

one thing We know well, and it is that if He has been pleased to preserve Our life, and if He be pleased to preserve it still longer, it is incumbent upon Us as a most sacred duty to live for the welfare and the increase of His immaculate spouse the Church, and not to quail before anxieties and fatigues, consecrating to this end the last remnant of Our strength. . . . Wherefore, let Our words be taken as a testament which We wish to consign, now that We have almost reached the doors of eternity, to the nations in Our desire and Our hopes for the common weal.*

In this testament the Holy Father gives a graphic description of 'the genesis, cause, and manifold forms of the war which is raging against the Church,' points out its fatal consequences to society, and indicates for the benefit of the faithful, and indeed for the good of all classes and creeds, the proper remedy.

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After reviewing from earliest times the contradictions and persecutions which the Church has had to sustain, the Holy Father passes on to the so-called Reformation, which tried to destroy the Church, and did succeed in wounding her by breaking the bond of jurisdiction and of faith which had hitherto united all Christendom and by introducing a deplorable and disastrous division. This division, and the principle of unrestrained private judgment then promulgated, prepared the way for the proud and sneering 'philosophism' of the eighteenth century, from which have flowed the pernicious systems of rationalism and pantheism, naturalism and materialism—all of them old errors under new forms which had been triumphantly refuted by the Fathers of the Church centuries before. We are still tasting to-day the fruits of this false philosophism and its baneful consequences have infected, not only the religious sphere, but the very web and woof of the political and social structures of the world. As the Holy Father in effect tells us: Our governments are for the most part practically atheistic, and the results are already beginning to be evident—the bases of society are beginning to totter and the eternal principles of justice and morality are becoming almost a dead letter. The civil power has laid a sacrilegious hand upon the matrimonial bond, and has invaded as far as it has found possible the natural rights of parents in the matter of the education of their children. The whole social and political order has been disturbed; in the international order the nations have adopted a system of egotism and jealousy, and look upon one another, if not with actual hatred, and least with feelings of rivalry and deep distrust.

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The Holy Father, after a sympathetic reference to the unrest and discontent among the people produced by the present state of things, and to the miserable condition of a large part of the masses, 'assuredly calling for alleviation and relief,' proceeds to consider certain supposed panaceas for the serious evils that have been described. The three levers on which the advocates of the present atheistic *regime* have relied for the elevation of the world to a higher and happier plane have been Liberty, Education, and Science, and the Holy Father deals with each of these in turn, showing how and why they have all failed. Liberty has failed because it has degenerated into license, and instead of producing peace and prosperity, has been the fruitful cause of economic conflict and social strife, 'debasement of everything noble, holy, and generous, and paving the way to crime, suicide, and to every other outlet of vulgar passion.' Education—separated from sound, moral, and religious instruction—has only aggravated the evil, exposing men's minds, and more especially the minds of the young, to the fascination of perverse maxims, and fomenting that spirit of pride and insubordination which so frequently disturbs the peace alike of families and of cities. Nor has the development of science—much as it has done to enlarge our dominion over nature and to minister to our mere earthly comfort—achieved the grand results which were so fondly hoped. Even its best friends must agree that science has so far done little or nothing to keep down the sad statistics of crime, to produce harmony between rich and poor, to remove 'the indefinable sadness that weighs upon men's souls,' or to satisfy the 'deep void in their hearts.' For all the deeper problems of life science has no answer, and its failure as a comforter or regenerator of the world could not be better

* We quote throughout from a somewhat freer rendering than the translation given in another column.

stated than in the Holy Father's graphic words: 'Man has obtained lordship over matter, but matter has not been able to give him what itself does not possess; the great questions which bear upon his highest interest have not been solved by science; the thirst for truth, for virtue, for the infinite has been left unslaked; the earth enriched with treasures and joys, and the increased comforts of life have quite failed to diminish moral unrest.'

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Before leaving this subject the Holy Father is careful to point out the proper place and real value of culture, knowledge, and liberty, and to vindicate the reputation of the Church as having been the friend and guardian in all ages of true education, true science, and true and reasonable liberty. His Holiness then proceeds to lay down the remedy for the terrible evils which now afflict the world and for the even more serious dangers which threaten the Church and society to-day. That remedy is simple, definite, efficacious, and goes to the root of the matter by removing the whole cause of the trouble. The cause of the confusion into which practical life has been thrown to-day is a foolish apostasy from God, and the Holy Father points out that the one and only remedy for this is a return to the bosom of Christianity, and especially a return to and a love for that practical expression of Christianity which is embodied in the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, under the visible headship of the Roman Pontiff. She alone by applying the doctrine of her Divine Founder is able to maintain with proper equilibrium just limits in all the rights and privileges of collective society. She ensures peace and purity in the domestic order by preserving the stability of conjugal union, and by protecting and promoting it in honor, fidelity, and sanctity. And she is the great sheet-anchor for harmony and prosperity in the civil and political order, because she is able, on the one hand, by her teaching, to render the much-needed assistance to authority, and, on the other, has always shown herself to be an ardent friend to wise reformers and to the just aspirations of the governed, 'imposing respect and obedience on princes, yet ever defending the imprescriptible rights of the human conscience.' Thus the nations who remain or become loyal to the Church will, thanks to her, be able to observe the golden mean between servitude and despotism, and will enjoy, both in the civil and the domestic sphere that reign of peace and justice which is the true foundation of a people's greatness.

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LEO XIII. has published many Encyclicals of great weight and value—Encyclicals on Christian Philosophy, on Human Liberty, on Christian Matrimony, on Freemasonry, on the Public Powers, on the Christian Constitution of States, on Socialism, on the Labor Question, on the Principal Duties of Christian Citizens, and kindred topics—but nothing finer has ever proceeded from his pen than the magnificent Letter which he has just given to the world. It is, indeed, worthy to be his last testament to mankind. And even if—as the venerable Pontiff anticipates—it is the will of God that he should be soon removed from the scene of his earthly labors, it will still be true to say that LEO XIII. is not really dead. He will rest from his labors, but his works will follow him, and the memory of his saintly character and noble mind will never die. As a modern writer has beautifully expressed it:

When Leo XIII. will have passed into history—and it will not be so long hence, in spite of Lapponi and the other physicians,—there will be a new Pope, but in the eyes of the universe there will always be an old Pope too. Linger along the shadows of the Papal seat, lurking in the twilight of the Vatican, loitering in the sunny seats, there will always be the shade of a feeble figure,—one that, throwing off physical weakness, strove always to keep spirit within body that he might for one year longer administer the great duties that had been laid upon his shoulders. 'Gladly I live and gladly I die,' will surely be his last thought. Of peace with his God he has no need to make any; for between the two—the father on earth and the Father in heaven—there has long been close fellowship. 'Translated' will be the better word for his uplifting; for in the ethereal beauty of his face those who have seen the Pope within late years notice the nearness to Him Whom the father on earth has striven with all faith for 25 years to imitate. And so farewell to Leo,—farewell, if there be no other year granted him!

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