

## *Apostolical Letter of His Holiness Pope Leo XIII*

To all the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops and Bishops of the Catholic World, on the Dangers Which Threaten the Church and Society, and the Remedy for Them.

In presence of the immensity of the evils which overwhelm society, and the perils which menace it, our duty compels us to again warn all men of good will, especially those who occupy exalted positions, and to conjure them as we now do, to devise what remedies the situation calls for, and what prudent energy to apply them with delay.

First of all, it behooves them to inquire what remedies are needed, and to examine well their potency in the present needs. We have extolled liberty and its advantages to the skies, and have proclaimed it as a sovereign remedy and an incomparable instrument of peace and prosperity which will be most fruitful in good results. But facts have clearly shown us that it does not possess the power which is attributed to it. Economic conflicts, struggles of the classes are surging around us like a conflagration on all sides, and there is no promise of the dawn of the day of public tranquility. In point of fact, and there is no one who does not see it, liberty, as it is now understood, that is to say, a liberty granted indiscriminately, to truth and to error, to good and to evil, ends only in destroying all that is noble generous and holy, and in opening the gates still wider to crime, to suicide and to a multitude of the most degrading passions.

The doctrine is also taught that the development of public instruction, by making the people more polished and more enlightened, would suffice as a check to unhealthy tendencies, and to keep man in the ways of uprightness and probity. But a hard reality has made us feel every day more and more how little avails instruction without religion and morality. As a necessary consequence of inexperience, and of the promptings of bad passion, the

mind of youth is enthralled by the perverse teachings of the day. It absorbs all the errors which an unbridled press does not hesitate to sow broadcast and which depraves the mind and the will of the youth and foment in them that spirit of pride and subordination which so often troubles the peace of families and cities.

So also was confidence reposed in the progress of science. Indeed the century which has just closed, has witnessed progress that was great, unexpected, stupendous. But is it true that it has given us all the fullness and healthfulness of fruitage that so many expected from it? Doubtless the discoveries of science have opened new horizons to the mind; it has widened the empire of man over the forces of matter, and human life has been ameliorated in many ways through its instrumentality. Nevertheless, everyone feels and many admit that the results have not corresponded to the hopes that were cherished. It cannot be denied, especially when we cast our eyes on the intellectual and moral status of the world, as well as on the records of criminality, when we hear the dull murmurs which arise from the depths, or when we witness the predominance which might has won over right. Not to speak of the throngs who are a prey to every misery, a superficial glance at the condition of the world will suffice to convince us of the indefinable sorrow which weighs upon souls and the immense void which is in human hearts. Man may subject nature to his sway, but matter cannot give him what it has not, and to the questions which most deeply affect our gravest interest human science gives no reply. The thirst for truth, for good, for the infinite, which devours us, has not been slaked, nor have the joys and comforts of life ever soothed the anguish