One can predict its fate. Abandoned in the near future by generous minds, to whom it may provide a certain outlet for sentiment, it will go on to merge itself with the general body of heresy. The adherents whom it drags after it may then be turned into fanatical persecutors, in keeping with the usual inconsistency of weak intellects obsessed with the false spirit of conciliation! Certain minds seem to be as susceptible to error as certain constitutions to disease. Everything that is unwholesome finds lodgment in them; they are carried away by the very first wind and ensnared by the very first sophism; they are the property, the booty, the chattels of the powers of darkness, and one may define them as antiquity defined slaves, *non tam viles quam nulli* — “not so much vile beings as nobodies.”

Let us undertake not so much to convince them as to set them an example that may save them.

In harmony with faith, reason exhorts us to unite and make ourselves strong in obedience. *To whom shall we go?* Liberals or not liberals, beset with the terrible perplexities of these troublous times, we know only one thing for a certainty: it is that no man knows anything, except the man with whom God is for aye, the man who possesses the thought of God.

It behooves us to lock arms around the Sovereign Pontiff, to follow unswervingly his inspired directions, to affirm with him the truths that alone can save our souls and the world. It behooves us to abstain from any attempt to twist his words to our own sense: “When the Sovereign Pontiff has proclaimed a pastoral decision, no one has the right to add or to suppress the smallest vowel, *non addere, non minuere*. Whatever he affirms, that is true forever.”⁴⁶ Any other course can but result in dividing us further and in fatally disrupting our unity. That is the misfortune of misfortunes. The doctrines known as liberal have riven us apart. Before their inroad, favored only too much, alas! by a spell of political bad humor, few as we were, we amounted, nevertheless, to something: we formed an unbroken phalanx. We rallied in such a phalanx whenever we chose to do so; it was no more than a pebble if

⁴⁶ Mgr. Bertreaud, Bishop of Tulle. (*Note of L. Veillot.*)

you will: that pebble had at least its compactness and its weight. Liberalism has shattered it and reduced it to so much dust. I doubt if it still holds its place: dispersal is not expansion. At all events, a hundred thousand specks of dust would not furnish ammunition for a single sling. Let us aim now at but one goal, let us work with but one mind to attain it: let us throw ourselves wholeheartedly into obedience; it will give us the cohesion of rock, and upon this rock, *hanc petram*, Truth shall plant her victorious foot.

XXXVIII

I commenced writing these pages with a sentiment of bitterness and anguish which I no longer feel as I bring them to a close. Not only is the liberal illusion empty to the very bottom, its counsels, which are those of weakness and dishonesty, disclose the ignoble mainspring of its conduct. The false pride in which it takes refuge when it ought obey does not suffice to cover up the obsequiousness with which it defers when it ought to have the backbone to resist. It will not long deceive souls that were made for true greatness. With Catholics, sincerity and nobility of soul straighten out the crookedness of the mind. If this world seems to hold out for us the prospect of a long period of inglorious combats without visible victory, together with humiliations of every sort; if we are to be laughed at, to be held up to ridicule, to be expelled from public life; if it be required of us, in this martyrdom of contempt, to stand the triumph of fools, the power of the perverse, and the conceited smugness of snobs, God, in His turn, reserves for His faithful a rôle whose fruitful splendor they will neither refuse nor misunderstand. To them He commits His truth contracted and reduced to the size of an altar candle, such as one might put in the hands of a child, and He bids them brave all this storm; for so long as their faith does not weaken, the living flame will not only not go out, it will not even flicker! The Earth may begrime us with its dust, the Ocean may spew on us its froth, we may be trampled beneath the feet of beasts let loose upon us, but we will forge on somehow over this malignant causeway of human history. The tiny light placed in our torn hands will not have perished; it shall kindle for us the fire divine.

XXXIX

What could be more inappropriate than discussions like these, in the presence of the problem that agitates the world, a problem of which it can be said that it is as vast in breadth and depth as humanity itself!

It is the existence of the Papacy that is at stake, and in this question the existence of Christianity itself is involved. In it, the whole of humanity, past, present and future, is concerned. The great question, the real question is to know whence humanity comes, what it seeks, whither it goes.

Is man the creature of God, and has God given His creature an inalterable law in the midst of the fluctuations permitted to its liberty? Has humanity been wrong in believing for eighteen centuries that Jesus Christ is the living and eternal Law-giver? Has it been wrong in believing that this God instituted a priesthood of which He is the sole, permanent and infallible head in the person of the Pope, called on this account the Vicar of Jesus Christ? Should humanity, which has heretofore believed this, cease to believe it any more? Is it to abjure Jesus Christ formally by outright denial of His divinity, or virtually by saying that His divinity was a hoax and has deceived the world, that He really did not found the Church, but left under that name nothing more than a fleeting work to which He gave none but unreliable promises, of whose failure the human mind has now become aware? Finally, what will the religious leadership of the world be, when the Pope, dragged from his throne, relegated to the sacristy, demoted into a subject of a petty king who is himself the puppet of his people and their allies; when the Vicar of Christ, impotent vicar of a God dethroned, having passed through this succession of humiliations, will no longer be bearer of any spiritual message that will not be despised as foolishness or punished as a State offense; when this sacred majesty, having been mocked by the police, will be turned by the peoples into an object of derision? And humanity? Will it any longer have a God? And if humanity is no longer to have a God, or if it may have all the gods it pleases and will never be at a loss to manufacture more, then what is to become of humanity?

These are a few, but by no means all, of the questions comprised within the vast compass of preserving the Papacy: and it is in the face of this question that the faithful are minded to discuss the Pope's decisions, or to decide without consulting him, the line of action it is proper for him to take!

Obedience, which alone can anchor us in the truth, puts into our hands, by that same token, the repository of life. Of this treasure let us not defraud humanity, lapsed though it be into madness. Never let us

give it up, nor ever adulterate it. In time of trial and chastisement, ours be the word that confesses the truth, ours the word that never ceases to knock at the door of pardon; it shall speed the day of grace.

The world is on the way to lose along with Christ all that Christ has given it. The Revolution squanders this royal heritage, priding itself the while on having conquered it. Its victory has led to tyranny, to contempt of man, to the immolation of the weak for the benefit of the strong, and all this was done in the name of liberty, of equality, of fraternity. Let us preserve the *liberty* to proclaim that God alone is God, that no one else than He is to be adored and obeyed, be the masters who they may that His anger permits to strut their hour upon the Earth. Let us preserve the *equality* never to bend the knee before force, or before talent, or before success, but only before the justice of God. Let us preserve the *fraternity*, that true fraternity which neither exists nor ever can exist upon Earth, unless we preserve there the paternity and royalty of Christ.⁴⁷

THE END

⁴⁷ This brochure was published in 1866. Since that time, some of the leaders of those who were then liberal Catholics have become *Old Catholics*. [NOTE: At the date when Louis Veillot drafted this note, the sect of the *Old Catholics*, which was organized around Canon Döllinger, in revolt against the decrees of the Vatican Council and excommunicated, appeared to be still very strong and threatening and Louis Veillot denounces here its influence or at least complicity in the persecutions of the Kulturkampf. It is well known that a few years later, the Kulturkampf, despite the power of Bismarck, was defeated by the German Center led by Windhorst and that the sect of *Old Catholics* went into decline.] This is a heresy abetted by certain governments in Germany where it persecutes the Catholics. It lines them, imprisons them, hunts down the religious, the priests and the bishops. Everything points to the likelihood of this persecution becoming a bloody one.

The original liberal Catholics survive in France, where the decrees of the Council, the admonitions of the Pope and the example of Germany have disturbed and embarrassed them exceedingly, yet have not altogether availed to reclaim them.

June 16, 1875. (*Note of L. Veillot*, added to the reprint of this brochure in the first volume of the Third series of the *Mélanges*.)

Study Outline

LESSON I Introduction

1. What glorious title did Leo XIII bestow upon Louis Veuillot?
2. By what title is Leo XIII's Encyclical on Liberalism known?
3. To what organization does the Pope refer when he speaks of the "widely-spread and powerful organization" of those who style themselves Liberals?
4. Is the Liberal principle of the absolute sovereignty of the people compatible with the sovereignty of God?
5. Is the Masonic principle of the separation of Church and State a sound principle?
6. What kind of liberty did the paganizing Humanists of the XVth century seek to revive?
7. On what ground did Luther reconcile pagan liberty with Christian faith?
8. Why is the Calvinist Rousseau regarded as the Father of political Liberalism?
9. Which of his works became the bible of Freemasonry and the French Revolution?
10. Of the three kinds of Liberalism — political, economic and religious — which is the root-principle of the other two?
11. Who was the first Grand Master of the Grand Orient whose slanders compassed the death of Louis XVI?
12. Why do we speak of Rousseau's principle of perfect individualism as a pulverizing principle?
13. Who is reputed to be the Father of economic Liberalism, and in what words was he pilloried by Ruskin?
14. What Liberal-economist formulated the Iron Law of Wages?
15. What are the three kinds of religious Liberalism?
16. What logical application does atheistic Communism make of the Liberal ideal of a secularized society or State?

LESSON II

Liberal Catholics (*chapters i-iv*)

1. Of what else is a liberal Catholic full, besides beautiful illusions?
2. Why does he style the ordinary Catholic intolerant?
3. Is toleration of all religions, regardless of their truth or falseness, the ideal regime for a State?
4. To what sort of embarrassment do “intolerant” Catholics expose their “liberal” brothers?
5. Does the liberal Catholic suffer from an inferiority complex, and why do we speak of him as a flesh-potter?
6. To what evidence is his mind closed, to what is it open?
7. Is any man free from the obligation to acknowledge the truth?

LESSON III

The Ageless Church and the Modern Age (chapters v-x)

1. Do the mass of men think with their reason or with their feelings?
2. Is it safe for reason to attack nonsense without first enlisting the aid of sentiment?
3. To what does treason in the matter of words ultimately lead?
4. What danger lurks in the toning down of “intolerant” expressions and the playing up of popular ones?
5. Is modern man able to take care of himself and mature enough to dispense with Divine direction?
6. Has the Church failed to keep pace with the times? Is she a poor straggler in the wake of human progress?
7. Has mankind outgrown the Church?
8. Has the Holy Ghost deserted her, so that she no longer enjoys enlightenment from on high?
9. Has God retracted His promise to be with the Church forever and changed His mind about having a Kingdom on Earth?
10. Does the eternal and unchangeable God change with the times?
11. Is the Rock of Peter a rolling stone that can be dislodged from its position?
12. Is it adamant or is it a plastic jelly taking any and every form impressed upon it?

Study Outline

13. Has the modern age repealed the royal rights of Christ the King, or are these inviolable and everlasting?
14. Is the universal Church of a particular time, a particular place, a particular race, or is she of all times, all places and all races?
15. What are the royal rights of Christians as Children of God — co-heirs with Christ the King?
16. By what twofold power should Christian society be governed and what is the relation that ought to obtain between Church and State?
17. Which is the superior society, the Church or the State?
18. Is the State in duty bound to protect the Church in the discharge of her Divine mission to preach the gospel to every creature?

LESSON IV

Christian Theocracy (*chapters xi-xxi*)

1. Do free-thinkers grant Catholics full freedom to believe in the infallibility of the Church?
2. What does the “tolerant” man mean by saying that the only thing he cannot tolerate is Catholic “intolerance”?
3. When liberals threaten to persecute Catholics because of their theocracy, to what end does the liberal Catholic make capital of this unjust intimidation?
4. Would the common people be the losers if the Church were to regain her moral power to coerce despots, dictators, autocrats, tyrants?
5. What happens to human freedom when the Church’s power over the consciences of civil rulers declines?
6. Through whom does Christ reign on Earth?
7. Have Christians, through whom Christ exercises His royal rights to reign over all mankind, any right to renounce or abate those rights?
8. Did God, in giving man free will, give him the license to disregard Divine truth and the Divine commandments?
9. Has the State the right to refuse official worship to God, and may Catholics positively approve of a godless State?
10. In what sense do Catholic upholders of Liberalism resemble the Christian maker of idols excoriated by Tertullian (*De Idolatria*, 6)?
11. Is it worthwhile to buy Masonic friendship by surrendering the divine rights of the Church?

12. On what condition did the Tempter promise Christ dominion over the whole world?
13. What did Gregory VII mean when he said of Henry IV: “The king of nothing promises to fill Our hands”?
14. Did God respect the “right” of freedom of worship in the case of the Jews who consecrated themselves to Beelphegor?
15. Do we have to go with the stream?
16. Has force a use as well as an abuse, or should all coercion be abolished?
17. What choice will liberal Catholics eventually have to face?
18. Is the Church a supernatural institution and has she any reason to fear mere numbers on the side of those opposed to her?

LESSON V

Catholic Independence (*chapters xxii-xxix*)

1. Which was the first great declaration of independence and how was it simultaneously a profession of dependence upon God?
2. To which result does rebellion against God lead — to liberty or to slavery?
3. When Antichrist asks the last Christian how he wishes to be treated, what will his answer be?
4. When the infidel Saracen ordered St. Louis to knight him, what reply did he receive?
5. What like reply ought we to give to godless Liberals demanding that we venerate their godless constitutions as something sacred?
6. Is it possible for error to have equal rights with truth, for vice to have equal rights with virtue?

LESSON VI

Catholic Liberalism a Contradiction in Terms (*chapters xxx-xxxvi*)

1. Do Masonic liberals trust liberal Catholics as liberal Catholics trust Masonic liberals?
2. Why do the concessions and compromises of liberal Catholics fail to disarm the suspicions of orthodox liberals?
3. What principle of Liberalism raises an impassable barrier between Catholics and Liberals?

Study Outline

4. Do liberal Catholics accept unreservedly such Liberal principles as the Secularization of Society, or the Sovereignty of the People?
5. Do the Masons detect this false note in Catholic professions of liberalism?
6. What, then, must the liberal Catholic do in order to remain liberal?
7. What were the latter-day Protestants forced to do in order to remain Protestants?
8. Why have liberal Catholics merit neither with God nor with men?
9. What other evil consequences flow from the principle of the *secularization of society*?

LESSON VII

Conclusion (*chapters xxxvii-xxxix*)

1. Why does Veillot plead with all Catholics, liberal and non-liberal, to forget their differences and to unite in a solid phalanx around the Holy Father?
2. What crimes does Liberalism commit in the name of liberty, fraternity and equality?
3. What kind of liberty, fraternity and equality should Catholics uphold?

