

ADP 9194
795857

THE CHURCH AND MODERN THOUGHT

by

JAMES M. GILLIS, C. S. P.



The Church and Modern Thought

by

Rev. James M. Gillis, C. S. P.,
Editor of The Catholic World

Eight addresses delivered in the Catholic Hour produced by
the National Council of Catholic Men with the co-
operation of the National Broadcasting Company
and its associated stations.

(On Sundays from May 5 to June 23, 1935)

- I. What is Modern Thought?
- II. Is the Church Mediaeval?
- III. Free Thought, Free Speech, Free Press.
- IV. Freedom of Conscience.
- V. Academic Freedom.
- VI. The Church and Democracy.
- VII. The Church and the New Social Conscience.
- VIII. The Church and Progress.



National Council of Catholic Men
Producer of the Catholic Hour
1312 Massachusetts Avenue
Washington, D. C.

Printed and distributed by Our Sunday Visitor
Huntington, Indiana



Imprimatur:

✠ JOHN FRANCIS NOLL, D. D.

Bishop of Fort Wayne.

DEDICATED
WITH FILIAL RESPECT AND AFFECTION
TO
FATHER HECKER
FOUNDER OF THE CONGREGATION OF MISSIONARY
PRIESTS OF ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE
(The Paulist Fathers)
ADVOCATE OF THE ALLIANCE OF THE CHURCH
WITH ALL THAT IS GOOD IN
MODERN THOUGHT

INTRODUCTION

The wisdom of the Catholic Church is nowhere more obvious than in Her refusal to keep Her ear to the ground, to run after novelties, or to bid for momentary popular success by being "up to date" or "in tune with the age". Institutions which aspire to be up to date become quickly out-dated, and those that are of their age die with the age. An everlasting Church gaited for a long race seems to lag behind the churches which adapt their speed to a short dash. It will be interesting to examine whether the Church is really out of step with what is good in our contemporary civilization, or with what merely seems desirable but which will probably be evanescent.

JAMES M. GILLIS, C. S. P.

WHAT IS MODERN THOUGHT?

(Address Delivered on May 5, 1935)

When an orthodox clergyman—particularly a Catholic priest—offers a discourse upon “The Church and Modern Thought,” the natural presumption is that he will make an assault upon Modern Thought. Common opinion has it that we are addicted to the rather foolish custom of pointing proudly to the past, that we lament the passing of the “good old days” and hold as a primary principle of faith that nothing good has happened since the rift in United Christendom 400 years ago, and that in the world of thought nothing but nonsense has been written and spoken since the decay of Scholasticism, 500 or 600 years ago.

If any such presumption be lurking in some remote corner of the brain of even one of my hearers, I hasten to disabuse his mind of the error.

I am no praiser of times past. I don't believe the good old days ever existed. “Green hills far away” is a significant maxim, and another equally wise if less dignified is the slangy expression “They all look good when they're far away.” Sometimes we meet certain natives of the old country who came to America in early youth, fared well, accumulated a tidy little fortune and decided to go back home and live out their days. But the “ould dart” was a disappointment. It didn't seem the same. Either because the tempo of life in the New World had made them restive, or because we idealize the “scenes of our childhood when fond recollection presents them to view,” the old country turned out to be insufferable. As with the good old “dart”



so with the good old days. If we were to be plunged back into the golden age of antiquity, we should find it superficially brilliant but beneath the surface hideous, horrible, cruel, and morally foul far beyond our own. As for the Middle Ages, I am sure we moderns would feel ourselves cribbed, cabined, confined almost to the point of mental suffocation in them, in spite of much recent glorification of mediaevalism. Even the 18th and 19th centuries would seem cramped and stuffy. I have read rather much in history, ancient and mediaeval, and as one result I thank Heaven fervently that I am alive here and now. Better days may come after us, but I am sure that ours are better than any that are past. That's a brave thing to say, or if you prefer a *brash* thing, with the World War still fresh in our memory and a new war—a worse war apparently—looming up. But I think I could make good my contention that we live in a better and happier world than our ancestors, recent or remote. However that will keep. Meanwhile I simply state without argument but with conviction that the ancient world was a nightmare, and the mediaeval world a kind of dungeon compared with our own.

But suppose we grant to those who will have it so that "there never was a time like this, never a time like this." Why wail about it? Isn't there something irreverent, not to say blasphemous, in finding fault with the age in which by the will of God we live and move and have our being? There is an old story about the fastidious young lady who didn't like this world in which her lot was cast and who for some time rebelled against it, but finally said that she had decided "to accept the universe." Whereupon Thomas Carlyle blurted out, "Gad! she'd

better!" Why whimper about this sad old, bad old world? It's the only world we've got, as yet, and if this one were satisfactory perhaps we wouldn't care for another, and there would be nothing to look forward to. As a matter of fact, it is foolish and cowardly to fill the air with lamentations about what we may be pleased to call "these terrible times." Good or bad, wonderful or horrible, beautiful or hideous, these are *our* times and we shall not improve them by carping and crying. I am told that missionaries to the heathen are warned before they go that if they cannot love the land and the people to which they are assigned they had better stay at home. Now even if we imagine that we have been sent by Divine Providence into a wicked heathenish world we may perhaps ask God to take us home again; but so long as we are here we had better make up our minds to like our surroundings and our neighbors.

If, therefore, in this talk, or in this series, I happen to criticize some features of our modern civilization, I should like to have it understood that I do so, not viciously like a Communist condemning Capitalism or like an aristocratic European heaping contumely upon what he calls our raw crude savage America, but sympathetically, as a friend reproves a friend or a father his son.

Now the age in which we live will probably be designated in history as the "Age of Science." Its achievements and its glories are largely scientific. Very well, my theology does not demand that I repudiate or antagonize science. On the contrary I am inclined to believe that the day will come when science will be called the handmaid of theology, as they called philosophy the handmaid of theology in

the days of Scholasticism. Even in those days there were a good many persons of timid intelligence who feared philosophy as something alien and hostile to religion. And to tell the truth, philosophy had a pagan origin, and what was worse it came into Europe not in its pure pristine condition but poisoned with a good many Moslem ingredients. Many mediaeval minds, some of them in high position and having authority, considered Aristotelianism and Platonism, the two principal forms of pagan philosophy, as hopelessly anti-Christian. But Thomas Aquinas, whose intellectual genius was coupled with a brave bold pioneering spirit, was not afraid of the incidental heathenism in either Greco-Roman or Moslem philosophy. Like the earlier fathers of the Church, Clement and Cyril of Alexandria, Pope Gregory I, Ambrose, Augustine and Jerome, he had vision broad enough and deep enough to see that the ancient sages were pedagogues leading the world to Christ.

As Thomas Aquinas and the more courageous theologians looked upon pagan philosophy, so I think we should look upon Modern Science. The Creator Who first made the world and then made man, said in effect to man, "I place your feet upon the earth and your head beneath the stars. I have packed earth and sea and sky and the waters beneath the earth with mysteries. Under the surface of the soil, locked away in the heart of the mountains, deep in the cavernous vaults of the ocean, infinite distances away in the blue sky, I have hidden secrets. I have endowed you with an inquisitive mind. Now seek and you shall find. You shall find the secrets of the universe one by one. Finding them you shall find Me." Later, much la-

ter, the Lord gave man a Book, a book replete like the universe with mysteries, and said to man, "Dig into the Book as you dig into the earth. Explore the Book as you explore the sea. Scrutinize it as you scrutinize the heavens.

"I have hidden My Mind and Myself here, there, everywhere, in a blade of grass, in a drop of dew, in the heart of the oak, 'out beyond the shining of the farthest star', and yet I am also within the very core of your own heart. Seek me in heaven and on earth, in the heart of man and in the letters of the Book, yet beneath and behind the letter, seek Me, find Me. Snatch My secret from Me. When you have solved one mystery I will give you a glimpse of another, of a thousand others. Like the eagle provoking her young to fly, I provoke you to try the wings of the intelligence with which I have endowed you." It must have been some such fancy as this that lay behind the axiom of Aristotle, "Man is an inquisitive animal born to know."

Evidently therefore not all the revelation of God is written in a Book. It is written in the rocks, it is cut in the face of the cliff, it is embedded deep in the bowels of the earth, it is hidden in and behind the clouds that scud across the heavens as if they were playing a game with man, concealing something that is transported behind them from horizon to horizon, teasing man to come aloft and peer behind to discover what the mystery may be.

Now man with his divinely implanted intellectual curiosity accepts the challenge of Nature and of God. He prods and picks into the surface of the earth, first with primitive implements that merely scratch the surface, but gradually with more perfect tools he bores to incredible depths.

Deep down he finds precious ores, liquid gold and other treasure; but not content he digs ever deeper not knowing what he shall unearth, but sure that he will discover things hidden from the foundation of the world.

Venturing out from the earth he penetrates the waters, first dropping a plummet, then letting down grappling hooks to bring up from the depths the most weird and grotesque monsters which even in their ugliness are a revelation of the infinite variety in the mind of their Maker. Not satisfied with mere scrapings from the floor of the sea, he invents the diving bell and an observation chamber so that he may descend and see with his very eyes just how things go down there a hundred and a thousand fathoms deep.

The earth and the ocean being not field enough for his restless explorations, he soars aloft with balloons and flying machines out of the atmosphere into the stratosphere; he talks of rockets that will shoot him some day completely off this planet on to another. Tennyson says,

“... the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns,” and he speaks of

“Men, my brothers, men the workers, ever reaping something new:

“That which they have done but earnest of the things that they shall do.”

And he felt that man would achieve ever more—

“For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,

“Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be;

“Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic sails,

“Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales.”

It was a prophetic vision; we have seen much of it fulfilled, and—credit to whom credit is due—it

remained for the scientist to make good the dream of the poet.

But perhaps boldest of all are the explorations that man has made not into the earth or the sea or the sky, but into the still profounder depths of his own human nature. For if there be mysteries hidden away in the bed of the ocean, in the trackless jungle—trackless but not impenetrable to dauntless man—in the uttermost reaches of the firmament, there are still more astounding mysteries tangled up in the fibres of man's heart. There are mysteries biological, geological, astronomical, and I suppose we must now say stratospherical, but the deepest and strangest mysteries, the weiderst and most wonderful, the most shocking and most sublime, are those that even after all these aeons lie concealed in the dark and tortuous depths of the mind of man. As a' Kempis says—and be it observed a' Kempis did a great deal of exploration in the human heart—“*This* shall puzzle thee and *that* shall puzzle thee, but most of all thou shalt frequently be a puzzle to thine own self.” Poets and scientists and saints have been probing the depths of the human heart now for many generations, but there remain many secrets still unrevealed. It seems to be as deep to the bottom of the heart of man as it is high to the remotest star.

Now what has all this to do with modern thought and modern science? Ours is the Age of Science and it is the vocation of science to read the riddles of the universe and of man's nature. But beyond nature and man is God. What we Christians have in mind when we speak the word “God” is the Very Center of Mystery. Poets, scientists, mystics, all are engaged in the same quest. One and all they have ac-

cepted the challenge of God: "Seek and find." What they find is not alone nature and man, but God. The poet knows it:

"Raise thou the stone and find Me there,
"Cleave thou the wood and there am I."

The saint knows it:

"I sought Thee and I found both myself and Thee."

It remains only for the scientist to know the ultimate object of his search and, when he finds it, recognize it.

The world is replete with mystery because it is filled with God. God is mystery. When we unveil a corner of the mystery we are nearer to seeing God. On the day when Science awakens to that fact, science will become a partner not only with poetry—*real* poetry is revelation—but with theology.

So I see no reason to despair of the Age of Science. In ancient and mediaeval days philosophy led to religion. In our times, or the times immediately after us, science will lead to religion.

Just at the moment it seems undetermined whether science will save and enrich civilization or destroy civilization. Tennyson, together with his vision of the achievements of science, had a premonition of the uglier possibility. He not only "saw the heavens fill with commerce," but he

"Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rained a
ghastly dew.

"From the nations' airy navies grappling in the central blue."

Argosies of commerce in the sky or battleships "grappling in the central blue," dropping hideous death from the skies—which shall it be?

Science must answer that question. But she must take philosophy and religion into her counsels.

A generation ago science was scandalized because a celebrated Catholic scholar (a litterateur by the way and not a theologian) declared science bankrupt. Stated just so, the proposition is doubtless too dogmatic. But science will indeed be bankrupt unless she enters upon a partnership with poetry and philosophy and humanity and philanthropy and theology and religion. What we Christian believers desire therefore is not to alienate science but to affiliate with science.

As of science, so of "Modern Thought," for the one seems to be the basis of the other. We do not antagonize Modern Thought. A generation or two ago there was much discussion about the "Conflict of Science with Religion" and modern thought was held to be essentially incompatible with ancient and mediaeval thought. Today there is more hope of friendship, alliance, cooperation between the two. Ancient Thought, Mediaeval Thought, Modern Thought, are all precious. No one of them need be rejected that another may be accepted. A devotion to antiquity or to mediaevalism would be narrow if it exclude modernity, and by the same token devotion to modernity is fanatical if it despise and repudiate what is ancient or mediaeval. The Old Thought and the New, working in combination, will produce a finer civilization than any that has hitherto been known.

IS THE CATHOLIC CHURCH “MEDIAEVAL”?

(Address Delivered on May 12, 1935)

There is a familiar saying “Give a dog a bad name and shoot him.” That dubious—not to say vicious—device is sometimes employed, I regret to say, in theological controversy. Witness, for example, the use of the word “Casuistry” or “Propaganda” or “Jesuitical” or “Fundamentalist.” Not any of these words has necessarily a bad meaning. Casuistry is the science of citing cases in support of moral principles. “Propaganda” means simply “dissemination”; the preaching of the Gospel is propaganda. “Jesuitical” happens to be a mean and libellous word because the lexicographers who invented it and writers who used it were Jesuit-haters. A “Fundamentalist” is by etymology one who gets at the roots of a question. But these are all good words gone wrong. They are used as opprobrious epithets. Epithets in place of arguments.

And so with the word in the title of this talk, “Mediaeval.” In itself it is neutral. Some things mediaeval are good, some are bad. But such is the power of tradition and of prejudice that “mediaeval” connotes opprobrium. And there are those who use it of the Catholic Church, thinking that with that contemptuous adjective they have sufficiently condemned and dismissed Her.

But it must be admitted that the use of epithets as proofs is a convenient controversial trick. It is concise, and simple. It saves labor. It serves as a substitute for knowledge. With an injudicious audience it is effective. But the method

labors under certain rather considerable disadvantages. It is unscientific and it is dishonorable. Besides, it could be used to prove anything. It is possible, for example, to use the word "modern" in an invidious sense. And not without apparent justification. There is modern graft, modern jazz, modern slums, modern industrial unrest, modern political and social chaos, modern mustard-gas warfare. Not all that is modern is magnificent or beautiful or wonderful or hopeful.

So: not all that is mediaeval is contemptible. Dante is mediaeval. Rheims and Chartres and Burgos, Milan and Westminster Abbey, are mediaeval. The Magna Charta is mediaeval. Chivalry—the original bona-fide chivalry, not the decadent form that was laughed away by Cervantes—chivalry was mediaeval. The *Chanson de Roland* is mediaeval, and the *Stabat Mater* and the *Summa* of St. Thomas Aquinas, the *Book of Kells* and St. Francis' *Hymn to the Sun*. The university is a mediaeval concept and a mediaeval achievement. Oxford and Cambridge and Paris and Salamanca and Padua are all mediaeval institutions of learning.

So—the use of the term as a synonym for "ignorant" or "superstitious" is itself a mark of ignorance or superstition. And when it is applied to the Catholic Church it indicates intellectual narrowness. There is provincialism of time as well as of place. To think that nothing good can come from another epoch than one's own is provincial just as surely as to think that no good can come from another village than one's own.

However, there are other observers of that strangely bewildering phenomenon, The Catholic

Church, not unfriendly but uncomprehending, who use the word mediaeval of Her in a kindly sense. To them She is a picturesque survival of a by-gone age. Or less than a survival, a ruin, moss-grown, ivy-clad, pathetically beautiful like Muckross Abbey, or Melrose in the pale moonlight. To change the simile, I have heard the Catholic Church likened to an extinct volcano once powerful, in a terrible way, but now impotent and harmless; or a meteor that once cut a brilliant path across the skies but that burned itself out. Those who apply these comparisons are aesthetes, persons of artistic, poetic, romantic temperament. They have, or think they have, historical imagination. They are interested, in a mild amateurish way, in old things, obsolete civilizations, the Aztecs, the Incas, the Mayans, the Babylonians. They sense, perhaps rather dimly, the pathos of Kipling's line, "all our pomp of yesterday is one with Nineveh and Tyre." In short, all things remote, prehistoric, obsolete, fascinate these aesthetes. So they love to think of the Catholic Church as a mediaeval institution outdated but in some mysterious way surviving. In the course of a rather rudimentary education they have read the essays of Lord Macaulay, and perhaps they remember his wonderment at the fact that "The august line of the dynasty of (the Catholic Church) extends back in an unbroken series from the pope who crowned Napoleon in the nineteenth century to the pope who crowned Pepin in the eighth", and the continuation of that sentence in which he shows himself the rhetorician rather than the scientific historian, "far beyond the eighth century that line extends until it is lost in the twilight of fable." Of course there is no "fable" and no "twilight" about

the list of popes any more than in the list of the presidents.

Now to these rhetoricians and romanticists—sentimentalists all— let us explain kindly but positively, that to look upon the Church as picturesque but passé, something obsolescent and moribund if not quite extinct, a relic if not a fossil, is a blunder. The Church is indeed somewhat of a mystery. Her survival is, to the uninitiated, a riddle. But one fact should be obvious even to the casual observer. The Church is alive, exuberantly, enormously, prodigiously alive. Anticipations and prophecies of Her impending demise are and always have been falsified. Even those who don't know any other history than Macaulay's will remember the concluding sentence of that same passage: "She (The Church) saw the commencement of all the governments and all the ecclesiastical establishments that now exist in the world; and we feel no assurance that she is not destined to see the end of them all."

Therein, indeed, is the great mystery of The Catholic Church: She is "ever ancient, ever new"; old but not decrepit. She bears the burden not of years but of centuries with miraculous ease. She ignores the primary law of the universe, the law of life and death, of growth and decay. One may attempt to write Her history but it would be presumptuous and ridiculous to write of Her Rise and Fall, or Her Rise and Decline, as historians have written of other organizations.

The Catholic Church is not therefore merely mediaeval, but ancient, and no more mediaeval or ancient than modern. She has had a marvelous past; She has accumulated a vast and superb tra-

dition. But let there be no mistake, She does not live on traditions or memories. She faces the future with as much confidence, and with as great zest as if She were new-born. The Catholic Church is no doddering ancient, lingering on with tantalizing persistence; cheating the grave; there is no senility in Her speech and conduct. It will be wisdom not to look upon the Catholic Church as an ancient ruin or a mediaeval survival.

However, I am not primarily concerned with the attitude of hostile critics of the Church. What interests me much more is the attitude of some of Her friends and even of Her members who seem to imagine that Mediaevalism and Catholicism are synonymous. Such an attitude is romantic, not realistic, like that of certain admirers of the little poor man of Assisi, St. Francis. The only features of his life they seem to remember are that he preached to the birds and the fishes, that he went about through the towns and villages of Umbria playing upon an imaginary fiddle; that he composed a Poem to the Sun, that he was an artist, a dreamer, a troubadour of God. He was all this, but it would be absurd to take those picturesque incidents as the essential features of his life.

So, with regard to the Middle Ages. They have been romanticized and idealized by some of our own, who, I fear know very little about the real history or the true character of the Middle Ages.

I, for one, have never been a member of that little group of Catholics, and near-Catholics, who hark back to the Middle Ages as a period in which human life and civilization were at its apogee, and who hold that the modern age in all its features is a decline from the glories and the beauties of Me-

diaevalism. To hear these devotees talk one would imagine that there had been no art since Giotto, no architecture since the thirteenth century, no music since the Gregorian chant of the 5th century, or at the latest since Palestrina; that there has been no philosopher since Aquinas; that Dante is not only the "central man of all the ages" but the only great poet of any age.

But these reactionaries are only an insignificant clique within the Church. Normal Catholics, lay and cleric, look upon them as rather absurd and not altogether innocuous dilettanti. They are like those extreme ritualists in our Church and elsewhere, who seem to concentrate all their powers of mind and soul upon vestments and incense, rubrics, ceremonial; upon an unnecessarily austere liturgical chant, oddly enough combined with anything but austere ecclesiastical pageantry, as if these incidental accompaniments of worship were of the very essence of religion.

If the truth must be known—and must the truth not be known?—the Middle Ages were no paradise on earth. Reverend H. E. G. Rope, writing in *The Catholic World* in September, 1926, said: "The Italy of Dante, of Boniface VIII, of Petrarch, of St. Bernardine, of St. Catherine of Siena; the France of Philip the Fair, or Charles V or Charles VII; the Rhineland of the robber barons, the terrible horrors of Albigensian Languedoc, were portentous."

And he quotes Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury in the 12th century, who wrote: "This land in which we are reels under the daily shocks of so many and so great afflictions, is defiled with so many adulteries and other abominations, that there

is scarcely any order of men who care for their own souls, or even so much as care to hear the salutary teaching which might instruct them to improvement in the sight of God."

Another excellent authority on the Middle Ages, C. M. Antony in her book on *St. Dominic's Country*, says, "It (The House of Foix) was a terrible race, even in those grim days when a noble's word was law, and the law was instantly enforced with the sword. It is in a sense impossible for us, in this age of sentimental humanitarianism, accurately to understand the almost inconceivable brutality of that 'altogether joyous thirteenth century'!"

Of all the exponents of the Middle Ages Dante is at the same time the most comprehensive and the most reliable. And I think it may be said without too much exaggeration that Dante's *Inferno* is, in effect, a revelation of conditions that prevailed in Italy in the 13th century. The familiar legend has it that when the saturnine poet passed along the streets, men would say to one another with bated breath: "There goes the man who has been in hell." He hadn't been in hell, of course, but he had been in Italy and according to his evidence the Italy of the 13th century, the best of the Middle Ages, was not unlike an *Inferno*.

The next century, that of St. Catherine, was, in my judgment (though I confess myself but an amateur historian) one of the two or three most horrible epochs in two thousand years. In consequence of such historical truths as these, one celebrated champion of certain features of mediaevalism, G. K. Chesterton, has found it advisable to say, "I do not hold anything like the views I am supposed to hold on the subject of mediaevalism."

“There is an idea that I represent the Middle Ages as a sort of Utopia, where everybody was happy all day long. I never said anything of the sort.

“The point about the Middle Ages which has got to be understood is that so far from its having been a time when everything went right, it was more true that the Middle Ages was the time when everything went wrong, because the wrong turning was taken by humanity at the Schism . . .

“I know there are an enormous number of people who think I mean that we must go about in multi-colored clothes, confine our reading to illuminated missals, and so on. But when I say we must return to the Middle Ages, I mean that we must return to the principles of mediaevalism.”

But let that suffice. A more detailed description of those unhappy far-off days would distract us from my purpose which is to emphasize the fact that the Catholic Church is not committed to the Middle Ages. She holds no brief for mediaevalism.

As for me, I am not certain that we should return to all the principles of the Middle Ages. I cannot, for instance, see that Mediaeval Feudalism was less oppressive than Modern Industrialism. Both systems in actual practice have involved enormous injustice and cruelty.

The simple truth is, of course, that no age in the history of the world has been ideal. But if comparisons are to be made, I think our own age will not be found altogether worse than any other that has past. Indeed with all its faults I think it better than any earlier century. Civilization does progress, sometimes by fits and starts and with many back slidings, but on the whole with a fair degree of consistency.

Be that as it may, the fate of the Catholic Church is not bound up with any particular form of civilization. As one writer has said (I regret that I cannot place the quotation):

“The Church, at one time imperialistic in her political alliances, was, at another, feudalistic; but She never committed Herself in principle to imperialism or to feudalism. She spoke Greek in Athens and Latin in Rome, and Her sons wore the chlamys or the toga; but She was never confined to Greece or to Italy. In later days She lisped the nascent languages of Goth and Frank . . .; but She was never limited in life and conditions to the life and conditions of Goth or Frank . . . She was merely partaking, in Her human elements, of the life of Her epoch, Her divine elements always remaining the self-same. Two or three centuries ago She was was courtly and aristocratic under the temporal sway of the Fifth Charles of Spain, or of the Fourteenth Louis of France; but this again was a passing phase in Her existence, and at other times She may be as democratic in Her demeanor as the most earnest democrat would desire. Her canon law, which is the expression of Her adaptability to environment, received the impress, now of Charlemagne, now of Hapsburgh or Bourbon edicts; but never was She Herself mummified in Justinian or Bourbon molds, and Her canon law may be as American as it was Roman, as much the reflection of the twentieth century as it was of the Middle Ages. Were not all this true, the Church would not be Catholic.”

That, I think, expresses the true attitude of the Church. She is not ancient or mediaeval or modern. Or if you please, She is all three. She lives in time but She is outside time, Catholic, Universal, in time as well as in place and in doctrine.

FREE THOUGHT, FREE SPEECH, FREE PRESS

(Address Delivered on May 19, 1935)

It is generally understood that the modern world began at the end of the 18th century, with the revolutions in America and in France. Those two cataclysmic upheavals were only superficially political. Primarily and fundamentally what took place was a revolution in the world of thought. The big idea that came up from the heart of man like an earthquake from the heart of the globe was *Freedom*. The dominant idea of modern civilization is or *was* therefore freedom. I say *was*, with regret because if there be any one high idea or holy principle that has suffered more than another in the war and since the war, that idea is freedom. "Freedom shrieked as Kosciusko fell", we used to orate when we were school-boys. Freedom has done a great deal more shrieking since then, but of late she seems to have become too feeble to shriek or even make an audible cry. The war that was to make the world safe for democracy destroyed freedom, the *sine qua non* of democracy. Freedom is dead—dead and buried in an ignominious grave, in Russia, in Italy, in Germany, in Mexico, and if she still lives elsewhere her tenure of life is uncertain and precarious. Even here in America, there are those—not a few—who advocate in effect a dictatorship, the renunciation of personal liberty subsequent to the already accomplished abandonment of states rights, as the only means of extricating ourselves from the predicament in which we now lie. Yesterday, the idea of liberty,

like the word of Caesar, "might have stood against the world"; now "none so poor to do it reverence".

But there is a difference between Europe and America in as far as freedom is concerned. Over there with political freedom have perished freedom of speech, freedom of the press, academic freedom, freedom of worship. Here in the United States we have surrendered the greater part of our political freedom but in proportion as we have let that go, we have clung more and more tenaciously to our personal freedom, freedom of thought, of expression, academic freedom, and most particularly to what we are pleased to call our moral freedom. It has been ever thus. When the ancient Romans, who considered themselves to be the creators, champions, guardians of political liberty, became degenerate and surrendered their freedom into the hands of the Caesars, by way of compensation, as a kind of sop to their self-esteem, they vindicated all the more fiercely their personal liberty, by which they meant freedom in small things and freedom for self-indulgence. Today we see the phenomenon re-enacted amongst ourselves. The pioneer Americans were savagely tenacious of their political rights but they were austere self-denying as far as moral liberty is concerned. We reverse the order: we permit political liberty to slip through our relaxed and enfeebled fingers, and we solace ourselves by taking on a greater degree of what we call personal liberty. We say to our president: "Relieve us of the burden of political thought. Take over all the functions of government. Devalue the currency if you wish, abrogate the contract printed on every gold certificate, control the crops, dictate to the industries,

determine taxation, collect and distribute the dole, carry the entire burden of administration, take it off our shoulders, and if we feel any shame or compunction at the surrender of our prerogatives and the abandonment of the ideal of democracy, government *by* the people, we will take refuge in cocktail parties, and horse races, and gaming and lascivious theatrical entertainment, in orgiastic dancing, in the hop-skip and jump, on-again-off-again-gone-again idea of marriage, in the application of an alleged scientific method to the limitation of offspring (a device for the elimination of inconveniences and responsibilities that might arise from unlimited sexual indulgence).

A shameful and dismal outcome of the great American Experiment in Liberty! I do not maintain, of course, that all this takes place as a conscious mental process. I do not believe that our hedonistic fellow-citizens are capable of such direct logic. But whether or not the surrender of one kind of liberty and the jealous, passionate determination to hold on to another kind of liberty are cause and effect, the fact is beyond dispute that they co-exist, and that in the history of mankind they have always co-existed.

So much for the pathetic and tragic condition of liberty and freedom in general. But let us see something of one particular kind of freedom, the freedom of the press in these our days and in this our land. Being limited for time I shall not attempt any adequate discussion of that vast and important question—the freedom of utterance accorded the newspapers. With them I am not now primarily concerned. I shall only permit myself to say in passing that the sensational newspapers (not only the tabloids but

many others) have so drenched and deluged the mind of the people with vulgarity, banality, and indecency, that they have all but destroyed the sense of moral and cultural values, and that the influence of the daily papers has largely neutralized if not negated the influence of church and school and college.

To put the matter graphically: Let us suppose a home into which day after day and every day in the year all manner of disreputable persons are freely admitted and allowed to say what they will: criminals, prostitutes, gangsters, much-married and as much unmarried screen actresses, murderers, thieves, moral perverts, drug addicts, and what not—and together with these, snoopers and spies upon the underworld, photographers, police detectives, scandal hounds, collectors of moral and social garbage. Suppose that all together or one after the other they are permitted to tell and illustrate all they know, and this in the hearing of the father and mother and the children in the home.

The parable needs little elucidation. This, to all intents and purposes, is what happens in some millions of American homes. It brings about the staining of the imagination, the benumbing of the intelligence, the debasement of moral ideals, the nullification of all efforts to inculcate knowledge and culture and virtue.

The only possible answer to the charge that a large section of the daily press is a debasing influence is that when the mind and the imagination are repeatedly flooded with filth they become immune, or even atrophied, so that they cannot rally absorb the poison that is poured over them. There may be some psychological truth

in that observation, but I am not sure that the benumbing of the mind and the atrophy of the imagination are not additional crimes to lay to the charge of the daily press rather than a palliation of their sin.

Now to allege that all this must be tolerated in virtue of the principle of the freedom of the press is to make that principle ridiculous, and worse than ridiculous, immoral. Such an allegation merits no argument. Any one who would seriously express a conviction that freedom may be used to corrupt the mind and weaken the moral fibre of a whole people is beyond and beneath the reach of argument. Anarchists, nihilists, and libertines invoke the principle of freedom, and with equal perverseness publishers of sensational newspapers may cry "free press", "free press", in justification of their sins against the human soul and against society. But the invocation of a high principle, Freedom of the Press, in the interests of what is after all, pornography, is nothing less than preposterous. Whatever "Free Press" means it cannot mean that.

But I have declared myself only moderately interested in the problem of freedom and the daily papers. What deeply concerns me is the more permanent and in the long run more influential literary medium, books. I suppose that all my listeners are aware that in recent years many novels previously outlawed and sold only surreptitiously, are now printed and distributed without let or hindrance. It seems only yesterday, though it may be some ten years ago, that a New York magistrate reported to the chief of the Society for the Suppression of Vice that he had been amazed and shocked at a book which he found in the hands of his daughter, a

girl, if I remember rightly, then in her teens. The Society sued the publisher and lost. The book is now on sale even in the drug stores.

Virtually all such cases are lost in the courts. The prevailing principle seems to be that the freedom of the press is absolute as far as book-publication is concerned. Only such works as are obviously and crudely obscene are suppressed. If a novel or an essay or a pseudo-scientific treatise has any literary merit whatsoever, and *a fortiori* if it be considered, even by a little clique of presumed *cognoscenti*, a "classic", there seems to be no law to prevent its publication and unlimited circulation, no matter how erotic it may be. In a word, as all readers know—even the readers of "ads" or of literary supplements—certain publishers and amongst them many who used to be conservative and reputable, are flooding the market with books that would have horrified the early Americans who appended the Bill of Rights to the Constitution and fought for the principle of freedom of the press.

Whenever any objector dares raise his voice, be he magistrate, or clergyman, or member of some society for the preservation of morals, or merely an indignant private citizen who writes in just wrath to his favorite newspaper, his protest is howled down with epithets "Puritan", "Hypocrite", "Reactionary", "Obscurantist", "Enemy of the Free Press".

The literary critics take up the hue and cry, but they are careful to insert in the midst of their condemnations some high sounding phrases which make it appear that they are governed solely by a zeal for the promotion of literary art. For example, they said of the book that scandalized the judge: "It portrays an important part in the history of civiliza-

tion" and they added in their most top-lofty manner, "It may be questioned whether the record of civilization can be suppressed". They spoke of "civilization"; what the book really depicts is the decadence of civilization. It concerns one of the most degraded epochs in the history of man, in the time of one of the most lecherous tyrants that ever lived. Even one of the critics explained in court that it was "alternately fascinating and disgusting". Perhaps more significant than these data is the simple fact that though it is a small book it was priced at \$30, and that it was sold from under the counter to privileged patrons. But now, as I say, any high school boy or girl can step into a drug store and get it for the price of two or three midday lunches. Of another book, the critics wrote, "It is a fearless delineation of love between man and woman", "candid, vigorous, brilliant, picturesque, powerful", and "a forceful presentation of primitive emotion". As a matter of fact that book is to an incredible degree lascivious.

On yet another occasion when two societies, one in New York and another in Chicago, protested against an American novel (those of which I have hitherto spoken are not American) as "lewd, licentious and obscene", a dozen or a score of writers not only here but in England burned up the wires and the transoceanic cables with hot denunciations of the objectors. Some of them confessed that they hadn't read the book but protested none the less against its suppression. And one novelist, an American woman, blurted out: "What American literature needs is not more morals, but more brains".

What I think she meant was that if a writer has brains he need not bother about morals. And there,

I think, you have the principle upon which contemporary literary criticism is based. If a writer is brilliant, or even clever, if he have the faculty of putting down his thoughts in a fascinating or even a graceful style, he must be permitted to say what he will. The morality of his message doesn't matter. As Oscar Wilde said, "There are not good books and bad books. There are well written books and badly written books". And another critic enunciates the critical canon "The capital sin in a novel is dullness".

But I should like to submit the matter to the ultimate critic, the reading public. Does cleverness or even brilliancy justify immorality? Is no book or paper or magazine objectionable unless it be flagrantly and crudely indecent? Recently when the British public commenced to take example from the American Legion of Decency in regard to motion pictures, an Anglican bishop spoke of "objectionable films". "There *are* no objectionable films", retorted Bernard Shaw. And he explained that if a producer has spent a good deal of money on a film that is sufficient guarantee that the film cannot be objectionable.

Here in the country that made the films famous, we think we have taught the producers that a film may be costly and cleverly produced, its art and its technique may be admirable, but that if it sin against decency and morality, we will not have it. Must we start a campaign against the newspaper proprietors and book publishers? And if we do, can we be assured of the vigorous and persistent cooperation of the American people?

In a word, how does the public interpret the principle of a free press? When the test comes it will not matter much what the sophisticated critics

or revellers in libidinous literature, seekers and devourers of *Erotica* may think. Even beyond and above the Supreme Court, the authorized interpreter of the Constitution, is the mind of the people.

And I for one am optimistic enough to believe that in their heart the American people believe in some such regulation of a free press as we have in the Catholic Church. They may bristle at the word "index" and they will be loath to make such an Index. But the Catholic Church which does provide an "Index of Prohibited Books" has had a great deal of experience on this old earth. She has picked up a good deal of valuable psychological information in the past nineteen centuries, not to mention the Divine Wisdom with which She is endowed.

She is—I need hardly say to the initiated—not opposed to the principle of freedom. She believes in a free press. In fact at this moment She happens to be the only advocate of a free press in all Europe. But when She says Freedom, She means not license, not madness, not anarchy, but true, moderate, regulated Freedom. So say we all of us. I am confident that any authentic interpretation of the principle of freedom as found in our Federal Constitution, and may I say, any universal, popular interpretation of that principle by thoughtful decent people, the true lovers of liberty, will coincide with the ideal of freedom taught by the Catholic Church.

FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE

(Address Delivered on May 26, 1935)

The Declaration of Independence proclaims the famous and familiar axiom that all men are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights. "Inalienable" is an impressive word. It fills the mouth. It comes magnificently if not trippingly off the tongue. Patriotic orators expound the idea eloquently, or at last vociferously—the idea that no man may take from me the rights that God has given me. But the orators do not so frequently explain that since my congenital rights are inalienable, even I myself may not alienate them. That is to say, I have no right to surrender my rights. I have, for example, as one of my inalienable rights, freedom of the will. I must not barter away that freedom. It is not a commodity to be bought and sold. Nor may any man rob me of it, or beat it out of me. I may not give it away or throw it away. As a matter of fact I cannot get rid of it, try as I may. I may abuse my freedom, smother it, paralyze it, atrophy it but so long as I am human, my freedom remains, inemissible because inalienable, and I shall be held responsible for it. We sometimes say, speaking loosely, that a man "makes a beast of himself." But of course he cannot. He may act like a beast, live like a beast, but "a man's a man for a' that".

I speak of a man, but quite as often nowadays we meet with boys and girls who seem to be bent upon dehumanizing themselves. They say in effect to us stern crabbed antiquated moralists, "You tell me I am free. Very well then, here goes in the name of

freedom!" They live recklessly, madly, using their freedom to abuse freedom. They are spendthrifts of freedom. They fling it away as a drunken sailor flings away in one night in a brothel the hard-won wages of a year. Later on (if there be any later on for them), there may come to them a realization of their folly and a faintly smoldering desire for better things. But they say, "I have gone too far. I am become a victim of habit; my freedom is lost." But do what we will, we *cannot* "lose" freedom: we cannot alienate what is *inalienable*. It will not be possible in the Judgment for man to say "I was only a beast." God will answer: "I made you a *man!*"

Now I wonder if every Fourth of July orator has all this in his mind when he bellows forth that primary proposition of the Declaration, "Man is endowed by his Creator with certain *inalienable* rights." Indeed I wonder if the author and the signers of the Declaration of Independence were fully aware of the importance in the moral world as well as in the political world of that splendid phrase "inalienable rights". It is possible that Thomas Jefferson had only in mind a political philosophy, but his axiom is applicable also in the field of ethics and theology. In my Church at least it is a dogma that freedom of the will, and hence freedom of conscience, remains inviolable. God will not, man must and can not, deprive us of our freedom.

However, no sane philosophy and no reasonable theology can admit that freedom—any kind of freedom, political freedom, freedom of conscience, freedom of worship—is absolute, unlimited, entirely *sui juris*, autonomous. There are rules and regulations, standards and limitations of liberty. The authors of the Declaration were not anarchists, still

less nihilists. The document that came from their hands was a Declaration of Independence, not an announcement of Political and Moral Chaos. The war was on but the lid was not off. Any one who imagines that the Fathers of this country established a go-as-you-please every-man-for-himself kind of government must think that the American Revolution was made by mad-men. True, the aristocrats and monarchists thought them crazy. There was much sardonic laughter in the courts of Europe. And I venture to think that some diplomatic wiseacres at the Court of George III counselled the king: "Leave the rebels alone. Let them try out their lunatic notion that all men are free and equal. They will wreck their country in six months. Then they will appeal to your majesty to save them from the consequences of their own folly."

But Jefferson and Adams and Franklin and Hancock and Madison and Washington, like Hamlet, were not so mad as not to know a hawk from a handsaw. They knew liberty from anarchy. So they wrote a Constitution as well as a Declaration. In the Constitution they embodied a Bill of Rights, but they took care to delimit these rights with an elaborate system of "checks and balances". As we all know, there is today a great deal of protest against some of those constitutional limitations of liberty. If the radicals in our midst can have their way, they will make our law as chaotic and as nihilistic as our public and domestic morals. But I think I may assert with confidence that no enlightened American who truly understands the spirit of American freedom imagines that our rights are absolute—altogether unconditioned. We have no such mad political philosophy.

But if we Americans do not cherish an exaggerated idea of our political freedom, I am not so confident that we have a moderate and reasonable notion of the extent of religious liberty. We are so zealous for freedom of conscience and freedom of worship that some of us seem to lose sight both of common sense and of Christian principle. Many of our fellow citizens will admit no limit whatsoever to religious liberty.

And here, incidentally, is an anomaly. Some sixty millions of them belong to no Church. You would imagine that they didn't care whether Church kept or not. But it would be a mistake to imagine, because they don't go to church, that they are indifferent about religion, or unconcerned about religious liberty. They would visit their bitter wrath upon the head of any public official who would even introduce the subject of church-going into a speech or *a fortiori* into any kind of political pronouncement. Of one thing they are convinced, that they have a right to believe or not to believe, to worship or not to worship as they choose, that their religion or irreligion is no one's business but their own, that there is not, never was and never can be any organization on this earth having authority to command or even to instruct conscience.

With these millions who do not worship at all and who reject with fury what they call the impudence and arrogance of any one who should attempt to persuade them to worship, there are associated millions of others who *do* believe and *do* attend services but who agree that no man and no Church has divine authority to say if or what a man shall believe, or which if any form of worship he shall follow.

Perhaps some five-sixths of the citizens of the United States maintain that the right to believe and to worship is absolute, unrestricted, utterly free; that in religion there is no analogue of the political constitution, no system of checks and balances; that in religion every one is a law unto himself; that he writes his own constitution, that he is at once legislator, judge, and executive of the laws, if any, which he may lay down for himself. As for any written document such as the Bible, emanating from a source outside his own mind, he reserves to himself the right to accept or to reject it; and if he accepts it, he still retains the right to make his own interpretation of the text. No Church, no theologian, no minister, no priest, no pope may tell him "such and such in the authorized meaning of this or that text". In this, as in all phases of religion, he is his own last court of appeal. His intellectual and spiritual autonomy is absolute.

Now, I will admit that this theory of religious freedom is enormously interesting. It must give any man a supreme thrill to feel that he has a right to make or to unmake his own religion; that he may agree or disagree with the masters of theology: that he can approach such a perplexing religious document as the Bible confident that he can interpret it in all cases correctly—correctly at least as far as he is concerned, and that after all such is the only sort of correctness about which he need be concerned.

And it must be not merely a thrilling but a dismaying experience to feel oneself free to face without fear the question that stumped Pontius Pilate and ten thousand other philosophers, "What is Truth?" I am sure it would give me vertigo, but I can marvel at the assurance of one who feels pre-

pared to answer it unappalled, just as I can marvel at one who has the self-confidence necessary to balance on his head on the topmost point, of let us say the Eiffel Tower, a thousand feet above *terra firma*.

Yes, it's a thrilling theological notion that a man should make his own religion, irrespective of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles and of all ecclesiastical authorities. But if you ask me "Is it reasonable?" I shall ask to be excused from answering for fear of seeming impolite, perhaps to the degree of laughing. And if you press me further to say whether I think any human being is entitled and equipped to discover without the aid of any authoritative teacher the Absolute Truth in Religion, I am afraid I shall have to say that you must not impugn my intelligence.

I will, however, grant that the theory of absolute autonomy in theology is quite as reasonable as some of the modern subjectivist philosophies that have been the vogue for now some generations. Schopenhauer, for example, said, "The world is the projection of my idea. . . the whole world is an object only in relation to a subject, it is a vision of the beholder, in a word the projection of my own idea." I confess that to me that philosophical dictum sounds like an extension of the phrase of the Count of Monte Christo, "The World is Mine!" Mine because I make it. Make it by projecting a thought out of my mind. Mine because the moment I cease to hold the thought, that moment the world ceases to be.

Also, Schopenhauer's idea seems to me to make a piker of Louis XIV. The king is said to have uttered the arrogant phrase, "*L'etat, c'est moi!*" "The State? I am the State." Whether he said it or

not, it's a bold utterance, but it is a picayune sentiment compared with that of the subjective philosophy, "The World? I am the World. The world is the projection of my idea!"

Immanuel Kant went even a step further. He said, "a world without man would be a world without God." Apparently then, it isn't God Who makes man. It is man who makes God. For God exists if I think Him. He continues to exist if I continue to think. If I cease to think God, He ceases to be. It may be lunacy, but it passes for philosophy in certain highly intellectual circles.

Rudolf Eucken, the great present-day philosopher, says "Modern times have changed the position of the human subject. . . it has become to man the center of his life and the ultimate object of his endeavor." That is to say, man has become egocentric. Not eccentric, which means off center, but egocentric which means self-centered. Before Copernicus, man used to think that the world was the center of the universe, that the sun and the planets and the stars existed for the sake of the earth. The universe, then, was geocentric, earth centered. After Copernicus, man came to know that the sun was the center, that the universe is heliocentric. But now since the subjectivist philosophies came in with Kant and Schopenhauer, the universe is held to be no longer either geocentric or heliocentric but homocentric, the mind of man is the cause of all things: not *every* man or *any* man but *this man*. I myself. The universe is egocentric. If I think the universe, it exists. If I think it not, it ceases to exist. Even God is blotted out if I don't think Him.

Now on the basis of that philosophy I can understand that a man should say, "What I think to be

truth is truth. What I think not to be truth, that is not truth. I *make* truth. I *unmake* truth. What is true for me is true. What is not true for me is not true. Truth is in me: it is subjective. There is no truth outside of me, no objective truth. If you tell me that God is Truth I assent. But as I make or unmake truth, I make or unmake God."

To all good Christians and other devout believers, this sounds like blasphemy. It is blasphemy. It is also nonsense, blasphemous nonsense. But it is one form and a very prominent form, one may perhaps say the *predominant* form, of philosophy. In *Oliver Twist* Mr. Bumble says, "If the law supposes *that*, the law is a ass, a idiot," and if any of my hearers say "If a philosophy teaches that, such a philosophy is a ass, a idiot," I can only answer in the Scripture phrase, "Thou sayest it."

But mark you, only on condition that a man is the center of the universe, only on condition that the patriarchs and prophets and apostles and doctors of the Church revolve like planets around him; only on condition that a man makes the universe by projecting an idea out of his mind, only on condition that a man is the first cause and the last cause, the Alpha and Omega of all things, only on condition that man makes or unmakes God, can a rational being admit that a man has the right or the power to make truth or to make his own religion. There are two terms to religion. One is man and the other is God. But of these two terms, the Dominant is God. He creates man; man does not create Him. He reveals truth to man, man cannot teach God. It behooves man, therefore, not to create or to manufacture or to imagine a religion of his own. A man-made religion is no good to any man, especially if

the man who makes it is the man who believes it. Religion, to borrow the magnificent phrase from the Prologue to St. John's Gospel, is "born not of the will of the flesh, not of the will of man but of God."

To revert to the idea with which we commenced, the idea of *freedom*. A man must be left free to seek God, free to find God, free to worship God. But he is not free to fashion God to his own fancy, to warp God into the mold of his own mind, or to create the kind of God or the kind of religion he thinks he would like.

Now the Catholic Church, in spite of all modernistic, subjectivistic philosophies, holds to the old philosophy that Truth exists independent of man. Truth is not synthetically made in the laboratory of the mind of man. Truth exists whether man exists or not. For Truth is God. In harmony with that philosophy, the Church teaches that no man has a right to any other religion than the religion revealed by God. To find and to follow that religion, a man is free. For this he has an inalienable right.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

(Address Delivered on June 2, 1935)

Not infrequently we Catholics call attention to the fact that our Church has accumulated a great deal of wisdom in the course of her very long life upon the earth. For this she deserves no particular credit. It would be an abnormally stupid organization that didn't pick up experience and common sense in the course of nineteen centuries. Isn't there a maxim "No fool like an old fool"? And another, "Live and learn"? Now the Church is old but she is no fool. She has lived and learned. Even her worst enemies admit that of her. They never say, "The Catholic Church is stupid". They may wish that she were, but they know that she isn't. If she were stupid, they wouldn't need bother about her. She would long since have perished of her own stupidity. Evolutionists tell us that such was the fate of the enormous—incredibly enormous—animals that roamed our western prairies ages and aeons ago. They had big bodies but small brains. Recently I believe, the scientists discovered the skeleton of a mastodon, or was it a dinosaur, in the bed of a lake of asphalt. He was huge and heavy but lacking in gray matter. He hadn't the sense to remain on solid ground. He ventured into the mass of sticky stuff, and there his fossilized remains were discovered after a million years.

Now the Catholic Church is big, and in a way heavy—indeed when zealots within the fold feel impatient with her, they say she is slow and unwieldy. But unlike some other big things, she does not lack sense. She knows enough to stay where

she has a good foot-hold. She doesn't go wandering off into bogs and quagmires and quicksands and ponds of asphalt. She doesn't go in which she cannot get out.

On the other hand there are organizations which abandon *terra firma*, ventutre into dubious territory, bog down, and are engulfed.

Amongst them is the modern university. Take it all in all, as if it were a single unit—not this university or that, but all of them together—the university is a huge institution. Being big it needs big brains. It pretends to have big brains, bigger than any one else's. But if it has brains it lacks what is better than brains—wisdom, called more popularly common sense. It has not learned from experience. **A**nd it has, in consequence, gone poking into some rather sticky places. And just now it is bogged down in a tremendous morass. Why did it go in? It followed what the Latins called *ignis fatuus*, "The light of fools". And the light of fools in this case was "Academic Freedom".

It's a fine phrase. In the slang of the day, "It sounds just swell." Yes, and learned too. And brave and bold, and adventurous and all that. It seems to be the opposite of "stick-in-the-mud." But by one of the paradoxes of which the world seems so full, the universities that followed Academic Freedom are stuck-in-the-mud. They don't know it yet. The poor old dinosaur didn't know he was caught until the oozy stuff reached up to his inadequate little brain; and that took some time. It will take some time yet for the enormous body of what is called "higher education" to realize that it is hopelessly engulfed.

To drop the parable and come to the concrete

fact: when a generation or two ago the American colleges were all aping the German system, they imported from what was then held to be the most learned nation in the world the principle of *Absolute Academic Freedom*. What that principle involved you may surmise from such statements of it as these:

In 1898 Professor G. Kaufmann writing on "Freedom of Teaching in the German Universities" said, "There must be no barriers to the freedom of a university teacher except those of his own instinct for the truth."

And Professor Friedrich Paulsen wrote, "No thought can be commanded or forbidden to the academic teacher or his students".

And Adolf Harnack: "In regard to research and knowledge, there must be unlimited freedom". He sees the latent possibility of danger, but he insists: "The fear that unlimited academic freedom throws open the door to serious error should not in the least deter us from it, for the most serious error of all is the opinion that man should not enjoy perfect freedom".

Also recognizing the danger, Professor Kaufmann added to the statement I have quoted from him, "Whatever the academic teacher produces from his subjective veracity must be inviolable: he may proclaim it as truth, regardless of consequences."

Those valiant proclamations of perfect academic freedom sound rather foolish and pathetic now in view of what has happened in Germany. In 1914, as soon as the war drums commenced to roll, most of those advocates of perfect intellectual liberty swallowed their words. But in those "dear

dead days beyond recall" academic freedom was a brave bold slogan, and the pick of American scholars came back from Europe proclaiming it. It is odd and tragic that on this side of the water, the nabobs of higher education are still mouthing that fine phrase "Academic Freedom".

In 1923 President Nicholas Murray Butler of Columbia University said—and I am sure he would say it still: "No professor of ours is or ever has been under any restrictions save those which he puts upon himself by reason of good morals and good manners. Columbia has through a long and honorable history lived up to the highest ideals of freedom to seek the truth and freedom to teach"

President Lowell, lately-retired president of Harvard, answered a statement of Bertrand Russell to the effect that English universities were freer than American. He said: "At Oxford not long ago, if I am right, a students' publication *The New Oxford*, was suppressed on account of remarks that it contained. Nothing of the kind has, I believe, occurred here in the memory of man. During the war, you lost your fellowship at Cambridge on account of your opinions. No such thing happened at Harvard. Harvard has stood, and will stand for the fullest academic freedom".

President Hopkins of Dartmouth has declared that even "pernicious" doctrines may be taught to college boys and girls provided "like access be not denied to other points of view".

But perhaps these are mere rhetorical expressions offered by way of attracting students who like to fancy themselves "liberal"? Not at all! There is plenty of evidence—too much—that the

professors have taken very seriously the *carte blanche* handed them by the prexies.

One professor exercising his prerogative of saying whatever his instinct for the truth dictated, says, speaking of marriage, "Free sex intercourse is the highly moral product of a healthy social organism".

And another: "Monogamy, with its lifelong hold on both parties, is incompatible with personal freedom": and since divorce entails expense, he adds "it is better to have no marriage ceremony at all and simply have those who love each other live together as husband and wife as long as they agree with each other."

That suggestion reminds me of a quaint conceit of Cosmo Hamilton, who said in debate with G. K. Chesterton, "Marriage is made not in heaven but on the top of a tram, or in a canoe on a placid stream, or during a walk in the woods, when the boy says 'Will you marry me?' and the girl answers 'I will'. That," said he, "is the marriage, and any demand that it be recorded in a magistrate's office or at city hall or in a church is tyranny."

Another professor says, "Psychologically, institutional religion is sex perversion."

A reference book used in many colleges, Metchnikoff's *Nature of Man* explains that "man is a kind of miscarriage of the ape".

And another: "Jesus in condoning the offense of the woman taken in adultery, set the stamp of His approval upon sexual relations based on mere inclination".

Another quotes with approbation the dictum of Nietzsche: "Morality is the greatest enemy of life".

An ex-professor in a girls' college, now writing

for a newspaper syndicate, declares dogmatically, "all gods are the creation of the human imagination. There never has been any divine revelation and never will be. No extant moral code, not even that derived from the Bible, possesses divine authority. Conscience is nothing more than the product of group opinion".

And another professor: "All crimes are produced by various chemicals called hormones which are manufactured by the different glands".

And again Metchnikoff: "Evolution knows nothing of free will. All our actions are the necessary outcome of chemical processes".

A professor of Sociology ridicules the idea that a criminal is a free moral agent responsible for his crime, and a college reference book specifies: "Suppose a tramp has murdered a child on the highway, has robbed her of a few coppers and has thrown her body in the ditch. Do you mean to say he is not to blame and not to be punished? Yes, I mean to say just that".

But enough. Any one familiar with the current trend in college sociology, ethics, criminology, psychology, biology must be aware that a thousand such mad statements as these could be assembled.

And in accordance with the claims of absolute academic freedom, one may teach Socialism, Communism, Bolshevism, Atheism; universal skepticism, or philosophic nihilism; the superiority of Buddhism over Christianity; the advantage of polygamy over monogamy; the desirability of monarchy rather than democracy. A professor may teach today a subversive opinion that he will abandon tomorrow. Abusing the advantage of having young men and young women when they are in

their most receptive and impressionable years, he may skillfully and powerfully indoctrinate them with views, which, after his students have graduated and are beyond his reach, he may abandon as absurd. The implications of the theory of absolute academic freedom are infinite.

Some years ago a group of 26 alumni of Amherst laying down a program for a liberal college said: "A liberal college should give the student the beautiful experience of exposure to conflicting viewpoints, and train him to accept no opinion until he has made it his own by careful examination and critical weighing of the best possible evidence". Now I submit that this is pure nonsense. Anybody who knows the intellectual caliber of under graduates in American colleges, is aware that they are quite incapable of "carefully examining and critically weighing the best possible evidence". By the very nature of the case, a student who takes up a dozen or score of sciences in a four years' college course can have only a smattering of them when he graduates. To tell him that he must not accept anything until he has made it his own by a critical investigation is asking something of which the student is intelligently incapable.

Indeed, his professors are likewise incapable of it. They study for a lifetime on one subject, and then disagree with one another. When professors disagree, shall the student decide? You might as well ask him to decide between Newton and Einstein.

A little preaching of intellectual humility would do the student more good than all this foolish flattery. The student should be told: "You don't know how to think until you come to college. Unless you

are the rare exception you won't know how to think when you leave college. So don't let any fool flatter you with the notion that you have the critical faculty of deciding for yourself what is truth and what is not. Don't deceive yourself and don't let any twenty-six alumni, or twenty-six hundred alumni, deceive you with the statement that you, an undergraduate, even after the 'beautiful experience of exposure to conflicting viewpoints', will be able to make an opinion your own by 'careful investigation and critical weighing of the evidence'. My dear boy, it cannot be done".

Back in the early years of this century the celebrated Dr. Osler of Johns Hopkins gave a lecture at Harvard on "Immortality". The plan of the lecture was to pass in review the supreme masters of thought in all ages: Aristotle, Plato, Seneca, Epictetus, Cicero, Maimonides, Mohammed, Augustine, Aquinas, Erasmus, Locke, Hume, Kant, the Bible, the Rig-Veda, the Zend Avesta, and other authorities, Christian and non-Christian, conservative and radical, of believers and unbelievers, orthodox and infidel. In the end Dr. Osler professed himself agnostic on the subject of Immortality. What wonder. No man can sit in judgment on the truth or error in the mind of all the thinkers of the human race. And if no man can do it, no boy or girl can do it. The idea of dishing up to college students all kinds of mental pabulum, good and bad, true and false, healthful and unhealthful is excellent if you wish to drug the students, poison them. But if the purpose of education is to feed the mind, not suffocate it, absolute academic freedom is nonsense and damnable dangerous nonsense.

And this is the nonsense that the Catholic

Church has learned to reject. She claims to have divine revelation and direct relationship with the Holy Spirit. But she doesn't need any supernatural light to show her that it is a mad thing to bewilder the minds of students and demoralize them because of stupid devotion to a slogan "Academic Freedom". Having common sense, the Church has avoided that pitfall, that bog, that sea of sticky slime in which the modern mastodon of University Education is now caught and in which it is feebly floundering before it becomes entirely and inextricably submerged.

THE CHURCH AND DEMOCRACY

(Address Delivered on June 9, 1935)

There is a suspicion—a rather widespread suspicion—that the Catholic Church is by tradition and on principle hostile to democracy. We are told—or we used to be told—that Monarchy, Feudalism, or some kind of Absolutism was essential to the existence and the progress of our Church. It was supposed that we could not survive if the union of Church and state were broken and all governmental props and subsidies removed.

The history of the Church in the last century and a half (here in the United States) has destroyed that misconception. The Catholic Church has flourished like the green bay tree in the democratic soil of America. In all her long career of nineteen centuries the Catholic Church has never taken root in a more congenial soil or breathed a more favorable atmosphere than the soil and the atmosphere of this youngest and freest of nations—America.

She has had experience of East and West, of Monarchy and Democracy, of Imperialism and Feudalism, of times of ignorance and times of intellectual culture; she has had experience of old countries and young, but never has she taken root more deeply, grown more rapidly or felt herself more thoroughly at home than here in the Land of Freedom, the land which after all has given democracy its fairest trial, the land in which, in spite of all the sneers of cynics and the fears of faint-hearted Americans (“O Ye of little faith!”) we are still substantially democratic.

Here in a land from which monarchy was routed, where a titled aristocracy is forbidden by law.

where notwithstanding the gradual limitation of opportunity, a poor boy with no important ancestors and no social position is still free to make his way to the top. A land wherein even yet and indeed more now than ever before, education is free and the vast majority of students poor; a land where class distinctions and social castes are frowned upon, except by a narrow lunatic fringe of fops and sycophants who ape the accent and the manner of European snobs; and with a grand fanfare of journalistic trumpets marry off their silly little snips of daughters to a count or a baron or a pseudo-prince of some decadent and probably degenerate stock; I say in this land where the blood and the heart and the sinew of the people still remain democratic, the Catholic Church has made such progress and achieved such triumphs as in no other land and in no other epoch.

Perhaps it may be well to document that fact with a few statistics which I shall present briefly and swiftly. In 1789 when John Carroll was appointed Bishop of Baltimore he had the entire United States for his diocese. There were 30 priests and 25,000 Catholic people. Today, we have in America four cardinals, 125 bishops or archbishops, 30,250 priests and over 21 million Catholic people. With a free field and no favor, no privileges, no governmental support, no union of Church and state; in the midst of a dozen powerful rivals, and perhaps 200 lesser contestants for supremacy, the Catholic Church has outdistanced them all. Surely it is a curious and interesting phenomenon.

Now, although it may startle some of my audience, I am going to attempt to show that the rea-

son for this Catholic triumph in a democratic land is no mere accident of circumstances but a natural necessary consequence of the fact that the principles upon which our American government is built are congenial to the Catholic Church and indeed, though to some outside the fold this may be surprise upon surprise, that the principles of American democracy originated in the mind of perfectly orthodox authoritative Catholic theologians.

The fundamental principles of the American government, as found in the Declaration of Independence, are identical with the fundamental principles of the government of the Catholic Church. Even more, I maintain that it is quite probable that Thomas Jefferson, when writing the Declaration of Independence, indirectly borrowed ideas and phrases from two great Catholic authorities, Suarez, a Spanish Jesuit, and Bellarmine, a cardinal of the Roman church. It happened thus:

A great hero with the American statesmen of the time of the Revolution was Algernon Sidney, who had been beheaded in England a hundred years previously for advocating democratic principles. A new edition of Sidney's works had been printed in 1763. In one of his volumes is found a summary of the political doctrine of Cardinal Bellarmine and a copy of that volume, underscored by Thomas Jefferson is preserved in the Congressional Library at Washington.

Remembering that Bellarmine lived two hundred years before Jefferson, listen to the Roman cardinal's teachings and say if Jefferson's ideas and even Jefferson's phrases are not reminiscent of those of the great Catholic authority.

Bellarmino writes: "Secular or civil power is in the people, unless they bestow it upon a leader. The power is immediately in the multitude."

"It depends upon the consent of the people to ordain over them a king, council, or other magistrates. If there be a lawful cause, the people may change the kingdom into an aristocracy or a democracy."

Cardinal Bellarmine continues: "Mankind is naturally endowed with freedom, and at liberty to choose what form of government it pleases. The power that one man hath over others was first bestowed according to the discretion of the people."

Surely these political principles of the Roman cardinal are identical with those of the Declaration of Independence:

"All men are created equal."

"Government derives its just power from the consent of the governed."

"Whenever any government becomes destructive of these ends it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it."

These axioms of democracy are so familiar to us that they do not startle us; indeed they scarcely ruffle the surface of our consciousness. But in Jefferson's day they were considered highly inflammatory, seditious and subversive of law and order. But radical as they are, they emanate from a Roman theologian whose orthodoxy was never called in question, and whose repute in the Church may be surmised from the fact that he has been canonized, Saint Robert Bellarmine. He might well be denominated patron saint of democracy and of these United States.

Before I pass on to a second great principle of

democracy, I feel that I must interject a few words to show that when Cardinal Bellarmine and Thomas Jefferson said "all men are created equal" neither one of them was proving himself either an ignoramus or an imbecile. It happens to be the fashion just now, even here in what should be the citadel of democracy, to laugh at the axiom "all men are created equal." Almost any day you may hear a sophomore, or, what is worse, a grown man with the mentality of a sophomore, solemnly laboring to demonstrate that men are *not* all equal, that by nature some have more brains and more talent than others. But do they imagine that Thomas Jefferson wasn't aware of that? Had he not eyes to see that not all men have the same facial angle or the same cranial content? Had he not ears to hear that not all men talk with equal wisdom? In his day as in ours there were boobs and morons. Give the framer of the Declaration his due: he couldn't have been so silly as those who—to their own satisfaction—obliterate his entire political philosophy by pointing out that an intellectual giant has more brains than a village idiot. Jefferson, it may be assumed, knew that much. When he said that all men are equal he declared a truth so deeply mystical and so profoundly theological that small minds think it ridiculous. I am glad to notice that at least one recent commentator on the Declaration, James Truslow Adams, in *The March of Democracy*, sees the truth and the importance of what a lesser mind has called "spectacular rhetoric." "Such phrases," he says, "as 'all men are created equal', 'are endowed by their Creator with inalienable rights', and that 'governments derive their just power from the

consent of the governed', were dynamic forces which sent the world on a new course, the end of which is not yet in sight."

Yet certain impatient or thoughtless Americans are willing to sell their birthright for a mess of Fascism or Hitlerism, or Leninism. Because some legislatures are corrupt the defeatists declare themselves in favor of the abolition of all congresses and parliaments. Because we are bedeviled by gangs of racketeers, hysterical persons cry aloud for some benevolent tyrant to arise, take the situation in hand, set up a scaffold in every public park, regale the citizens and intimidate criminals with multitudinous executions. They seem to forget that such experiments in *schrecklichkeit* have been tried before. But those who reign by terror often end like Robespierre on the guillotine, or like Marat in his bath with a dagger under his ribs. Dictatorships are precarious: the last state of a government that trusts in dictators is usually worse than the first. Free citizens (more or less free) who think to cure all their political and social troubles by setting up a superman to lord it over the nation, forget the lesson taught by history that no man is big enough, wise enough, good enough to exercise unlimited power. Those who bring in a dictator to do what they themselves haven't the energy to do, are in reality lazy and if they haven't the courage to do the job that must be done they are cowards. Only a degenerate population shirks the responsibility of self-government. Only if we have become degenerate is it time to call in some one to tyrannize over us.

The Jeffersonian maxim, "All men are created equal", is not the most extreme expression of fun-

damental democracy. The Catholic catechism is more radical than the Declaration of Independence. It insists that the meanest of men—let us say a scabrous scrofulous coolie—is so important in the eyes of God that if the Crucifixion of Christ saves him and no other, it will not have been in vain. There you have the ultimate in democracy. To “aristocratic” Christians the mad magnificent extravagance of that statement is a stumbling block and to the unbeliever it is foolishness, but it is an inevitable corollary of the orthodox theology of redemption.

I have spoken throughout of American Democracy. But I would not have any listener imagine me ignorant of the fact that democracy, perhaps in a superficially different form than ours, exists and has existed in other countries than our own. We sometimes are tempted to believe that England and Canada and Australia, though technically monarchical, and indeed members of an empire, are more democratic in some ways than the United States. But the democratic principles under which these countries enjoy so large a measure of freedom emanate from the Magna Charta, and that superb document—in effect a Bill of Rights—dates from the 13th century when all the world was Catholic. Furthermore, the city-states of Italy in the days of the Renaissance and earlier were, except when they periodically fell into the hands of tyrants like the Medici and the Sforazi, more democratic than even ancient Athens and quite as democratic as our own New England when the town meeting was in its heyday.

Cardinal Moran of Sydney, New South Wales, in a very brilliant historical resume of “The Catholic

Church in the Nineteenth Century" quotes a Protestant writer (unfortunately not named) who says of Belgium (I beg you to observe as I read the passage that it contains not merely a eulogy of Belgium but a comprehensive catalogue of democratic principles):

"This most Catholic of Catholic countries adopted from the very first the most modern of modern Constitutions, embodying every popular liberty in its length and breadth. Freedom of conscience, religious equality, freedom of the press, of meeting, of association, of education, parliamentary government, ministerial responsibility, universal suffrage, inviolability of person and house, equality before the law, permanence of judicial appointments, publicity of legal courts, trial by jury, have all not only been legalized, but protected in Belgium, without any of the evasions which make similar legislation in some countries virtually a dead letter."

Against the various assertions that Catholicism and Democracy are not at all incompatible certain hostile critics often quote the Syllabus of Pope Pius IX written in 1870, a document in which a careless casual reader uninstructed in the art of interpretation might indeed seem to find a condemnation of democracy. The pope inveighed against what was called "liberalism". And indeed it would seem at first blush that one who condemns "liberalism" must be illiberal. But it was not *bona fide* liberalism that the pope condemned, but moral, social, political anarchy hiding behind a facade of liberal pronouncements. It should not be difficult for us to understand that situation. Aren't we all familiar with the exclamation of

Madame Roland, "O Liberty, how many crimes have been committed in thy name?" And have we not before our eyes a government that proclaims itself the very acme of liberalism, Russia, wherein cruelty, tyranny, fierce injustice, wild disregard for all human rights and mass murder are perpetrated in the name of humanity? The very term "Communism" originally a noble and beautiful word—the first Christians at the height of their pristine fervor, in the days when all men said "See how these Christians love one another" were communists. But now the word reeks and stinks with fanaticism and savagery. So in Mexico, a small imitation of Russia here at our doors, there is developing, though our politicians high and low deliberately blind themselves to the fact, a reign of tyranny such as has hardly been seen since the days of Diocletian or of Nero. And yet that government calls itself "liberal". That's the kind of liberalism condemned by the pope.

As far back as June 1871, the *Civiltà Cattolica*, a Jesuit paper in Rome, explained that Pius IX was condemning not genuine liberalism but counterfeit liberalism, not true democracy, but tyranny masquerading as democracy.

Says the *Civiltà*: "The words of Pius IX do not refer to representative constitutions but to the errors which under every form of government may manifest themselves. . . It was impossible that Pius IX could include civil and political liberty in his condemnation of Liberalism, and so far was it from being his intention, that at the very time of the publication of the encyclical, he introduced these administrative reforms into his states."

However, before I conclude, I must be permitted

to explain that democracy like every other good and holy principle needs to be regulated and moderated. Democracy of itself, extreme and rampant, might produce disintegration. You have the idea in Daniel Webster's phrase memorized, I am sure, by every school boy in America since it was first spoken, "Union and Liberty, one and inseparable," As union and Liberty are to be inseparable, so must Democracy and Authority be forever united. There was until the Civil War a theory that union was unimportant, that liberty must be extended even to include the right to secede from the union. That concept of democracy was washed out in blood in the terrible years 1861-1865 and after the passions aroused in that conflict died down, we have been able to see clearly that disunion would have destroyed democracy.

Now the Catholic Church is aware of that necessary limitation of democracy. She has always refused to allow the individual congregation or a local group of congregations to secede from the Unity of the Whole Church. She constantly has in mind the prayer of Our Savior "that they may all be One", and the slogan of St. Paul, "One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism", as well as his indignant exclamation, "I hear that there are schisms amongst you. Was Christ divided?" No! democracy and self-government must not be permitted to imperil the divine unity of the Church. Democracy must not degenerate into rank individualism. Democracy is not to be defined, government of, for and by the individual. Enlightened Americans, as distinct from extreme libertarians, believe in a limited freedom and a balanced, moderated democracy. And there once again, as so frequently be-

fore in this series, I am led to remark that the American idea and the Catholic idea coincide.

THE CHURCH AND THE NEW SOCIAL CONSCIENCE

(Address Delivered on June 16, 1935)

The most pathetic fact in the history of civilization is that the race learns very slowly what is for its social and moral good. Man takes an unconscionably long time to get hold of an ethical principle, and a still longer time to apply it in daily life. One would imagine, for example, that slavery would have vanished promptly when the Gospels were once accepted by kings and emperors and people. The idea that one man may *own* another and be absolute master of the other man's life is madly at variance with the Sermon on the Mount. But nations that called themselves Christian did not abolish slavery until 1800 years after Christ.

As of slavery, so in a lesser degree of class distinctions and what St. Paul calls "fables and endless genealogies". Since we are all children of the same father, it is ridiculous that some should call themselves "aristocrats", "the best people", as if they had come down body and soul from heaven while the rest of us were but common clay out of the earth. Even if one cannot grasp the noble idea of the brotherhood of man, a little common sense, it would seem, should enable us to laugh at aristocratic pretensions. As Bobby Burns has it:

"You see young birkie, ca'd a lord,
Wha struts, and stares, and a' that;
Tho' hundreds worship at his word,
He's but a coof for a' that;
For a' that, and a' that,

His ribbon, star, and a' that,
The man of independent mind,
He looks and laughs at a' that."

But even Bobby Burns' proud countrymen are still so eager for ribbons and medals and badges and decorations that they accept them from a government that conquered their ancestors.

Certain Christians carry aristocratic distinctions even into church. I wonder what they make of Our Savior's blunt condemnation of those who "love the first places at feasts and the first chairs in the synagogues" and of His stern condemnation of the Pharisees who thought themselves better than the rest of men.

Yet in the Epistle of St. James there is a denunciation of Christians who draw a line of distinction between man and man. "If there shall come into your assembly," says St. James, "a man having a golden ring, in fine apparel, and there shall come in also a poor man in mean attire, and you have respect to him that is clothed with the fine apparel, and shall say to him; 'Sit thou here well'; but say to the poor man; 'Stand thou there or sit under my footstool', you commit sin" because "you have respect to persons." There's a bombshell for rich pewholders and for the entire breed of aristocrats who even in church before the altar put up a barrier between themselves and the vulgar horde. The practice of separating the "nice people" from the "common people" still persists 1,900 years after St. James and in spite of Jesus Christ.

Take the more important matter of warfare. I suppose we dare not say that any and every imaginable war is sinful and criminal. Self-defense is the first law of nature. But one thing seems

certain: we would never go to war unless we were first stirred up to hatred of our fellow man. Yet, according to the Scripture, "he that hateth his brother is a murderer". Wars have continued, and feuds and duels, and race hatred and international animosities, in flat contradiction of the spirit of the Gospel. Indeed we learn slowly. Sometimes it seems we never learn.

So it is not to be wondered at if in the matter of social justice the conscience of Christian people has developed very tardily. True, we have got rid of a few of the most obvious instances of "man's inhumanity to man". Only in countries that have reverted to paganism, as for example, in Russia and in Mexico, is it the custom to condemn multitudes of men and women to penal servitude for no other crime than that of fidelity to conscience. We no longer slaughter captured populations or enslave them. We don't chain captives to the galleys or rivet them to the rock in mines deep in the bowels of the earth. But though the galleys are gone, I doubt if the rowers chained to an oar in a Roman trireme suffered more than the stokers in the hold of a modern steamer, or than the sailors before the mast in the wind-jammers of a generation or two ago. And though mine workers are no longer technically slaves, their lot in life is still desperately hard. I have heard a priest, once a breaker-boy in a Pennsylvania coal mine, tell of his childhood experiences some sixty years ago, and I assure you the story was harrowing. To this day there are some 800,000 children at work on farms, in factories, and in sweat shops, and you may have read lately in the *New York Times* of children working late at night in the beet fields by the light of automobile head-

lights. Almost a century after *Oliver Twist*, we still find it necessary in the Anglo-Saxon world to maintain societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, a scandal, by the way, to the Latins and to the Orientals who cannot understand cruelty to children. Speaking of *Oliver Twist*, we like to believe that there are no longer schools for teaching children to be pickpockets, but we have boy-bandits in the United States; indeed an appalling percentage of the prevalent crimes are committed by adolescents. We read in the news-dispatches a few days ago that in Russia, where the newest and maddest sociological experiment is being tried, there is a tidal wave of juvenile crime, and the girls are as frequent offenders as the boys.

For another social crime, not so far away from home, observe the slums in European and American cities, sordid fetid tenements that breed filth, disease, drunkenness, crime, revolt, indecency, obscenity and even degeneracy. They are a stench in the nostrils, literally and figuratively, and a shrieking contradiction of our claim to be a civilized people. With the advance in medical science, hygiene, and sanitation, a slum should be impossible, unthinkable. It is less excusable in a modern city than a leper colony amid the rocks and caves and tombs in ancient Palestine. Besides slums, we have huts—huts and hovels in the very shadow of mansions. On Riverside Drive in New York, directly in front of the palatial home of one of the world's wealthiest men, there was all last winter a village of shacks made of bits of waste lumber, fragments of scrap iron, discarded bits of tin, put together with pathetic ingenuity by men, some of them soldiers in the World War, who were not only homeless but destitute and all but straving.

The richest city in the world could find no shelter for them. Few passersby seemed to sense the fact that these pitiable makeshift homes, and the still more pitiable occupants of them were a tragic commentary upon the idea of social justice that prevails in what some of us would like to think the most enlightened community in the world. That casual juxtaposition of the millionaire's mansion with hovels fit only for rats but shared by rats and men, must have caused the devils of irony to laugh a raucous laugh at the mad inconsistencies of our civilization.

I need not continue the catalogue of these anomalies. You may add to it as you will, but whether the list be long or short we must reach the one conclusion: even here in America we have scarcely commenced to understand the rudiments of social justice. In particular we have been blind and obdurate to the implications of that supreme document of social justice (not to say of the religion that makes our duty to man part of our worship of God) the Gospels of Jesus Christ.

Now there are critics of Christianity—not a few in these days of communism and atheism—who place the blame for the slow development of a sense of social justice at the door of the Church. They might better lay it at the door of human nature. The trouble is not with the Church but with man. The Church teaches but man refuses to learn; the Church cries "Come along" but man lags behind. Any one who questions the fact that the Church, no matter how much a laggard she may seem to the impatient reformer, is always far in advance of the people, might do well to examine his conscience as to whether he keeps pace with the Bible or with the

Church in the matter of relationship with his fellow man. If he be quite honest I think he will conclude with the pagan poet who said "I see what is good and I admire it. But I do what is evil", and in that you have an epitome of the history of humanity.

As for the Communists who criticize the entire Christian system as fruitless of social reform, I should imagine that they would have the good grace to be dumb in the face of what organized Communism has done in Russia. The machine indeed has made progress—terrible progress—amongst the Soviets, especially the war-plane and the battle-tank, but the dignity of man has been destroyed and his freedom utterly ruined. If that be progress, I would prefer the socially backward days of the feudal system, or even the Greco-Roman civilization of the Caesars, which was not only ignorant of social justice but contemptuous of the new Christian doctrine of the brotherhood of man. Any unbiased student of Christian origins must know that with the preaching of the Gospel came a stupendous universal social revolution. In a course of talks on "The Church and the Depression" given over this network some six months ago I recapitulated some of the teachings of the Fathers of the Church of 700, 1,000 and 1,500 years ago. I cannot now go over that ground again.

But in these our days also, two popes, Leo XIII in 1891 and Pius XI in 1931, have issued encyclicals that have been generally recognized as documents of epoch-making importance, not mere academic statements of doctrine (though they are that) but clarion calls to practice the social justice of the Gospels.

In those documents you may find, not indeed dis-

cussion of intimate details, questions of the valuation of gold and silver, of a federal banking system, of inflation, deflation, reflation, and all that, but you find fundamental principles which like the roots of a great tree go deep and spread wide. See, for example, how nobly Leo XIII vindicates the dignity of man, the foundation of all social justice.

“No man may with impunity outrage that human dignity which God himself treats with great reverence. . . Nay, more; no man has in this matter power over himself. To consent to any treatment which is calculated to defeat the end and purpose of his being is beyond his right; he cannot give up his soul to servitude; for it is not man’s own rights which are here in question, but the rights of God, the most sacred and inviolable of rights.”

In consequence man must not be dealt with as if he were an animal or a machine; the work of his hands and the sweat of his brow are not a mere commodity. Pope Pius XI says: “Labor, . . . is not a mere chattel, since the human dignity of the workman must be recognized in it, and consequently it cannot be bought and sold like any piece of merchandise. None the less the demand and supply of labor divides men on the labor market into two classes, as into two camps, and the bargaining between these parties transforms this labor market into an arena where the two armies are engaged in combat.”

In this combat, both popes recognize that the employer has the advantage over the employee, the rich hold the upper hand over the poor. In consequence, though there must be no class war and no discriminatory legislation, the state must take the poor particularly under its wing. Says Pope Pius:

“The richer class have many ways of shielding themselves and stand less in need of help from the State; whereas the mass of the poor have no resources of their own to fall back upon, and must chiefly depend upon the assistance of the State, and for this reason wage earners, since they mostly belong to that class, should be specially cared for and protected by the government.”

Now the popes always speak with moderation, they never give way to hysteria, never play the part of the demagogue, but they do not mince words when they set forth the social evils that are the cause of our present unrest. Take for example such utterances as these from Pius XI: “In our days not alone is wealth accumulated but immense power and despotic economic domination are concentrated in the hands of a few, and those few are frequently not the owners but only the trustees and directors of invested funds, who administer them at their good pleasure.

“This power becomes particularly irresistible when exercised by those who, because they hold and control money, are able also to govern credit and determine its allotment, for that reason supplying, so to speak, the life-blood to the entire economic body, and grasping, as it were, in their hands the very soul of production, so that no one dare breathe against their will.”

The pope does not spare his own. He says: “There are even now, some who, while professing the Catholic faith, are well nigh unmindful of that sublime law of justice and charity which binds us not only to give each man his due, but to succor our brethren as Christ, Our Lord Himself; worse still, that there are those who out of greed for gain do not

shame to oppress the workingman. Indeed there are some who can abuse religion itself, cloaking their own unjust imposition under its name that they may protect themselves against the clearly just demands of their employees."

It is not my purpose at this time to rehearse the remedies suggested by the popes. I need only say that after showing thus plainly that they visualize the evil, they go on to suggest practical means for reforming the social condition of the world. Some of their principles are so sweeping and, as men say, so "radical" that the world in general is not and for some time to come will not be ready to accept them. To give but one sample. The popes, with the theologians, hold that private wealth is a public trust, and that no man absolutely owns what he happens to possess. Leo says: "The chief and most excellent rule for the right use of money is one which the heathen philosophers hinted at, but which the Church has traced out clearly, and has not only made known to men's minds, but has impressed upon their lives. It rests on the principle that it is one thing to have a right to the possession of money, and another to have a right to use money as one wills. . . . If the question be asked, How must one's possessions be used? the Church replies without hesitation in the words of St. Thomas Aquinas: 'Man should not consider his material possessions as his own, but as common to all.'"

Call that Communism if you will; it is a noble, magnificent, divine kind of Communism, infinitely remote from the narrow twisted ill-natured hateful thing rampant in our day and calling itself Communism.

But I say, this brief talk cannot pretend to be

an adequate presentation of the attitude of the Church towards the Social Problem. I have had it in mind only to indicate that the popes, the doctors, and fathers of the Church in our day, and in every day since the Gospel was first made known, have been alive and alert for social reform. As Gladstone said, "The Church for 1,500 years marched at the head of the procession of civilization." Fifteen hundred? Yes, nineteen hundred. So far has she been from lagging that it might perhaps be alleged that she goes ahead so fast that the people dare not follow. Her doctrine is so advanced that the world cannot or will not catch up with it. But whether or not mankind at large is ready for the truth about social justice, the Church like her Divine Master refuses to condescend to some baser doctrine. She may be ahead of and above the common conscience in regard to social rights and social duties. But no man can truly allege that she has been delinquent or behind hand.

THE CHURCH AND PROGRESS

(Address Delivered on June 23, 1935)

Voltaire, a man of bitter poisonous genius, but something of a sage, wrote in one of his innumerable letters, "If there were no God, it would be necessary to invent Him." A few years after the appearance of that shrewd observation, as if in confirmation of it, the revolutionists in Paris, having dethroned God, declared a substitute—"Reason". But Reason is an abstract philosophical sort of deity, so they personified it in a flesh and blood woman—a foul sort of woman by the way—and actually committed the sacrilege of placing her upon the altar at Notre Dame.

"Reason" as a god lasted but a short while. In our day Reason is fallen so low that no modern philosophical system gives her recognition, not to say a genuflection, still less an adoring prostration. Pragmatism, Vitalism, Freudianism, Behaviorism, all the new philosophies scout reason. They say we are not governed by reason but by impulse and indeed that all our thoughts and words and deeds, our "reactions", our sins and crimes and virtues, are all mechanically determined.

After Reason in place of God came Science, called more impressively Modern Science. But science as a god is slipping. As long ago as 1890 Ferdinand Brunetiere, a very notable thinker, declared science "Bankrupt". A contemporary critic who would be flattered if I called him the American Brunetiere. Joseph Wood Krutch, in *The Modern Temper*, after speaking of "the despair which has beset intelligent people in recent years", devotes a whole chapter to "Disillusion with the Laboratory"*.

**The Modern Temper*, by Joseph Wood Krutch.

Back in the early years of the century Professor Loeb was promising to create life in the laboratory. But instead of life, death comes from the laboratory, hideous horrible death, mustard gas death, and only the scientists who work in secret know what still more horrible kinds of death will come out of the laboratory to be utilized in the next war, the next war that Pope Pius XI and a good many others are already calling the "war of extermination". "Disillusion" with the laboratory? Say rather, furious indignation with the laboratory. The laboratory may annihilate us. The whole world is awake to the fact that modern science may ruin civilization. Those who used to bend the knee to modern science have become so fearful of modern science that some of them have tried to call a halt—a moratorium they call it—on science. They want science to stop in its tracks and wait for ethics and morals to catch up.

With science there was a twin-god, the Machine. Machinery was to revolutionize civilization. But the machine, now become incredibly high powered, threatens to get out of hand and smash man who made it. Mrs. Shelley's *Frankenstein*; first a novel, now a motion picture, has brought home to readers and to film-audiences the hideous possibility that the god Machine may turn out to be a monster more ruthless than Moloch, more destructive than Juggernaut. And Eugene O'Neill in a nightmare sort of play, *Dynamo*, develops with intense dramatic power the idea that humanity and civilization may be sacrificed to the machine.

Another substitute for God, contemporary with the machine and with science, was Evolution. "Some

call it Evolution, others call it God", says Caruthers, and irrational though it be, there still *are* persons who think that Evolution can perform all the functions of God, and that since we have evolution we may dispense with the hypothesis of any other deity.

Herbert Spencer was the high priest of the religion of Evolution. High priest, prophet, philosopher, pedagogue, and factotum. He explained that "human society which starts from the condition in which each family wanders about alone and isolated, and each man at once warrior, hunter, fisherman, tool-maker and builder, shall pass through the nomadic stage in which several families are united in a kind of chieftainship where the king is at once judge and king, and eventuate in those complex settled states of Modern Civilization where labour is carried to its minutest subdivision and every function finds its appropriate social organ."*

But Thomas Huxley, who was an even better expositor of Darwinism than Herbert Spencer, admitted—or rather emphasized—the fact that the evolutionary process is non-moral. Evolutionary progress, he declared, wars against social progress, ethical progress, moral progress, and hence the progress of civilization. So if evolution is a god it is a non-moral god, a heedless, heartless, remorseless god. Tennyson saw that. He says:

... "Nature red in tooth and claw

"With rapine, shrieked against his creed"

the creed of man who thought that God was love.

He asks if man

"Who loved, who suffered countless ills

"Who battled for the True, the Just"

must

*J. B. Crozier, *Civilization and Progress*, quoted in Christopher Dawson: *Progress and Religion*, P. 18.

“Be blown about the desert dust
“Or sealed within the iron hills?”

If that be the end of evolution, man, says Tennyson (and I dare say, also God), would be

. . . “A monster then, a dream,
A discord. Dragons of the prime,
That tare each other in their slime,
Were mellow music matched with him.”

But the saddest, most tragic, most hopeless conclusion, if there be no God but Evolution, is that of Bertrand Russell who speaks of “Omnipotent matter, blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, rolling on its relentless way,” and who has epitomized the pessimism inherent in the evolution-theory in a passage as eloquent as it is despondent:

“Man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; all the labors of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noon-day brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system; and the whole temple of Man’s achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the débris of a universe in ruins.”

As a kind of fillip to that horrifying prophecy of the ultimate fate of man, H. G. Wells, the favorite spokesman of semi-educated worshippers at the shrine of Evolution, says that he looks upon the world as “a very dire and terrible world” and that hope has been all but extinguished from his heart.

“Reason” and “Science” and “The Machine” and “Evolution” having all disappointed the human race, there remains, or there did remain until the war, an undaunted though unsubstantiated belief in “Progress”. Progress is perhaps not a god alone: it is a twin-god of Evolution, just as the Machine is a twin-god of Science. Those who worship Progress make an act of faith in the proposition that the universe and man move ever onward and upward from chaos to order, from the amoeba, a splotch of protoplasmic jelly in a puddle of mud, to that highly complex and intricate organism, man. Herbert Spencer gave a classic definition of evolutionary progress in a paragraphic sentence which we all had to memorize when we were in college. I will not repeat it here—it is too long and too difficult to follow—but the gist of it is that all things that exist pass from the simple to the multiform, from the incoherent to the coherent, from the indefinite to the definite, and so on. What it really means is that the universe with all its worlds and all its solar systems, with all vegetable, animal, and human life, is constantly, everlastingly ascending, moving steadily forward to a goal of unlimited perfection. If I may risk the possible impropriety of descending swiftly from the very learned Herbert Spencer to the funny little French chemist who came here a few years ago with his simple cure for all our ills, a piece of knotted string and a sing-song refrain: “Every day in every way I become better and better”, may I say that the childish formula is a popular expression of the religion of “Progress”.

The trouble is, of course, that not only individuals but entire races of men and indeed whole civilizations go downward and backward as well as upward

and onward. The archaeologist will tell you that the surface of the earth is heavily encumbered with ruins. If you dig down some 15 or 20 feet below the surface of the sands in Egypt or in Babylonia, you will find buried remnants of what used to be magnificent, gorgeous civilizations. In Athens the ruins stare at you gaunt and pathetic from the top of the hill of Mars like broken tombstones: in the Forum at Rome you see them again, beautiful in a kind of way, but none the less tragic reminders that a civilization like a man dies and rots in the earth. Indeed they say that beneath the surface of the city of Rome there are deeper and deeper layers, nine in all, one dead civilization laid upon the ruins of another, as the bones of a man may be laid in a grave above those of his father, and the father's in turn upon those of his father. Edward Gibbon tells in the familiar beautiful preface to his masterpiece *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* of his sad musings at the ruins of the Coliseum. He didn't put his thoughts into verse but Kipling has done it for him:

"The tumult and the shouting dies,

"The captains and the kings depart;

.

"All valiant dust that builds on dust."

The prophet Isaias wrote it a thousand years before Rome was ruined. "All flesh is grass and all the glory thereof as the flower of the field. The grass is withered and the flower is fallen. . . indeed the people is grass," and to complete the thought from our Savior Himself, the "Grass that is today and tomorrow is cast into the oven". For those who do not read Isaias or the Gospels, there is the modern,

ultra-modern H. G. Wells, who wrote shortly after the war :

“The system under which we have grown up, the system we call modern civilization, is heading very rapidly downhill towards disaster, and people living as we do are not realizing with any strength of conviction just what that downward movement amounts to. I have seen a modern civilized system broken down. I saw railways falling out of use. I saw a great city visibly dying, houses tumbling down, roads falling into the drains below, all the methods of urban transport going out of use. That process of collapse has spread.”

In a book which made a vast impression on the post-war mind, *The Decline of the West*, Oswald Spengler, presumably one of the wisest of recent philosophers, denies that civilization as a whole, world-wide civilization, develops constantly. In fact he denies that there is any one universal civilization. There are many successive civilizations which spring up here and there, develop, decline, die like individual men, and (if I read him rightly) he seems to say that after all we don't really get anywhere. For whole civilizations, as for individual men, “The path of glory leads but to the grave.” When some evolutionists in Darwin's day said that although individuals are blotted out, the “type” goes on, Tennyson answered, speaking of Nature,

“So careful of the type? but no.
From scarp'd cliff and quarried stone
She cries, ‘A thousand types are gone:
I care for nothing, all shall go.’”

And to drop the poets and the philosophers, do not some of the most approved scientists, equipped with the very latest biological and astronomical learning, tell us that the universe is running down, like an antiquated grandfather's clock, and that the day is coming when it will cease to move and the stillness of ultimate death will reign once more, that the universe will become once again as in the beginning disorganized and disintegrated, that the cosmos will revert to chaos?

To consider a phenomenon closer at hand and more easily verifiable, do we not see before our very eyes certain signs of the decadence of our own people? Here in America, the birth rate is declining ominously. The other day I saw a chart prepared by the National Resources Board heavily printed in black parallelograms with the note that the condition is quite as black as it is painted, showing that whereas in 1800 there were 976 children to every 1,000 women in the United States, there has been a constant decline until in 1934 there were only 350 children to 1,000 women. We need no prophet Daniel to read that handwriting on the wall. Americans are going the way of the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Aztecs, the Incas, and the Redmen of our own plains and mountains. Nor is the decline merely arithmetical. Morally we are slipping. We commit more murders than all Europe combined, and our homicide rate is five times that of England. We grind out more divorces than any country in Europe except Russia, where divorce may be obtained by a post-card notification to husband or wife and to a public official. In consequence, amongst us the institution of the family, the basis of civilized society and of the State is riddled, in

some classes of society, shot to smithereens. We lead the world with embezzlers, grafters, gangsters, racketeers, hijackers, kidnapers, and malefactors of great wealth. The now defunct industrial codes were made necessary by cheaters and ruined by chisellers even before they were legally condemned to death by the Supreme Court. To our terrible disgrace there have been 4,000 lynchings in the United States north and south, since 1898. In spite of the expenditure of uncountable millions of dollars on popular education, the mass of the people remain easy victims of almost any demagogue, provided he be sufficiently dogmatic, blatant, violent, intolerant, and uninhibited by conscience from making wild, impossible promises to the poor, abused underdog. It is notorious that the people at large are governed here and now by emotion, passion, and not by reason, notwithstanding a hundred years of common school, high school and college education.

As for sex-sins, natural and unnatural, normal and abnormal, you shall have to ask the custodians of clinics and of insane asylums for the horrible statistics and the ghastly details. Together with all this, we have our share—more than a proper share for a young nation—of social and economic ills—imagine five major depressions or panics in one man's lifetime, in a land that is reeking and bursting with natural resources.

I present these unpleasant facts not to make an indictment against my own nation, but in the interest of truth and to give pause to those evolutionistic moderns who cry "Progress!", as if Progress were as plain as a mountain rising in magnificent

solitude from a plain, and as undeniable as the sun in a cloudless sky at noonday.

I believe in Progress myself and my Church believes in Progress. But belief in Progress demands an act of faith. It isn't as plain as A. B. C. or as evident as twice 2 make 4. I believe in Progress because and only because I believe in God. Blot out God and I couldn't believe in Progress because there would be neither a starting point from which progress could begin nor a goal towards which progress could aim. And worse still, if there were no God there could be no guiding hand to direct the way of man and the Universe. The world and all on it would be in the same danger as the sun when the inexperienced Phaeton drove it madly across the skies.

In a word the Church refuses to share the tragic and pitiable despondency of the Oswald Spenglers, the Bertrand Russells, the Herbert George Well's, and of the astronomers who think the world is running down, because the Church believes in God, the only God, not Science as God, not Evolution as God, not Progress as God, but the one only God, the God Who creates and inspires true science directs the true evolution, and controls the progress of the spheres through space and of man to his eternal goal.



