

of the poor, by charity on harshness, and the egotism and selfishness of riches. These are the encroachments, you, Messieurs, will in your hearts agree with me, which irritate the greatest number of her enemies; all those hired calumniators, all those false philanthropists who every morning insult her, and whose scandalous writings have so often shocked you. These are the mortifications that are disguised under accusations, which would be ridiculous if they were not destined to produce fatal consequences, by raising in the minds of the people the most monstrous phantoms. These are, however, the only encroachments on the temporal state that the Church claims or exercises in the present day. It is in this sense only that she desires (as it is imputed to her) the empire of this world and of the next. She covets the empire of souls and consciences; for that only does she exist, and as that is the noblest and most sovereign of empires, it is that which they strive with bitter eagerness, but without a shadow of frankness, to tear from her.

And how does she pretend to exert this empire? Not only in virtue of her own imprescriptible liberty, which is inseparable from her very existence, but in virtue of the general freedom of institutions and opinions which the modern world has won and has proclaimed. Now here, if I do not deceive myself, is a fact of immense importance, and the most memorable of contemporary history; the most worthy of the study and the admiration of all attentive and respectful observers of the conduct of human affairs. I allude to the attitude assumed by the clergy of France in the face of this great and new fact of political liberty and representative government. Now, what has been this attitude? Every day should make it clearer to you. The clergy, who have been so long reproached with servility, and an inveterate attachment to absolute power—the clergy, who, during the whole period of the restoration, were denounced to France as the instrument of despotism and the melancholy wrecks of the *ancien régime*—the clergy, who were said to be chained to the feet of a broken throne, and identified with a vanquished destiny—behold them enter with spirit into the practice and the comprehension of representative government—behold them invoking and proclaiming liberty, equality, and common right—behold them confiding their rights and interests to the principles of the new social law, of which they manifest a profound and sincere understanding! I will not, Messieurs, do you the injustice to believe that it is necessary to demonstrate this sincerity to you—it is not you that can ever be persuaded that all the bishops, all the priests, all the Catholics of France who have lifted up their voices in this contest, have secretly agreed to contend, on a certain

day, for the very opposite of what they think, and that all these men—the depositories of the loftiest morality that the world has ever known—should debase themselves by a lie. Besides, if need were, their unanimity would demonstrate their sincerity. Further, the Church of France has, in thus acting, only pursued the path already opened out by Catholicism in America, in Belgium, and in Ireland. I think I do not risk too much in affirming that corresponding circumstances will soon bring about similar results in Germany and in the Peninsula. On all sides we hear resounding among us eloquent voices that repeat the motto of heroic and Catholic Poland—*Malo periculosum libertatem quam quietum servitium*: “We prefer the perils of liberty to the repose of slavery.” The old Catholic Church—the bark of St. Peter—battered by so many storms, is still ready to sail the agitated and unknown sea of modern liberty. She will brave the tempest as she has done in the midst of absolute monarchies, and even in the midst of feudal Europe. She well knows that she carries in herself the only positive and legitimate counterpoise against all the perils of liberty: and we shall thus see, that—thanks to her immutable authority, and the immortality of her promises—she, and she alone, can, in every crisis, adapt herself to all systems, impress her image on all ages. Here, I say, is a fact of immense importance; and if we love, or pretend to love, liberty, we must be blind to overlook its bearing and its immensity—more blind still, if we dread the excesses of liberty, not to seek the simplest and most certain remedy for those excesses. But I add another fact, no less remarkable, but infinitely painful, and that is, the reception which this grand development of Catholic mind by men who have long usurped among us the monopoly of Liberalism. For my own part, I know nothing better calculated to give a contemptible notion of the prejudices and passions of our time, than the reception afforded by a certain political circle to this new attitude of the Church. It must be owned with regret, that no sooner did these pretended Liberals perceive that liberty might and ought to advance Catholicism, than they invoked against us all the traditions and all the resources of tyranny.

There is no despotism, however arbitrary, vexatious, or extreme, that these men have not welcomed and hailed with transport, provided that the Catholics were its object. Men who have been continually smitten themselves by the political justice of the restoration, and even of the present Government, have denounced us to the Attorney General—men who have organised I know not how many subscriptions for political offenders of their class, set themselves up to preach to us of the respect due to such judgments. The liberty of the