

THE ENCYCLICAL--IMMORTALE DEI.

On the Christian Formation of States.
To Our Venerable Brethren, all the
Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops,
and Bishops of the
Catholic World.

LEO PP. XIII.

VENERABLE BRETHREN, HEALTH AND APOSTOL-
IC BENEEDICTION:

CONTINUED.

But those pernicious and deplorable revolutionary tendencies which were aroused in the sixteenth century, when they had once introduced confusion into Christendom, soon, by a natural course, entered the dominion of philosophy, and from philosophy into all the lines of society. From this source are to be traced the more recent declarations of unbridled liberty, invented during the great upheavals of the last century, and laid down as the principles and fundamentals of the "new law," which was before unknown, and is at variance, on more than one score, not only with Christian, but even with natural law. Of those principles, the chief is that all men, as they are of one species, are also really equal in practical life; that every man is so far independent as to be subject in no way to the authority of another; that he is free to think as he pleases, to act as he pleases; that the right of governing resides in no person. In a society thus constituted, there is no sovereignty except the will of the people; who, as power is in themselves alone, so they alone govern themselves; they select persons to whom they intrust themselves, in such manner, however, as not to transfer the right to rule, but merely a charge to be exercised in their name. Divine Supremacy is ignored, as if there were no God at all, or He was nowise solicitous concerning the human society; or as if men whether individual or united together in society, owed nothing to God, or if any sovereignty could be imagined, whose cause, force and authority did not reside entirely in God. In this way the State is nothing but a multitude, mistress and ruler of itself; and since the people is declared as holding within itself the source of all rights and all power, it follows that the State should consider itself bound by no manner of duty to God; that it should profess publicly no religion; that it should not seek out of many that which alone is true, nor prefer a certain one to the rest, nor favor one principally, but give to each an equality before the law with the only limit that public order be not disturbed. It is in harmony with this to leave all questions of religion to the judgement of each individual; to permit every one to follow such as he pleases, or none at all if he accept none. Hence surely arise: a conscience without law to determine its decision, freedom of opinion as to the worship of God, or not worshipping Him; a boundless licence of thought and of publishing whatever is thought.

Having once laid down these tenets, which in our time are greatly approved, as the fundamental principles of the State, it easily appears unto what and how unjust a position the Church is forced. For when the conduct of affairs is in accordance with these doctrines Catholicity is placed on an equal footing in the State with associations foreign to her, or even of an inferior footing; no account is taken of the ecclesiastical laws; the Church, which ought according to the command and mandate of Jesus Christ teach all nations, is commanded not to touch the public instruction of the people. Those things which enter into both ecclesiastical and civil law are legislated upon by the civil rulers according to their own judgment, and they disregard in these matters the most sacred laws of the Church. Wherefore jurisdiction is usurped over the marriage of Christians, even deciding as to the marriage bond;—the unity, the permanency of marriage becoming the subject of civil determination; they take away the property of the clergy, denying that the Church can hold her own possession. To sum up the whole matter, they act towards the Church; disparaged in estimation of her rights and nature as a perfect Society, as if she were like other corporations, that the State keeps together: so that whatever right she possesses, whatever liberty of action, she is declared to hold by the concession and favor of the civil rulers. Wherever the Church is with the approval of civil laws in possession of her rights, and a public compact between both authorities has been entered into, first a clamor is raised that Church and State must be separated; and this with the design of obtaining impunity in disregarding pledges, of removing obstacles and gaining control of everything. Since the Church cannot bear this in silence, and cannot abandon her most sacred and important duties,

and hence demands that the pledges made to her be entirely and sacredly fulfilled, there arise between the religious and the civil powers conflicts of which generally the result is that the one which is weaker in human resources succumbs to the stronger.

Thus in this system, to which many are ardently attached, the custom and the desire is to drive the Church out altogether, or hold her entirely in the bonds of the State. Whatever is publicly enacted at present is in great part enacted with this design. The laws, the administration of States, the non-religious training of youth, the spoliation and destruction of the religious orders, the overthrow of the civil principedom of the Roman Pontiffs, all look to breaking the force of Christian institutions, placing the liberty of the Catholic Church in restraint and lessening her other rights.

Natural reason itself convicts these opinions as to civil rule as far from the truth. Whatever there is of power anywhere, nature itself attests as coming from God as its chief and most august source. The teaching that the government of the people does, without regard to God, by nature, reside in the multitude, while serving in a marked degree to afford flattery and flame to many passions; in truth rests on no probable reason, and cannot have sufficient force to obtain public security and the preservation of order. In fact with these doctrines things have gone so far that it is held as a genuine part of civil jurisprudence that seditions can be rightfully gotten up. For the opinion prevails that rulers are nothing more than certain persons chosen to carry out the popular will; whence it necessarily follows that all things are as changeable as popular judgment, and there is a constant apprehension of disturbances.

Concerning the religion, to hold as of the same character different and contrary forms has clearly the result of believing and practicing none. This, if differing in name from atheism, in reality does not differ from it at all. For those who believe there is a God must, if they wish to be consistent and not in an absurd position, understand that ways practiced in worshipping God, in which there is so much difference, and in the most important matters such dissimilarity and conflict, cannot be equally true, equally good, equally acceptable to God.

So, liberty of thought and of the press, all moderation contemned, is not an intrinsic good in which human society may rightfully rejoice; but is the source and origin of many evils. Liberty, inasmuch as a virtue perfecting man, ought to be exercised in what is true and what is good; but the good and the true cannot be changed at the whim of man, but remain ever the same, and not less unchangeable than the nature itself of things. If the mind assent to false opinions, if the will adopt evil and apply itself to it, neither part obtains its perfection, but both shall from their natural estate and lapse into corruption. To place before the eyes of men whatever is contrary to truth and virtue, is not lawful; to place such things under the aegis of the law is much less lawful. Only a life well led is the way to Heaven, whither we all tend; and for this reason the State departs from the rule and law of nature when permitting license of opinion and of deed to be so wanton that minds may with impunity be led from truth, and hearts from virtue. To exclude the Church which God Himself instituted from active life, from legislation from the education of youth, from domestic society, is great and pernicious error. Taking away religion, the State cannot have good morals; and indeed it is perhaps better known than it needs to be, what is the character, and what the scope of what is called the "civil" philosophy of life and morals. The true teacher of virtue and the guardian of morals is the Church of Christ; it is she that maintains intact the principles from which duties are deduced, and placing before us the most efficacious motives for a virtuous life, commands us not only to avoid evil deeds, but to control even desires not carried into act, that are contrary to reason. To seek a subjection of the Church in the discharge of her office to the civil power is in truth great injustice and great rashness. By this, order is broken, because what is merely natural is placed ahead of what is above nature; those abundant blessings with which the Church, if not impeded, fills our common life, are done away with, or at least exceedingly lessened; and besides, the way is paved to hostilities and conflicts, the injury of which to both has been too often made manifest by results.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The "Northwest Review" should be in every Catholic household in the Northwest. Begin the New Year by subscribing for it.

Protestant Tribute to the Church.

A Unitarian minister, the Rev. Charles A. Allen, after tracing the beneficent influence of the Church and the Papacy in past ages, renders this glowing tribute to the Church to-day:

"The greatest peril that threatens our modern civilization is the selfish, willful individualism, which has no respect for the rights of others or for the laws of duty and which makes a god of its own pleasure and caprice. It is the inevitable tendency of Protestantism when left to itself. And against this lawless liberty the Catholic Church bears its steadfast witness, even though it be with much that we think superstitious, but maintaining in mystic symbolism that authority of law, whose home is the bosom of God and whose voice is the harmony of the universe.

"And, then, how much truer is the Catholic Church to that democratic spirit which once gave her the leadership of Europe. In her noble cathedrals, rich and poor are on a level; they kneel at the same confessionals; they are cared for in life and death by the same ministrations. All feel, whether high or low, that they are brethren in one Church, and are at home in her hallowed shrines. Contrast the divisions, the feuds, the petty individualisms of the Protestant world! See how the rich are separated from the poor in their worship as in their homes, and religion often seems to become the privilege of those only who can buy a costly pew! See how the Protestant churches often become little select clubs, which live for their own enjoyment only, while the increasing multitudes of the poor and neglected become every year more godless! See how few of the men and women Protestant Churches give themselves to labors of charity and religion with the devoted consecration of the Paulist and Jesuit Fathers and the Sisters of Mercy! Ought we not to be grateful to God that He has sustained the Catholic Church as a steadfast witness even to-day, for that practical Christianity to which Protestantism has often been false? May God give us humility, instead of the conceit which too often abounds in Protestant Churches and may we be docile to learn the lesson, of reverence, of humanity, and of a true brotherhood in religion, for which the Catholic Church is God's witness still, and without which our Protestant civilization is destined to perish in a worse catastrophe than that which befell the civilization of the ancient world!"

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