

(ii) BY VIRTUE OF THE NATURAL DIVINE RIGHT THE CHURCH POSSESSES SOVEREIGN AUTHORITY.

[371] Having shown that the Church is entitled to sovereign authority by virtue of the positive divine law, we will proceed to show that She is, moreover, entitled to Sovereignty by virtue of the natural law. For, it is an axiom of jurisprudence that a *perfect* society is, by right of nature, self-governing and sovereign. Now, the Church is notoriously what jurists call "a perfect society."

A society is the union of rational beings for the pursuit of a common end. It is perfect if its end is perfect and if, besides, the means at its disposal for the attainment of such end are fully adequate. In other words, a society is perfect *i.e.*, self-sufficient and independent, if its end is supreme and subordinate to no other, and if it depends upon no other for the means to that end.

In the *natural* order, the one perfect society is that which (a) has for its end the *whole* compass of man's *natural* welfare, not merely a fraction thereof—and which (b) possesses the means proportionate to the end. Thus, civil society in its supreme form exclusively—as empire, monarchy or republic—may be called a perfect society.

Other natural societies—*e.g.*, the city, the municipality, etc.—are obviously imperfect societies, since they can only meet a *portion* of the natural and social needs and wants of man, and are thus necessarily subordinate to the Sovereign society, upon which they themselves depend for perfect protection or individual independence, for the benefits of progressive civilization, and for all social blessings.

In the *supernatural* order, the particular churches and especially the religious Orders are imperfect societies, since they are *not* self-sufficient and cannot even work out their own salvation independently of the Perfect Society called "The Catholic Church"—from which they derive the right to exist and the very breath of supernatural life.

The one perfect supernatural society existent upon earth is the Church Militant.

She is perfect, and immeasurably superior to all natural societies, by reason of the infinite superiority of her end or object, and of her absolute self-sufficiency in the disposal of the means for attaining that end.

Her object or end is to continue the mission of Jesus Christ here below, *viz.*, to introduce *Him personally*, as well as His Religion, into the human soul,—and thus to raise up fallen man, to Christify man and fit him for the face to face vision of God in heaven.

Such a sublime end is the highest conceivable and, by consequence can be subordinate to no other.