

THE POSITION AND DUTIES OF LAYMEN IN THE CHURCH.

II. THE ASSISTANCE DUE FROM THE STATE TO THE CHURCH, IN UNFRIENDLY OR HOSTILE GOVERNMENTS, DEVOLVES UPON THE CATHOLIC LAITY.

The Church, as I have shown above, is religion in the form of society. To the Church, as such, the individual assistance or private protection of her children—the expression of their zeal and love for her, is not sufficient, she has need of public protection, at least, in the measure required for the free and untrammelled exercise of her authority, and in the tranquil enjoyment of her rights. This public protection, in its normal condition, cannot be accorded to her except by the public authority, viz.: that which presides over public order and controls the executive. Now, in states separated from the Church, this protection for the most part has no longer place. The civil Princeship has, of itself, divested itself of such duty, and this, so honorable office, abdicated by the said Princeship or Power, of its very nature devolves upon the Catholic laity.

I will try and put this idea in a clearer light. It is a principle of public right that in society the public power, abdicated by the Prince of its own nature, devolves upon the nation—that is to say, upon the aggregate of the citizens. Now, society is essentially composed of two elements—the multitudes (the people), and the right to order or govern it (the sovereignty). The subject of this sovereignty, no matter in what legitimate way determined, is usually designated by the name of Chief or Prince, taken in its generic sense. The Chief or Prince may abdicate the sovereignty conferred upon him. Yet this sovereignty cannot perish, otherwise society itself, failing its formal principle, should perish. Abdicated then by the Prince, what becomes of this sovereignty? It must naturally devolve upon the citizens taken collectively, and these can either retain it, defining however, and determining the mode of its exercise, or they may transfer it to another subject, selected by them. We have a recent example in Bulgaria, in the abdication of Prince Alexander, despotically insisted upon by Russia.

Now let us apply this theory to our case.

In Christian society, the office of Prince is essentially two-fold—that of Civil Ruler, and that of Protector of the Church. In those states, which, either through imperious circumstances, or through hostility of the rulers, are separated from the Church, this second office of the Prince, viz.: *Protector of the Church*, is abdicated. Yet, this office cannot perish, because Divinely ordained for the wellbeing of Christian society. What then becomes of it? Precisely that which becomes of the office of Civil Ruler, if abdicated by the Prince. Of its very nature it devolves upon the lay element—not in its citizen, but in its Christian capacity. In other words, the office of Protector of the Church, abdicated by the Ruler, falls upon the Catholic laity—being not a clerical, but a lay attribution. The reasoning is identical in both cases.

Since then, in political society, the right of civilly governing the multitude cannot perish, so in Christian society, the right and the duty of assisting and protecting the Church, by means which are of the temporal order, cannot cease to exist.

Even prescindng from this, the sole general obligation which binds each one of the faithful to the Church, would be sufficient to prove that, failing to the Church, the assistance and protection of the state, by its separation from her, the Catholic laity enters naturally into the vacated office, and should the wants and dangers of their mother increase, the duty and devotion of the children to help and protect her, should proportionally increase.

III. THE CATHOLIC LAITY IN RELATION TO STATES SEPA- RATED FROM THE CHURCH BY PURE NEGATION.

It is fitting to distinguish two kinds of states separated from the Church, viz.: those by simple negation, and those by positive hostility and persecution; those of the first-class do not favor the Church, they leave her free in the main; those of the second class, far from allowing her a generous freedom, deny her almost every liberty. Different, in consequence, must be the attitude of the Catholic laity, according to the different relations or attitude of the state to the Church. We will here consider the Catholic laity in regard to states of the first-class.

These states, although separated from the Church, are not inimical to her. The Church, in their regard, is in a condition analogous to that of a Power side by side with another, not allied to, nor bound by international treaties; yet not hostile to, nor desirous of invading her rights.

In such states the Catholic laity has no need to defend the Church, which, whilst she receives no help, receives no opposition from the state. In this condition of things, the sum total of the obligation which lies upon the Catholic laity, is reduced to the supplying that positive assistance denied her by the state.

The Catholic laity here assumes, in regard to the Church, the place of a faithful helper, by co-operating with the clergy in all which regards the Church's interests; in the observance of the laws, in contributing to the beauty of her temples, to the splendour of Divine worship, to the support of the sacred ministry, to the maintenance of her various institutions, religious, educational and charitable:

And since union is strength, the Catholic laity will essay to band its members, into various Associations, having for object, to provide for the religious education of the people, to promote pious unions of young men, for the diffusion of good books, for the succour of the indigent, for the suppression of vice, for the encouragement of good journals, reading rooms, in a word, of every means whereby sound doctrine and good morals may be propagated and the various popular errors by which the simple are deceived, may be confuted. Above all, a *Catholic Press*, considering the present social conditions, must become a potent aid to the Church.

It is the duty of the Catholic laity to assist the Church, not only in the action which she exercises among the faithful, but also in her efforts for the conversion of the Infidel. And so we observe to-day that the greatest assistance to Catholic Missions is the noble work of the *Propagation of the Faith*, set on foot by laymen, and nurtured and maintained principally by them.

One thing, however, which the Catholic laity, in assuming the abdicated office of the state regarding the assistance and protection of the Church, should carefully avoid, is the grave mistake made by Princes and Governments in over-stepping the limits of legitimate action in ecclesiastical affairs. When the ancient empire was converted to the Church, its chiefs knew not how entirely to forget that the Pagan Emperor was also the *Pontifex Maximus*. Hence, although theoretically they recognize the independence of the Church, in practice, they sometimes arrogated to themselves somewhat more than was their due in the affairs of the Church. This policy, known as the *Byzantine*, continued with rare exceptions, in the lower Empire, until, after the Photian Schism, it became a species of lay popedom, inherited to this day by the Czars of Russia. The true idea of Christian Kingship found its real and corporate expression in the establishment of the Empire by Charlemagne. This man, who merited that greatness should be identified with his name, expressed that idea of Christian Kingship in the formula never to be forgotten. "Karl, by the grace of God, King; the *defender of the Church*, and in