

Our enemies have shown that they are aware of this. From the first moment and most steadily have they kept the following object in view: first, to separate you from Us and the See of Peter, and next to sow dissension amongst you. They have never changed their tactics. Continually and with all the means at their disposal they have returned to the same design, some with intricate formulas and with great ingenuity, others with brutality and cynicism. To this end they have employed specious promises,

Dishonoring Bribes

offered to schism, threats, violence, and all the artifices they could command. But your clear-sighted fidelity rendered all these attempts vain. Then it occurred to them that the best means of separating you from Us was to deprive you of every feeling of confidence in the Holy See, and therefore they have not hesitated from the speaker's tribune and in the press to throw discredit on Our acts, misrepresenting and sometimes even calumniating Our intentions.

The Church herself, they have said, sought to excite a war of religion in France and with all her heart longed for persecution. Strange accusation! Founded by Him Who came into this world to bring it peace and to reconcile men with God, a messenger of peace on earth, the Church could only wish for a religious war if she disowned her exalted mission and lied in the face of the whole world. On the contrary, however, she is and always remains true to this mission of patient charity and love.

Moreover the whole world knows to-day—and a mistake on the point is not possible—that if the peace of consciences has been broken in France, the blame lies not with the Church, but with her enemies.

Impartial Onlookers

and people who are not of Our belief recognise that if in the domain of religion there is a fight going on in your beloved country, it has been caused not by the Church first taking up arms, but by war being declared against her. Within the last twenty-five years especially she has had to undergo this ordeal. That is the truth. Thousands and thousands of repeated statements in the press, at meetings, in the Masonic lodges, and in Parliament, as well as the attacks that are increasingly and methodically directed against her, prove it. These facts are indisputable, and no assertion of any kind can shake them. The Church does not want war, least of all religious war, and to state the opposite is to defame and outrage her.

Just as little does she desire violent persecution. She knows what it is, for she has endured it at all times and in all climates. Having lived through several centuries of bloody persecutions, she has the right to say with sacred pride that

She Does Not Fear Persecution,

and that, if necessary, she will always know how to meet it. But persecution in itself is an evil, for it is injustice, and it hinders men from adoring God in freedom. The Church, then, cannot wish for it, not even with a view to the good which Providence in its infinite wisdom always draws out of it. Besides, persecution is not merely evil; it means suffering, and that is a further reason why the Church, the best of mothers, through sympathy for her children can never desire it.

As a matter of fact that persecution which they falsely declare she has provoked and they have resolved not to enter upon is even now being inflicted upon her. Have they not just expelled the Bishops from their dwellings—even those of them who, owing to their age and virtues, were the most venerable? Have they not driven the seminarists out of the seminaries, great and small, and begun the work of banishing the priests from their parishes? The whole Catholic world has beheld this spectacle with grief, and there never was a moment's doubt as to how it would regard such acts of violence.

As for the ecclesiastical property which we are accused of having abandoned, it is important to remark that this property was partly

The Patrimony of the Poor,

and the patrimony, more sacred still, of the dead. It was not permissible to the Church to abandon or give it up: she could only let it be taken from her by violence. Nobody will believe that she has, except under the pressure of the most constraining causes, deliberately abandoned what was confided to her keeping, and what was so necessary for the exercise of worship, for the maintenance of sacred edifices, for the instruction of her clergy, and for the support of her ministers. The choice being set before her in a perfidious manner whether she would assent to material

ruin or agree to the violation of her constitution, which is of Divine origin, the Church, though facing poverty, refused to allow the work of God in her to be touched. Her property was taken from her; she did not abandon it. To declare the Church's possessions vacant at a fixed date if the Church has not by that time created a new organisation in her fold; to subject this organisation to conditions which are in unmistakable contradiction with the Divine constitution of that Church and which she is therefore in duty bound to reject; then to assign a third of those possessions, as if they had no owner; and in the end to declare, when all this has been done, that they are not robbing the Church, but only making arrangements as to the property abandoned by her—that is not only to indulge in sophistry, but to add derision to the cruellest of spoliations. It is an

Incontestable Spoliation

which they have in vain endeavored to mask through the assurance that there was no moral personality to whom this property could be assigned; for the State has the power to impart the right of a juridical person to that to which, in accordance with the demands of the public welfare, it is making a transference—the Catholic establishments like others; and in any case, it would have been easy for the State not to have subjected the formation of the Associations Cultuelles to conditions that are in direct opposition to the Divine Constitution of the Church which those associations were supposed to serve.

This is precisely what was done with regard to the Associations Cultuelles. The law organised them in such a way that its dispositions on the subject run directly counter to those rights which, derived from her Constitution, are essential to the Church, and the statement is true especially with regard to the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, the inviolable base given to His work by the Divine Master Himself. The law, moreover, confers on these associations' rights which exclusively belong to the province of ecclesiastical authority whether as regards public worship or the possession and administration of Church property. Finally, the associations are not alone withdrawn from ecclesiastical jurisdiction; they are held responsible to the civil authority. This is the reason why We felt compelled to condemn these associations in Our previous Encyclical in spite of the material sacrifices involved in the condemnation.

We have also been accused of partiality and inconsistency. It has been said that We refused to sanction in France what We had approved of in Germany. But the reproach is as groundless as it is unjust, for though

The German Law

deserved condemnation on many points, and was only tolerated to avoid greater evils, the situations are entirely different; and this law expressly recognises the Catholic Hierarchy, whilst the French law does not.

As to the annual declaration demanded for the exercise of public worship, it did not offer all the legal security which people have a right to claim. Nevertheless—though the assemblies of the Faithful have in them, in principle, none of the essential elements of public meetings, and though it is odious to place them on the same footing—the Church might have decided to tolerate this declaration for the prevention of greater evils; but if it is decreed that 'the parish priest or the curate shall for the future be' in his church 'only a man in possession without juridical title, that he shall have no right to carry out any administrative measure,' the position of the ministers of worship in the fulfilment of their duties is made so humiliating and so vague that under such circumstances the declaration could not be accepted.

There remains for notice the latest law voted by the two Chambers. It is a law of robbery and confiscation with respect to the property of the Church, and it completed the plundering of the Church. Although her Divine Founder was born poor in a manger had died poor on the Cross, and though she herself has known from the beginning what poverty is, the property she possessed was none the less her own, and no one had the right to despoil her of it. The possession of this property, which should be inviolable from every point of view, was sanctioned by the State and consequently the State could not interfere with it. In regard to the exercise of public worship this law

Has Organised Anarchy,

and what it ensures, above all, is uncertainty and dependence on mere good will. Uncertainty as to whether the sacred buildings, which may still be refused, will be left at the disposal of the clergy and the faithful; uncertainty as to whether they will be kept for them and how long; administrative, arbi-

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