

Pope Leo XIII: A Critique of the Modern World

by MICHAEL L. BROCK

In the late nineteenth century, the world was on the brink of war. It was a world not dissimilar to ours in its economic, political and social divisions, and it was about to explode. It is Michael Brock's contention that of all the voices offering advice in those days, only that of Pope Leo XIII penetrated straight to the heart of the problems at hand. Through the great Pope's major encyclicals, the author proceeds to focus on Nationalism, Rationalism and Liberalism as key ideological dead-ends in the resolution of the tensions of the modern Western world. In so doing, he not only presents a trenchant critique of contemporary modes of thought and action, but also acquaints the reader with the wisdom of the Church as applied to fundamental temporal concerns.

As the leaders of the major European states jockeyed for position during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, one leader alone, a man stripped of power though not of authority, stood in distinct transcendence of the competing factions and ideologies which would in a few short years throw all Europe into war. His name was Leo, the thirteenth to be so called, and he stood at the head of a Church just recently humbled by its loss of temporal power. He was neither monarchist nor republican, neither reactionary nor liberal. His message was at once as old as Christian Europe itself and as young as the electric light bulb, that illuminating symbol which for many so perfectly represented the new era into which Europe was moving – the twentieth century, the age of light, the triumph of reason.

While the wise of the world were echoing the last strains of Rationalism, Leo opted for, of all things, a return to Scholasticism. While the political *avant-garde* called for wider and wider *liberte*, he reminded the world that true liberty cannot be attained in separation from the moral law. While political theorists and governmental leaders called for the separation of Church and State (i.e., the usurpation of Church functions by the State), he called, not for a return to Gallicanism, but for the recognition of the primacy of the spiritual over the natural, of what pertains to the soul over what pertains to the body. While many, recognizing the evils of unrestrained capitalism, found salvation in socialism, he fought both as evils which affirm only the material dimension of man. Some saw him as a man sent by God, moved by the Holy Spirit. Others rejected him as a relic of the Dark Ages and saw in his reign the end of nineteen centuries of religious tyranny. Most simply ignored him.

What follows is a critique of the modern world as seen through the eyes of Leo XIII. During his twenty-five year pontificate (1878-1903) Leo exercised his teaching authority in a series of encyclicals which offers at once a veritable goldmine of information on the thought of the nineteenth century and the definitive Catholic answer to the errors of modernity. God and religion had been declared dead (each new pope was proclaimed the last) and in their place the vying ideologues opted for agnosticism, atheism, darwinism, liberalism, materialism, nationalism, positivism, rationalism, or whatever other persuasion happened to sell best that month in the market place of ideas. It was a world without a center, the roots of which can be located at least as far back as the Protestant Revolution of the sixteenth century, while some thinkers go back further still, to the breakdown of the medieval world in the fourteenth.¹ But the Protestant Revolution, which destroyed the theological and, consequently, philosophical unity of Europe, can truly be said to be the parent of the modern mind.

The doubt caused by the destruction of religious unity found its philosophical parallel not long after in the person of Rene Descartes whose own 'universal doubt' opened an entirely new field of philosophical speculation. Philosophy was now critical, that is, it would concern itself from now on with the process of philosophizing rather than with the reality being philosophized about. Or better put, the *act* of philosophizing became the object of philosophy. Rather than look at the world and deduce therefrom, philosophers sought to look within the thinking process itself (*I think; therefore I am*) in order to verify

the existence of extramental reality. The philosopher was forced to question his thinking faculties and in time, with Kant, he would find them wanting. Kant's contribution to philosophic thought (after he had been aroused from his dogmatic slumber by David Hume) lay in his understanding that the mind imposes an order on extramental reality and that what we perceive is not the true object (the *noumenon*) but only the object-as-it-appears-to-me (the *phenomenon*). It would not be long before the critic would question why man should assume that there is a reality if that reality cannot be grasped by man. Descartes had solved that problem by 'proving' the existence of a non-deceiving God. But God was now dead.

LEO XIII: FAITH AND REASON UNITED

Into this confusion in the year 1879 Pope Leo XIII issued his encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, which laid the cornerstone for the great social edifice he was about to construct in his following encyclicals. *Aeterni Patris* preceded, both chronologically and substantially, all of Leo's encyclicals. It was written before the others because it was to be the substance, the foundation, of the others. Leo realized that the errors which he sought to correct were errors stemming from the philosophical perversions of the day and that to combat those errors it would be necessary to lay a solid foundation. *Aeterni Patris* served that end.

The purpose of Leo's first encyclical was twofold: to disavow any incompatibility between faith and reason and to introduce St. Thomas Aquinas to the modern world. The conflict between faith and reason, between the theologians and the rationalists, is one that has plagued the Christian Church since its inception. But Leo transcended the faith-reason dialectic by claiming that, far from being incompatible, faith and reason are complementary:

For not in vain did God set the light of reason in the human mind; and so far is the super-added light of faith from extinguishing or lessening the power of intelligence that it completes it rather, and by adding to its strength renders it capable of greater things.²

Human science was not to be rejected — but neither was it to be deified. It was to be considered as a tool by which men, guided by faith, could reach truth. St. Thomas Aquinas, “among the Scholastic Doctors, the chief and master of all,”³ was recognized as the man to whose thought the world must turn if it is to correct its false philosophies:

For, the teachings of Thomas on the true meaning of liberty, which at this time is running into license, on the divine origin of all authority, on laws and their force, on the paternal and just rule of princes, on obedience to the higher powers, on mutual charity one toward another — on all of these and kindred subjects — have very great and invincible force to overturn those principles of the new order which are well-known to be dangerous to the peaceful order of things and to public safety.⁴

Thomism, as Leo saw it, is centered on the existence of a God who is both Absolute Being (“I am who am”) and a Person, not some distant overlord or abstract idea. This God is the Creator and Sustainer of nature, and so a world system which disregards Him is incomplete. God is: therefore He cannot be ignored. Hierarchy and degree and human differences exist: therefore they cannot be ignored. We cannot act as if all men are equal because they are not. Nothing better demonstrates Leo's use of Thomistic realism than this simple quote from another of his great encyclicals, *Rerum Novarum*: “nothing is more useful than to look upon the world as it really is, and at the same time to seek elsewhere . . . for the solace to its troubles.”⁵ Leo looked upon the world “as it really is” and saw that, in the political and economic spheres, Christian principles were conspicuously absent. With Thomism as his guide and the nineteen hundred year tradition of the Church behind him, Leo entered that world and in two ground breaking encyclicals laid to rest the hackneyed charge that the Church ought to stay clear of ‘worldly’ affairs. For Leo, the Church was very much ‘in the world’ and as such it would not refrain from pointing out, and answering the world's errors. And it was here, in the application of Christian principles to the problems of

the modern world, that Leo shone brightest. In *Immortale Dei* he would tackle the political problems of the day; in *Rerum Novarum* he would grapple with the economic. It is to an analysis of those two encyclicals that we now turn.

TWO ENCYCLICALS

“In two directions, the new German Empire must categorically renounce all the traditions of the old: it has nothing to do with hierarchic or theocratic, nothing with cosmopolitan tendencies. It is a secular, a national State.”⁶ Thus did Otto von Bismarck, the Iron Chancellor, define the nation-state, a novel governmental system which was to force the Pope to once again study the age old question of Church-State relations. In different times, under different circumstances, the pope has had to reaffirm the Church’s teaching on the relation between throne and altar and, although there have certainly been changes in the relationship, a common thread can be discerned throughout the Church’s long history. Although it may not have always been clear what pertains to Caesar and what pertains to God, the fact of a distinction has in all times been recognized. There have been aberrations – Gallicanism, for example – but the Church has recognized them as such, thereby preserving the basic truths. Stated as simply as possible, the Church’s position has always been that there exist two orders, the supernatural and the natural, that in the latter the governing body has (or is delegated) priority and in the former the Church has priority, and that governments are natural institutions which should be respected. Pope Gelasius in the fifth century explained it well:

It thus happened that the Christian emperors depended on the priests for their eternal life, and the priests made use of imperial dispositions in the course of temporal affairs; in this manner the spiritual activity would stand apart from carnal onslaughts and the ‘soldier of God’ would not be involved in secular affairs. He, in turn, who was involved in secular affairs, would not seem to preside over divine matters. Thus the purity of each order would be preserved, and not unduly increased by the subservience of the other; and thus each profession would be especially provided with its suitable function.⁷

In 1885 Leo XIII published *Immortale Dei*, dispelling immediately the “hackneyed reproach of old date . . . that the Church is opposed to the rightful aims of the civil government.”⁸ It is not the State but the prevailing theory of the State against which he levelled his guns. Leo made it clear that the government is considered by the Church to be a natural institution. He took his argument — that man, living alone, could not provide himself with the necessary requirements of life — directly from Aquinas’ exposition of Aristotle’s *Ethics*.⁹ In so doing, Leo divorced himself, and the Church for which he spoke, from those who would assail all government as necessarily evil, a belief which has plagued the Church from its very beginnings, and which continues to do so to the present day.

Leo further separated himself from those who would tie the Church to one form of government (“the right to rule is not necessarily, however, tied to one special form of government”), thus alienating both the extreme monarchists and the disciples of Lamennais. But though the form of government is left to each society to decide, all governments, being natural institutions and thus subject to the laws of nature and of nature’s God, must “bear in mind that God is the paramount ruler of the world, and must set Him before themselves as their exemplar and law in the administration of the State.”¹⁰ Leo saw the governing office as a trust from God which must be respected as such: “to despise legitimate authority, in whomsoever vested, is unlawful, as a rebellion against the divine will, and whomsoever resists that, rushes willfully to destruction.” But, concomitantly, the ruling authority must always act “for the well-being of the citizens” and not give occasion for rightful discontent.¹¹

The ruling authority must protect and favor religion in society: “it is a public crime to act as if there is no God.”¹² Leo recognized that the stability of society is strengthened when religion is publicly professed. But more than that — and here again we see the influence of Aquinas — he recognized that the

Church, being of divine origin, maintains a higher place in the natural hierarchy than does the State, and thus its authority must be recognized as greater than that of the State. As Leo put it:

. . . to wish the Church to be subject to the civil power in the exercise of her duty is a great folly and a sheer injustice for whenever this is the case, order is disturbed, for things natural are put above things supernatural.¹³

The Thomistic respect for hierarchy and order is evident. Leo based the Church's position on philosophical ground and when he spoke of order he meant something more than social order, even more than cosmic order. He was speaking of the order which is from God. There is something transcendent in his use of those words 'order is disturbed.' He is speaking not of the order that is imposed, but of the order that *is*.

Leo recognized the existence of two powers — the ecclesiastical and the civil — which exercise control over human affairs. This is not a dichotomy for their respective domains overlap. And it is this intersection that has been the area of most Church-State problems throughout the years. The ecclesiastical power has charge over divine affairs and these include "whatever belongs either of its own nature or by reason of the end to which it is referred, to the salvation of souls, or to the worship of God. . . ." The civil power, on the other hand, has charge over human affairs, i.e., "whatever is to be ranged under the civil and political order."¹⁴ It is clear that a certain balance is intended here, a balance which can be tipped by either party if it attempts to usurp authority which is not its own. Leo was not so much concerned in *Immortale Dei* with ecclesiastical usurpation. These were times of interference on the part of the State in matters of the Church and hence it was a reaffirmation of ecclesiastical rights with which he was chiefly concerned.

Leo recognized that the principles he laid down had often been ignored in his own day. He saw the sixteenth century religious revolution, which "threw first of all into confusion the Christian religion, and next, by natural sequence, invaded the precincts of philosophy, whence it spread among all classes of society" as the parent of the evils of modernity. From this beginning "later tenets of unbridled license"¹⁵ burst forth, among which are the beliefs that all men are equal in the control of their lives, that each man is his own master and under the rule of no other, that each man is free to think and act as he pleases, and that no man has a right to rule another. And behind all this lies atheism in all its forms:

The authority of God is passed over in silence, just as if there were no God; or as if he cared nothing for human society; or as if men, whether in their individual capacity or bound together in social relations, owed nothing to God; or as if there could be a government of which the whole origin and power and authority did not reside in God Himself.¹⁶

And the result of all this is nothing less than the deification of the State.

Leo positioned himself in firm opposition to the liberalism of the day. He did not see the freedoms of speech and press as bulwarks of liberty but rather as the very springs of evil, for "whatever is opposed to virtue or truth may not be allowed to entice man."¹⁷ Further, "unrestrained freedom of thinking and of openly making known one's thoughts is not inherent in the rights of citizens."¹⁸ On the contrary, true freedom is freedom from error and it is the duty of the State to protect its citizens from error. And Leo closed with the reminder that all men must strive to "confer the greatest benefit on civil society, the safety of which is exceedingly imperiled by evil teachings and bad passions."¹⁹

ECONOMIC THEORIES

The liberalism which Leo spoke of in *Immortale Dei* was that of the political sphere. But during the nineteenth century liberalism also meant a particular theory of economics, a theory opposed by socialism though nonetheless evil, a theory which has come down to us in the form of unbridled

capitalism. To answer the twin evils of socialism and capitalism Leo wrote the encyclical by which he is best known, *Rerum Novarum*.

“That the spirit of revolutionary change, which has long been disturbing the nations of the world, should have passed beyond the sphere of politics and made its influence felt in the cognate sphere of practical economics is not surprising.”²⁰ Thus Pope Leo located the problem immediately within that “spirit of revolutionary change” which has gone by so many names. Leo identified the results of this spirit in the economic sphere: “working men have been surrendered, isolated and helpless, to the hardheartedness of employers and the greed of unchecked competition [and] a small number of very rich men have been able to lay upon the teeming masses of laboring poor a yoke little better than that of slavery itself.”²¹ The Church then is on the side of the working poor; but there are others also vying for that privilege. They are the socialists who, “working on the poor man’s envy of the rich, are striving to do away with private property”²² and who hold that “class is naturally hostile to class, and that the wealthy and the working men are intended by nature to live in mutual conflict.”²³ Leo dispelled the first error by reminding us that private property “is in accordance with the law of nature”²⁴ and that to dispose of it would be “emphatically unjust.”²⁵ Against the natural hostility of classes, Leo employed the organic analogy, and his debt to Aquinas is once more made manifest:

So irrational and so false is this view that the direct contrary is the truth [for] just as the symmetry of the human frame is the result of the suitable arrangement of the different parts of the body, so in a State it is ordained by nature that these two classes should dwell in harmony and agreement, so as to maintain the balance of the body politic.²⁶

Leo thus located the Church’s position outside of the prevailing dialectic of capitalism versus socialism. In fact he transcended that dialectic and, combating both as evils stemming from the same root, presented to the world the Catholic view of the relationship between capital and labor.

Rerum Novarum has been subjected to various interpretations and dilutions. Capitalists have emphasized the Church’s antipathy to socialism, which is certainly evident in the encyclical, while ignoring the very *raison d’être* of the encyclical, which was principally to answer the problems caused by capitalism. On the other hand, socialists have dwelt on Leo’s criticisms of the capitalist spirit while ignoring his attacks on their own creed. Many commentators have attributed this diversity of interpretations to an alleged lack of clarity in the encyclical, or, at least, to a certain amount of leeway purposely left by its author. This attitude, however, is more of a reflection on the commentator than it is on the encyclical, a reflection that the commentator has not transcended, with Leo, the socialist-capitalist dialectic. There is enough ammunition in *Rerum Novarum* to thoroughly batter either capitalism or socialism and the temptation to use it for either purpose is understandable. In fact, it is a lasting tribute to the papacy that men will still use a papal writing to support their point of view. But to do so, nevertheless, would be to miss Leo’s central point.

What then is his point? To begin with, it must be remembered that Leo, following the example of Aquinas, was concerned chiefly with first principles. Just as in *Immortale Dei*, where he had been concerned with the elaboration of the principles of Christian government while leaving the mechanics to each particular State, Leo concentrated his efforts on outlining certain principles which must be followed to insure justice. He was not concerned with the wealth of nations, not even with the wealth of individuals for he recommended voluntary poverty as a safeguard against materialism. But he was concerned with justice, and justice in the economic order is twofold. On the one hand, the worker must “fully and faithfully . . . perform the work which has been freely and equitable agreed upon; never injure the property nor outrage the person of an employer; never resort to violence . . . nor engage in riot or disorder. . . .” On the other hand, the employers must “not look upon their work people as their bondsmen [nor] tax their work people beyond their strength [nor] exercise pressure upon the indigent and the destitute for the sake of gain.” Said Leo, “To defraud anyone of wages that are his due is a great crime which cries to the avenging anger of heaven.”²⁷

It is easy to see from the above how *Rerum Novarum* could be used to uphold a particular economic ideology. But the difference between Leo and the ideologues is this: all of them, without exception, were concerned solely with the material welfare of those for whom they spoke. Leo was very much concerned that the worker receive a decent wage. In fact he insisted that it “ought not to be insufficient to support a frugal and well-behaved wage earner.”²⁸ (Forty years later, Pope Pius XI would write in *Quadragesimo Anno* that “in the first place, the worker must be paid a wage sufficient to support him and his family,” again putting the lie to the Communist claim that it is they alone who are concerned that the worker ‘receive according to his needs.’) But Leo was concerned with more than this. He was concerned with the salvation of souls and so he parted company, decisively, with the values of the modern world: “those whom fortune favors are warned that riches do not bring freedom from sorrow and are no avail for eternal happiness,” “the rich should tremble at the threatenings of Jesus Christ,” “when what necessity demands has been supplied, and one’s standing fairly taken thought for, it becomes a duty to give to the indigent out of what remains over.”³⁰

And in conclusion, Leo expressed his profound respect for private property and his hope that “as many as possible of the people become owners,”³¹ a position taken up by Hilaire Belloc and G.K. Chesterton in their distributist economic program. But, quoting St. Thomas, Leo further instructed the world that though “it is lawful for a man to hold private property [he] should not consider his material possessions as his own, but as common to all, so as to share them without hesitation when others are in need.”³²

RATIONALISM, NATIONALISM, LIBERALISM

Much has been said up to this point of the ‘errors of modernity’ without as yet an identification of what precisely those errors are. It seems to me that if we were to reduce the myriad ideologies which make up nineteenth century thought to three all-encompassing terms, they would have to be Rationalism, Nationalism, and Liberalism, with emphasis on the last as the most pervasive. In the light of the foregoing analysis of Leo’s teachings, let us look more closely at those three interrelated ideologies.

For Leo, Rationalism meant far more than that system of thought attributed to Descartes. Some two hundred years had passed since the death of Descartes, and his ‘followers’ — from Malebranche, Berkeley, and Leibniz to Hume and Kant — had drawn out his original insights to their logical conclusions, much, we can be sure, to the chagrin of the master. One may agree or disagree with the Cartesian method but no serious philosopher or historian would deny that Descartes, for at least two hundred years (until Hegel), was the man to answer. His spirit lived on long after his body had failed.

The Cartesian method — the universal doubt and the discovery of reality dependent upon the discovery of thought — was capable of affirming not only one’s own existence but also the existence of God and of the material world. When later thinkers found Descartes’ distinctions wanting they began to doubt the powers of the human mind itself. It was David Hume who first reacted against Rationalism by insisting that existence cannot be deduced from essence, a metaphysical formula brought down to earth by Kant’s quip that the concept of one hundred dollars adds nothing to the pocket. But the important point is that reason, whose powers were previously respected, almost taken for granted, was now called to answer before the tribunal of critical philosophy. Its defense was assumed by the Rationalists who argued that, not only could reason reach truth, but in fact truth could be reached *only* through reason. And by Leo’s day, Rationalism would come to mean, as Etienne Gilson described it in his introduction to the Pope’s encyclicals, that system of thought whose adherents “recognize as valid only such knowledge as can be gathered by the natural reason of man, independent of any supernatural revelation.”³³ In his encyclical *Libertas Praestantissimum*, Leo identified the fundamental doctrine of Rationalism as the “supremacy of the human reason, which, refusing due submission to the divine and eternal reason, proclaims its own independence, and constitutes itself the supreme principle and source and judge of truth.”³⁴ In short, Rationalism had come to mean the absolute power supremacy of reason over faith.

The temptation would certainly have been strong for Leo to attack Rationalism by positing some new form of Theologism, thereby placing himself within that long tradition of Catholic anti-rationalists, the first major exponent of which was probably Tertullian and which has counted such eminent individuals as St. Bernard of Clairvaux and Thomas a Kempis. Leo could have cowered before the onslaughts of Rationalism by taking refuge, so to speak, in the certainty of the Faith. He could, in short, have fallen into the dialectic. But he refused the bait and opted for Thomas Aquinas, for the harmony of faith and reason. Rationalism would be fought with reason itself and faith would be strengthened thereby:

. . . reason, borne on the wings of Thomas to its human height can scarcely rise higher, while faith could scarcely expect more or stronger aids from reason than those which she has already obtained through Thomas.³⁵

When Bismarck proclaimed that the new German Empire was “a secular, a national State,” he was attacking, above all, the supra-nationalist claims of religion. He was not attempting to exclude God and religion from public life, as were many others, but he was relegating Him more and more to the heavens. And in his place the Iron Chancellor pushed his own false god.

Nationalism is a tricky concept. It can mean, simply, patriotism, love of country, duty, honor, and the like. But it can also signify “a ruthless force making for international anarchy and imperialism [which is] aggressive, combative, utterly selfish [and which] evolves into hatred of rival countries.”³⁶ Truly, this latter is the tone it acquired in the period preceding the Great War, the period of Leo’s pontificate.

Nationalism was a governmental policy which made regimentation and massive armed forces possible. Further, it had the rather annoying habit of usurping, in the name of Caesar, the things that are God’s. Leo wrote *Immortale Dei* as the head of a universal organization and as such he was speaking to all men of all nations. Yet we cannot but surmise that he had a few particular individuals in mind. Europe in 1885 was not exactly a showcase of confessionalism. The German *Kulturkampf*, though in its last stages, was not yet dead. Six years earlier, in France, the Gambetta regime had expelled the clergy from the administration of all hospitals and welfare departments. In 1880 the Jesuit Order, that bugbear of nineteenth century liberalism, was suppressed, and by 1882 all religion had been excluded from the primary schools. This progressive de-clericalization of France continued on and off for some twenty years until 1905 when the Law for the Separation of Church and State was enacted. Meanwhile, in Italy, petty legislation was depriving the Church of much of its funds and the more extreme anti-clericals were calling for the suppression of organized religion throughout the country. Clearly, Nationalism narrowed rather than broadened men’s loyalties by discouraging (or nationalizing) religion, which alone could unite different peoples. And the role of Nationalism as an underlying cause of the First World War can hardly be denied. In 1922 Pope Pius XI wrote that peace “was written in public documents, not in the hearts of men; the spirit of war reigns there still. . . .”³⁷ Twenty-five years before that war began Leo XIII told us why.

If Rationalism is the name of a particular philosophy and Nationalism a governmental policy, Liberalism connotes more of an attitude towards life. For Leo it meant the attitude “of those men who refuse to submit their wills to any law prescribed by a higher authority than their own, and, quite especially by the authority of God. . . . [It] is the rejection of any divine and super-national law.”³⁸ We see then that the emphasis is placed on the existence of an authority which is not being recognized as such.

Now authority, as a principle, is understandable in terms of power. Authority is the principle which regulates power. Authority can find expression in a Church, in a symbol, in a governmental form, in a tradition. It matters not, for our purposes, what form it takes, only that it be recognized as authority.

Authority is to power as ‘what should be’ (in the moral, not the utopian, sense) is to ‘what can be.’ More simply, authority is ‘right’ and power is ‘might.’ And as long as there exists a recognizable authority, so long will it be understood that ‘right’ has priority over ‘might.’ For many years the Catholic Church, through the institution of the Papacy, was the representative of authority on earth but this was no longer so, with a few exceptions of course, by the late nineteenth century, despite the affirmation of papal infallibility. Other authorities were placed before the people: Reason (deified during the French

Revolution), Monarchism (the Dreikaiserbunds, for example), Democracy (*vox populi, vox Dei*). But these were all found wanting. Therefore, there was nothing to restrain power. There was, in short, no overarching principle capable of diverting peoples from each other's throats.

Liberalism, in destroying authority, unleashed power. In the economic order, what reason would there now be to restrict one's accumulation of wealth? There is no authority governing what a man should acquire — the only restraint is lack of power. In the political order, what reason would there now be to restrict a nation's accumulation of territory? There is no authority to regulate nationalist expression — the only restraint is, again, lack of power. Power means ability and ability, unlike authority, must be proved. How better to prove it than to go to war and settle once and for all where power lies!

Leo XIII saw all this and his encyclicals which do not at least touch on the matter are few and far between. In *Libertas Praestantissimum* he taught that "the highest duty is to respect authority, and obediently to submit to just law."³⁹ In *Diuturnum* he wrote that citizens should "submit to the ruling authority as to God, not so much through fear of punishment as through respect for their majesty. . . ."⁴⁰ In *Quod Apostolici Muneris* he assailed those who would pervert authority by claiming that it "neither derives its principle, nor its majesty, nor its power of governing from God, but rather from the multitude . . ."⁴¹ And in *Immortale Dei*, as has already been seen, respect for the civil authority, since all authority comes from God, is the cornerstone of the Christian State.

Eleven years after Leo's death Rationalism, Nationalism, and Liberalism exploded on the fields of Europe. Beginning as simply another Balkan skirmish, the conflict quickly became a European war and finally, after 1917, a world war. At the close of the war, the leaders of the several states were incapable of looking upon "the world as it really is." Even less were they able to "seek elsewhere . . . for the solace to its troubles." At the insistence of the Italian peace representative, the Pope was excluded from any peace negotiations. The world had not learned its lesson, nor has it learned it today. And yet, as false authorities continue to collapse around us in a world which has become less tolerant of rationalized allegiances, the Vicar of Christ — the Authority of authorities, the Icon of icons⁴² — still stands tall amid the ruins. True peace will reign when the world rediscovers that Authority.

NOTES

¹The philosopher-historian Etienne Gilson, for example, located the roots of the modern world in the nominalism of William of Ockham which destroyed metaphysics by restricting philosophy to the realm of the probable. See his *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Random House, New York, 1954) pages 489-519.

²*Aeterni Patris*, para. 2. (All quotes from the encyclicals of Leo XIII are taken from the collection by Etienne Gilson entitled *The Church Speaks to the Modern World* (Doubleday and Co., Inc., Garden City, New York, 1961).)

³*Ibid.*, para. 17.

⁴*Ibid.*, para. 29.

⁵*Ibid.*, para. 18.

⁶Rene Fulop-Miller, *Leo XIII and Our Times* (Longman's Green and Co., London, 1937) p. 87.

⁷Norman Cantor, ed., *The Medieval World, 300-1300* (The Macmillan Co., London, 1969) pp. 98-99.

⁸*Immortale Dei*, para. 2.

⁹Aristotle, *Ethics*, I, Lect. 1, n. 4.

¹⁰*Immortale Dei*, para. 4.

¹¹*Ibid.*, para. 5.

¹²*Ibid.*, para. 6.

¹³*Ibid.*, para. 33.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, para. 14.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, para. 23.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, para. 25.

- ¹⁷*Ibid.*, para. 32.
- ¹⁸*Ibid.*, para. 35.
- ¹⁹*Ibid.*, para. 49.
- ²⁰*Rerum Novarum*, para. 1.
- ²¹*Ibid.*, para. 3.
- ²²*Ibid.*, para. 4.
- ²³*Ibid.*, para. 19.
- ²⁴*Ibid.*, para. 9.
- ²⁵*Ibid.*, para. 4.
- ²⁶*Ibid.*, para. 19.
- ²⁷*Ibid.*, para. 20.
- ²⁸*Ibid.*, para. 45.
- ²⁹*Quadragesimo Anno*, para. 71, in Terence P. McLaughlin, editor, *The Church and the Reconstruction of the Modern World*, (Doubleday and Co., Inc., Garden City, New York, 1957).
- ³⁰*Rerum Novarum*, para. 22.
- ³¹*Ibid.*, para. 46.
- ³²St. Thomas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIa-IIae, q. lxvi, art. 2, Answer, quoted in *Rerum Novarum*, para. 22.
- ³³Etienne Gilson, ed. *The Church and the Modern World*, *op. cit.*, from the *Introduction*, p. 8.
- ³⁴*Libertas Praeantissimum*, para. 15.
- ³⁵*Aeterni Patris*, para. 18.
- ³⁶Raymond Corrigan, *The Church and the Nineteenth Century*, (The Bruce Pub. Co., Milwaukee, 1948) p. 307.
- ³⁷*On the Peace of Christ in the Reign of Christ*, para. 14.
- ³⁸Etienne Gilson, ed., *The Church and the Modern World*, *op. cit.*, from the *Introduction*, p. 8.
- ³⁹*Libertas Praeantissimum*, para. 13.
- ⁴⁰*Diuturnum*, para. 13.
- ⁴¹*Quod Apostolici Muneris*, para. 2.
- ⁴²For a fascinating study of the role of the Papacy in the post-modern world, see *Pope as Icon* by Frederick D. Wilhelmsen in *Triumph* magazine, January, 1971.