

view was to banish the principles of Christianity from the bosom of society; but by refusing, on the one hand, to recognise the supremacy of the See of Rome, which is the efficient cause and bond of unity, and by proclaiming, on the other hand, the principle of free judgment, they shook to its lowest foundations the Divine edifice, and opened the way for infinite varieties of creeds, for doubts and denials on the most important matters, for departures from faith far surpassing the expectations of the innovators themselves.

The road being thus clear, there arose the proud and scoffing philosophy of the eighteenth century, which went further still. It turned into derision the sacred collection of the Scriptures, and rejected in the mass all truths divinely revealed, with the object of finally uprooting from the conscience of men all religious belief, and of stifling in them the last breath of Christian spirit.

From this source flowed Rationalism and Pantheism, Naturalism and Materialism, deleterious and fatal systems which ushered in again, under new appearances, the ancient errors which had long since been victoriously refuted by the Fathers and Doctors of the Church. The result has been that the pride of modern times, through an excess of confidence in its own light, has been smitten with blindness, and, like Paganism, feeds itself now only with dreams, even in all that relates to the attributes of the human soul, and the immortal destinies which constitute its glorious privilege.

The Struggle Against the Church

thus assumed a more serious character than in the past, no less by reason of the vehemence of the attacks than of their universality. Contemporary incredulity does not, in truth, confine itself to calling in doubt or to denying such or such a truth of faith, but it combats the very body of principles which revelation consecrates and true philosophy supports—fundamental and sacred principles which teach man the supreme end of his sojourn in life, which sustain him in duty and infuse into his soul courage and resignation, which, in promising him incorruptible justice and perfect felicity beyond the tomb, teach him to subordinate time to eternity and earth to heaven. Now, what do they give man instead of those teachings, those incomparable supports of faith? A frightful scepticism that petrifies the heart and stifles in the conscience all magnanimous aspirations.

Such fatal doctrines have passed only too frequently, as you know, venerable brethren, from the domain of ideas into the exterior life and into the spheres of public action. Great and powerful States are constantly reducing them to practice, and imagine that they are thus doing the work of civilisation, and taking the lead in progress. And just as if public authorities were not bound to collect in themselves and to reflect all that is soundest in the moral life, they hold themselves free from the duty of publicly honoring God; and it happens only too often that, while they boast of their indifference to all religions, they, in fact, make war on the one religion instituted by God.

This system of practical atheism must necessarily cause, and in fact has caused, profound disturbance in the domain of morals, for, as the most famous sages of pagan antiquity foresaw, religion is the principal foundation of justice and of virtue. When the bonds are broken which unite man to God, the Sovereign Lawgiver and Universal Judge, there remains but a phantom of morality; purely civil, or, as it is called, independent morality, which, abstracting from all eternal reason and all divine law, draws as inevitably and fatally to this last consequence of making man a law unto himself. Henceforth incapable of raising his life on the piousness of Christian hope towards the higher good, man, thus infatuated, no longer seeks anything above the material satisfaction of his desires in the collective enjoyments and conveniences of life. When we see excited in him a thirst for pleasures, a desire of riches, the devouring avarice of rapid and immoderate gains; when, at the same time, all kinds of ambition, with feverish and frenzied anxiety to gratify them, even by illegitimate means, set him on fire, justice must suffer. In a word, contempt for law and for public authority are the inevitable consequences, and a licentiousness of morals which, as it becomes general, brings with it without fail the decay of society.

But perhaps We exaggerate the doleful results of the sad troubles of which We speak? No, for the reality is at Our door, and only too fully confirms Our conclusions. It is manifest, indeed, that the very foundations of society, if they are not strengthened very soon, will totter, and the superstructures will bring down in their fall.

The Great Principles of Right and Eternal Morality.

Hence arise the serious injuries which all parts of the body social, beginning with the family, have had to endure. For the secular state, forgetful of the limits and of the essential aims of the authority which it holds, has laid violent hands upon the conjugal bond, profaned it and de-peopled it of its religious character; it has encroached as far as it could on the natural rights of parents in matters that concern the education of their children, and in many places it has destroyed the stability of marriage by giving legal sanction to the licentious institution of divorce. Now, everybody knows the fruits that these encroachments have borne. They have multiplied beyond all expression unions brought about solely by shameful passions, which are consequently broken off after brief intervals or when they have degenerated often into tragic scenes of conflict, often into scandalous infidelities. We say nothing of the children, the innocent offspring who are neglected, or perverted, in some cases by the vicious examples of the parents, in others through the poison which the State officially puts before them every day.

Not only the family but the social and political order itself is endangered, especially by the new doctrines which, assigning a false origin to sovereignty, have thereby corrupted its true idea. For, if sovereign authority flows formally from the consent of the people and not from God, the supreme and eternal source of all power, it

loses in the eyes of the subject its most august character, and degenerates into an artificial sovereignty which is erected on foundations unsteady and shifting as the will of the men from whom it is said to be derived. Do we not see also the consequence of this error in the laws? Too often, in truth, instead of being the written dictates of reason, these laws express nothing more than the power of superior numbers and the predominant will of a political party. Thus the illicit desires of the multitude are catered for, and the reins are thrown loose on popular passions, even when these passions disturb the hard-earned repose of the citizens. When the evil has gone too far, and has become extreme, recourse is had to violent means to repress it, and the catastrophe is reached in the effusion of blood.

The nations having repudiated these Christian principles, which have such power and efficacy to establish the brotherhood of peoples, and to unite all men in a great family, there has arisen in the international order a system of jealousy and selfishness in consequence of which the nations mutually regard each other if not always with hatred at least certainly with the distrust that animates rivals. Hence it is that in their enterprises they are easily led to forget the great principles of morality and justice, and the protection of the feeble and the oppressed. In the desire which goads them on to the indefinite increase of the national wealth, the nations pay heed no longer to aught save the opportunity of circumstances, the profits arising from success, and the tempting possessions that will be theirs when the deed is successfully accomplished, sure that no one will disturb them afterwards in the name of justice, and through the respect which is due to it. Fatal principles, which have consecrated material force, as the supreme law of the world, to which must be attributed this progressive and unmeasured increase of military preparations, this armed peace comparable in many respects at least to the most disastrous effects of war.

This lamentable confusion in the domain of ideas has caused among the popular classes uneasiness, unrest, and the spirit of revolt, whence arise agitation and disorder—the prelude to commotions still more formidable. The miserable condition of so great a part of the lower classes, people assuredly very deserving of relief and help, admirably serves the purpose of agitators who are full of craft, and in particular of those of the Socialist factions, who, by lavishing foolish promises on the humblest classes, hasten the accomplishment of their nefarious designs.

He who loses his footing in a dangerous steep rolls with increased speed to the bottom of the abyss. With a logic which has vindicated its principles there has been organised a veritable association of criminals. With instincts thoroughly savage, by its first exploits this association has filled the world with awe. Owing to its solid constitution, and its branches spread through the nations, it is already able to raise its wicked hand in every place without fear of any obstacle, unterrified by any punishment. Its members, repudiating all union with society, and cynically breaking with law, religion, and morality, have taken the name of Anarchists; they propose to themselves the utter subversion of society as it is, and employ for their purpose all the means that blind and savage passion can suggest. And as society receives unity and life from the authority which governs it, it is against authority in the first place that anarchy directs its blows. How do we not shudder with horror, as well as with indignation and pity, at the remembrance of the numerous victims who have fallen in these latter years! Emperors, empires, kings, presidents of powerful republics, whose sole crime consisted in the supreme power with which they were invested.

In the presence of the enormous evils which overwhelm society, and of the dangers which threaten it, Our duty requires Us once more

To Warn Men of Good Will,

especially those who occupy the highest stations, and to exhort them, as We do at this moment, to reflect on the remedies which the situation needs, and with provident energy to apply them without delay.

In the first place it is right to ascertain what these remedies are and to examine their value. We have heard liberty and its blessings exalted to the clouds as the sovereign remedy, the incomparable instrument of fruitful peace and prosperity. But facts have clearly demonstrated that it does not possess the efficacy which has been attributed to it. Economic conflicts, the strife of classes, are enkindled and break forth on all sides, and there has not yet been seen the dawn of public life in which peace might reign. For the rest, and everyone can verify this, liberty, as it is understood today—that is to say, licence granted indiscriminately to truth and error, to good and evil—results only in the lowering of all that is noble, holy, generous, and in opening more widely the road to crime, to violence, and to the wretched category of passions.

It has been maintained also that the development of instruction, by rendering the people more refined and more enlightened, would suffice to fortify them against their evil inclinations and to keep them within the limits of justice and probity. But does not the stern reality of things every day give us palpable proof of the uselessness of instruction which is not accompanied by solid religious and moral training? In consequence of their inexperience, and of the ferment of passions, the spirit of young people submits to the fascination of perverse teachings. It is captivating, especially by the errors which a licentious journalism fears not to disseminate with overflowing hands, and which, while depraving at the same time the intellect and the will, fosters in youth that spirit of pride and of insubordination which troubles so often the peace of families and of cities.

Much confidence has also been placed in the progress of science. Assuredly the last century saw many of its great and unexpected, aye, marvellous conquests. But is it so true that these advances have given us the full and satisfactory abundance of fruits that so many men expected from them? Undoubtedly the expansion of science has opened new horizons to our minds, it has widened the empire of man over the forces of matter; and life in this world has