

REPORT

Presented to the Supreme Pontiff, Gregory XVI, by the Editors of *L'Avenir* and the Members of the Council of *L'Agence générale pour la défense de la liberté religieuse*¹

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The opposition encountered by the Editors of *L'Avenir* and the Members of the Council of *L'Agence générale pour la défense de la liberté religieuse* centered on two topics: their teachings considered in themselves and the type of action they adopted to shelter the Catholic religion in France from the consequences it feared from the Revolution of 1830. Separating these two topics, they humbly place at the feet of the Sovereign Pontiff the exposition of the teachings they upheld, as well as their conduct and the reasons behind it, so that, faithfully informed of all that concerns them, the Head of the Church, judging together both their faith and their works, graciously pronounce on both the decision that will enlighten them, should they have erred, and which, on bended knee, they request of him.

I

STATE OF RELIGION IN FRANCE UNDER THE RESTORATION

The state of religion in France, during the sixteen years that preceded the last revolution can be conveyed in two sentences. Religion was oppressed by the government and hated by a large part of the nation.

On the other hand, the royal government had maintained all the laws of the Empire relative to the Church, including the Organic Articles, decreed fraudulently from the Concordat of 1801. Consequently, the bondage of the Church was legally the same as it was under a man who excelled in the art of oppressing everything he took under his protection. The relationships of the bishops among themselves and with the Holy See were thwarted, and every Catholic priest was liable to a penalty that could reach as far as exile, if one had dared to correspond with Rome. No more provincial councils, no more diocesan synods, no more ecclesiastical tribunals, preservers of discipline, but only the Council of State as the sole judge of all contentious matters relating to religion and to conscience. Education was entrusted to a body of laymen, to the exclusion of the clergy; spiritual direction in seminaries was obstructed and their instruction was submitted, in what is most essential, to the prescriptions of civil authority. The practice of the evangelical counsels under a common rule, forbidden by the law, except by an authorization always revocable, was granted almost exclusively to a few congregations of women. Finally, all that gives religion life was weakened or destroyed by the enforcement of imperial legislation. No one could ignore the two notable ordinances of 16 June 1828, which attest all the more to the bondage of religion in that the prince signed them reluctantly, impelled by the force of established proceedings. Those ordinances suppressed the only colleges that an underhanded tolerance had left in the hands of the clergy for some time, and, in fact, submitted all ecclesiastical schools to civil authority. They limited the number of young men allowed to prepare themselves by study and prayer for the service of God; the men were ordered to wear distinctive garb as soon as they reached a certain age. As for the teachers, previously approved by the government, the ordinances required them to swear an oath that they would not belong to a religious congregation unapproved by the State.

On the other hand, the Church was hated by a large segment of the people; strongly attached to the freedom promised by Louis XVIII, they suspected that the clergy was allied to a party intent on destroying the order of things. In 1844, the clergy had seen with great joy the return of the former royal family and, from its return to the throne, envisioned hopes for religion, given that the misfortunes in France had begun with those of royalty. The Church had lost everything at the bottom of the scaffold of Louis XVI, and Napoleon had given her only one item that she would never lack, *bread*, rather than the one thing she needed, *freedom*. Thus, it was natural for the clergy of France, on seeing the return from exile of the princes of the ancient royal house, to expect from them the liberation of

religion. It was not a question of restoring the privileges of the Church, of returning the enormous amount of property of which the revolution had despoiled her, and which the Supreme Pontiff, as highest dispenser of the property of the Church, sacrificed in the Concordat of 1801. Some minds may have considered these changes impossible; but a great number never gave it a thought. The only feeling was that the Church, subdued by the laws of the Empire and by those of the Republic not abrogated by the Empire, was not in her natural state; the Restoration was expected to correct this at the end of the century. The numerous reprintings of Voltaire, Rousseau and others had no other goals; in fact, the past two years saw the end of the reprintings. Finally, to judge how much the state of matters that we have just portrayed was disastrous for religion, it suffices to say that the number of Easter communions which in Paris under the Empire reached eighty thousand, was reduced to one fourth towards the end of the Restoration. The same fact was being reproduced in all of France, so that we could say that the Revolution of 1830, which terminated this progressive decline, was from this point of view, a favorable event.

It was no longer a question of the liberation of the Church; the hatred that one part of the nation held for the clergy made impossible any major legislative gesture on that score. If in 1844 the clergy had been able to separate its cause from that of the political parties; if, less touched by memories — which, by the way, had moved all of France — it had not allowed its interests to be intermingled with those of a family, however illustrious it was; if the clergy had limited itself to claim its rightful independence, the nation would never have seen in it but the representative of God and the natural protector of the rights of conscience; the clergy would have acquired the respect of everyone. It would have obtained what the favor of one party cannot grant : universal trust, and what the victory of one party can give only tentatively: a strong and free position. What in fact did happen, on the contrary, and what was the government doing for religion, as compensation for the terrible situation where it had been placed out of love for the House of Bourbon, by trust in its piety, by hope for its influence? The government increased the number of bishops, often granting them individual favors; introduced them in the House of Peers; increased their salaries and those of pastors. It created scholarships for major and minor seminaries, allowing both to increase; it supported and encouraged the ceremonies of worship; it favored missions but by imposing on them a political character that was from then on dangerous for religion. It tolerated the founding of several communities of men; in a word, it was doing all that the government could do by actions of reward, but nothing long-

lasting, nothing that was not exposed to frequent variations, increasing again the hatred of political parties, nothing that could not be destroyed simply by a change in Minister, as proved by the Ordinances of 16 June 1828. That day saw the death of fourteen years of work; the clergy of France realized that it had received no freedom since Napoleon, and moreover that it had only one thing left: the hatred of a segment of France.

From another viewpoint, one could see the preparation and the gradual development of the elements of schism. From the very start of the Restoration, civil authority, renewing the decrees of Bonaparte, ordered the teaching in seminaries of the four articles of 1682. Messrs Lainé and Corbière, successively Ministers of the Interior, required the directors of those establishments and professors of theology to sign a promise to teach the doctrine contained in that declaration, unapproved by the Holy See. The political parties, enemies of religion, saw in this a means of provoking a rupture from Rome. From then on, all the newspapers of those parties, the *Constitutionnel*, the *Courrier*, the *Débats*, were filled every day with articles in which the government was pressed to overcome the resistance that it found on this point in a number of the clergy, which at that time, was less antagonistic to Gallicanism in itself than to the pretension of the government to impose demands on its own authority. Later, in early 1826, a solemn judgment of the royal court of Paris declared that the four articles of 1682 were part of the fundamental laws of the kingdom. This belief received such acceptance that, instead of combating it directly, churchmen, linked to authority by their personal status, supported it wholeheartedly and sought only to delay its consequences. It was then that Mr. Frayssinous published the second edition of his work, *Les vrais principes de l'Église de France* [The True Principles of the Church of France]; in the Preface, admitting that the four articles were being used in order to bring about a schism, he said that nonetheless they needed to be preserved, but by separating them from the abuses intended. At the same time, he announced, as Minister, the foundation of a school of *higher ecclesiastical studies*, to ensure their continued teaching, a school, he said, to replace the ancient Sorbonne, *that permanent council of the Gauls*. The bishop of Chartres also published a circular letter defending the articles; this movement spread in all dioceses. Under these circumstances, it was believed to be a duty to oppose an impetus that pushed the Church of France to certain ruin, a resistance all the more necessary since her enemies and even her friends (strangely enough!) were united in a common action. Father de La Mennais, therefore, undertook to defend the Roman doctrines; in this, he saw a dual advantage: combating the principles of the schism being prepared, and setting the

foundation for the freedom of the Church, that always had as corroboration the Chair of Saint Peter.

Even though these questions were treated solely from the viewpoint of dogma, the government became afraid. While France was flooded with books whose impunity attested to the boldness of opinions, one could see on the bench of the Court of Petty Sessions a priest accused of having supported some theological doctrines that formerly had displeased Louis XIV. The fact is that among all the teachings, all the beliefs, those of the Catholic Church were the only ones that could be attacked without fear of prosecution, because every day they enjoyed less sympathy in the nation. Knowing this, the government did not wish to appear ungrateful when fear obliged it to offer wages to its enemies. Even before the Ordinances of 1828, fear had often constrained it to that; a long story could be written about all the events that successively warned the clergy that religion was being lost, unless God came to its rescue.

II

DANGERS THAT RELIGION HAD TO FEAR

DURING THE FRENCH REVOLUTION OF 1830

A new revolution, foreseen and announced by those who could not believe in the stability of an order of things in which everything was free except religion, suddenly deprived the Church of France of the only support on which she seemed to have relied for the past sixteen years. Religion found itself without a visible protector as it faced its enemies, victorious and in control of things, recently irritated by political predictions and by mandates from several bishops. God allowed it to be spared at the first moment of popular fury; even so, one had to consider what religion would become, and anticipate all the opportunities for its disappearance in an attempt to overcome them.

A schism with Rome was impossible. The controversies of the preceding years had destroyed Gallicanism in the minds of a very large majority of the clergy and had weakened it in the spirit even of those who still retained old prejudices. The entire Church of France

had rejected with disdain the attempts to establish a national Church.

And so, all that was left for the revolution to accomplish its beliefs was a violent persecution or an insidious and progressive bondage, based, on the one hand, on the apparent protection of persons and properties of the Church, and on the other, on the enforcement of hostile laws of the Empire, confirmed by the Restoration. Under this system the government could legally take over the hierarchy, instruction, worship, and reduce the clergy — deceived by the maintenance of previous customs — to becoming simply a branch of civil administration, until that time when, losing with the years the bishops and their current teachings, it could tempt the clergy to that which accomplishes the bondage of the Church: formal schism. Buonaparte [*sic*] had created his legislation with that straightforward view; but a remarkable feeling of order would not allow him consciously to hand over religion to unworthy leaders; he would not have attempted to achieve schism except as a last resort. The House of Bourbon had preserved this legislation, half by impotence and half by the prejudices of Louis XIV, and trusted in its piety to moderate abuses. But neither the ideas of Buonaparte nor the faith of the Bourbons enlivened those whom the Revolution of 1830 had just placed in charge. Moreover, the Church of France could no longer be shielded from the frightful troubles that had beset her, whether persecution, or whether imperial authority, except by her own energy, sustained by divine assistance.

III

TWO SYSTEMS OF CONDUCT THAT CATHOLICS COULD HAVE ADOPTED AFTER THE REVOLUTION OF 1830

Evidently, there were only two positions to take: to hold to the system of the Restoration, to the indissoluble alliance of throne and altar, to the eternal solidarity of one and the other; or to renounce this system and separate, as much as possible, the two motives whose union had been so unsuccessful.

Now, let us look at the advantages of both these situations.

The system of the Restoration had against it the experience of sixteen years. At no period was the Church less free, less influential on the minds of people, exposed to more gross insults, some even from authority, which, too weak to defend her, attempted to appease her enemies by sacrificing to them the rights of religion. No one disputes that this was the actual situation of the Church under that regime, and no one wished for this situation to last indefinitely. The hope was that the House of Bourbon, on acquiring greater power, would set other destinies for the Church; but where was that power at the end of July 1830? To continue under the revolution, in spite of enemies, a system that had been disastrous under the Restoration, in spite of friends, was that not folly? Moreover, the partisans of this system had a secret thought, and here it is: Before long, there will be a second Restoration; to separate the Church from the State would be to remove from the Bourbons a part of their influence and deprive the Church of the protection they would grant her. While awaiting this restoration, let us leave matters in the condition that the revolution found them, namely, the Church of France had to be handed over to the government of Louis Phillipe, on the off-chance that the latter could have as successor Henry V, and on the off-chance again, that Henry V could be both more enlightened and more powerful than Charles X. It always remains uncertain whether a revolution will return to the throne the princes who were ejected by another revolution. This is especially so when the princes are returned in a very short time; it is impossible for these changes to increase the strength of the authority that undergoes them. These transactions bring the princes back from exile only to make them subject to all the opinions and all the groups that contributed to their return.

To follow the first system of conduct was, therefore, to abandon the Church to chance at a time of a decisive moment for her. But entertaining doubtful hopes, even if they were realized before too long, the Church would have mistakenly expected safety from that which had caused its loss for sixteen years.

Initially, the second alternative had the advantage of raising religion up from the downfall of the throne, and to break all solidarity with those who went to work for the benefit of the exiled royal family. This was to avoid having religion treated as vanquished and as conspirator. In a country where power is contested, where civil war is menacing,

neutrality is the first interest of the Church, when it is not her first duty. By renouncing all alliance with the State and with political parties, the Church became completely inviolable; she chose her rightful place above strong emotions; she fulfilled the mission of peace that she received from Jesus Christ. By unusual good fortune, she also satisfied the drawn-out desire of nations; she told her enemies, looking for her in the dust of a demolished throne: *Christus non est hic, surrexit!* [Christ is not here, he has resurrected! - Trans.] She used to say to France, whatever might be her fate, that she was prey to foreigners or to civil war: *Munda ego sum a sanguine hujus* [I am innocent of that blood. - Trans.]. Instead of this role, so sublime and so Christian, should she have hypocritically joined a hostile power, praying aloud for this one and softly for any other, imagining disasters against the country, taking an underhanded role in all conspiracies, and humiliated under bishops appointed by atheism? At the time of the Republic, the Church of France honored herself at the scaffold; at the time of the Directory, she had courageously brought her ruins onto a soil where she owned nothing more of her vast wealth; she had survived and lived nobly from the charity of her own members; at the time of the Empire, she had accepted the protection, with sincere respect, of a great captain, and gave added influence, in the opinions of nations, to his victories; at the time of the Restoration, she had allied her cause with that of a royal house returning from exile, and whose misfortunes she had shared not long ago. But what role was the Church to play, what duty did she have to perform in 1830, if instead of dreaming about the salvation of nations, of dreaming about her own safety, she had consented to subjugation with resignation, out of dedication to those who were not able to defend her, and believing questionable forecasts that do not waive either the Christian or the man from acting in the most simple matters of life?

A few Catholic priests, the very ones who had fought against Gallicanism and its consequences for several years, and on account of that sole fact had found themselves in opposition to the administration which had just fallen, judged that they could place themselves between the revolution and the clergy it was threatening. They believed they had to take this opportunity in which Providence had just given a contradiction worthy of consideration by so many hopes, to build on their ruins the foundation for the freedom of the Church. This is why, between the two systems of conduct which have just been explained, they necessarily chose the one that did not condemn them to the most absolute inertia, one that had not been condemned by experience, one that was not already a ruin.

In order to understand better the need they felt to follow this system, one must understand the one that had been adopted against the Church by the authority that arose from the Revolution of 1830.

IV

THE SYSTEM ADOPTED AGAINST THE CHURCH BY THE GOVERNMENT WHICH AROSE FROM THE REVOLUTION OF 1830

The Revolution of 1830 was directed as much against the Church as against the Crown; it is impossible for matters to have been otherwise, given the close alliance of the two. The government which emerged from this revolution inevitably had to be hostile to the Church, but, as we have said, it had the choice of open persecution or progressive and complete subjection. It adopted the latter mode as the less dangerous one because it wanted to maintain in everything at least the appearances of the previous order. We know that this was its policy.

Nonetheless, numerous acts of violence against religion were committed around the country, with the toleration of the government. Besides, too feeble to prevent them, the latter saw in them a dual advantage, that of offering a victim to a party uplifted by the revolution, and of making the clergy more docile to its wishes by making it feel the need to be protected. These acts of violence revealed the demonstration of a powerful belief: that religion was not hated for itself but for its alliance with authority. From one end of France to the other, with almost no exception, sacrileges took on the character of political reprisals. Accordingly, the archiepiscopal residence of Paris was plundered because it was believed that the last mandates of the archbishop contained allusions to coups d'état. Accordingly, the Church of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois was laid waste because after a service for the soul of the Duke de Berry, a young man imprudently attached to the catafalque an image of the Duke of Bordeaux. Accordingly, the crosses of Mission, set up in recent times, were struck down because they bore, at the ends of their arms, some fleurs-de-lis, and because the missionaries had often included in their sermons purely political topics, while the ancient cross, devoid of irrelevant emblems, received no insult. Everywhere religion could

be found, religion was respected — not only by people in general, but by men of the most extreme political parties. Only by the hypocritical means it had chosen, did the government attack it in its three principal branches: the hierarchy, instruction, and worship.

HIERARCHY

The Concordat of 1801 had given the government the right to present bishops to the Holy See — and many other rights that had not been agreed on — according to what had been expressed in the preamble, because the consuls *were making profession in the Catholic religion*. As regards the nomination of bishops, it was even stipulated that if the consuls or their successors ceased their profession of the Catholic faith, a new concordat would regulate the mode of nomination to sees. The case had just arisen because of the revolution. One of the fundamental principals was still this one: *There is no longer a State Religion; in other words, The State does not profess any religion*. In fact, instead of seeing Buonaparte and all his successors assist publicly at Catholic rites, for the first time, the head of the nation abandoned the anointing of kings and gave no external sign of Catholicism, whatever the circumstance. It was not, we need to indicate, by personal impiety, but for him to conform to public opinion, to show himself consistent with the new order created by the revolution. From then on, the right of presenting bishops no longer belonged to the government; we can imagine the danger of allowing deist ministers, Protestants, Jews, unbelievers, the task of choosing the successors of the apostles of Jesus Christ.

Nonetheless, the government persisted in naming bishops. Its first choices terrified Catholics. It was at B... that Father G..., whose schismatic conduct in the matter of Father Gr..., soon relieved the faithful and the clergy from having to justify their fears. It was at D..., where Fr. B..., of whom the people said publicly in the streets: “He will not be consecrated because he is detestable.” It was at M. A..., where Father H... an old man, discredited for his behavior under the Empire, who, as rector of the Academy of Limoges, had filled it with married priests; besides, worn out by the years, he resigned from the duties of Vicar-General because of his inability to fulfill them.

The government was not satisfied with wanting to introduce its creatures in the

episcopate; it also sought to take over the lower hierarchy by refusing to authorize the choices bishops had made for vacant parishes, until such time as it had contacted priests recommended to the Ministry of Cults by the civil administration of the areas, and sometimes itself named an individual as in the diocese of Nîmes. The pastor was no longer to be the envoy of the bishop to a segment of the faithful, but the man of the prefect, of the procurator general, of the mayor, or of the deputy. We have seen a parish deprived of a pastor for several months because the Ministry opposed to the candidate of the bishop one presented by a colonel. We have seen a clergyman become pastor of another parish on the recommendation of the mayor, a Protestant. And, since the nomination of canons and vicars-general also depended on the government's need for previous authorization, it follows that the entire hierarchy directly or indirectly fell into the hands of the administration, that is to say, into the hands of men who were enemies of the Church. After having imagined her ruin, all their lives, they suddenly found themselves masters, able to give her unworthy pastors, in whatever number they wished.

INSTRUCTION

As regards instruction, the system of the government was reduced to two principal goals: to maintain for the University the monopoly of instruction, even though this was contrary to the new Charter, so that the clergy have no part in the education of youth; and to give free instruction to the poor, at the State's expense, so as to destroy *superstition*. This is how M. de Montalivet, Minister of Cults, described from the podium the effect of the Catholic religion on minds; it was this same Minister who was entrusted with giving the Church of France her bishops, her vicars-general, her canons, and her pastors.

WORSHIP

The simple enumeration of the proceedings of the government will suffice for anyone to understand the length to which its claims extended in spiritual matters and what the Church of France would have become under such a regime, if the oppressors had been allowed free rein.

A letter from the Ministry of Cults to the bishops ordered them to have added to the verses of the prayer for the king the name of the prince, contrary to the immemorial usage of the Church of France, something respected even under Napoleon.

Another letter ordered them to forbid the celebration of feasts not required by the Concordat, so that the faithful who, out of devotion, had preserved the habit of assisting to the offices on those days, could no longer do so. This was a flagrant violation of the Concordat.

A circular letter ordered the priests to use hot water to administer baptism in winter. In some localities, namely in the dioceses of Lyons and of Grenoble, it was required for the child to be presented to the civil officer to be inscribed in the birth registry before being presented to the Church to receive there the sign of salvation.

When Father Grégoire died in Paris, estranged from the Catholic communion, the government seized by force a parish church to have schismatic priests celebrate a solemn service there, over the remains of the deceased. Shortly after, this official sacrilege was repeated on the death of another schismatic bishop, Father de Berthier; the government declared that its right and its duty were to act as it had, and that this would always be its conduct in similar circumstances.

Not satisfied with preventing bishops from meeting together, the government took measures to take away from simple country pastors the consolation of seeing each other. By a communal decision, the latter were placed under the immediate surveillance of mayors, and for every day of their absence, they were to lose a proportionate amount of their modest salary. Later, via letter from Mr. Périer, the armed police and all government agents received orders to pay attention to the movements of pastors outside their rectories.

Needless to say that the ordinances of 16 June 1828, containing so many violations of religion and freedom of conscience, were renewed, and that their enforcement was rigorously pressed. The creation of eight thousand scholarships for the minor seminaries was the only provision of these ordinances to which the government did not feel obliged to enforce. Nonetheless, with the help of other scholarships held by the dioceses, it sought to ease itself into the interior of the seminaries. A decree dating from the Empire was to

serve as pretext for it to require the admission of a lay administrator charged with seeing that the money of the State was not misdirected.

The very existence of religious organizations, tolerated under the Restoration, was threatened; the point was to prevent the Capuchins of Aix, protected by a writ of the Supreme Court, from wearing their habit publicly. Horrible scenes took place at the Abbey of Melleray, in Brittany; venerable Father Antoine, Abbot General of La Trappe, needed more than courage to defend the rights of Christians, and of Frenchmen against the wrongs of the administration.

This is how the Church of France was treated for eighteen months. It must be mentioned that the sole pretext all this friction and persecutions was still a political one: namely, the presumed link between the clergy and the Carlist party [supporters of Charles X - Trans.].

V

THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

In the situation of matters such as we have portrayed it, clearly there was no other defense possible for religion but to advocate for the separation of Church and State. The experience of the Restoration alone had already demonstrated this need; the fall of the throne, while delivering the Church to victorious enemies, left it with no other avenue for safety. The conduct of the government that came out of the Revolution was such that it made this need so imperative, that it is safe to say, no one denied the Church's need for safety. Only forces opposed to the interest of religion were able, by themselves, to stop those who had refused to support the liberation of the Church in their country.

When Catholics had not seen for themselves the evil done and continuing to be done by the alliance of the Church with the State, they could have guessed it by the language of their adversaries. All of the latter, in fact, desired and wanted only one thing: the maintenance of the alliance between the Church and the State. Whether one read the

government newspapers, whether one followed the debates in the Chambers, whether one listened to the orators speaking with hostile intentions about religion and the clergy, one would find at the bottom of their speeches only this thought: It is important that the State name bishops and oversee the choice of pastors; that it be the required intermediary between bishops and the Supreme Pontiff; that it examine the bulls emanating from the Holy See before allowing their enforcement; that it prevent the propagation of false teachings, that is to say, Roman teachings; finally, that it preserve the sovereign management of spiritual matters, and, consequently, that it pay the clergy because any clergyman who does not receive a salary, in one form or another, sooner or later becomes independent and forces the government to respect that independence, or to destroy itself in pursuing religion by sword and by fire.

Besides, no principle of theology, no canon of the Church, no apostolic tradition was opposed to the separation of Church and State. Far from it, that separation was the realization of the Concordat itself, which had not been signed by the Supreme Pontiff except in consideration of the fact that the consuls professed the Catholic faith as well as with this bold clause that if they or their successors were to cease professing it, there would be need for a new arrangement concerning the nomination to bishoprics. Now, the separation of Church and State was reduced to the enforcement of that formal pact and to the break of all political solidarity.

And again, on what are all concordats based? On the supposition that the prince can and does wish the good of the Church. But in France, for thirty years, this supposition was not verified and those who know France have learned that the Church will only be fulfilled when other impossible matters begin to be realized. Under the Empire, the prince could have seen to the good of the Church but he chose not to; under the Restoration, the prince wished for the good of the Church, but was powerless; under the Revolution of 1830, the government was impotent and unwilling to look out for the good of the Church. As regards the future, the very fact that the prince wishes for this good will be enough to prevent him from bringing it about, because a privileged worship is what the majority of Frenchmen find most repugnant. It would take long to uncover the cause for this, but that is how things are. From then on, in France, the concordats lack their natural base [i.e., the princes]; they grant the prince such rights, that, whatever they do will result in injury to religion.

And so, on considering the separation of Church and State in itself, Catholics found no obstacles. But two sacrifices were necessary to obtain it, that of strictly political attachments and that of the budget of the clergy. From these arose the opposition to that idea.

First of all, strictly political attachments had to be sacrificed, not in the sense of erasing the memory of benefits received, of destroying attractions of the heart for serious misfortunes, of becoming hostile toward those whom we had loved — but in the sense that, by placing interests of religion above interests of the political party, no Christian would use it to serve the triumph of an earthly cause, nor would he, in spite of the experience that had shown the danger, once again blend divine matters with human ones.

Moreover, it was necessary, in good faith, to recognize that the Catholic religion is not incompatible with freedom of worship, nor freedom of instruction, nor freedom of the press, nor any form of government — and especially that these diverse freedoms were, in France, the only force that could preserve the Church from a catastrophe similar to the one that lost Catholicism in England. In fact, imagine if freedom of worship, that is, civil tolerance, were to be abolished in France, which religion would be proscribed? Evidently, the Catholic religion. Imagine that freedom of instruction were deleted from the Charter, which men would be forbidden to teach? Evidently, the Catholic clergy, because, despite freedom of instruction stipulated in the Charter, the government has made unheard-of efforts to deny the clergy any benefit from this law. Imagine if freedom of the press were chained in France by censorship, who would no longer be able to write? Evidently, only Catholics. Even under the Restoration, censorship was hardly used except to their detriment. While the government allowed everything contrary to religion to be published; it brought before the courts those who had the misfortune of upholding the doctrines of the Roman Church. Accordingly, there exists in France no freedom that benefits Catholicism as much as it does the rest of the nation. This explains why the present government was able so easily and with such impunity to reveal itself as the enemy of communal freedoms at the conclusion of a revolution waged to preserve them.

With regard to this general proposition that the Catholic religion is not incompatible with freedom of religion, freedom of instruction, freedom of the press, with any form of government, this is a statement of fact, proven by the entire history of the Church. The

Church has lived under all regimes; she suffered, one after the other, the ordeal of persecution, of freedom, of power; she saw innumerable monarchies and republics pass by; and today, she sends bishops to the United States of America, without ever imagining to complain about the freedom that protects them there for the benefit of all citizens, and that helps them populate with Catholics those immense regions.

And so, it follows that the sacrifice of previous political attachments, in the context that we have just explained, a sacrifice necessary for the separation of Church and State, would contain nothing hateful, nothing unjust, nothing that could not be demanded from Christians who loved their God and were devoted to the cause of souls redeemed by His blood.

Another sacrifice was necessary, that of the budget of the clergy. The budget of the clergy, considered in its origins, is not a salary, it is an indemnity for immeasurable robberies, a restitution stipulated in the Concordat of 1801. The nature of the debt matters little when injustice refuses to recognize it and there is no way of forcing the issue. Indeed, it is a fact that the government does not see the support of the clergy as a debt but as a salary. Not satisfied with increasing or decreasing it, at its whim, as something in its full and exclusive power, it claims the right to suppress it, even after a legislative vote and royal approval made it a part of the budget, a law of the State. Recently, we have seen ordinary sub-prefects revoke from a portion of the clergy its claims on the public treasury because these subordinate administrators, acting in the name of the Ministry, were displeased, they said, by the conduct of the clergy. To understand the logical force of this fact, one has to know that, according to French law, the government cannot deprive a civil servant of his pay, once it has been approved in the budget, except by firing him. And if he is immovable, except by filing a lawsuit. Moreover, the ecclesiastical budget, far from being really an indemnity, is not even placed by the government in the same category as the salary of civil servants. Consequently, it creates between the clergy and the government a bond of commandment on one side, and of obedience and subjugation on the other — stronger than between the government and its own agents. And, as another consequence, as long as the priest receives the salary from the State, so long he will, and religion with him, remain under the subordination of civil authority.

But two objections have been raised. First of all, the clergyman would fall into

disrepute should he ask for bread from his people instead of receiving it from the State. Secondly, the bread of the people will not suffice to feed the entire clergy. These two objections are resolved better than by reasoning; they are answered by contemporary facts: those who sought remedies for the ills of the Church of France did not sufficiently probe their own memory. They have only to trust in the memories left on earth by the Saints, and by living examples. All the world knows what the respect or rather the influence of the clergy is in Ireland, and yet, that clergy lives from the charity of the people. England pressed it to accept payment from the Treasury; it offered at this price the emancipation of Catholics; neither the clergy nor the people gave their consent. And again, we know the high esteem that the Catholic clergy enjoys in the United States, and yet, this clergy, like that of Ireland, lives from the charity of the people. In Holland, the only portion of the clergy that had preserved a dignified and apostolic existence is that which, in conformity with the orders of the Holy See, constantly refused the salary of the government. Finally, which religious orders today exercise the greatest influence on the people if not those who beg for their daily bread? Never is the priest better appreciated than when he is as poor as they; nothing is esteemed so highly as a legitimate independence secured at the price of voluntary privations.

As for the impossibility of obtaining sufficient help from the respect and trust of Catholics, the objection is equally overcome by the examples we have just cited. Ireland is certainly Europe's poorest country, and yet, after having been forced to pay the Protestant clergy, it continues willingly to pay the Catholic clergy. In France, we need to distinguish between cities and rural areas. It is impossible that the clergy not find a sufficient number of Catholics to assure a fitting existence; in fact, this is what is happening. For the State grants no pay — besides, more than modest and everywhere insufficient — except to a pastor and a sole assistant; the clergy that is needed for the rest of the abundant population has to be taken care of by that population. As for the rural areas, some are located in provinces wherein faith is fully alive; on that score, others are less favored. It is certain that the former would provide a more pleasant lot to their pastors than that which they receive from the government; in fact, this is what can be seen in many parishes, newly established, not recognized by the State. In the latter, experience proves that the people who have greatly lost the habit of attending the holy offices and of frequenting the sacraments, still hold on to religion by four strong ties: baptism, First Communion, marriage, and Christian burial. In these, even when faith seems almost extinguished, families strongly feel the need

for a priest to teach moral habits to children; on this point, we could cite striking examples. Thus, it is erroneous to suppose that only Catholics would support the Catholic clergy. In a country where a religion is widespread, it attracts to its assistance even those who are strangers to it. Necessity and family relations are permanent causes that draw minds that have drawn away. Every day, we see avowed enemies of Catholicism in France entrust their children to the clergy they oppose through what they say and write. Besides, the question of the budget was not linked to the deliverance of the Church only by the nature of things, both were inseparable in public opinion. It was impossible to claim any religious freedom with giving rise to this argument against the self: 'You are paid by the State; why are you complaining about serving it?' This objection has been repeated excessively by all the newspapers; since it falsely accused the Catholics who called for the suppression of the ecclesiastical budget, many publications agreed to it wholeheartedly, and limited themselves to saying: 'Get your co-religionists to think as you do, and then they will have, like you, the right to claim their freedom.'

Accordingly, this matter was not bandied about arbitrarily; you either had to remain silent or deal with it. Moreover, whom would you address to refuse the budget? Would it be the government? Not at all. The defenders of the Church's freedom used to tell the government: "The budget is sacred; it is a debt, the result of a treaty; you would perjure yourself in suppressing it." The proposition was addressed only to the clergy; it had the power to renounce an indemnity become oppressive, but also the power to maintain it. Far from compromising its rights by public discussion, it was, in fact, the surest way of affirming those rights. Never was the ecclesiastical budget better guaranteed against the attempts of the government than since that time. Journals and government speakers no longer tried to frighten the clergy by speaking of suppressing its salary. There prevails in France a very personal belief that the fall of the ecclesiastical budget would be the end of the domination of authority over spiritual matters, that in fact, if the clergy arrived at refusing it, the government would try by all means possible to shake that resolution. Today, this belief is the strongest barrier the Church has against undertakings of authority. Other than this significant and actual advantage, acquired for religion by the controversy over the budget, there is another that looks to the future. Sooner or later, the deplorable state of finances in Europe, the ever increasing complication of the expenses needed to maintain order in this society — so poorly established, because it has not been constituted in a

Christian manner — will force governments, and especially the French government, to suppress the part of the budget that is less needed materially and most disapproved of by public opinion. They will offer this sacrifice, reluctantly, but they will do it, and, by the force of events, the Church will find herself liberated from the salary. Then, one will remember that she herself had desired that liberation; she will be able to carry her poverty with honor. Moreover, public opinion will be confirmed in its opinion that, in this way, the Church is fully untied from all the links that subjected her to the State.

VI

WHETHER SCHISM CAN BE ACTUALIZED IN FRANCE

As long as there were in France powerful kings and a clergy imbued with Gallican ideas, schism had been possible. Indeed, that was the position of England when it separated from Catholic unity. Today, France no longer has powerful kings and the overwhelming majority of the clergy hold to the Roman Church by a conviction of mind and by unbounded love. The conditions favoring schism no longer exist. If the government were to imagine producing a schism in revenge for the separation of the Church, this is what it would be facing: it would have to destroy religious freedom, close all Catholic buildings throughout France, persecute thirty thousand priests who would have nothing to lose, but, rather, would have become popular in two ways: by the persecution itself and by the separation of the Church from the State. Moreover, it would have to create a religion to replace the old one; which is to say that the government which has no real power would attempt what the Republic was unable to do with boundless moral and military power, using the remnants of the nobility and of the clergy and amidst the troubles that an initial revolution brings to minds.

If matters were ever prepared for a schism in France, the government's attempt to bring it about would be enough to make the scheme impossible because the tyranny exercised over consciences would alienate all opinions and all political parties without distinction. This administrative undertaking would appear to everyone as a laughable venture and hateful oppression. Nonetheless, what is impossible today may not be so later, by the progressive changes that the influence of the government on the clergy would bring

to the feelings that animate it and to the beliefs with which it is imbued. This is well-known by those who work to destroy Catholicism. They hope that, in time, with the money of the budget, with faulty bishops, to corrupt little by little the current spirit of the clergy of France. Religion and the Holy See have no other dangers to worry about.

VII

THE *L'AVENIR* NEWSPAPER AND THE *GENERAL AGENCY*

FOR THE DEFENSE OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

It is not enough to have adopted a system for the defense of religion against the natural consequences of the Revolution of 1830; there was need to put that system into operation and to make use of the sole means of action in conformity with the state of society in France. A daily newspaper and an association were created close together, towards the end of 1830. The newspaper was named *L'Avenir* [The Future]. It was the first daily broadsheet founded in Europe in the interests of Catholicism. The statutes of the association were published under the title: *General agency for the defense of religious freedom*. We will present briefly, but faithfully, what was done by those two activities.

L'Avenir

The purpose of this newspaper was made known to the public in early September 1830. It began to appear on 16 October. The editors were Fathers F. de La Mennais, Ph. Gerbet, Rohrbacher, H. Lacordaire, Messrs. Ch. de Coux, Adm. Bartels, Count Ch. de Montalembert, Daguerre, and d'Ault-Duménil. They developed the opinions whose explanation accompanies this Report. Supported by the influence these quickly gave them on minds, every day without respite they defended religion against the hostile actions of the government, against those of specific agencies, and against attacks from individual passions. Every time that Churches were violated, crosses taken down, the rights of the Church mocked, whoever the perpetrator was, they raised their voices. They raise them today to defend themselves; this is why they must be allowed to recall what they have accomplished. Hardly a month had passed since the first publication of *L'Avenir* that the

government, already guilty of numerous aggressions against the Church, dared to name Father G., to the see of B. After having uttered a cry of alarm, and having addressed to the bishops of France very mournful supplications, *L'Avenir* was seized by the postal system two days in a row. Fathers de La Mennais and Lacordaire, writers of the incriminated articles, were brought before the Court of Assizes along with the Editor-in-Chief of the paper; they appeared there on 31 January 1831. In the interval between the arrest and the sentencing, a crowd of Catholics gave to the accused, or rather, to the cause they defended, testimonies of sympathy which made an impact on the administration because they revealed the unity and power of Catholics. A fund-raiser, set up at the office of the paper to defray the costs of the lawsuit, raised more than twenty thousand francs, even though the majority of the donors had offered only five *centimes* [pennies - Trans.], or a very modest sum. In some cases, entire parishes, with the pastor in the lead, sent in their donations. Some bishops of France also offered the editors of *L'Avenir* their token of encouragement. The bishop of Pamier himself offered three hundred francs; furthermore, he set aside three hundred francs for alms, for the purpose, said he, of attracting the blessing of God in favor of the cause the accused were defending. Everyone was amazed to see religion lift up its head in pride, four months after a revolution had threatened it with complete ruin.

We cannot remain silent about the day when the suit was heard, because never did the Roman Church obtain in France so great a triumph. Her teachings were upheld during an entire day, to the applause of an audience composed of young lawyers and other young people of all classes of society. In the very building of the Parliaments, whence so many decrees against the Holy See and the freedom of the Church emanated, a solemn accusation against the articles of 1682 was heard. The acquittal of the accused by the jury, delivered amidst unanimous acclamations, ended that day with the destruction of Gallican beliefs in France and foretold a new alliance between the people and religion.

All that the accused heard being said around them during the breaks in the hearing would be worth reporting. There was only one doubt that seemed to baffle minds and bore witness to the influence on them: 'Is it true that this indeed is the Catholic religion?' This is the result already achieved by *L'Avenir* at the end of three and a half months of existence.

This initial victory over the government brought happiness and strength to Catholics. *L'Avenir* continued to march with more independence than ever on the road it

had traced for itself. Shortly thereafter, the paper obtained new proof of the boost it had given to the defense of the faith when after announcing, at the beginning of May 1831, its precarious financial status, it received seventy thousand francs in help, from France as well as from Belgium. The reason is that its action extended even to foreign countries; shortly after, it sent eighty thousand francs to the Irish, mowed down by famine. This was the result of a fund drive at its offices. The bishops of Eastern Ireland, assembled in synod, discussed how they should show their gratitude to the donors. In their letter of thanks, they qualified *L'Avenir* as a truly Christian paper. At least, it was devoting all its efforts to serve the cause of Christianity; moreover, it is true to say that the paper brought many persons back to the faith. A Vicar-General of A..., wrote that two residents of that city, one an atheist, the other a liberal anti-Catholic, were converted by reading *L'Avenir*. At L..., a renowned physician, a man enjoying the greatest influence on the liberal party of townspeople, had changed from unbelief to such a profound enthusiasm for the cause of Catholicism, that he thought of going to Rome, to offer to the Holy Father the views his zeal inspired.

In Switzerland, at L..., a member of the government declared that he would abandon Protestantism as soon as it was confirmed that the teachings professed by *L'Avenir* were in keeping with those of the Catholic Church. In general, those teachings had a remarkable effect on the Protestant areas that border Lake Geneva. In Alsace, a farmer, misled by reading the philosophers of the previous century, returned to the faith after having read a certain number of issues of *L'Avenir*. Immediately, he set about traveling throughout the area of his residence on foot, to drum up subscribers to the Agency as well as signatories of the petitions for freedom of instruction. A great number of students from the School of Medicine of Paris and the Schools of Law of Paris and Toulouse broadcast aloud their attachment to the teachings of *L'Avenir* and associated themselves with its efforts. Moreover, when the paper was suspended, they hurriedly expressed their sincere regrets as well as the hope that the suspension would be short-lived. Several students from Paris even addressed the editors, asking them to set up courses on the different branches of religious and political sciences, a proposal that was welcomed and today is fully accomplished. Significant Catholic influence was effective in different areas of Germany. The principal articles from *L'Avenir* had been translated there and published in several newspapers; they served to strengthen the authority of the Holy See, shaken by the disastrous attempts at schism.

This was not the only service that the paper was able to provide for those unfortunate Churches. In addition, it offered them the means to publish their claims against the oppressive measures of governments, claims stifled on the spot by Protestant censorship. Similar links were being formed among the Catholics of Ireland, of England, with an even closer union established in Belgium. All the articles of *L'Avenir* had been reprinted every week and distributed to more than five thousand subscribers. Its words were echoed even in the New World, whence it received numerous subscribers, from New Orleans up to Boston. Finally, everywhere proof was received that the principles espoused by *L'Avenir* answered the needs and the ideas of numerous populations in whose midst Catholicism appeared anew with a character of greatness and influence, and of something generous that dispelled the prejudices against it, spread by the godlessness of another century.

General Agency for the defense of religious freedom

L'Avenir defended religion by the word; since its editors wished to defend it by an even more positive action, they published, on 18 December 1830, the statutes of an association. Here are the principal objectives that would occupy it.

1. The redress of every action against the freedom of clerical ministry by lawsuits before the Chambers and before all the courts, from the Council of State to the justice of the peace. In the most important suits, publication of judicial reports, pleadings, were to be made at the expense of the General Agency and distributed throughout France.

2. The support of every establishment of instruction, at the primary, secondary, and superior levels, against all arbitrary violations of freedom of instruction; without this support there is no longer a Charter or religion.

3. Maintenance of the right that belongs to all French people to assemble for prayer, for study, or to obtain any other legitimate goal, equally advantageous to religion, the poor, and civilization.

4. The General Agency was destined to be the common link between all the local associations already established in France, or that will be established with the goal of creating a mutual insurance program against the tyrannies hostile to religious freedom.

Extract from the Design of the General Agency

The General Agency was composed of a council of nine persons, with Father de La Mennais as president, and associated donors. The donation was 10 francs per year. The funds of the Agency for the year 1831 reached the sum of 31,513 francs. As soon as the Agency was established, it presented petitions to the Chambers to claim the freedom of instruction stipulated in the Charter of 1830. It invited Catholics to imitate it; almost three hundred petitions were addressed, one after the other, to the House of Deputies, endorsed by more than fifteen thousand signatures. Moreover, since freedom of instruction was not only promised but begun, the agency resolved to make use of it. It announced, on 29 April 1831, that it would open a school, without authorization from the University. Three of its members, Mr. De Coux, Father Lacordaire, and Count de Montalembert, adopted the task of schoolmasters. Twenty poor children, whom they recruited, received from their mouths the first elements of religious and literary instruction when agents of the government came to expel by force both teachers and students. The teachers were charged before the Court of Petty Sessions, which sent them to the Court of Assizes. During the debates about the appropriate criminal jurisdiction to handle the so-called offense, Mr. de Montalembert was called to the peerage by the death of his father and claimed the jurisdiction of the Chamber which he had just entered. It was therefore at the bar of the highest court of the kingdom that the three teachers of the free school bore witness to their faith. They were condemned; but the Catholic language had been spoken before the highest Body of the State and the cause of freedom of instruction won in public opinion.

During the course of the suit, the General Agency encouraged the foundation of several free schools in the provinces and came to the aid of some teachers who were victims of the University's monopoly. Persecutions of another kind had also attracted its attention and led to other lawsuits. The commandant of a military division having wished to forbid the Capuchins of Aix to appear in public in their religious garb, the Agency, at its expense and in the name of the venerable Fathers, hastened to pursue him before the Council of State. It abandoned this action only after the Lieutenant-General had been transferred to the command of another military division, and at the request of the Fathers themselves, restored to the enjoyment of their rights.

Later on, when *L'Avenir* was on the point of being suspended, the Trappists of the Abbey of Melleray, in Brittany, provided the Agency with a new occasion to defend the freedom of religious congregations. On 28 September 1831, six hundred men, on foot and

on horseback, surrounded the abbey. The sub-prefect of the district had come to inform Father-Abbot that his community was dissolved; he brought to all the members permits for them to leave. On the daring objections of Father-Abbot, a delay was granted so that he could write to the Ministry. But seven days later, sixteen officers, mounted on horses and their swords bared, galloped into the courtyard of the abbey and expelled a large number of the French religious. The other inhabitants, among whom were seventy English religious, were detained by the soldiers. We will remain silent about other horrible details: the imprisonment of the abbot, the expulsion of sixty-three English religious, forced to board the frigate *Hebe*, as well as other shocking treatment. Even before the procedures were fully known, the Agency wrote to the Father-Abbot and offered to take charge of his defense. The venerable religious, who, to the end, acted with a courage and a composure worthy of admiration, hastened to accept the offer of the Agency. Three judicial actions were right away directed against the authors of the violation: one criminal, the other two civil. Even now, the process has captured the attention of France, and has already resulted in the return of the Abbot and some of his religious into the abbey, where the customary program was taken up again.

On some other matters, the General Agency again offered a few services to the Catholic cause. Thus, when Mr. G..., named by the government to the see of B..., had contributed to the scandal that surrounded the burial of Father Grégoire, the Agency supported with all its strength, the energetic resistance of the diocese of B... . All the more should it claim credit for the part it took in this matter, in that the Sovereign Pontiff, echoing the filial hope of the Church of France, acknowledged that the Agency spared the Church from one of the greatest threats ever to menace her.

We remain silent about other deeds, which are not without importance, such as the foundation in several large cities of newspapers as well as of Catholic associations that proposed the same goal as the General Agency and in association with it. The paper *Union* published in Nantes, the *Correspondant de Strasbourg*, written in German, the *Courier Lorrain* and *L'Association Lyonnaise* deserve special mention with some details, lest we deprive the Sovereign Pontiff of moments so precious to Christianity. The Catholics who banded together to defend the rights of their brothers believe they have, for their part, done all they had promised and all they were capable of doing. Mere tools of the oppressed, they were at the disposition of all those who had need of justice. If they did not do more, it is

because many considered it dangerous or useless to resist persecution and so, voluntarily sacrificed their rights.

This is the abridged report of the acts of *L'Avenir* and of the *General Association for the defense of religious freedom*. The principal articles of *L'Avenir* were assembled in two volumes under the title *Mélanges catholiques* [Christian Medley]. The lawsuit of *L'Avenir* and that of the free school were also published in separate booklets. These various works were placed at the feet of the communal Father, so that His Holiness could judge for himself and pass judgment on what had been done.

VIII

THE OPPOSITION TO THE EDITORS OF *L'AVENIR*, ITS CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

It seems that with so many activities undertaken in good faith for the cause of the Church, at a difficult time when the most courageous remained silent, they ought not to have found enemies. However, while a large segment of the clergy and of the faithful saw them as a safe way open to religion, others pursued them as culpable. The epithets of revolutionaries, heretics, schismatics, were bestowed on the editors of *L'Avenir*. The more their dedication was manifested in their activities, the more the opposition assumed an abusive stand against them. Reading their paper was forbidden in many dioceses, young people apparently inclined to its teachings were turned away from religious orders; some were even refused entrance into the seminary. On the slightest conjecture that they embraced more or less the teachings of *L'Avenir*, some professors were deprived of their lecterns, pastors were dismissed. In a word, a vast persecution was fabricated against the works whose description had just been placed under the eyes of the head of the Church, and against those who were believed to be interested in them. Many newspapers, and in particular the one called *Ami de la Religion* [Friend of Religion] engaged in distorting the thoughts, the phrases, and even the intentions of the editors of *L'Avenir*. More than once, it had no qualms about altering their words, so as to intensify the accusations it imagined against them every day. The paper went so far as to defame their private lives. Finally, in a book printed at Avignon, with the permission of the Master of the Sacred Palace, the

editors were treated as innovators in the style of Luther. In that book, the author declared that their thoughts were not to be interpreted according to their words because they lacked trustworthiness.

For all that — and this is worth mentioning — while every day the editors of *L'Avenir* were refining their thoughts, while every day their enemies condemned their teachings and their intentions, not one single statement was contested by a bishop. On the one hand, it seemed that the Church was being threatened, but, on the other, no voice called attention to a precise danger.

To explain this unusual situation, one needs to look back to the causes of the opposition faced by the editors of *L'Avenir*. There were two principal ones: one political, the other theological. The supporters of the Bourbon branch, fallen from the throne, on seeing the appearance of a newspaper that defended religion without defending the former dynasty, while explaining frankly the defects of the Restoration, were convinced that it would be an obstacle to their purposes. They feared that their cause would lose the support of the clergy, and since they deemed this support essential, they brought to the ruin of *L'Avenir* in public opinion all the care and all the enthusiasm that political parties use to overcome an obstacle. This is the source of that incredible hatred which pushed them to the extreme of branding as heretics and schismatics the men who unceasingly proved their attachment to unity, among whom several had already given proof by their previous work over many years. On the other hand, even though dogmatic Gallicanism had been done away with in the great majority of the French clergy, some traces still remained. Moreover, practical Gallicanism, that is to say, the prolonged habit of a certain social order based on the Gallican theory, brought about that those who had logically sacrificed the principle were still living under the influence of established procedures. Now the separation of Church and State was opposed to practical Gallicanism. This was putting the Roman beliefs into action in a society wherein contrary beliefs held sway for several centuries, and had hardly disappeared in a controversy of ten years standing.

How would such an attempt not have agitated theological passions that had already been soured? It was a question of seeing the practice change after the principles; one could hope, in a final combat, to regain what had been lost. From this, there flowed a persecution practiced in the shadow of seminaries, not only against the political element of the beliefs

of *L'Avenir*, but also — it needs to be said out loud — against all the beliefs held by Father de La Mennais. This is what led to the startling accusations of schism, heresy, so that the hatred directed to the person of the author, would fall also on his writings, all of them equally condemned. We affirm that, today, there is in France only one issue: a question in which everything is indivisible, things and persons; and this is the issue: The society of Louis XIV as well as the Gallican beliefs that are its consequences and its basis, will they be revived or not?

The editors of *L'Avenir*, distressed by the opposition they encountered, but afraid and troubled for the Church and not for themselves, did what faith and holy examples inspired them to do. As soon as 2 February 1831, the day when the choice of God gave to the Church Gregory XVI, they signed in Paris a document of the beliefs they professed. This was to be sent to Rome immediately and placed at the feet of the Holy Father. It was, in fact, entrusted to Mr. Sebastiani, Minister of Foreign Affairs, who had offered to have it delivered by the embassy. Later, it was learned that he had found it inconvenient or impossible to make this delivery. When the editors of *L'Avenir* were informed, their position became more serious. There was talk of condemnations; a thousand rumors circulated in which the name of the Sovereign Pontiff was daringly mentioned. Was this with or without basis? The editors of *L'Avenir* resolved to clarify this doubt by going to Rome, to the feet of the successor of St. Peter, there, to find a resolution. After thirteen months of fighting for religion, they suspended painfully, but with confidence in God, the publication of *L'Avenir*. We are leaving, they told the Catholics of France; for the moment, we are leaving the battlefield in favor of another equally pressing task: “The traveler’s walking-stick in hand, we will set out for the eternal pulpit; there, prostrate at the feet of the pontiff that Jesus Christ has placed as guide and master of His disciples, we will tell him: ‘Of Father! Deign to lower your eyes onto some of the least of your children who are accused of being rebels against your infallible and benign authority. Here they are in front of you; read into their souls; there is nothing there that they seek to hide. If one of their thoughts, a single one strays from your thoughts, they disavow it, they renounce it. You are the measure of their beliefs; never, never did they know any other. O Father! Pronounce on them the word that gives life, because it gives light; and may your hand be extended to bless their obedience and their love.’ ” (*Avenir* of 13 November 1831).

IX

CONCLUSION

Here are the results of what has just been said:

1. That, without the actions of Catholics, independent of every political party and of all influence of the government, the Catholic religion in France would be deprived of a kind of defense that it needs in the present circumstances, because the bishops, in the state of isolation, of dependency, and of submission in which they have been placed, dare not and could barely dare to give religion the kind of help that the current situation calls for. The Catholic religion would find itself open to sacrilegious attacks and other encroachments of the government, to the hatred of the majority of French people and to the danger of a future schism.

2. That the stand of these independent Catholics, fortunate in that the government can do absolutely nothing against them, has, on the contrary, become very difficult in the case of those who must fulfill their duties — given the fact, that the Gallican intrigues, linked to purely political intrigues, succeeded in making them suspect in the eyes of religious authority. In two sentences, the action of the editors of *L'Avenir*, or, if you will, of our entire association, acting in the same direction, is indispensable for the maintenance of Catholicism in France, and this action has no chance of success unless it is backed by the Holy See. It is, therefore, in the sole interest of the Catholic religion, and not for any personal interest, that the editors of *L'Avenir* undertook the trip to Rome, and came to the feet of His Holiness. They ask no more than to devote themselves, at the price of all sacrifices, to the holy cause of the Church and of religion. To that end, they venture to pray His Holiness: 1- So as to dissipate the suspicions of error spread about them, that he have examined the *Exposition* of their beliefs which they have laid at his feet, and that, if, on the level of theology, this exposition contains nothing contrary to the holy teaching of the Roman Church, His Holiness will command that this be proclaimed in a manner he will deem appropriate; 2- That, in order to allow the editors of *L'Avenir* and the members of the *Agence Catholique* to continue their work, if the Sovereign Pontiff finds this useful for religion, it please His Holiness to make known that, having found nothing contrary to Catholic principles, their activity cannot, by that very fact, be the object of any disapproval.

But for the complete satisfaction of their conscience, the editors of *L'Avenir* believed themselves also obliged to submit humbly to the head of the Church some observations based on the particular knowledge they had of the state of matters and of minds in France. First of all, as regards the beliefs professed in *L'Avenir*, whether the Sovereign Pontiff approves or condemns them, his decision will not find the slightest opposition. Whoever would dare to allow himself such opposition would instantly be pushed away in horror by the entire body of Catholics. While the silence of the Holy See would weaken the courage of those devoted to it, throw into indecision a great number of minds, draw their minds away from Rome, open a vast field of fears, of doubts, and of melancholic and dangerous reflections, at the same time Gallicanism would double its efforts to pervert teaching, and impose it on young seminarians as an obligation in conscience, by virtue of the obedience due to ecclesiastical superiors. As I have said in this report, we have already seen this. Secondly, regarding the system of behavior adopted for the defense of religion, it is no less to be feared that the silence of the Holy See be taken as its condemnation. This would have other consequences; the first, that it would be impossible in future to present any resistance against the oppressors of the Church; thus, evil would increase with untold speed; the second, that this large segment of the population which, in France, and in the surrounding countries, had become the enemy of Catholicism because it believed Catholicism to be incompatible with civil freedom, and because, since the publication of *L'Avenir*, that the principles expressed in that paper were disavowed in Rome, consequently distanced themselves from religion with greater hatred than ever. Already, the liberal papers in Belgium openly expressed themselves on this topic. The greatest obstacle found in French liberalism, to obtain its cooperation in the defense of the rights of Catholics, is the genuine or pretended belief that *L'Avenir* expressed opinions on which no solid alliance could be built because they were opposed to the teachings of Rome.

There you have it, what we had to present so as to exonerate our souls before God. In his wisdom, the Supreme Pontiff will pass judgment. And now, full of love for him and obedient to his voice, like small children, we kneel at his feet, while entreating his paternal blessing.

Rome, 3 February 1832

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Excerpt from *Lacordaire Journaliste, 1830-1848*, compiled by Paul Fesch. Published by Delhomme et
Briguet. Paris, 1897.