

They do not consider that temporal sovereignty cannot be saintly and above sin; that it cannot aspire to celestial perfection in this world. Material weapons and legal violence, justified by reasons of State, should not belong to the Vicar of Christ on earth, who is to preach peace, to pray and to pardon. Religion is not, and it cannot be, an affair of State. Its mission is to console believers with the hope of everlasting life and to uphold the spirit of faith. . . .

The Italians, by promulgating the law of May, 1871, have solved a problem which seemed incapable of solution. In this country, where freedom of thought and of conscience is acknowledged, unlimited liberty has been granted to the Head of the Church with reference to his sacred office and his irresponsibility and inviolability. In regard to his acts, the Pope is subject only to God, and no human potentate can reach him. He exercises a sovereign authority over all those who believe in him—and they are many millions—while he is surrounded by all the honors and privileges of royalty without the drawbacks of civil power, without the hatred, the resentment, and the penalties inseparable from such power. No earthly prince is in a similar position or on the same level. His position is unique. He has no territory to govern. Indeed, any extent of territory would be inadequate for his position, and yet all the world is subject to his spiritual power. Were he a temporal prince his authority would be diminished, because it would be equal to that of other rulers, and he would cease to be pre-eminent. He would be exposed to continual struggles, as he has struggled for centuries to the detriment of the faith and of his spiritual authority. We have made him an independent sovereign, and as such he is superior to all other princes. In this lies his power. He exercises the office by virtue of authority; he corresponds with all the world; he prays; he protects, without needing protection, because the Italian kingdom is his shield. Consequently, no earthly weapon can reach him; and the outrages inflicted upon Boniface VIII. cannot be repeated.

Catholics should be grateful to Italy for the services which we have rendered to the Roman pontiff. Before September 20, 1870, he was obliged to bow before the princes of the earth, and concordats were concessions of divine right made to the prejudice of the Church. It was only when relieved of his temporal dominion that Pius IX. could cope with Bismarck and make that man feel the power of spiritual arms. All this is our handiwork, the work of our Parliament and our king. I will say more; it was the will of God, because the Almighty willed that Italy should gather her provinces together and become an equal of other nations.