

## THE POPE'S ENCYCLICAL.

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POPE Leo XIII's recent encyclical letter is one of those remarkable features which, in company with other striking events and circumstances, distinguishes this day of the Lord from all previous times. The letter is addressed, not to the bishops and clergy, nor even to the Catholic community at large, but "*principibus populisque universis*"--"to the princes and peoples of the earth," and was evidently suggested by the fact, now so manifest, and long ago predicted by the Lord ([Luke 21:26](#)), that men's hearts are failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. Out of this very fear, which the shaking of this present order of things, preparatory to its final removal ([Heb. 12:26,27](#)), engenders, Satan, whose masterpiece of iniquity and religious deception the church of Rome is, desires to make some capital wherewith to bolster up the tottering walls of his ancient fortress and protect his kingdom from ruin in the midst of the great time of trouble.

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Consequently, the poor, deceived old man at the Vatican, who, as the professed Vicar of Jesus Christ, stands at the head of the great counterfeit Christian church, addresses himself to the whole world, inviting all men everywhere to come into the Roman fold, under the pastoral care of the Pope, so that thus the words of Christ may be fulfilled--"There shall be one fold and one shepherd." This, he says, he does in imitation of Christ, who, on the eve of his ascension, prayed that his disciples might be united. So, at the end of his life, he desires to invite all men, without respect to race or nationality, to come into the one fold, the Catholic church.

Referring to the heathen first, he recalls past missionary efforts of the church, declares his deep concern for the conversion of the heathen, and prays that the number of missionaries for the extension of "Christ's kingdom" may be multiplied.

The letter then deals with the various Christian nations, and expresses the grief of the Pope that flourishing nations have, by religious dissensions in the past, been torn from the bosom of the church, and adds,--"We turn towards these nations and, of our fatherly charity, we beg them and implore them to wipe out all traces of dissensions, and return to unity."

An urgent appeal is then made to the Eastern churches--the Greek, Armenian, Nestorian, Jacobite, Coptic, and Abyssinian Catholics--urging upon their attention the primacy of the Roman Pontiff; and, while recognizing their friendly disposition toward the church of Rome, he promises that in the event of their return to the Roman communion, they need fear no diminution of their rights, of the privileges of their patriarchates, or of the rites and customs of their several churches; "for," he continues, "it has been, and will ever be, the purpose of the Apostolic See, and according to its traditions, to be condescending to all peoples and to respect generously their origins and customs."

The Protestants are next addressed, not as heretics, as of old, but as "dear brethren." Their separation from the church of Rome in the trying times of Luther and his associates is palliated and excused; the divisions and discords and wide diversity and conflict of faith among them is sympathetically pointed out; and while the recent efforts to secure union among the various sects on the basis of Christian charity, regardless of doctrine, is commended as a step in the right direction, the question is put--"How could perfect charity join hearts, if faith does not unite our spirits?" And that necessary faith is, of course, claimed to be in the church of Rome, to which all Protestants are invited in the following words,--"Our heart, more even than our voice, calls to

you, dear brethren, who for three centuries past have been at issue with us in the Christian faith. Whoever you are, if for any reason you have parted from us, join with us in the unity of the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God. Let us hold out to you our hand affectionately and invite you to the unity which never failed the Catholic church, and which nothing can take from it. Long has our common mother called you to her breast: long have all the Catholics of the universe awaited you with the anxiety of brotherly love, hoping that you would serve God with us in the unity of the one gospel, one faith, one hope, one perfect charity."

Catholics everywhere are then urged to faithfulness and obedience to the authority of the church, and warned against the perils outside of her communion. Then Free Masonry is condemned; and the rights of the church and state and the duty and advantages of their mutual co-operation are discussed, with the usual complaint that the church is oppressed by the state and restrained from the exercise of its rightful authority, and that thereby the latter is preparing lamentable catastrophes for society.

The encyclical closes by disclaiming ambition for power and professing to seek only the preservation of virtue among men, and by this means to secure their salvation. It implores princes and rulers, in the name of their political foresight and solicitude for the interests of their peoples, "to weigh the Pope's designs" for religious union "equitably, and to second them by their favor and authority," in the hope that at least some benefit might accrue "amid the present rapid downfall of all things, when to the prevailing unrest is joined fear of the future." [R1704 : page 295]

Who cannot discern between the lines of this gauzy manifesto the policy-spirit which would lick the dust or play the tyrant as circumstances might require or permit, if *by any means* it might gain its unholy ends.

But aside from the Papal policy, this document, as before intimated, is a peculiar sign of the times. The Pope knows the fear and perplexity of rulers and statesmen, and how nervously they are casting about for some potent arm to assist them in the great struggle with the awakening and discontented masses of the people, and how disorganized and shattered are the ranks of the various religious denominations; and therefore, in this carefully prepared document, he would suggest that the influence of all be united to reinstate the old and formerly potent power of the persecuting church of Rome.

The plan which the Pope suggests is one which certainly does commend itself to the worldly-wise [R1705 : page 295] who desire to perpetuate the present order of things. In nothing but the power of ignorance and superstition and such tyranny as the Church of Rome exercises over her subjects can there be any reasonable hope of perpetuating present social institutions. And it is on this account that kings and rulers pay their respects to the head of that iniquitous system whose history and principles they despise and hate. It is this idea, and the fear that some day they may need to invoke the power of the Pope, that occasionally calls forth such demonstrations as those on the event of the Papal Jubilee a few years ago; and that is leading to the reinstatement of the Jesuits in Germany. In fear of greater evils from widespread anarchy, they are loth to part with the old tyrant of the Tiber who formerly ruled them with a rod of iron.

From the world's conservative standpoint it surely would be wise to help to keep the reins of government of the masses of the people in some strong hands; but such is not God's purpose. Men may thus exert themselves to the utmost, but their councils and schemes will avail nothing in the day of the Lord's anger.

But so far as the selection and development of the "little flock," the true Church, is concerned, it would be far better if all religious denominational lines were broken up and each individual Christian were thus led individually to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free--taking God's Word as his rule of faith and practice and accepting such helps to the understanding of that Word as God in his providence supplies.

Commenting on this encyclical, the *N.Y. Sun* says, "Unquestionably the time is ripe, or soon will be, for a

moral co-operation of all men calling themselves Christians against revolutionary teachings which threaten the destruction alike of religion and of civilization. The necessity of such a combination against anti-social forces has been repeatedly affirmed by Leo XIII., and is proclaimed with special anxiety and fervor in what perhaps will prove to be his last encyclical."

The lameness of the law of selfishness is here manifested. Those who have some possessions of this world and who have some hopes and facilities for their increase, fear the growing intelligence of the lower strata of society, which, having nothing, has "nothing to lose." This latter class is gradually learning its power, and daily comes more into sympathy with socialism, anarchy, or any thing which promises them a larger share of the necessaries and luxuries of life. It is the realization of this that is leading the conservative and wealthy classes of men to combine for the preservation of society upon its present basis, which is found to be favorable to their interests and ambition. They recognize religion as the strongest influence for the peaceable control of humanity; and they see that with the growing intelligence of our day and the growing independence of thought and action, the influence of all the different religious teachings over the lower classes of society is on the decrease; and they begin to fear the results. Hence we have just that condition of things which the Lord predicted ([Luke 21:26](#)), men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; because the powers of the heaven (the religious systems) are being shaken. This is true of all Protestant denominations, and increasingly so of the Roman Catholic church also, in which there are various splits progressing. [R1705 : page 296]

The Pope's encyclical is the result of his heart failing him for fear of the things coming; and he expresses the fears and sentiments of many others--Protestants, as well as Catholics, who, neither seeing nor being in harmony with the divine plan, are greatly disconcerted at the evident failure of present arrangements, which they had supposed would usher in the Millennium by converting the world.

As heretofore shown, the Scriptures clearly indicate that just such a combination of religious systems as the Pope advocates will eventually take place, except that it will be in two distinct parts. Catholicism under the Papal head will doubtless absorb the Greek, Armenian and other eastern churches, and quite possibly the high church Episcopalians; the other division being a grand federation of the chief Protestant denominations. And these two great systems, for fear and for self-preservation, will heartily co-operate in order that the "peace and safety" of present institutions and arrangements may be continued. This thought is set forth in the Scriptures in strong symbolic language, and the event is located in this day of wrath and time of trouble:-- "Come near, all ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear and all that is therein, the world and all things that come forth of it; for the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations and his fury upon all their armies: he hath condemned them to destruction, he hath delivered them to the slaughter....And all the host of heaven [religious societies] shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together [not in one great roll, but] as a scroll [in two separate divisions or parts,--Catholicism one part and Protestantism the other, in close affiliation and cooperation, so that whatever passes from the one passes to the other]."--See [Isa. 34:1-4](#); also [Rev. 6:14-17](#).

The Scriptures plainly show that the present order and condition of society cannot, even by such combinations of power as proposed, be long sustained, but that shortly after this great religious federation has been perfected, the upheavals of socialism and anarchy will suddenly destroy them and ultimately every vestige of the present system. And no sooner will these elements be thus brought together than they will begin to realize what the Prophet Nahum suggests, that they are thorns in each other's sides:--"What do ye imagine against the Lord? he will make an utter end [of this present order of things]: affliction shall not rise up the second time. For while they be folden together as thorns, and while they are drunken as drunkards [intoxicated with the spirit of this world--the spirit of selfishness and tyranny], they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry."--[Nahum 1:9,10](#).

Thus the way will be prepared for the establishment of a new social arrangement ["the new earth"], on the

basis of love and righteousness, and under the influence and control of the glorified Church of Christ (the "new heavens," or spiritual power) in which righteousness and love will control and prevail.

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