

# The Reign of Christ the King

By Michael Davies

On 11 December 1925, Pope Pius XI promulgated his encyclical letter *Quas primas*, on the Kingship of Christ. The encyclical dealt with what the Pope described correctly as "the chief cause of the difficulties under which mankind was laboring." He explained that the manifold evils in the world are due to the fact that the majority of men have thrust Jesus Christ and His holy law out of their lives; that Our Lord and His holy law have no place either in private life or in politics; and, as long as individuals and states refuse to submit to the rule of our Saviour, there will be no hope of lasting peace among nations. Men must look for the peace of Christ in the Kingdom of Christ—*Pax Christi in Regno Christi*.

The teaching of this encyclical was ignored and passed over, if not actually contradicted, by the Second Vatican Council. It is an incontrovertible fact that this Council conspicuously and, one must conclude, deliberately, failed to reaffirm the teaching of *Quas primas* in which Pope Pius XI reaffirmed the unbroken teaching of his predecessors that states as well as individuals must submit themselves to the rule of Christ the King. In affirming this fundamental truth of our faith, Pope Pius was not referring simply to Catholic nations, or even to Christian nations, but to the whole of mankind. He stated this truth unequivocally by quoting a passage from the encyclical *Annum sacrum* of Pope Leo XIII:

The empire of Christ the King includes not only Catholic nations, not only baptized persons who, though of right belonging to the Church, have been led astray by error, or have been cut off from her by schism, but also all those who are outside the Christian faith: so that truly the whole of mankind is subject to the power of Jesus Christ.

All men, both as individuals and as nations, are subject to the rule of Our Lord Jesus Christ the King, and this for two reasons. Firstly, because, as God, He is our Creator. Psalm 32 summarizes the correct Creator-creature relationship in the following inspired terms:

Let all the earth fear the Lord: and let all the inhabitants of the world be in awe of Him. For He spoke and they were made: He commanded and they were created.

"For He spoke and they were made: He commanded and they were created." God is our Creator. We are His creatures. Without Him we would not exist. We owe Him everything, and He owes us nothing. Those who are created have an absolute obligation to love and serve their Creator. This obligation is unqualified; there is no question of any possible right on the part of any man at any time to withhold his obedience.

It is only when men live their lives within the correct perspective of the Creator-creature relationship that social and political harmony and order prevail. "The peace of Christ in the Kingdom of Christ." When men repudiate this relationship, disharmony and disorder take over, the disharmony and disorder of sin, the disharmony and disorder introduced for the first time by Lucifer, once the most magnificent of all God's creatures, who, overcome with pride, boasted: *Non serviam*—"I will not serve." The Catechism teaches us that our purpose in life is to know, love, and serve God in this world so that we can be happy with Him forever in the next. We cannot claim

to love God if we do not serve Him, and we cannot claim to serve God if we do not subject ourselves to the law of Christ the King. "If you love me," He warned, "keep my commandments." (John 14:15).

In *Quas primas*, Pope Pius XI explains the second reason that we must subject ourselves to Our Lord. He explains the beautiful and profound truth that Christ is our King by acquired as well as by natural right, for He is our Redeemer:

Would that those who forget what they have cost our Saviour might recall the words: "You were not redeemed with corruptible things, but with the Precious Blood of Christ, as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled." We are no longer our own, for Christ has purchased us "with a great price"; our very bodies are the "members of Christ."

The double claim of Our Lord Jesus Christ to our allegiance, as our Creator and our Redeemer, is well summarized in the Book of the Apocalypse, where St. John tells us that Christ is "the ruler of the kings of the earth." (Apoc. 1:5). The fact that the kings of the earth—in other words, the nations and those who rule them—are subject to the Kingship of Christ pertains to what is known as His Social Kingship, that is, His right to rule over societies, as well as individuals.

No one claiming to be a Christian would, one hopes, dispute the fact that as individuals we must submit ourselves to the rule of Christ the King, but very few Christians, Catholics included, understand, let alone uphold, the Social Kingship of Our Lord Jesus Christ. His social kingship can be implemented fully only when Church and State are united. The separation of Church and State was condemned unequivocally by the Roman Pontiffs until the Second Vatican Council. The Church's teaching is that the State has an obligation to render public worship to God in accord with liturgy of the true Church, the Catholic Church, to uphold its teaching, and to aid the Church in the carrying out of her functions. The State does not have the right to remain neutral regarding religion, much less to pursue a secular approach in its policies. A secular approach is by that very fact an anti-God and an anti-Christ approach.

Those who ignore or repudiate the Social Kingship of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and His right to rule over societies as well as individuals, accept, perhaps without realizing it, the abominable theory of democracy enshrined in the French Revolution's *Declaration of the Rights of Man*, the declaration which constituted a formal and insolent repudiation of the Social Kingship of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the declaration which enshrined the greatest heresy of modern times, perhaps of all times: that authority resides in the people. On the contrary, as the Popes have taught, *Omnis potestas a Deo*—"All authority comes from God." "Not so!" reply the revolutionaries. *Omnis potestas a populo*—"All authority comes from the people."

How well the term "revolutionaries" applies to these men! A revolution is best defined as the forcible overthrow of an established government, and this is precisely what they did. They overthrew the Social Kingship of Our Lord Jesus Christ in favor of the heresy that authority resides in the will of the majority—the heresy that is the source of all the evils in society today. The promulgation of *The Declaration of the Rights of Man* constituted the first formal repudiation of Our Lord's Social Kingship. It was the most influential act in the process of securing His virtually universal dethronement during the next two centuries.

Before examining the extent to which this Declaration constituted a repudiation of Catholic teaching on the authority of the State, it is necessary to have a clear grasp of the content of this teaching. A state is composed of two elements: the government, or those who govern, and the governed, authority being vested in those who govern. The Church is not committed to any particular form of government. Despite the tendency of Popes to refer to "princes" in their encyclicals, they were in no way opposed to democracy, if all that is meant by this term is that those who govern are chosen by a vote (based on either limited or universal suffrage). Leo XIII

explains:

The right to rule is not necessarily, however, bound up with any special mode of government. It may take this or that form provided only that it be of a nature to insure the general welfare. But whatever be the nature of the government, rulers must ever bear in mind that God is the paramount Ruler of the world, and must set Him before themselves as their exemplar and law in the administration of the State.

What the Popes maintain, logically and uncompromisingly, is that the source of authority is precisely the same in an absolute monarchy, such as that of Louis XIV in 18th-century France, as in a country where the government is chosen in a democratic election in which every citizen has the right to vote, such as the United States today. *Omnis potestas a Deo*—"All authority comes from God." Pope Leo XIII explained in his encyclical *Immortale Dei*, Nov. 1, 1885, that:

Every civilized community must have a ruling authority, and this authority, no less than society itself, has its source in nature, and has, consequently, God for its author. Hence it follows that all public power must proceed from God. For God alone is the true and supreme lord of the world. Everything without exception must be subject to Him, and must serve Him, so that whosoever holds the right to govern, holds it from one sole and single source, namely, God, the Sovereign Ruler of all. "There is no power but from God." (Rom. 13:1)

"There is no power but from God." This quotation from Romans 13:1 states all that needs to be stated concerning the source of authority. Because those who govern derive their authority from God and govern as His legates, and not as holding their authority from the people, no government can have a true right to enact any legislation contrary to the law of God, even if such legislation is the manifest wish of the majority of the people. The Church is totally opposed to any concept of democracy in which authority is said to reside in the people and in which those who govern are said to receive their authority from the people. Pope Leo XIII insisted in *Immortale Dei* that:

In a society grounded upon such maxims, all government is nothing more nor less than the will of the people; and the people, being under the power of itself alone, is alone its own ruler. . . . The authority of God is passed over in silence, just as if there were no God; or as if He cared nothing for human society; or as if men, in their individual capacity or bound together in social relations, owed nothing to God; or as if there could be a government of which the whole origin and power and authority did not reside in God Himself. Thus, as is evident, a state becomes nothing but a multitude, which is its own master and ruler.

In the July 1950 issue of the *American Ecclesiastical Review*, Monsignor George Shea explains the situation that should prevail in a predominantly Catholic state as follows:

In a Catholic society, it is incumbent upon the State to be a "Catholic State," to declare and to treat Catholicism as "the religion of the State." The formal, official, and exclusive recognition and profession of Catholicism by the State in a Catholic society as its own one and only religion, in short, the establishment of Catholicism as "the religion of the State," seems necessarily contained in the very notion of the State's duty to accept and profess the true religion, therefore Catholicism, with its creed, code and

cult. How else could the State, *qua* State, in truth accept and profess Catholicism, together with its tenet that it alone is the true religion?

This is a faithful summary of consistent papal teaching. In *Immortale Dei*, Pope Leo XIII teaches:

Men living together in society are under the power of God no less than individuals are, and society, not less than individuals, owes gratitude to God, who gave it being and maintains it, and whose ever-bounteous goodness enriches it with countless blessings. Since, then, no one is allowed to be remiss in the service due to God, and since the chief duty of all men is to cling to religion in both its teaching and practice—not such religion as they may have a preference for, but the religion which God enjoins, and which certain and most clear marks show to be the only one true religion—it is a public crime to act as though there were no God. So, too, is it a sin in the State not to have care for religion, as a something beyond its scope, or as of no practical benefit; or out of many forms of religion to adopt that one which chimes in with the fancy; for States are bound absolutely to worship God in that way which He has shown to be His will. All who rule, therefore, should hold in honour the holy Name of God, and one of their chief duties must be to favour religion, to protect it . . . . "

In the same Encyclical he cites as reprehensible these views:

The State (*civitas*) does not consider itself bound by any kind of duty towards God. Moreover, it believes that it is not obliged to make public profession of any religion; or to inquire which of the very many religions is the only one true; or to prefer one religion to all the rest; or to show to any form of religion special favour; but, on the contrary, is bound to grant equal rights to every creed, so that public order may not be disturbed by any particular form of religious belief.

In his Encyclical *Libertas humana*, 20 June 1888, he teaches:

"This kind of liberty [liberty of cult], if considered in relation to the State, clearly implies that there is no reason why the State should offer any homage to God, or should desire any public recognition of Him; that no one form of worship is to be preferred to another, but that all stand on an equal footing, no account being taken of the religion of the people, even if they profess the Catholic faith.... Civil society [*civilis societas, quia societas est*] must acknowledge God as its Founder and Parent, and must obey and reverence His power and authority. Justice therefore forbids, and reason itself forbids, the State to be godless; or to adopt a line of action which would end in godlessness—namely, to treat the various religions (as they call them) alike, and to bestow upon them promiscuously equal rights and privileges. Since, then, the profession of one religion is necessary in the State, that religion must be professed which alone is true, and which can be recognized without difficulty, especially in Catholic States, because the marks of truth are, as it were, engraven upon it.

Pius X wrote in his Encyclical *Vehementer nos*, 11 February 1906:

That the State should be separated from the Church is an absolutely false and most pernicious thesis. For first, since it is based on the principle that religion should be of no concern to the State, it does a grave injury to God, He Who is the founder and conserver of human society no less than He is of individual men, for which reason He should be worshipped not only privately but also publicly.

The Rights of Man were discussed by the French National Assembly during the meetings of August 1789, and adopted in October of the same year. Some of the articles are not simply acceptable, but actually commendable, e.g., Article 7, concerning the detention of citizens; Article 8, stating that laws cannot have a retroactive effect; and Article 9, concerning those who have been arrested but whose guilt has not been proven. Other articles are ambiguous. But some others are positively incompatible with Catholicism, particularly Article 6, which begins by stating that the law is the expression of the general will. This is a complete negation of the teaching of the Church that all authority comes from God. Pope Pius VI had no hesitation in condemning the Declaration as "contrary to religion and to society."<sup>[1]</sup> Acceptance of the Declaration of the Rights of Man rules out the possibility of a Catholic state and the social reign of Christ the King. This is hardly surprising in view of the Masonic origin of the Declaration. Father Denis Fahey wrote:

That the preparation and the triumph of the French Revolution were the work of Freemasonry does not need proof, since the Masons themselves boast of it. Accordingly, *The Declaration of the Rights of Man* is a Masonic production.<sup>[2]</sup>

Father Fahey quoted in support of this contention a statement by Monsieur Bonnet, the orator at the Grand Orient Assembly in 1904:

Freemasonry had the supreme honor of giving to humanity the chart which it had lovingly elaborated. It was our Brother, de la Fayette, who first presented the project of a declaration of the natural rights of the man and the citizen living in society, to be the first chapter of the Constitution. On 25 August 1789 the Constituent Assembly, of which more than 300 members were Masons, definitively adopted, almost word for word, in the form determined upon in the Lodges, the text of the immortal Declaration of the Rights of Man.<sup>[3]</sup>

Father Fahey summarized the Declaration as a formal renunciation of allegiance to Christ the King, of the supernatural life, and of membership in Christ's Mystical Body. He continued:

The French State thereby officially declared that it no longer acknowledged any duty to God through Our Lord Jesus Christ, and no longer recognized the dignity of membership of Christ in its citizens. It thus inaugurated the attack on the organization of society under Christ the King which has continued down to the present day.<sup>[4]</sup>

Father Francis J. Connell has explained that the fundamental issue at stake in the necessity for Church and State to be united in Catholic countries is not the obligation of states to obey the laws of the Catholic Church, but "the obligation of civil rulers in their official capacity to obey the

divine positive law of Jesus Christ." He adds: "In other words, the real point at issue is not the relation between the State and the Catholic Church, but rather the relation between the State and Christ the King."<sup>[5]</sup>

This is a point of crucial importance. The obligations of the State to God, deriving from the rights of Christ the King, are quite independent of any particular historical circumstances which may have influenced the writing of a particular encyclical. The citations from encyclicals which have been cited demonstrate that the Popes were laying down general principles with a permanent validity. These principles retain their validity no matter what may have been the circumstances which prompted particular encyclicals. Writing in the American Ecclesiastical Review in May 1953, Cardinal Ottaviani condemned those who attempt to bypass permanently valid teaching in encyclicals on the grounds that it was transient and applicable only to the historical circumstances which prompted it:

The first fault of these persons consists precisely in their failure to accept fully the *arma veritatis* and the teachings which the Roman Pontiffs during the past century, and particularly the reigning Pontiff Pius XII, have given to Catholics on this subject in encyclical letters, allocutions, and instructions of various kinds.

To justify themselves, these people assert that in the body of teaching imparted within the Church there are to be distinguished two elements, the one permanent, and the other transient. This latter is supposed to be due to the reflection of particular contemporary conditions.

Unfortunately, they carry this tactic so far as to apply it to the principles taught in pontifical documents, principles on which the teachings of the Popes have remained constant so as to make these principles a part of the patrimony of Catholic doctrine. [my emphasis]

After summarizing papal teaching on the question of Church and State, including "the duty of rulers of a Catholic State to protect from everything that would undermine it the religious unity of a people who unanimously know themselves to be in secure possession of religious truth," Cardinal Ottaviani traces this teaching through successive pontificates up to that of Pope Pius XII and concludes:

These principles are firm and immovable. They were valid in the times of Innocent III and Boniface VIII. They are valid in the days of Leo XIII and of Pius XII, who has reaffirmed them in more than one of his documents . . . . I am certain that no one can prove that there has been any kind of change, in the matter of these principles, between *Summi pontificatus* of Pius XII and the encyclicals of Pius XI, *Divini Redemptoris* against Communism, *Mit brennender Sorge* against Nazism, and *Non abbiamo bisogno* against the state monopoly of fascism, on the one hand; and the earlier encyclicals of Leo XIII, *Immortale Dei*, *Libertas*, and *Sapientiae Christianae*, on the other.

"The ultimate, profound, lapidary fundamental norms of society," says the august Pontiff in his Christmas radio-message of 1942, "cannot be damaged by the intervention of man's genius. Men can deny them, ignore them, despise them, disobey them, but they can never abrogate them with juridical efficacy."

It is incontestable that *Dignitatis humanae*, the Declaration of the Second Vatican Council on Religious Liberty, did not reaffirm authentic papal teaching on the social reign of Christ the King. It is certainly arguable that it also contradicts papal teaching on Church and state, teaching which Cardinal Ottaviani described as "part of the patrimony of Catholic doctrine."

The most scholarly defense of *Dignitatis humanae* was written by an Australian priest, Father Brian Harrison. Father Harrison is a scholar of complete integrity, who makes no attempt to defend what is indefensible. He writes:

Even more striking than *Dignitatis humanae*'s omission of any obvious reiteration of the obligation of public authorities to recognize Catholicism as uniquely true (not to mention the subsequent removal of prayers and hymns expressing this teaching from the new Mass and Office of Christ the King) is the conciliar Declaration's affirmation of certain ideas which bear at least a *prima facie* appearance of contradicting previous papal statements. [\[6\]](#)

Father Harrison was not only honest, but prudent, to concede that the social kingship of Christ was not affirmed by *Dignitatis humanae*, as not one word affirming it can be found anywhere in the Declaration, and his reference to the new Mass and Office of Christ the King is very significant. An accepted principle with regard to liturgical worship is that the doctrinal standpoint of any religious body must necessarily be reflected in its liturgy. This can be summed up by the phrase *lex orandi, lex credendi*, which can be translated freely as meaning that the manner in which the Church worships, *lex orandi*, must reflect what the Church believes, *lex credendi*

The true import of the new Office can be deduced primarily from what has been removed from the preconciliar Breviary, and a comparison of the two texts reveals the systematic removal or modification of complete prayers or individual phrases which could not be reconciled with the teaching of *Dignitatis humanae*, that is, prayers which give liturgical expression to the Social Reign of Christ the King, and demand that states as well as individuals must submit themselves to His rule. The same procedure has been applied to the Proper of the Mass for the Feast. An introductory note in the 1952 edition of the St. Andrew Daily Missal explains that:

Pope Pius XI (whose motto was *Pax Christi in regno Christi*) instituted the Feast of Christ the King as a solemn affirmation of Our Lord's Kingship of every human society. He is King not only of the soul and conscience, intelligence and will of all men, but also of families and cities, peoples and states and the whole universe. In his encyclical letter *Quas primas*, the Pope showed how laicism or secularism, organizing society without any reference to God, leads to the apostasy of the masses and the ruin of society, because it is a complete denial of Christ's Kingship. This is one of the great heresies of our time, and the Pope considered that this annual public, social, and official assertion of Christ's divine right of Kingship over men in the liturgy would be an effective means of combatting it.

Pope Pius XI wrote in *Quas primas*:

Nations will be reminded by the annual celebration of this feast that not only private individuals but also rulers and princes are bound to give public honour and obedience to Christ.

Forty years later, almost to the day, by the promulgation of *Dignitatis humanae* on 7 December 1965, the Church ceased to demand that rulers give public honour and obedience to Christ. The title of the Declaration itself, "The Dignity of the Human Person," epitomizes the man-centred ethos of the Declaration. It is no longer the rights of Christ the King which must take priority but the so called rights of contemporary man, rights which he ascribes to himself in virtue of what is said to be his developing consciousness of his own dignity. In an address to the last Council meeting, on the very day of the promulgation of the Declaration, Pope Paul VI remarked:

One must realize that this Council, which exposed itself to human judgement, insisted very much more upon this pleasant side of man, rather than his unpleasant one. Its attitude was very much and deliberately optimistic. A wave of affection and admiration flowed from the Council over the modern world of humanity. Errors were condemned, indeed, because charity demanded this no less than did truth, but for the persons themselves there was only warning, respect, and love. Instead of depressing diagnoses, encouraging remedies; instead of direful prognostics, messages of trust issued from the Council to the present-day world. The modern world's values were not only respected but honoured, its efforts approved, its aspirations purified and blessed.

The values of the modern world are now clearly apparent even in nominally Catholic countries today in the legalization of divorce, contraception, pornography, sodomy, and abortion. Pope Paul's illusion that his Council would purify the aspirations of the modern world was finally dispelled for him when he wept at the establishment of an abortion clinic in Rome itself before his death in 1978.

### **The Breviary Office of Christ the King**

The hymn *Te saeculorum Principem* of First Vespers has had the following verses omitted:

The wicked mob screams out.

"We don't want Christ as king,"

While we, with shouts of joy, hail

Thee as the world's supreme King.

May the rulers of the world publicly

honour and extol Thee;

May teachers and judges reverence Thee;



May the laws express Thine order  
And the arts reflect Thy beauty.

May kings find renown in their submission  
and dedication to Thee.  
Bring under Thy gentle rule our  
country and our homes.

Glory be to Thee, Jesus, supreme over  
All secular authorities;  
And glory be to the Father and  
The loving Spirit through endless ages.

The hymn *Aeterna Imago Altissimi* has been transferred from Matins to Lauds, and the following changes made. The last two lines of the second verse stated that the Father had entrusted to Christ, as His right, "absolute dominion over the peoples" (*Cui iure sceptrum gentium Pater supremum credit*). This has been replaced by an admonition that we, as individuals, should willingly submit ourselves to Christ (*tibi volentes subdimur qui iure cunctis imperas*).

The following verses have, not surprisingly, been omitted completely:

To Thee, Who by right claim rule over all men,  
We willingly submit ourselves;  
To be subject to Thy laws  
Means happiness for a state and its peoples.

Glory be to Thee, Jesus,  
Supreme over all secular authorities;  
And glory be to the Father and  
The loving Spirit through endless ages.

A version of the *Vexilla Regis* has been abolished completely. Originally found in Lauds, some of its verses read:

Christ triumphantly unfurls His  
Glorious banners everywhere;  
Come nations of the world, and  
On bended knee acclaim the King of kings.

How great is the happiness of a country  
That rightly owns the rule of Christ and  
Zealously carries out the commands God gave to men.

The plighted word keeps marriage unbroken,  
The children grow up with virtue intact and  
Homes where purity is found  
Abound also in the other virtues of home life.

Beloved King, may the light from Thee  
That we desire, shine on us in all its glory;  
May the world receive the gift of peace,  
Be subject to Thee and adore Thee.

A number of readings from Quas primas itself were included in the Office, and they explained the traditional teaching on Church and State with great clarity. They have all been removed, showing how blatantly the compilers of the new Breviary went about their task of eliminating liturgical references to the Social Kingship of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The removal of these readings from Quas primas must certainly be seen as an affront to the memory and the teaching of Pope Pius XI, at whose behest the Office had been composed only forty years earlier, with the specific aim of reminding rulers that they are bound to give public honour and obedience to Our Lord. Could this great Pope possibly have imagined that within four decades he would have a successor who would totally mutilate the Office that he had approved so recently, and that this mutilation would have the objective of removing any suggestion that rulers are bound to give honour and obedience to Our Lord? Pope Paul VI stated explicitly to the rulers of the world that the Church asked no more of them than freedom to pursue its mission.

The thoroughness with which Archbishop Bugnini's Consilium expunged every specific expression of Our Lord's Social Kingship from the liturgy can hardly be denied. Its members did not

even miss a reference to Our Lord's Social Kingship in the Good Friday liturgy. The first of the Solemn Collects, the one for the Church, read:

Let us pray, dearly beloved, for the holy Church of God: that our God and Lord may be pleased to give it peace, keep its unity and preserve it throughout the world: subjecting to it principalities and powers, and may He grant us, while we live in peace and tranquillity, grace to glorify God the Father almighty. {my emphasis]

This prayer has been replaced by the following:

Let us pray, dear friends, for the holy Church of God throughout the World,  
that God, the almighty Father guide it, and gather it together  
so that we may worship him in peace and tranquillity.

Lest anyone should imagine that an undue significance has been placed upon changes in the Breviary and Missal relating to the doctrine of Christ the King, a comment by Archbishop A. Bugnini, Great Architect of the Liturgical Revolution, should prove very illuminating.

In the ecumenical climate of Vatican II, some expressions in the *Orationes sollemnes* of the Good Friday service had a bad ring to them. There were urgent requests to tone down some of the wording. It is always unpleasant to have to alter venerable texts that for centuries have effectively nourished Christian devotion and have about them the spiritual fragrance of the heroic age of the Church's beginnings. Above all, it is difficult to revise literary masterpieces that are unsurpassed for their pithy form. It was nevertheless thought necessary to face up to the task, lest anyone find reason for spiritual discomfort in the prayer of the Church. The revisions, limited to what was absolutely necessary, were prepared by study group l8 bis. In Intercession 1: "For the Church," the phrase *subiciens ei principatus et potestates* ("subjecting principalities and powers to it [the Church]") was omitted: even though this was inspired by what St. Paul says about the "angelic powers" (Col. 2:15), it could be misinterpreted as referring to a temporal role which the Church did indeed have in other periods of history but which is anachronistic today. [7]

So there we have it. The social kingship of Christ is an anachronism.

In my book *The Second Vatican Council and Religious Liberty*, I have documented in great detail the manner in which *Dignitatis humanae* abandoned the traditional concept of a Catholic state as taught by the Popes. The term "Catholic State" is not so much as mentioned throughout the entire Declaration. Article 6 accepts the possibility of a religious body being given "special legal recognition," but insists that "it is at the same time imperative that the right of all citizens and religious bodies to religious freedom should be recognized and made effective in practice." This hardly corresponds with the insistence of Pope Leo XIII: "Justice therefore forbids, and reason itself forbids, the State to be godless; or to adopt a line of action which would end in godlessness—namely, to treat the various religions (as they call them) alike, and to bestow upon them promiscuously equal rights and privileges."

One of the privileges denied to the adherents of false religions in a Catholic state was that of propagating their errors in public and persuading the Catholic citizens to repudiate the truth for heresy. This was the case prior to Vatican II in such Catholic states as Spain, Colombia, and Malta. The Popes did not teach that in a Catholic state non-Catholics should be forced to embrace the Catholic faith or be prevented from practicing their religions in private. In *Immortale Dei*, Pope Leo XIII taught that:

The Church is wont to take earnest heed that no one shall be forced to embrace the Catholic faith against his will, for, as St. Augustine wisely reminds us, “Man cannot believe otherwise than by his own free will.”

It is necessary to make a distinction of crucial importance, the distinction between religious liberty considered from a legal or juridical standpoint, that is as a civil right, and from a theological standpoint. Considered from a juridical standpoint, it examines the grounds for and the extent of the legal coercion to be applied to the expression of religious belief in the external public forum. Considered from a theological standpoint, that is, a standpoint based upon the nature and will of God as revealed to man, there can be no question of any natural right to believe or to propagate error. As Pope Leo XIII teaches, man has a natural right only to follow the will of God and obey His commandments. In the Liberal sense, liberty of conscience is the right of an individual to think and believe whatsoever he wants, even in religion and morality; to express his views publicly, and to persuade others to adopt them, using word of mouth, the public press, or any other means. He has the right to choose any religion or to have no religion, and this, Liberals claim, is a natural right. *Dignitatis humanae* did not affirm that anyone has a natural right, a moral right, to believe in or to propagate error, but upheld the traditional teaching in this respect. The Declaration affirmed not a moral but a civil liberty, and so the question must be considered from a purely juridical standpoint. In considering the question of religious liberty from the juridical standpoint, the following distinctions must be kept in mind. The first distinction must be that between the internal forum and the external forum. The internal forum refers to what a man does in private, the external forum to what he does in public. The second distinction must be made between not being forced to act against one's conscience, i.e., freedom from coercion, and freedom not to be restrained from acting in accordance with one's conscience. The traditional Catholic teaching is that in religious matters: 1. No one must be forced to act against his conscience in private. 2. No one must be forced to act against his conscience in public. 3. No one must be prevented from acting in accordance with his conscience in private. 4. The right of acting in accordance with one's conscience in public can be restricted.

Let us take a specific example. Before Vatican II, Jehovah's Witnesses in Spain were allowed to practice their bizarre religion within the privacy of their homes and to meet together in private with other members of their sect. They were not forced to take part in public Catholic worship.

They were not, however, in accordance with (4) permitted to interfere with the faith of Catholics by visiting their homes with the object of perverting their faith, to publish anti-Catholic literature, or to propagate their errors through the radio or TV or by holding public meetings. Father Francis J. Connell explained in the *American Ecclesiastical Review* that what a man does in private affects only himself and his family, but when he acts in public the rights of other citizens are involved:

It is fully within their [civil rulers'] right to restrict and to prevent public functions and activities of false religions which are likely to be detrimental to the spiritual welfare of the Catholic citizens or insulting to the true religion of Christ. [8]

The word "toleration" is of crucial importance for understanding the discontinuity between *Dignitatis humanae* and the classic papal teaching. Pope Leo XIII taught in *Libertas humana*:

While not conceding any right to anything save what is true and honest, she does not forbid public authority to tolerate what is at variance with truth and justice, for the sake of avoiding some greater evil, or of obtaining or preserving some greater good.

This was the consistent teaching of the Popes up to and including Pope Pius XII. Those in error had no natural right to propagate their views—the propagation of error is an evil—but it could be tolerated in the interests of the common good ("public welfare") to prevent a greater evil, such as civil unrest. Pope Leo XIII insisted in *Libertas humana* that the overriding criterion in the question of toleration is the common good, and that

To judge aright, we must acknowledge that the more a state is driven to tolerate evil the further it is from perfection; and that the tolerance of evil which is dictated by political prudence should be strictly confined to the limits which its justifying cause, the public welfare, requires.

This was official teaching of the Church up to and during the Council. Writing in the *American Ecclesiastical Review* in 1950, Msgr. George W. Shea insisted that what is at issue here is a question of principle, i.e., "the relations which should per se obtain by reason of the nature of Church and State in a Catholic society, so that any deviation from these relations, while tolerable perhaps as a concession prompted by expediency, could not merit approval on principle." [my emphasis] [9] There is not the least suggestion in the teaching of any pre-Vatican II Pope that there could be a natural right on the part of non-Catholics not to be prevented from propagating their errors in public.

The traditional teaching, described by Cardinal Ottaviani, as "part of the patrimony of Catholic doctrine" was upheld time and again during the conciliar debates. Cardinal Siri of Genoa warned that:

We cannot legitimize what God merely tolerates; we can only tolerate it, and that within the limits of

the common good. We cannot therefore accept the proposed schema insofar as it recommends liberty for all without discrimination. . . . We should therefore consider more carefully the contribution of theological sources to this problem of religious liberty and determine whether or not the contents of this schema can be reconciled with the teaching of Leo XIII, Pius XI, and Pius XII. Otherwise, we weaken our own authority and compromise our apostolic effort.[\[10\]](#)

Bishop Emilio Tagle Covarrabuias of Valparaiso, Chile, spoke in the name of forty-five Latin American bishops when he stated:

I am very much against this schema. It merely rearranges the previous version, and it contains a number of contradictions. . . . Many passages are too complacent towards false religions and run the risk of indifferentism and Liberalism. It does not seem possible to grant the same rights to all religions indiscriminately. Only the one true Church has the right to religious liberty, strictly speaking. Other religions can only be tolerated, depending upon the circumstances and persons.[\[11\]](#)

Cardinal de Arriba y Castro of Tarragona defended the traditional papal teaching as follows:

This is probably the most delicate problem of the whole Council with respect to the faith. We must clearly affirm this basic principle: only the Catholic Church has the duty and the right to preach the Gospel. That is why proselytism on the part of non-Catholics among Catholics is illicit and should be prevented by the civil authorities as well as by the Church, as the common good requires. . . . The Council must be careful not to decree the ruin of Catholicism in those countries where it is in fact the only religion.[\[12\]](#)

It is no exaggeration to state the changing of the Spanish Constitution to correspond with *Dignitatis humanae* has indeed brought about the ruin of Catholicism in that country. During the Synod of European Bishops in October 1999, Msgr. Fernando Sebastián Aguilar, Archbishop of Pamplona, lamented the fact that in Spain "the cultural convictions on which social life is based are undermined and are more atheistic than Christian." Divorce, abortion, homosexual acts, contraception and proselytism by Protestant sects, which were all illegal prior to DH, have been legalized. Spain now has the lowest birthrate in Europe, and there is a Mormon temple in Madrid.

During the Council, the schema on religious liberty was often called "the American schema." The finalized text of *Dignitatis humanae* can be considered almost entirely the work of Father John Courtney Murray, S.J., and he attributed its success to "the solid and consistent support of the American bishops and their numerous interventions"—interventions which he had written and which they had accepted and read with the most abject docility. Father Murray continued:

Undoubtedly, the support derived its basic inspiration from the American experience, from which the Church has learned the practical value of the free-exercise clause of the First Amendment. . . . The object or content of the right to religious freedom, as specified both in the Declaration and in the American constitutional system, is identical." [my emphasis][\[13\]](#)

In his book *American Participation in the Second Vatican Council*, Msgr. V. A. Yzermans writes: "It was a delightful victory for the American hierarchy."<sup>[14]</sup> He would have been more accurate in describing it as a delightful victory for Father Murray, in view of the fact that, as one American prelate expressed it: "The voices are the voices of United States' bishops, but the thoughts are the thoughts of John Courtney Murray!" In his book *John Courtney Murray: Theologian in Conflict*, Father Donald E. Pelotte has no doubt that although other members of the commission helped to pen the final text of the Declaration, "Murray's contribution was decisive. The very acceptance of Murray's basic thrust, only ten years after his admonition from the Jesuit Curia in Rome, was itself a singular recognition."<sup>[15]</sup> Ten years previously Murray's Jesuit superiors had forbidden him to teach what *Dignitatis humanae* made the official teaching of the Church. What had taken place was described with complete accuracy and with total approval in the 20 July 1992 issue of *The Catholic Virginian* by Father G. P. Fogarty, S.J., President of the American Catholic Historical Association, who gave Father Murray credit for the fact that *Dignitatis humanae* "made universal Catholic teaching what had previously been considered an aberration of the American Church."

The doctrine of the Social Kingship of Jesus Christ was thus rejected by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council in favor of the Constitution of the United States, a country in which "the majority of men have thrust Jesus Christ and His holy law out of their lives; . . . [where] Our Lord and His holy law have no place either in private life or in politics," a state which has become "nothing but a multitude, which is its own master and ruler." There is no realistic possibility of the repudiation of Christ's Kingship in *Dignitatis humanae* ever being reversed. This sublime teaching is not sacrosanct in the Church of the third millennium, but the non-infallible teaching of Vatican II most certainly is.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Encyclical Letter, *Adeo nota*, 23 April 1791. Para 13.

<sup>[2]</sup> Foreword to G. Dillon, *Grand Orient Freemasonry Unmasked* (London, 1965), p. 16.

<sup>[3]</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>[4]</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

- [5] *American Ecclesiastical Review*, No. 125, 1951, p. 9.
- [6] B. Harrison, *Religious Liberty and Contraception* (Melbourne, 1988), p. 14.
- [7] A. Bugnini, *La riforma liturgica*, 1948-1975 (Edizioni Liturgiche - 00192 Roma, 1983), p. 127.
- [8] *American Ecclesiastical Review*, No. 119, 1948, p. 250.
- [9] *Ibid.*, No. 123, 1950, p. 161,
- [10] Henri Fesquet, *The Drama of Vatican II* (New York, 1967), p. 591.
- [11] *Ibid.*, p. 600.
- [12] *Ibid.*, pp. 591-592.
- [13] Msgr. V. A. Yzermans, *American Participation in the Second Vatican Council* (New York, 1967), p. 668.
- [14] *Ibid.*, p. 623.
- [15] 15 Donald E. Pelotte, *John Courtney Murray: Theologian in Conflict* (New York, 1975), p. 98.