

The Great Papal Encyclicals

Quanta Cura & The Syllabus of Errors
Condemning Current Errors

Pius IX

ENCYCLICAL LETTER

Quanta Cura & The Syllabus of Errors

OF THE SUPREME PONTIFF

PIUS IX

Condemning Current Errors

December 8, 1864

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Encyclical Letter of Pope Pius IX

Quanta Cura¹
Condemning Current Errors

December, 8, 1864

To Our Venerable Brethren, all Patriarchs,
Primates, Archbishops and Bishops having
Favor and Communion of the Holy See.

Venerable Brethren, Health and Apostolic Benediction.

1. It is well known unto all men, and especially to You, Venerable Brothers, with what great care and pastoral vigilance Our Predecessors, the Roman Pontiffs, have discharged the Office entrusted by Christ Our Lord to them, in the Person of the Most Blessed Peter, Prince of the Apostles, have unremittingly discharged the duty of feeding the lambs and the sheep, and have diligently nourished the Lord's entire flock with the words of faith, imbued it with salutary doctrine, and guarded it from poisoned pastures. And those Our Predecessors, who were the assertors and Champions of the august Catholic Religion, of truth and justice, being as they were chiefly solicitous for the salvation of souls, held nothing to be of so great importance as the duty of exposing and condemning, in their most wise Letters and Constitutions, all heresies and errors which are hostile to moral honesty and to the eternal salvation of mankind, and which have frequently stirred up terrible commotions and have damaged both the Christian and civil commonwealths in a disastrous manner. Wherefore those Our Predecessors have, with Apostolic fortitude, continually resisted the machinations of those evil men, who, "foaming out their own confusion, like the raging waves of the sea," and "promising liberty, while they are themselves the slaves of corruption," endeavored by their fallacious opinions and most wicked writings to subvert the foundations of Religion and of civil Society, to remove from our midst all virtue and justice, to deprave the hearts and minds of all, to turn away from right discipline of morals the incautious, and especially inexperienced youth, miserably corrupting them, leading them into the nets of error, and finally withdrawing them from the bosom of the Catholic Church.

2. And now, Venerable Brothers, as is also very well known to you, scarcely had We (by the secret Dispensation of Divine Providence, certainly by no merit of Our own) been called to this Chair of Peter, when We, to the extreme grief of Our soul, beheld a horrible tempest stirred up by so many erroneous opinions, and the dreadful and never enough to be lamented mischiefs which redound to Christian people from such errors; and We then, in discharge of Our Apostolic Ministerial Office, imitating the example of Our illustrious Predecessors, raised Our voice, and in several published Encyclical Letters, and in Allocutions delivered in Consistory, and in other Apostolic Letters, We condemned the prominent, most grievous errors of the age, and We stirred up your excellent episcopal vigilance, and again and again did We admonish and exhort all the sons of the Catholic Church, who are most dear to Us, that they should abhor and shun all the said errors, as they would the contagion of a fatal pestilence. Especially in Our first Encyclical Letter, written to You on the 9th of November, A.D. 1846, and in two Allocutions, one of which was delivered by Us in Consistory on the 9th of December, A.D. 1854, and the other on the 9th of June, A.D. 1862, We condemned the monstrous and portentous opinions, which prevail especially in the present age, to the very great loss of souls, and even to the detriment of civil society, and which are in the highest degree hostile, not only to the Catholic Church, and to her salutary doctrine and venerable laws, but also to the everlasting law of nature engraven by God Upon the hearts of all men, and to right reason; and out of which almost all errors originate.

3. Now although hitherto We have not omitted to denounce and reprove the chief errors of this kind, yet the cause of the Catholic Church and the salvation of souls committed to Us by God, and even the interests of human society absolutely demand, that once again We should stir up Your pastoral solicitude, to drive away other erroneous opinions which flow from those errors above specified, as their source. These false and perverse opinions are so much the more detestable, by as much as they have chiefly for their object to hinder and banish that salutary influence which the Catholic Church, by the institution and command of her Divine Author, ought freely to exercise, even to the consummation of the world, not only over individual men, but nations, peoples, and sovereigns, and to abolish that mutual cooperation and

agreement of counsels between the Priesthood and Governments, which has always been propitious and conducive to the welfare both of Church and State. (Gregory XVI, Encyclical *Minari Vos*, Aug. 15, 1852). For you know well, Venerable Brethren, that at this time there are found not a few who, applying to civil intercourse the impious and absurd principles of what they call *Naturalism*, dare teach “that the best form of Society, and the exigencies of civil progress, absolutely require human society to be constituted and governed without any regard whatsoever to Religion, as if this [Religion] did not even exist, or at least without making any distinction between true and false religions.” Contrary to the teachings of the Holy Scriptures, of the Church, and of the Holy Fathers, these persons do not hesitate to assert, that “the best condition of human society is that wherein no duty is recognized by the Government of correcting, by enacted penalties, the violators of the Catholic Religion, except when the maintenance of the public peace requires it.” From this totally false notion of social government, they fear not to uphold that erroneous opinion most pernicious to the Catholic Church, and to the salvation of souls, which was called by Our Predecessor, Gregory XVI (lately quoted) the insanity [*deliramentum*] (*Ibid.*): namely, “that the liberty of conscience and of worship is the peculiar (or inalienable) right of every man, which should be proclaimed by law, and that citizens have the right to all kinds of liberty, to be restrained by no law, whether ecclesiastical or civil, by which they may be enabled to manifest openly and publicly their ideas, by word of mouth, through the press, or by any other means.” But whilst these men make these rash assertions, they do not reflect, or consider, that they preach the liberty of perdition (St. Augustine, Epistle 105, al. 166), and that, “if it is always free to human arguments to discuss, men will never be wanting who will dare to resist the truth, and to rely upon the loquacity of human wisdom, when we know from the command of Our Lord Jesus Christ, how faith and Christian wisdom ought to avoid this most mischievous vanity.” (St. Leo, Epistle 164, al. 133. sec 2. Boll. ed.)

4. And since Religion has been excluded from civil Society, and the doctrine and authority of divine Revelation, or the true and germane notion of justice and human right have been obscured and lost, and material or brute force substituted in the place of true justice and legitimate right, it is easy to perceive why some persons,

forgetting and trampling upon the most certain principles of sound reason, dare cry out together, “that the will of the people, manifested by what they call public opinion, or in any other way, constitutes the supreme law, independent of all divine and human right, and that, in the political order, accomplished facts, by the mere fact of having been accomplished, have the force of right.” But who does not see and plainly understand, that the Society of man, freed from the bonds of Religion and of true justice, can certainly have no other purpose than the effort to obtain and accumulate wealth, and that in its actions it follows no other law than that of the uncurbed cupidity, which seeks to secure its own pleasures and comforts? For this reason, also, these same men persecute with such bitter hatred the Religious Orders, who have deserved so well of Religion, civil Society, and Letters; they loudly declare that these Orders have no right to exist, and, in so doing, make common cause with the falsehoods of the heretics. For, as was most wisely taught by Our Predecessor of illustrious memory, Pius VI, “the abolition of Religious Orders injures the state of public profession of the Evangelical Counsels; injures a mode of life recommended by the Church, as in conformity with Apostolic doctrine; does wrong to the illustrious founders whom we venerate upon our altars, and who constituted these societies under the inspiration of God.” (Epistle to Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld, March 10, 1791.)

And these same persons also impiously pretend that citizens should be deprived of the liberty of publicly bestowing on the Church their alms for the sake of Christian charity, and that the law forbidding “servile labor on account of Divine worship” upon certain fixed days should be abolished, upon the most fallacious pretext that such liberty and such law are contrary to the principles of political economy. Not content with abolishing Religion in public Society, they desire further to banish it from families and private life. Teaching and professing these most fatal errors of Socialism and Communism, they declare “that domestic society, or the family, derives all its reason of existence solely from civil law, whence it is to be concluded that from civil law descend and depend all the rights of parents over their children, and, above all, the right of instructing and educating them.” By such impious opinions and machinations, do these most false teachers endeavor to eliminate the salutary teaching and influence of the Catholic Church from the instruction and

education of youth, and miserably to infect and deprave by every pernicious error and vice the tender and pliant minds of youth. All those who endeavor to throw into confusion both religious and political affairs, to destroy the good order of society, and to annihilate all Divine and human rights, have always exerted all their criminal schemes, attention, and efforts upon the manner in which they might, above all, deprave and delude unthinking youth, as We have already shown: it is upon the corruption of youth that they place all their hopes. Thus they never cease to attack by every method the Clergy; both secular and regular, from whom, as testify to us in so conspicuous a manner the most certain records of history, such considerable benefits have been bestowed in abundance upon Christian and Civil Society and upon the republic of Letters; asserting of the Clergy in general, that they are the enemies of the useful sciences, of progress, and of civilization, and that they ought to be deprived of all participation in the work of teaching and training the young.

5. Others, reviving the depraved fictions of innovators, errors many times condemned, presume, with extraordinary impudence, to subordinate the authority of the Church and of this Apostolic See, conferred upon it by Christ our Lord, to the judgment of civil authority, and to deny to all the rights of this same Church and this See with regard to those things which appertain to the secular order. For these persons do not blush to affirm “that the laws of the Church do not bind the conscience, if they are not promulgated by the civil power; that the acts and decrees of the Roman Pontiffs concerning religion and the Church require the sanction and approbation, or at least the assent of the civil power; and that the Apostolic Constitutions (Clement XII, In *Eminentis*; Benedict XIV, *Providas Romanorum*; Pius VII, *Ecclesiam*; Leo XII, *Quo Graviora*) condemning secret societies, whether these exact or do not exact an oath of secrecy, and branding with anathema their followers and partisans, have no force in those countries of the world where such associations are tolerated by the civil Government.”

It is likewise affirmed “that the excommunications launched by the Council of Trent and the Roman Pontiffs against those who invade and usurp the possessions of the Church and its rights, strive, by confounding the spiritual and temporal orders, to attain solely a mere

earthly end; that the Church can decide nothing which may bind the consciences of the faithful in the temporal order of things; the right of the Church is not competent to restrain with temporal penalties the violators of her laws; and that it is in accordance with the principles of theology and of public law for the civil Government to appropriate property possessed by the churches, the Religious Orders, and other pious establishments.” And they have no shame in avowing openly and publicly the heretical statement and principle, from which have emanated so many errors and perverse opinions, “that the ecclesiastical power is not, by the law of God, made distinct from and independent of the civil power, and that no distinction, no independence of this kind can be maintained without the Church invading and usurping the essential rights of the civil power.” Neither can We pass over in silence the audacity of those who, not enduring sound doctrine, assert that “the judgments and decrees of the Holy See, the object of which is declared to concern the general welfare of the Church, its rights, and its discipline, do not claim acquiescence and obedience, under pain of sin and loss of the Catholic profession, if they do not treat of the dogmas of Faith and of morals.”

How contrary is this doctrine to the Catholic dogma, of the plenary power divinely conferred on the Sovereign Pontiff by Our Lord Jesus Christ, to guide, to supervise and to govern the Universal Church, no one can fail to see and understand, clearly and evidently.

6. Amid so great a perversity of depraved opinions. We, remembering Our Apostolic duty, and solicitous before all things for Our most holy Religion, for sound doctrine, for the salvation of the souls confided to Us, and for the welfare of human Society itself, have considered the moment opportune to raise anew Our Apostolic voice. Therefore do We, by our Apostolic authority, reprobate, denounce, and condemn generally and particularly all the evil opinions and doctrines specially mentioned in this Letter, and We wish that they may be held as reprobated, denounced, and condemned by all the children of the Catholic Church.

7. But You know further, Venerable Brothers, that in Our time the haters of all truth and justice and violent enemies of our Religion have spread abroad other impious doctrines, by means of pestilent books, pamphlets,

and journals, which, distributed over the surface of the earth, deceive the people and wickedly lie. You are not ignorant that in our day men are found who, animated and excited by the spirit of Satan, have arrived at that excess of impiety as not to fear to deny Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, and to attack His Divinity with scandalous persistence. And here We cannot abstain from awarding You well-merited praise. Venerable Brothers, for all the care and zeal, with which You have raised Your episcopal voice against so great an impiety.

8. And therefore in this present Letter, We speak to You with all affection: to You who, called to partake of Our cares, are Our greatest support in the midst of Our very great grief; Our joy and consolation, by reason of the excellent piety of which You give proof in maintaining Religion, and the marvelous love, faith, and discipline with which, united by the strongest and most affectionate ties to Us and this Apostolic See. You strive valiantly and accurately to fulfill Your most weighty episcopal ministry. We do then expect, from Your excellent pastoral zeal, that, taking the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and strengthened by the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, You will watch with redoubled care that the faithful committed to Your charge “abstain from evil pasturage, which Jesus Christ doth not till, because His Father hath not planted it.” (St. Ignatius, *M. ad. Philadelph.*, St. Leo, Epist. 156, al. 125.) Never cease, then, to inculcate on the faithful that all true happiness for mankind proceeds from our august Religion, from its doctrine and practice, and that that people is happy who have the Lord for their God (Psalm 143). Teach them “that kingdoms rest upon the foundation of the Catholic faith (St. Celest, Epist. 22 ad. Syn. Eph.), and that nothing is so deadly, nothing so certain to engender every ill, nothing so exposed to danger, as for men to believe that they stand in need of nothing else than the freewill which we received at birth, if we ask nothing further from the Lord; that is to say, if, forgetting our Author, we abjure His power to show that we are free” (St. Innocent I, epistle 29 ad Episc. Conc. Carthag. apud Coust., p. 891). And do not omit to teach, “that the royal power has been established, not only to exercise the government of the world, but, above all, for the protection of the Church (St. Leo, Epist. 156, al. 125); and that there is nothing more profitable and more glorious for the Sovereigns of States, and Kings, than to leave the Catholic Church to

exercise her laws, and not to permit any to curtail her liberty”; as Our most wise and courageous Predecessor, St. Felix, wrote to the Emperor Zeno. “It is certain that it is advantageous for Sovereigns, when the cause of God is in question, to submit their Royal will, according to his ordinance, to the Priests of Jesus Christ, and not to prefer it before them” (Pius VII, Encyclical *Diu Satis*, May 15, 1800).

9. And if always, so especially at present, Venerable Brothers, in the midst of the numerous calamities of the Church and of civil Society, in view also of the terrible conspiracy of our adversaries against the Catholic Church and this Apostolic See, and the great accumulation of errors, it is before all things necessary to go with faith to the Throne of Grace, to obtain mercy and find Grace in timely aid. We have therefore judged it right to excite the piety of all the faithful, in order that, with Us and with You all, they may pray without ceasing to the Father of lights and of mercies, supplicating and beseeching Him fervently and humbly, and in the plenitude of their faith they may seek refuge in Our Lord Jesus Christ, who has redeemed us to God with his blood, that by their earnest and continual prayers, they may obtain from that most dear Heart, victim of burning charity for us, that it would draw all to Himself by the bonds of His love, that all men being inflamed by His holy love may live according to His heart, pleasing God in all things, and being fruitful in all good works.

But, as there is no doubt that the prayers most agreeable to God are those of men who approach Him with a heart pure from all stain, We have thought it good to open to Christians, with Apostolic liberality, the heavenly treasures of the Church confided to Our dispensation, so that the faithful, more strongly drawn towards true piety, and purified from the stain of their sins by the Sacrament of Penance, may more confidently offer up their prayers to God and obtain His mercy and grace.

10. By these Letters therefore, emanating from Our Apostolic authority, We grant to all and each of the faithful of both sexes throughout the Catholic world a Plenary Indulgence, in the manner of a Jubilee, during one month, up to the end of the coming year 1865, and not longer, to be carried into effect by You, Venerable Brethren, and the other legitimate local Ordinaries, in the form

and manner laid down at the commencement of Our Sovereign Pontificate by Our Apostolic Letters in form of a Brief, dated the 20th of November, A.D. 1846, and sent to the whole Episcopate of the world, commencing with the words, "*Arcano Divinae Providentiae concilio*," and with the faculties given by Us in those same Letters. We desire, however, that all the prescriptions of Our Letters shall be observed, saving the exceptions We have declared are to be made. And we have granted this, notwithstanding all which might make to the contrary, even those worthy of special and individual mention and derogation; and in order that every doubt and difficulty may be removed, We have ordered that copies of those Letters should again be forwarded to You.

11. Let us implore, Venerable Brethren, from our inmost hearts, and with all our souls, the mercy of God. He has encouraged us so to do, by saying: "I will not withdraw My mercy from them." "Let us ask and We shall receive; and if there is slowness or delay in the reception, because we have grievously offended, let us knock, because to him that knocketh it shall be opened; if our prayers, groans, and tears, in which We must persist and be obstinate, knock at the door: and if our prayers be united; let each one pray to God not for himself alone, but for all his brethren, as the Lord hath taught us to pray" (St. Cyprian, Epistle 11). But, in order that God may accede more easily to Our and Your prayers, and to those of all His faithful servants, let us employ in all confidence, as our Mediatrix, with Him, the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, who has destroyed all heresies throughout the world, and who, the most loving Mother of us all, is "very gracious . . . and full of mercy, . . . allows herself to be entreated by all, shows herself most clement towards all, and takes under her pitying care all our necessities with a most ample affection" (St. Bernard, *Serm. de duodecim praerogativis B.V.M. in verbis Apocalyp.*), and, "sitting as queen at the right hand of her only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in a golden vestment clothed around with various adornments," there is nothing which she cannot obtain from him. Let us implore also the intervention of the Blessed Peter, Chief of the Apostles, and his co-Apostle Paul, and of all those Saints of heaven, who, having already become the friends of God, have been admitted into the celestial kingdom, where they are crowned and bear palms in their hands; and who, henceforth certain of their own immortality, are solici-

tous for our salvation.

12. In conclusion, We ask of God from Our inmost soul the abundance of all His celestial benefits for you, and We bestow upon You, Venerable Brethren, and upon all the faithful Clergy, and Laity committed to Your care, Our Apostolic Benediction from the most loving depths of Our heart, in token of our Charity toward You.

PIUS, PP. IX.

Given at Rome, from St. Peter's this 8th day of December, 1864, the tenth anniversary of the dogmatic Definition of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in the nineteenth year of Our Pontificate. [D-1688-1 780]

THE SYLLABUS OF ERRORS²

Syllabus of the principal errors of our time, which are censured in the consistorial Allocutions, Encyclical and other Apostolic Letters of our Most Holy Lord. Pope Pius IX

I. PANTHEISM, NATURALISM AND ABSOLUTE RATIONALISM

1. There exists no Supreme, all-wise, all-provident Divine Being, distinct from the universe, and God is identical with the nature of things, and is, therefore, subject to changes. In effect, God is produced in man and in the world, and all things are God and have the very substance of God, and God is one and the same thing with the world, and, therefore, spirit with matter, necessity with liberty, good with evil, justice with injustice.— Allocution *Maxima Quidem*, June 9, 1862.

2. All action of God upon man and the world is to be denied.—*Ibid.*

3. Human reason, without any reference whatsoever to God, is the sole arbiter of truth and falsehood, and of good and evil; it is law to itself, and suffices, by its natural force, to secure the welfare of men and of nations.—*Ibid.*

4. All the truths of religion proceed from the innate strength of human reason; hence reason is the ultimate standard by which man can and ought to arrive at the knowledge of all truths of every kind.—*Ibid.*, and Encyclical *Qui Pluribus* Nov. 9, 1846, etc.

5. Divine revelation is imperfect, and therefore subject to a continual and indefinite progress, corresponding with the advancement of human reason.—*Ibid.*

6. The faith of Christ is in opposition to human reason, and divine revelation not only is not useful, but is even hurtful to the perfection of man.—*Ibid.*

7. The prophecies and miracles set forth and recorded in the Sacred Scriptures are the fiction of poets, and the mysteries of the Christian faith the result of philosophi-

² cal investigations. In the books of the Old and the New

Testament there are contained mythical inventions, and Jesus Christ is Himself a myth.—*Ibid.*

II. MODERATE RATIONALISM

8. As human reason is placed on a level with religion itself, so theological [sciences] must be treated in the same manner as philosophical sciences.—Allocution *Singulari Quadam*, Dec. 9. 1854.

9. All the dogmas of the Christian religion are indiscriminately the object of natural science or philosophy; and human reason, enlightened solely in an historical way, is able, by its own natural strength and principles, to attain to the true science of even the most abstruse dogmas; provided only that such dogmas be proposed to reason itself as its object.—Letters to the Archbishop of Munich, *Gravissimas Inter*, Dec. 11, 1862, and *Tuas Libenter*, Dec. 21, 1863.

10. As the philosopher is one thing, and philosophy another, so it is the right and duty of the philosopher to subject himself to the authority which he shall have proved to be true; but philosophy neither can nor ought to submit to any such authority.—*Ibid.*, Dec. 11, 1862.

11. The Church not only ought never to pass judgment on philosophy, but ought to tolerate the errors of philosophy, leaving it to correct itself.—*Ibid.*, Dec. 21, 1863.

12. The decrees of the Apostolic See and of the Roman congregations impede the true progress of science.—*Ibid.*

13. The method and principles by which the old scholastic doctors cultivated theology are no longer suitable to the demands of our times and to the progress of the sciences.—*Ibid.*

14. Philosophy is to be treated without taking any account of supernatural revelation.—*Ibid.*

N.B. To the rationalistic system belong in great part the errors of Anthony Günther, condemned in the letter to the Cardinal Archbishop of Cologne. *Eximiam Tuam*, June 15, 1857, and in that to the Bishop of Breslau, *Dolore*

Haud Mediocri, April 30, 1860.

III. INDIFFERENTISM. LATITUDINARIANISM

15. Every man is free to embrace and profess that religion which, guided by the light of reason, he shall consider true.—Allocution *Maxima Quidem*, June 9, 1862; Damnatio *Multiplies Inter* June 10, 1851.

16. Man may, in the observance of any religion whatever, find the way of eternal salvation, and arrive at eternal salvation.—Encyclical *Qui Pluribus*, Nov. 9, 1846.

17. Good hope at least is to be entertained of the eternal salvation of all those who are not at all in the true Church of Christ.—Encyclical *Quanto Conficiamur*, Aug. 10, 1863, etc.

18. Protestantism is nothing more than another form of the same true Christian religion, in which form it is given to please God equally as in the Catholic Church.—Encyclical *Noscitis*. Dec. 8, 1849.

IV. SOCIALISM, COMMUNISM, SECRET SOCIETIES, BIBLICAL SOCIETIES, CLERICO-LIBERAL SOCIETIES

Pests of this kind are frequently reprobated in the severest terms in the Encyclical *Qui Pluribus*, Nov. 9, 1846, Allocution *Quibus Quantisque*, April 20, 1849, Encyclical *Noscitis et Nobiscum*, Dec. 8, 1849, Allocution *Singulari Quadam*, Dec. 9, 1854, Encyclical *Quanto Conficiamur*, Aug. 10, 1863.

V. ERRORS CONCERNING THE CHURCH AND HER RIGHTS

19. The Church is not a true and perfect society, entirely free; nor is she endowed with proper and perpetual rights of her own, conferred upon her by her Divine Founder; but it appertains to the civil power to define what are the rights of the Church, and the limits within which she may exercise those rights.—Allocution *Singulari Quadam*, Dec. 9, 1854, etc.

20. The ecclesiastical power ought not to exercise its

authority without the permission and assent of the civil government.—Allocution *Meminit Unusquisque*, Sept. 30, 1861.

21 . The Church has not the power of defining dogmatically that the religion of the Catholic Church is the only true religion.—Damnatio *Multiplices Inter*, June 10, 1851.

22. The obligation by which Catholic teachers and authors are strictly bound is confined to those things only which are proposed to universal belief as dogmas of faith by the infallible judgment of the Church.—Letter to the Archbishop of Munich, *Tuas Libenter*, Dec. 21, 1863.

23. Roman pontiffs and ecumenical councils have wandered outside the limits of their powers, have usurped the rights of princes, and have even erred in defining matters of faith and morals.—Damnatio *Multiplices Inter*, June 10, 1851.

24. The Church has not the power of using force, nor has she any temporal power, direct or indirect.—Apostolic Letter *Ad Apostolicæ*, Aug. 22, 1851.

25. Besides the power inherent in the episcopate, other temporal power has been attributed to it by the civil authority, granted either explicitly or tacitly, which on that account is revocable by the civil authority whenever it thinks fit.—*Ibid.*

26. The Church has no innate and legitimate right of acquiring and possessing property.—Allocution *Nunquam Fore*, Dec. 15, 1856; Encyclical *Incredibili*, Sept. 7, 1863.

27. The sacred ministers of the Church and the Roman pontiff are to be absolutely excluded from every charge and dominion over temporal affairs.—Allocution *Maxima Quidem*, June 9, 1862.

28. It is not lawful for bishops to publish even letters Apostolic without the permission of Government.—Allocution *Nunquam Fore*, Dec. 15, 1856.

29. Favors granted by the Roman pontiff ought to be considered null, unless they have been sought for through

the civil government.—*Ibid.*

30. The immunity of the Church and of ecclesiastical persons derived its origin from civil law.—*Damnatio Multiplices Inter*, June 10, 1851.

31 . The ecclesiastical forum or tribunal for the temporal causes, whether civil or criminal, of clerics, ought by all means to be abolished, even without consulting and against the protest of the Holy See.—Allocution *Nunquam Fore*, Dec. 15, 1856; Allocution *Acerbissimum*, Sept. 27, 1852.

32. The personal immunity by which clerics are exonerated from military conscription and service in the army may be abolished without violation either of natural right or equity. Its abolition is called for by civil progress, especially in a society framed on the model of a liberal government.—Letter to the Bishop of [Montreal], *Singularis Nobisque*, Sept. 29, 1864.

33. It does not appertain exclusively to the power of ecclesiastical jurisdiction by right, proper and innate, to direct the teaching of theological questions.—Letter to the Archbishop of Munich, *Tuas Libenter*, Dec. 21, 1863.

34. The teaching of those who compare the Sovereign Pontiff to a prince, free and acting in the universal Church, is a doctrine which prevailed in the Middle Ages.—Apostolic Letter *Ad Apostolicæ*, Aug. 22, 1851.

35. There is nothing to prevent the decree of a general council, or the act of all peoples, from transferring the supreme pontificate from the bishop and city of Rome to another bishop and another city.—*Ibid.*

36. The definition of a national council does not admit of any subsequent discussion, and the civil authority can assume this principle as the basis of its acts.—*Ibid.*

37. National churches, withdrawn from the authority of the Roman pontiff and altogether separated, can be established.—Allocution *Multis Gravibusque*, Dec. 17, 1860.

38. The Roman pontiffs have, by their too arbitrary conduct, contributed to the division of the Church into

Eastern and Western.—Apostolic Letter *Ad Apostolicæ*
Aug. 22. 1851.

VI. ERRORS ABOUT CIVIL SOCIETY, CONSIDERED BOTH IN ITSELF AND IN ITS RELATION TO THE CHURCH

39. The State, as being the origin and source of all rights, is endowed with a certain right not circumscribed by any limits.—Allocution *Maxima Quidem* June 9, 1862.

40. The teaching of the Catholic Church is hostile to the well-being and interests of society.—Encyclical *Qui Pluribus*, Nov. 9, 1846; Allocution *Quibus Quantisque*, April 20, 1849.

41. The civil government, even when in the hands of an infidel sovereign, has a right to an indirect negative power over religious affairs. It therefore possesses not only the right called that of *exsequatur*, but also that of appeal, called *appellatio ab abusu*.—Apostolic Letter *Ad Apostolicæ*, Aug. 22, 1851.

42. In the case of conflicting laws enacted by the two powers, the civil law prevails.—*Ibid.*

43. The secular power has authority to rescind, declare and render null, solemn conventions, commonly called concordats, entered into with the Apostolic See, regarding the use of rights appertaining to ecclesiastical immunity, without the consent of the Apostolic See, and even in spite of its protest.—Allocution *Multis Gravibusque*, Dec. 17. 1860; Allocution *In Consistoriali*, Nov. 1, 1850.

44. The civil authority may interfere in matters relating to religion, morality and spiritual government: hence, it can pass judgment on the instructions issued for the guidance of consciences, conformably with their mission, by the pastors of the Church. Further, it has the right to make enactments regarding the administration of the divine sacraments, and the dispositions necessary for receiving them.—Allocutions *In Consistoriali*, Nov. 1, 1850, and *Maxima Quidem*, June 9, 1862.

45. The entire government of public schools in which

the youth of a Christian state is educated, except (to a certain extent) in the case of episcopal seminaries, may and ought to appertain to the civil power, and belong to it so far that no other authority whatsoever shall be recognized as having any right to interfere in the discipline of the schools, the arrangement of the studies, the conferring of degrees, in the choice or approval of the teachers.—Allocutions *Quibus Luctuosissimis*, Sept. 5, 1851, and *In Consistoriali*, Nov. 1, 1850.

46. Moreover, even in ecclesiastical seminaries, the method of studies to be adopted is subject to the civil authority.—Allocution *Nunquam Fore*, Dec. 15, 1856.

47. The best theory of civil society requires that popular schools open to children of every class of the people, and, generally, all public institutes intended for instruction in letters and philosophical sciences and for carrying on the education of youth, should be freed from all ecclesiastical authority, control and interference, and should be fully subjected to the civil and political power at the pleasure of the rulers, and according to the standard of the prevalent opinions of the age.—Epistle to the Archbishop of Freiburg, *Cum Non Sine*, July 14, 1864.

48. Catholics may approve of the system of educating youth unconnected with Catholic faith and the power of the Church, and which regards the knowledge of merely natural things, and only, or at least primarily, the ends of earthly social life.—*Ibid.*

49. The civil power may prevent the prelates of the Church and the faithful from communicating freely and mutually with the Roman pontiff—Allocution *Maxima Quidem*, June 9, 1862.

50. Lay authority possesses of itself the right of presenting bishops, and may require of them to undertake the administration of the diocese before they receive canonical institution, and the Letters Apostolic from the Holy See.—Allocution *Nunquam Fore*, Dec. 15, 1856.

51. And, further, the lay government has the right of deposing bishops from their pastoral functions, and is not bound to obey the Roman pontiff in those things which relate to the institution of bishoprics and the appointment of bishops.—Allocution *Acerbissimum*, Sept.

27, 1852; *Damnatio Multiplices Inter*, June 10, 1851.

52. Government can, by its own right, alter the age prescribed by the Church for the religious profession of women and men; and may require of all religious orders to admit no person to take solemn vows without its permission.—Allocution *Nunquam Fore*, Dec. 15, 1856.

53. The laws enacted for the protection of religious orders and regarding their rights and duties ought to be abolished; nay, more, civil Government may lend its assistance to all who desire to renounce the obligation which they have undertaken of a religious life, and to break their vows. Government may also suppress the said religious orders, as likewise collegiate churches and simple benefices, even those of advowson, and subject their property and revenues to the administration and pleasure of the civil power—Allocutions *Acerbissimum*, Sept. 27, 1852; *Probe Memineritis*, Jan. 22, 1855; *Cum Saepe*, July 26, 1855.

54. Kings and princes are not only exempt from the jurisdiction of the Church, but are superior to the Church in deciding questions of jurisdiction.—*Damnatio Multiplices Inter*, June 10, 1851.

55. The Church ought to be separated from the State, and the State from the Church.—Allocution *Acerbissimum*, Sept. 27, 1852.

VII. ERRORS CONCERNING NATURAL AND CHRISTIAN ETHICS

56. Moral laws do not stand in need of the divine sanction and it is not at all necessary that human laws should be made conformable to the laws of nature, and receive their power of binding from God.—Allocution *Maxima Quidem*, June 9, 1862.

57. The science of philosophical things and morals and also civil laws may and ought to keep aloof from divine and ecclesiastical authority.—*Ibid.*

58. No other forces are to be recognized except those which reside in matter, and all the rectitude and excellence of morality ought to be placed in the accumulation and increase of riches by every possible means, and the

gratification of pleasure.—*Ibid.*; Encyclical *Quanto Conficiamur*, Aug. 10, 1863.

59. Right consists in the material fact. All human duties are an empty word, and all human facts have the force of right.—Allocution *Maxima Quidem*, June 9, 1862.

60. Authority is nothing else but numbers and the sum total of material forces.—*Ibid.*

61. The injustice of an act when successful inflicts no injury on the sanctity of right.—Allocution *Jamdudum Cernimus*, March 18, 1861.

62. The principle of non-intervention, as it is called, ought to be proclaimed and observed.—Allocution *Novos et Ante*, Sept. 28, 1860.

63. It is lawful to refuse obedience to legitimate princes, and even to rebel against them.—Encyclical *Qui Pluribus*, Nov. 9, 1864; Allocution *Quibusque Vestrum*, Oct. 4, 1847; *Noscitis et Nobiscum*, Dec. 8, 1849; Letter Apostolic *Cum Catholica*.

64. The violation of any solemn oath, as well as any wicked and flagitious action repugnant to the eternal law, is not only not blamable but is altogether lawful and worthy of the highest praise when done through love of country.—Allocution *Quibus Quantisque*, April 20, 1849.

VIII. ERRORS CONCERNING CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

65. The doctrine that Christ has raised marriage to the dignity of a sacrament cannot be at all tolerated.—Apostolic Letter *Ad Apostolicæ*, Aug. 22, 1851,

66. The Sacrament of Marriage is only a something accessory to the contract and separate from it, and the sacrament itself consists in the nuptial benediction alone.—*Ibid.*

67. By the law of nature, the marriage tie is not indissoluble, and in many cases divorce properly so called may be decreed by the civil authority.—*Ibid.*; Allocution *Acerbissimum*, Sept. 27, 1852.

68. The Church has not the power of establishing diriment impediments of marriage, but such a power belongs to the civil authority by which existing impediments are to be removed.—Damnatio *Multiplices Inter*, June 10, 1851.

69. In the dark ages the Church began to establish diriment impediments, not by her own right, but using a power borrowed from the State.—Apostolic Letter *Ad Apostolicæ*, Aug. 22, 1851.

70. The canons of the Council of Trent, which anathematize those who dare to deny to the Church the right of establishing diriment impediments, either are not dogmatic, or must be understood as referring to such borrowed power.—*Ibid.*

71. The form of solemnizing marriage prescribed by the Council of Trent, under pain of nullity, does not bind in cases where the civil law lays down another form, and declares that when this new form is used the marriage shall be valid.— *Ibid.*

72. Boniface VIII was the first who declared that the vow of chastity taken at ordination renders marriage void.—*Ibid.*

73. In force of a merely civil contract there may exist between Christians a real marriage, and it is false to say either that the marriage contract between Christians is always a sacrament, or that there is no contract if the sacrament be excluded.—*Ibid.* Letter to the King of Sardinia, Sept. 9, 1852; Allocutions *Acerbissimum*, Sept. 27, 1852; *Multis Gravibusque*, Dec. 17, 1860.

74. Matrimonial causes and espousals belong by their nature to civil tribunals—Encyclical *Qui Pluribus*, Nov. 9, 1846; Damnatio *Multiplices Inter*, June 10, 1851; *Ad Apostolicæ*, Aug. 22, 1851; Allocution *Acerbissimum*, Sept. 27, 1852.

N.B.—To the preceding questions may be referred two other errors regarding the celibacy of priests and the preference due to the state of marriage over that of virginity. These have been stigmatized: the first in the Encyclical *Qui Pluribus*, Nov. 9, 1846; the second, in the

Letter Apostolic *Multiplies Inter*, June 10, 1851.

IX. ERRORS REGARDING THE CIVIL POWER OF THE SOVEREIGN PONTIFF

75. The children of the Christian and Catholic Church are divided amongst themselves about the compatibility of the temporal with the spiritual power.—*Ad Apostolicæ*, Aug. 22, 1851.

76. The abolition of the temporal power of which the Apostolic See is possessed would contribute in the greatest degree to the liberty and prosperity of the Church.—Allocutions *Quibus Quantisque*, April 20, 1849, *Si Semper Antea*, May 20, 1850.

N.B.—Besides these errors, explicitly censured, very many others are implicitly condemned by the doctrine propounded and established, which all Catholics are bound most firmly to hold touching the temporal sovereignty of the Roman pontiff. This doctrine is clearly stated in the Allocutions *Quibus Quantisque*, April 20, 1849, and *Si Semper Antea*, May 20, 1850; Letter Apostolic *Cum Catholica Ecclesia*, March 26, 1860; Allocutions, *Novos et Ante*, Sept. 28, 1860; *Jamdudum Cernimus*, March 18, 1861; *Maxima Quidem*, June 9, 1862.

X. ERRORS HAVING REFERENCE TO MODERN LIBERALISM

77. In the present day it is no longer expedient that the Catholic religion should be held as the only religion of the State, to the exclusion of all other forms of worship.—Allocution *Nemo Vestrum*, July 26, 1855.

78. Hence it has been wisely decided by law, in some Catholic countries, that persons coming to reside therein shall enjoy the public exercise of their own peculiar worship.—Allocution *Acerbissimum*, Sept. 27, 1852.

79. Moreover, it is false that the civil liberty of every form of worship, and the full power, given to all, of evenly and publicly manifesting any opinions whatsoever and thoughts, conduce more easily to corrupt the morals and minds of the people, and to propagate the pest of indifference.—Allocution *Nunquam Fore*, Dec. 15, 1856.

80. The Roman Pontiff can, and ought to, reconcile

himself, and come to terms with progress, liberalism and modern civilization.—Allocution *Jamdudum Cernimus*, March 18, 1861.

THIS encyclical letter of Pope Pius IX was promulgated in 1864, and the attached *Syllabus of Errors* was simultaneously issued by the same great Pontiff. This important papal document was sent to all the bishops of the Catholic world “in order that these same bishops may have before their eyes all the errors and pernicious doctrines which he [Pius IX] has reprobated and condemned.” Though this is all-but-forgotten and greatly ignored nowadays, it did ignite a worldwide “firestorm” reaction when it was first issued. The world was greatly shocked to discover that the Church did not share its high opinion of itself. The *Syllabus* is a catalog of 80 erroneous propositions, a list of the most common errors of modern thinking. Grouped under ten separate headings, each proposition is cross-referenced to the specific Papal document where the particular proposition was discussed—and condemned as erroneous. This document is particularly useful for us to help clear our minds of these false ideas now polluting the world we live in, and whose repercussions will clearly affect our future and the future of the world.

**“Teach them that kingdoms rest upon
the foundation of the Catholic faith...
and that nothing is so deadly, nothing
so certain to engender every ill...as for
men to believe that they stand in need
of nothing else than the free will which
we received at birth.”**

¹ Translation from version accompanying pastoral letter of Archbishop Spalding, Baltimore, 1870.

² *Dogmatic Canons and Decrees*