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Christian State  
or pagan chaos!

GERALD G. TREACY, S.J.



*"The Voice of the Vicar of Christ"*

# CHRISTIAN STATE OR PAGAN CHAOS!

A popularized edition of the Encyclical  
*Immortale Dei*, on the Christian Con-  
stitution of States, by Pope Leo XIII.

BY

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# CHRISTIAN STATE OR PAGAN CHAOS!

1. The purpose of the Church is the eternal welfare of souls. Yet her influence on human life is so great, that it might be thought her one aim was to secure man's earthly welfare and happiness. Wherever the Church has planted the Cross civilization and culture have taken root.

2. Yet an age-old calumny against the Church ever persists. It is that she opposes the rightful aims of government. Far back in the days of pagan Rome, Christians were proclaimed enemies of the Empire. Disaster that came upon the State for flouting God's Law, was blamed not on the guilty nation but on the innocent Christian. St. Augustine refuted the calumny long ago. But it will not down. It is alive today. Its advocates would fashion the State and its Government on principles opposed to our Lord's teaching. So we think it imperative to contrast these novel, false State theories with the true doctrines of Christ.

## **God the Origin of Authority**

3. God has created man to live in society. Unless he lives with his fellow-man he cannot lead a truly human life. He begins life as a member of a family. But as his family cannot do everything for him to enable him to live a full human life, the family must

join with others in a larger group, the State. That is God's plan for man, and that is how the State began. Families got together because they needed each other's help.

As no group can hold together unless there is someone to guide it, the State must have authority. This is a law of Nature, and so God is its Author. The authority of the State then comes from God. "There is no power but from God," says St. Paul (Rom. xiii. 1).

### **The Object of Government**

4. The right to rule is not bound up with any special form of government. There is no best form. That form is the best which procures the general welfare, whatever its name. God is the supreme ruler. Men are his representatives. Those who rule must reflect the wisdom and justice of the Divine Ruler.

### **Duties of Rulers and Subjects**

5. God's rule is just and paternal. So should be the rule of men in authority in the State. Government should be administered for the general welfare, and not for the benefit of special classes or individuals. Rulers who fail in this must remember that they will be called to account by the Supreme Ruler, for "the mighty shall be mightily tormented" (Wisdom vi. 7).

When people are convinced that their rulers hold authority from God, and that it is their duty to obey them as God's representatives, then the majesty of the law will meet with the loyal homage of all citizens. To despise lawful authority is to despise God. "He

that resists the power, resists the ordinance of God, and they that resist, purchase to themselves damnation” (Rom. xiii. 2).

### **The State and Public Worship**

6. The State should give public honor to God. For the law binding the individual to pay honor to God, applies to the State. Men living in society as citizens of a State, are under God’s power just as individuals are. Society then owes God honor and gratitude by public worship. It is sinful for the State to act as if there were no God and to contemn or hinder the practice of religion. It is the duty of the State to protect and favor the observance of religion, and shield it under the sanction of law. For human happiness depends on the practice of religion, and the State is bound to procure that happiness, as far as it lies in its power.

### **God Established One True Religion**

7. “One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all” are St. Paul’s words. That means there is one way to God, His way, His one religion. God has pointed out this one true religion by prophecies fulfilled, by miracles without number, by the witness of countless martyrs, by the rapid spread of the Good Tidings in the face of tremendous opposition and persecution.

### **Christ Founded One Church**

8. That one true religion is found in the Church established by Christ. For the only-begotten Son of



God formed a society on earth which is His Church, and to it He gave the commission that had been given Him by the Eternal Father. "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you" (John xx. 21). "Behold I am with you all days even to the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20). Christ came to save all men and open to them the gates of heaven. So He entrusted to His Church the same task: "Preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark xvi. 15).

### **Church Authority**

9. Over all men Christ has placed His Vicar, the chief and unerring teacher of truth. To him He has given the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. xvi. 19). He has placed him over the whole flock. "Feed My lambs, feed My sheep" (John xxi. 16, 17). For him He prayed a special prayer. "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not" (Luke xxii. 32).

### **The Church a True Society**

10. This Church or society is made up of men, just as the State is. It is different from the State however, because its end is different and the means it uses to attain that end are different. For its end and means are supernatural and spiritual. By right divine the Church is a perfect society, having from its Founder the means necessary for its end. It is plain from this that the Church is superior to all human societies, and in no wise dependent on the State.

11. It is the Church and not the State that is to be man's guide to heaven. God has given power to the



Church to teach and legislate in regard to everything pertaining to religion. "All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth. Going therefore teach all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. xxviii. 18-20).

### **The Church Claims Supreme Authority**

12. The Church has always claimed supreme authority in matters of religion, and has ever fearlessly exercised it. The Apostles insisted on this at the very beginning of the Church's history. For when they were forbidden to preach the Gospel by the leaders of the Synagogue, they replied: "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts v. 29). The Fathers of the Church, the Roman Pontiffs have constantly and consistently vindicated this authority. Rulers of States have by treaties and concordats acknowledged and respected it.

### **The Church and the State**

13. God has given two powers jurisdiction over mankind, the Church and the State, the ecclesiastical and the civil. Each is supreme in its own sphere. However as each has jurisdiction over the same subjects dealing with the same question, it is plain that there must be co-operation between them. Education is such a question. For the sphere of education belongs both to the Church and the State. It is then according to God's Providence that the Church should see to the eternal interests of mankind, and the State to the temporal.

## **The Need of Harmony**

14. As "the powers that are, are ordained by God" (Rom. xiii. 1), harmony and not conflict should prevail between Church and State. For the Church has the eternal welfare of men as its chief concern, the State their temporal welfare. Whatever then pertains to spiritual values belongs to the Church, whatever is of the civil or political order belongs to the State. Our Lord has made this clear: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's."

15. There are occasions however that call for special agreement between Church and State. On such occasions concordats are drawn up, defining the rights and duties of both Church and State in the matters agreed upon.

16. Such then is the organization of the Christian State based on reason and on God's Law.

### **The Church Helps the State**

17. The dignity and sovereign power of rulers in the Christian State are aided by the Church. In such a State provision is made for the human and the divine; the rights of citizens are protected by divine, natural and civil law; the duties of each one are carefully marked out. Furthermore domestic society or the family, which is so closely bound up with the good of the State, acquires a solidity so necessary to it, when Church and State co-operate for its protection.

### **Civil Obedience a Duty**

18. As the laws in the Christian State rest on truth and justice and not on the whims of rulers or sub-



jects, they call for obedience that is not a servitude of man to man, but submission to God Who rules through men. The result is that public authority is something sacred, and obedience to that authority is dignified and noble, for it is obedience to God.

### **Christianity Ennobles Citizenship**

19. The citizen who is a Christian is not torn by conflicting obligations. He respects his fellow-citizens and his rulers. He knows that he has responsibilities as well as rights. And so the benefits that Christianity confers on the individual, are acquired by the whole community.

### **The Catholic Church Is the Bulwark of the State**

20. That is why St. Augustine addresses the Church as the bulwark of the State: "Thou joinest together not in society only, but in a sort of brotherhood, citizen with citizen, nation with nation, and the whole race of men by reminding them of their common parentage. . . . Thou teachest kings to look to the interests of their people, and people to be submissive to their kings. . . . Thy teaching if duly followed, is the very mainstay of the State."

### **History Shows the Value of the Christian State**

21. The Christian State once was. It made Christian Europe. It changed barbarism into civilization. It stemmed the tide of Mohammedan conquest. It gave the world true liberty. It brought relief to human suffering. And how was it capable of achieving such



a result? Because it reached the mind and heart of man through the teaching of the Religion of Christ.

### **Effects of Agreement of Church and State**

22. Ivo of Chartres writing to Pope Paschal II stated: "When kingdom and priesthood are at one, in complete accord, the world is well ruled. . . . But when they are at variance, not only the smaller interests suffer, but even things of greatest moment fall into deplorable decay." But the harmony between Church and State did not continue. It was ended by the religious revolt of the sixteenth century.

### **The Effects of Religious Disunion**

23. The Sixteenth Century Revolt against the Church disrupted religious unity and confused religious thought. It affected all human life. It perverted true philosophy and substituted in its place the philosophy of Liberalism. Protestantism bred Liberalism. From the right of private judgment which is the keynote of Protestantism, sprang the right to do whatever one pleased, which is the basis of Liberalism.

### **Falsehoods of Liberalism**

24. Beginning with a false idea of liberty, Liberalism advances to a false idea of the State and Government. In the State, everyone is free to think and do as he pleases, and no man has the right to rule other men. The State is nothing but a mob of people, who entrust to their rulers the business of government. The ruler has no right to govern.

25. God is ignored. All rights and powers come from the people, independent of God. The State owes no duty to God or the Religion revealed by God. Religion belongs only in the churches, for those who wish to have churches. This in brief is the teaching of Liberalism. It is responsible for Totalitarianism which is the menace of the modern world.

26. Out of all this falsehood came unbridled Capitalism which crashed down in a world-wide depression, and was soon followed by world-wide war.

### **Statism Replaced Religion**

27. The history of the State in the 19th and 20th centuries is one long story of hidden and open attack upon the Church. Laws were passed infringing on the rights of the Church as a perfect society established by Christ. The State claimed the right to treat the Church as any other society under its jurisdiction. The great slogan was broadcast: "Separation of Church and State."

### **The Meaning of Separation**

28. The real meaning of separation of Church and State is domination of the Church by the State, as Liberalism proved by its action and not by its slogan. Co-operation between Church and State, each power acting in its own sphere, according to God's plan, was outlawed.

### **The Effect of Separation**

29. The effect of separation, attained by unjust laws, was "to paralyze the action of the Church, to

cramp to the utmost her freedom and to curtail her inalienable rights." Separation is a nice name for tyranny and absolutism.

30. Such State absolutism is against God's Truth and God's Law. For God, not the State, is the source of all power of every kind.

### **False Popular Sovereignty**

31. False popular sovereignty teaches that the people are supreme without any dependence on God. The truth is that the sovereignty of the people is derived from God's sovereignty. For if it derives from the people themselves without God for its Author, then the people are supreme to such an extent that no ruler is anything more than a delegate. He is at the whim of popular passion, and may be removed or disobeyed whenever the people so choose. Such a falsehood makes a mockery of authority, and leads to ceaseless government upheavals and finally to anarchy.

### **Religious Indifference**

32. To hold that every form of religion is equally good, leads finally to the rejection of all religion in theory and practice. This means atheism. Men who sincerely believe in the God of Truth, cannot admit that different conflicting forms of belief and divine worship are equally good and acceptable to God.

### **Freedom of Speech**

33. The freedom to think and write whatever one pleases is not real liberty. For liberty is a power given



to man by God that he may become a better man; that he may perfect himself. Truth and goodness are the objects of liberty, and they are as unchangeable as Nature itself. If the mind of man goes after falsehood and his will after evil, neither mind nor will can attain their full development. They become twisted and corrupt. Whatever then is against truth and virtue should not be broadcast for popular consumption, much less sanctioned by law. When the State permits license of speech and action to lead men into error and vice, it is acting against the laws of Nature. For license is not liberty. License means freedom to do anything. Liberty means freedom to do what is good and according to man's nature.

### **The Freedom of the Church**

34. It is an injustice to subject the Church to the State. For that is to put the natural above the supernatural, to subordinate eternal values to things of time. The Church founded by Christ is the true and sole teacher of virtue and guardian of morality, and without the virtuous and moral citizen the State cannot last. It is the duty of the State to aid the Church and not fetter her freedom, for the very good of the State itself.

### **Errors Condemned by the Popes**

35. The errors of Statism have been condemned by Our Predecessors Gregory XVI and Pius IX. In Gregory's day the false notions of liberty and individualism were exposed by that Pontiff and repudiated,

while Pius IX made a summary of the current false teachings, branding them contrary to reason and religion. Separation of Church and State was the catch-cry of the Liberals who were really building up the totalitarian State. Co-ordination of Church and State, co-operation of Church and State and not separation is in keeping with common sense and God's command.

### **Summary of Papal Teaching**

36. From the teaching of the Popes it follows that the origin of public authority is to be found in God first and not in the people first. For the people derive their rights from God. It is as unlawful for the State as it is for the individual to disregard all religious duties, and to regard all forms of religion as equally good. It is also wrong for the State to allow unlimited freedom of speech as if this were a right of the citizen. No one has an unlimited right. All rights are limited. This is according to God's Law.

The Church and the State are perfect societies and exercise their rights, each in its own sphere. There should be no subordination, but there should be equality and harmony between both powers. There is no reason for conflict between them even in matters of mixed jurisdiction such as education. Church and State should co-operate for the good of the people who live under the jurisdiction of both.

### **Catholic Teaching On Government**

37. The Church does not condemn any form of just government. The Church approves every form

of government that secures the common welfare. If the people consent to the established form of government, no matter what the form is, always providing it is a just rule, then that is the best form of government for the people concerned. If it is a democracy, the people should take an active part in government.

### **Catholic Teaching On Religion**

38. There is one true religion, there is one true Church, "one Lord, one Faith," as St. Paul expressed it. That is Catholic teaching. In a State where there are various forms of religious belief, the Church does not relinquish her claim of being the Church of God. But she does not advocate forcing belief in that claim for a forced belief is no belief. "Man cannot believe otherwise than of his own free will," says St. Augustine.

### **Liberty and License**

39. The Church approves liberty which is freedom under God's Law. The Church condemns license which means freedom to ignore and despise God's Law. True liberty acknowledges lawful authority. License admits no authority. All real liberty is that of the children of God.

### **The Church Has Encouraged Liberty**

40. History proves that the Church has been the promoter and guardian of liberty. She has ever opposed the tyranny of rulers who would rob their people of liberty. She has ever upheld the rights of the in-



dividual, those natural rights given each individual by God, that no State or Government may interfere with. Every modern advance in the development of the real liberties of the people the Church has welcomed.

### **The Church Welcomes Modern Discoveries**

41. It is a calumny to say that the Church is against modern political systems and the discoveries of modern science. It is true to say that the Church opposes the wild theories of false science, and the errors of Liberalism that lead to license and not liberty. As all truth comes from God the Church welcomes every new discovery that broadens the field of knowledge. Every real research project has the blessing of the Church. So has every real improvement in human living. All newly discovered truth in the natural order adds to the knowledge or praise of God. As the Church is opposed to sloth, she encourages all activity of mind that leads to new knowledge. Her only anxiety is that men's minds and industry work for the Glory of God. She does not wish them to become the victims of pride that will turn man away from God.

### **Truth the Guardian of Freedom**

42. The best guardian of liberty among men is God's Truth, as Christ has said: *The truth shall make you free*. We are in touch with the times and in sympathy with the real improvements of the age. We are anxious however about modern political theories and wish that they were based on more solid foundations, without endangering the real freedom of peoples.

## **The Voice of the Pope**

43. In these troublesome times it is important for Catholics to heed the voice of the Pope. Papal teaching is the guide for Catholic thought and action.

### **Liberty and Liberties**

44. Catholics must remember that there is a difference between liberty and the false liberties that are advocated today. States today are advocating liberties and at the same time denying liberty to the Church. Not names but facts are important. Under the name liberties, policies are adopted by governments that give the lie to true liberty.

### **Full Catholic Life**

45. Full Catholic life embraces private and public activity. It means first living up to the teachings of the Gospel even at the cost of sacrifice. It means loving loyalty to the Church's teachings and commands. It means making Catholic thought effective in public affairs. Catholics should be active in securing a Christian education for every child in a Christian nation.

### **Catholics In Political Life**

46. As a general rule Catholics should take an active interest in political life. To shun public life is to leave it open to men whose principles are rooted in hostility to God and the Church. And men of such caliber harm the State as well as religion. By participating in political life, the Catholic influences gov-



ernment for the common good by infusing Christ's teaching into the laws and policies of the State.

### **The Example of the Early Christians**

47-48. The early Christians are an example for the modern Catholic. Living in the poisonous atmosphere of paganism they proved themselves the leaven in the mass. And soon the whole mass was leavened and paganism was no more. Christianity permeated the homes, the camps, the senate and even the palace of the Emperor. When persecution had come to an end, Tertullian could say: "We are but of yesterday but we crowd all your institutions; your cities, islands, villages, towns, assemblies, the army itself, your wards and corporations, the palace, the senate, the courts of law."

### **Total Catholicity**

49-50. It is for the modern Catholic to imitate his forefathers in the Faith. First, every Catholic should be a *total* Catholic, which means giving unswerving allegiance to *all* the teachings of the Church. Again, every Catholic should take his share in popular movements, guiding them along right lines. Moreover Catholic influence should direct civil liberty along the path of God's Law, and so bring back society to the Christian pattern we have just described. It is not necessary to give a detailed plan for this. But there must be unity of aim in all plans for Catholic action. This unity will be attained if all follow the guidance of the Apostolic See and the Bishops, whom the Holy Spirit



has placed "to rule the Church of God." In matters of opinion there is the widest possible Catholic liberty. In matters of Faith there must be uncompromising unanimity.

### **Political Theories**

51. Catholics are free to choose any political theory of the State and Government. There is no best form of government. That form is best that is just and according to the will of the people.

### **Catholic Unity**

52. There should be unity of opinion among Catholics on two important principles, the maintenance of religion and the State. There is no room for disagreement in these matters.

### **Two Important Results**

53-54. From this united Catholic opinion two results will follow, the Church will be helped in her divine mission and the State will be benefited thereby. This then is Our teaching on the Christian State and the duties of individual citizens.

### **God's Help Necessary**

55-56. We must pray for God's help to enlighten the minds and move the hearts of men to follow the teachings we have just given. To you, to your clergy and people we gladly impart the Apostolic Benediction.

Given at St. Peter's in Rome, November 1, 1885, the seventh year of Our Pontificate.

LEO XIII, Pope.

## **QUESTIONS**

### **LESSON I**

**(Paragraphs 1-7)**

What is the purpose of the Church and what effects have followed?

State the age-old calumny against the Church and refute it.

How did the State begin?

Explain the text: "There is no power but from God."

What is the best form of government?

What must government rule reflect?

How should government be administered?

Why should we submit to lawful authority?

How should the State or Society show honor to God?

What duty has the State regarding religion?

Prove that there is but one true religion.

Where is that religion found?

### **LESSON II**

**(Paragraphs 8-12)**

What commission has Christ given His Church?

What is Christ's promise to His Church?

To whom did our Lord give the keys of His Kingdom?

What was Christ's special prayer for Peter?

Explain the difference between the two societies, the Church and State.

Why is the Church superior to all other societies?

What power has the Church received from God?

What did the Apostles say, when the leaders of the Synagogue forbade them to preach?

### LESSON III

(Paragraphs 13-20)

How has the State shown its respect for the Church's authority?

In what particular subject must Church and State co-operate?

How can both Church and State be supreme?

What are the aims of Church and State?

"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's."  
Explain.

Why do concordats exist between Church and State?

What follows from the co-operation of Church and State?

Why is public authority sacred and obedience noble?

How does St. Augustine prove that the Church is the bulwark of the State?

### LESSON IV

(Paragraphs 21-24)

How has the Church helped civilization?

When did the harmony between Church and State end?



State the effects of the Reformation.

Explain the connection between Protestantism and Liberalism.

What is Liberalism's teaching on the State and Government?

How does Liberalism regard Religion?

### LESSON V

(Paragraphs 25-32)

What is totalitarianism derived from?

What is the foundation of unbridled capitalism?

What does the history of the State in the 19th and 20th centuries show?

What did separation of Church and State really mean?

Explain the false idea of sovereignty of the people. State the right teaching on the sovereignty of the people.

What effects follow from the false teaching on popular sovereignty?

Why are not all forms of Religion equally good?

### LESSON VI

(Paragraphs 33-38)

Explain the difference between liberty and license.

Why has God given man liberty?

Why is man not free to think and write as he pleases?

Why should the State gladly concede complete liberty to the Church?

Who condemned the errors of Statism?  
Where do we find the origin of public authority?  
Does anyone possess an unlimited right?  
Is there any reason for conflict between Church and State?  
What is the Church's attitude toward forms of government?  
What are the duties of citizens in a democracy?  
What is the Church's attitude toward various forms of religious belief?  
Quote St. Augustine on religious belief.

## LESSON VII

(Paragraphs 39-44)

Show the difference between license and liberty.  
What has been the Church's attitude toward liberty?  
What is the attitude of the Church toward modern science?  
What does the Church oppose in political theories and scientific discoveries?  
All truth comes from God. What follows from this?  
What is the Church's anxiety about modern discoveries?  
What is the best guardian of liberty?  
Quote our Lord's words on liberty.  
What does the Pope say of modern political theories?  
In these troublesome days to whom must Catholics look for guidance?  
When States talk today about liberties, how do they act?

## LESSON VIII

(Paragraphs 45-56)

Explain the meaning of full Catholic life.

Why should Catholics be active in political life?

What good result follows from such activity?

What does the example of the early Christians teach us?

Quote Tertullian on Catholics in the Roman Empire.

What does total Catholicity call for?

Does the Pope outline a detailed plan for Catholic action?

How is unity in Catholic action attained?

What is the Catholic position on opinions and on Faith?

Are Catholics at liberty to prefer any form of government?

On what two matters is there no room for disagreement among Catholics?

What important results must follow from united Catholic opinion?

How does Pope Leo close his encyclical?





