



The Holy See

TAMETSI FUTURA PROSPICIENTIBUS

ENCYCLICAL OF POPE LEO XIII ON
JESUS CHRIST THE REDEEMER

*To Our Venerable Brethren, the Patriarchs, Primates,
Archbishops, Bishops, and other Local Ordinaries having
Peace and Communion with the Holy See.*

Venerable Brethren, Health and Apostolic Benediction.

The outlook on the future is by no means free from anxiety; on the contrary, there are many serious reasons for alarm, on account of numerous and long-standing causes of evil, of both a public and a private nature. Nevertheless, the close of the century really seems in God's mercy to afford us some degree of consolation and hope. For no one will deny that renewed interest in spiritual matters and a revival of Christian faith and piety are influences of great moment for the common good. And there are sufficiently clear indications at the present day of a very general revival or augmentation of these virtues. For example, in the very midst of worldly allurements and in spite of so many obstacles to piety, what great crowds have flocked to Rome to visit the "Threshold of the Apostles" at the invitation of the Sovereign Pontiff! Both Italians and foreigners are openly devoting themselves to religious exercises, and, relying upon the indulgences offered by the Church, are most earnestly seeking the means to secure their eternal salvation. Who could fail to be moved by the present evident increase of devotion towards the person of Our Saviour? The ardent zeal of so many thousands, united in heart and mind, "from the rising of the Sun to the going down thereof," in venerating the Name of Jesus Christ and proclaiming His praises, is worthy of the best days of Christianity. Would that the outburst of these flames of antique faith might be followed by a mighty conflagration! Would that the splendid example of so many might kindle the enthusiasm of all! For what so necessary for our times as a widespread renovation among the nations of Christian principles and old-fashioned virtues? The great misfortune is that too many turn a deaf ear and will not listen to the teachings of this revival of piety. Yet, "did they but know the gift of God," did they but realise that the greatest of all misfortunes is to fall away from the World's Redeemer and to abandon Christian faith and practice, they would be only too eager to turn back, and so escape certain destruction.

2. The most important duty of the Church, and the one most peculiarly her own, is to defend and to propagate throughout the world the Kingdom of the Son of God, and to bring all men to salvation by communicating to them the divine benefits, so much so that her power and authority are chiefly exercised in this one work. Towards this end We are conscious of having devoted Our energies throughout Our difficult and anxious Pontificate even to the present day. And you too, Venerable Brethren, are wont constantly, yea daily, to give your chief thoughts and endeavours together with Ourselves to the self same task. But at the present moment all of us ought to make still further efforts, more especially on the occasion of the Holy Year, to disseminate far and wide the better knowledge and love of Jesus Christ by teaching, persuading, exhorting, if perchance our voice can be heard; and this, not so much to those who are ever ready to listen willingly to Christian teachings, but to those most unfortunate men who, whilst professing the Christian name, live strangers to the faith and love of Christ. For these we feel the profoundest pity: these above all would we urge to think seriously of their present life and what its consequences will be if they do not repent.

3. The greatest of all misfortunes is never to have known Jesus Christ: yet such a state is free from the sin of obstinacy and ingratitude. But first to have known Him, and afterwards to deny or forget Him, is a crime so foul and so insane that it seems impossible for any man to be guilty of it. For Christ is the fountain - head of all good. Mankind can no more be saved without His power, than it could be redeemed without His mercy. "Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved" (Acts IV, 12). What kind of life that is from which Jesus Christ, "the power of God and the wisdom of God," is excluded; what kind of morality and what manner of death are its consequences, can be clearly learnt from the example of nations deprived of the light of Christianity. If we but recall St. Paul's description (Romans I., 24-32) of the mental blindness, the natural depravity, the monstrous superstitions and lusts of such peoples, our minds will be filled with horror and pity. What we here record is well enough known, but not sufficiently realised or thought about. Pride would not mislead, nor indifference enervate, so many minds, if the Divine mercies were more generally called to mind and if it were remembered from what an abyss Christ delivered mankind and to what a height He raised it. The human race, exiled and disinherited, had for ages been daily hurrying into ruin, involved in the terrible and numberless ills brought about by the sin of our first parents, nor was there any human hope of salvation, when Christ Our Lord came down as the Saviour from Heaven. At the very beginning of the world, God had promised Him as the conqueror of "the Serpent," hence, succeeding ages had eagerly looked forward to His coming. The Prophets had long and clearly declared that all hope was in Him. The varying fortunes, the achievements, customs, laws, ceremonies and sacrifices of the Chosen People had distinctly and lucidly foreshadowed the truth, that the salvation of mankind was to be accomplished in Him who should be the Priest, Victim, Liberator, Prince of Peace, Teacher of all Nations, Founder of an Eternal Kingdom. By all these titles, images and prophecies, differing in kind though like in meaning, He alone was designated who "for His exceeding charity wherewith He loved us," gave Himself up for our salvation. And so, when the fullness of time came in God's Divine Providence, the only-begotten Son of God became man, and in behalf of mankind made most abundant satisfaction in His Blood to the outraged majesty of His Father and by this infinite price He redeemed man for His own. "You were not redeemed with corruptible things as gold or silver . . . but with the precious Blood of Christ, as of a lamb, unspotted and undefiled" (1 Peter I., 18-19). Thus all men, though already subject to His Kingly power, inasmuch as He is the Creator and Preserver of all, were over and above made His property by a true and real purchase. "You are not your own: for you are bought with a great price" (2 Corinthians VI, 19-20). Hence in Christ all things are made new. "The mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed to Him, in the dispensation of the fullness of times to re-establish all things in Christ" (Ephesians I., 9-10). When Jesus Christ had blotted out the handwriting of the decree that was against us, fastening it to the cross, at

once God's wrath was appeased, the primeval fetters of slavery were struck off from unhappy and erring man, God's favour was won back, grace restored, the gates of Heaven opened, the right to enter them revived, and the means afforded of doing so. Then man, as though awakening from a long-continued and deadly lethargy, beheld at length the light of the truth, for long ages desired, yet sought in vain. First of all, he realised that he was born to much higher and more glorious things than the frail and inconstant objects of sense which had hitherto formed the end of his thoughts and cares. He learnt that the meaning of human life, the supreme law, the end of all things was this: that we come from God and must return to Him. From this first principle the consciousness of human dignity was revived: men's hearts realised the universal brotherhood: as a consequence, human rights and duties were either perfected or even newly created, whilst on all sides were evoked virtues undreamt of in pagan philosophy. Thus men's aims, life, habits and customs received a new direction. As the knowledge of the Redeemer spread far and wide and His power, which destroyeth ignorance and former vices, penetrated into the very life-blood of the nations, such a change came about that the face of the world was entirely altered by the creation of a Christian civilisation. The remembrance of these events, Venerable Brethren, is full of infinite joy, but it also teaches us the lesson that we must both feel and render with our whole hearts gratitude to our Divine Saviour.

4. We are indeed now very far removed in time from the first beginnings of Redemption; but what difference does this make when the benefits thereof are perennial and immortal? He who once bath restored human nature ruined by sin the same preserveth and will preserve it for ever. "He gave Himself a redemption for all" (1 Timothy II., 6). "In Christ all shall be made alive" (1 Corinthians XV., 22). "And of His Kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke I., 33). Hence by God's eternal decree the salvation of all men, both severally and collectively, depends upon Jesus Christ. Those who abandon Him become guilty by the very fact, in their blindness and folly, of their own ruin; whilst at the same time they do all that in them lies to bring about a violent reaction of mankind in the direction of that mass of evils and miseries from which the Redeemer in His mercy had freed them.

5. Those who go astray from the road wander far from the goal they aim at. Similarly, if the pure and true light of truth be rejected, men's minds must necessarily be darkened and their souls deceived by deplorably false ideas. What hope of salvation can they have who abandon the very principle and fountain of life? Christ alone is the Way, the Truth and the Life (John XIV., 6). If He be abandoned the three necessary conditions of salvation are removed.

Christ the Way

6. It is surely unnecessary to prove, what experience constantly shows and what each individual feels in himself, even in the very midst of all temporal prosperity - that in God alone can the human will find absolute and perfect peace. God is the only end of man. All our life on earth is the truthful and exact image of a pilgrimage. Now Christ is the "Way," for we can never reach God, the supreme and ultimate good, by this toilsome and doubtful road of mortal life, except with Christ as our leader and guide. How so? Firstly and chiefly by His grace; but this would remain "void" in man if the precepts of His law were neglected. For, as was necessarily the case after Jesus Christ had won our salvation, He left behind Him His Law for the protection and welfare of the human race, under the guidance of which men, converted from evil life, might safely tend towards God. "Going, teach ye all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew XXVIII., 19-20). "Keep my commandments" (John XIV., 15). Hence it will be understood that in the Christian religion the first and most necessary condition is docility to the precepts of Jesus Christ, absolute loyalty

of will towards Him as Lord and King. A serious duty, and one which oftentimes calls for strenuous labour, earnest endeavour, and perseverance! For although by Our Redeemer's grace human nature hath been regenerated, still there remains in each individual a certain debility and tendency to evil. Various natural appetites attract man on one side and the other; the allurements of the material world impel his soul to follow after what is pleasant rather than the law of Christ. Still we must strive our best and resist our natural inclinations with all our strength "unto the obedience of Christ." For unless they obey reason they become our masters, and carrying the whole man away from Christ, make him their slave. "Men of corrupt mind, who have made shipwreck of the faith, cannot help being slaves. . . They are slaves to a threefold concupiscence: of will, of pride, or of outward show" (St. Augustine, *De Vera Religione*, 37). In this contest every man must be prepared to undergo hardships and troubles for Christ's sake. It is difficult to reject what so powerfully entices and delights. It is hard and painful to despise the supposed goods of the senses and of fortune for the will and precepts of Christ our Lord. But the Christian is absolutely obliged to be firm, and patient in suffering, if he wish to lead a Christian life. Have we forgotten of what Body and of what Head we are the members? "Having joy set before Him, He endured the Cross," and He bade us deny ourselves. The very dignity of human nature depends upon this disposition of mind. For, as even the ancient Pagan philosophy perceived, to be master of oneself and to make the lower part of the soul, obey the superior part, is so far from being a weakness of will that it is really a noble power, in consonance with right reason and most worthy of a man. Moreover, to bear and to suffer is the ordinary condition of man. Man can no more create for himself a life free from suffering and filled with all happiness that he can abrogate the decrees of his Divine Maker, who has willed that the consequences of original sin should be perpetual. It is reasonable, therefore, not to expect an end to troubles in this world, but rather to steel one's soul to bear troubles, by which we are taught to look forward with certainty to supreme happiness. Christ has not promised eternal bliss in heaven to riches, nor to a life of ease, to honours or to power, but to long-suffering and to tears, to the love of justice and to cleanness of heart.

7. From this it may clearly be seen what consequences are to be expected from that false pride which, rejecting our Saviour's Kingship, places man at the summit of all things and declares that human nature must rule supreme. And yet, this supreme rule can neither be attained nor even defined. The rule of Jesus Christ derives its form and its power from Divine Love: a holy and orderly charity is both its foundation and its crown. Its necessary consequences are the strict fulfilment of duty, respect of mutual rights, the estimation of the things of heaven above those of earth, the preference of the love of God to all things. But this supremacy of man, which openly rejects Christ, or at least ignores Him, is entirely founded upon selfishness, knowing neither charity nor self-devotion. Man may indeed be king, through Jesus Christ: but only on condition that he first of all obey God, and diligently seek his rule of life in God's law. By the law of Christ we mean not only the natural precepts of morality and the Ancient Law, all of which Jesus Christ has perfected and crowned by His declaration, explanation and sanction; but also the rest of His doctrine and His own peculiar institutions. Of these the chief is His Church. Indeed whatsoever things Christ has instituted are most fully contained in His Church. Moreover, He willed to perpetuate the office assigned to Him by His Father by means of the ministry of the Church so gloriously founded by Himself. On the one hand He confided to her all the means of men's salvation, on the other He most solemnly commanded men to be subject to her and to obey her diligently, and to follow her even as Himself: "He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me" (Luke X, 16). Wherefore the law of Christ must be sought in the Church. Christ is man's "Way"; the Church also is his "Way"-Christ of Himself and by His very nature, the Church by His commission and the communication of His power. Hence all who would find salvation apart from the Church, are led astray and strive in vain.

8. As with individuals, so with nations. These, too, must necessarily tend to ruin if they go astray from "The Way." The Son of God, the Creator and Redeemer of mankind, is King and Lord of the earth, and holds supreme dominion over men, both individually and collectively. "And He gave Him power, and glory, and a kingdom: and all peoples, tribes, and tongues shall serve Him" (Daniel VII., 14). "I am appointed King by Him . . . I will give Thee the Gentiles for Thy inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession" (Psalm II., 6, 8). Therefore the law of Christ ought to prevail in human society and be the guide and teacher of public as well as of private life. Since this is so by divine decree, and no man may with impunity contravene it, it is an evil thing for the common weal wherever Christianity does not hold the place that belongs to it. When Jesus Christ is absent, human reason fails, being bereft of its chief protection and light, and the very end is lost sight of, for which, under God's providence, human society has been built up. This end is the obtaining by the members of society of natural good through the aid of civil unity, though always in harmony with the perfect and eternal good which is above nature. But when men's minds are clouded, both rulers and ruled go astray, for they have no safe line to follow nor end to aim at.

Christ the Truth

9. Just as it is the height of misfortune to go astray from the "Way," so is it to abandon the "Truth." Christ Himself is the first, absolute and essential "Truth," inasmuch as He is the Word of God, consubstantial and co-eternal with the Father, He and the Father being One. "I am the Way and the Truth." Wherefore if the Truth be sought by the human intellect, it must first of all submit it to Jesus Christ, and securely rest upon His teaching, since therein Truth itself speaketh. There are innumerable and extensive fields of thought, properly belonging to the human mind, in which it may have free scope for its investigations and speculations, and that not only agreeably to its nature, but even by a necessity of its nature. But what is unlawful and unnatural is that the human mind should refuse to be restricted within its proper limits, and, throwing aside its becoming modesty, should refuse to acknowledge Christ's teaching. This teaching, upon which our salvation depends, is almost entirely about God and the things of God. No human wisdom has invented it, but the Son of God hath received and drunk it in entirely from His Father: "The words which thou gayest me, 1 have given to them" (John XVII., 8). Hence this teaching necessarily embraces many subjects which are not indeed contrary to reason-for that would be an impossibility-but so exalted that we can no more attain them by our own reasoning than we can comprehend God as He is in Himself. If there be so many things hidden and veiled by nature, which no human ingenuity can explain, and yet which no man in his senses can doubt, it would be an abuse of liberty to refuse to accept those which are entirely above nature, because their essence cannot be discovered. To reject dogma is simply to deny Christianity. Our intellect must bow humbly and reverently "unto the obedience of Christ," so that it be held captive by His divinity and authority: "bringing into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians X., 5). Such obedience Christ requires, and justly so. For He is God, and as such holds supreme dominion over man's intellect as well as over his will. By obeying Christ with his intellect man by no means acts in a servile manner, but in complete accordance with his reason and his natural dignity. For by his will he yields, not to the authority of any man, but to that of God, the author of his being, and the first principle to Whom he is subject by the very law of his nature. He does not suffer himself to be forced by the theories of any human teacher, but by the eternal and unchangeable truth. Hence he attains at one and the same time the natural good of the intellect and his own liberty. For the truth which proceeds from the teaching of Christ clearly demonstrates the real nature and value of every being; and man, being endowed with this knowledge, if he but obey the truth as perceived, will make all things subject to himself, not himself to them; his appetites to his reason, not his reason to his appetites. Thus the slavery of sin and falsehood will be shaken off, and the most perfect liberty attained:

"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John VIII., 32). It is, then, evident that those whose intellect rejects the yoke of Christ are obstinately striving against God. Having shaken off God's authority, they are by no means freer, for they will fall beneath some human sway. They are sure to choose someone whom they will listen to, obey, and follow as their guide. Moreover, they withdraw their intellect from the communication of divine truths, and thus limit it within a narrower circle of knowledge, so that they are less fitted to succeed in the pursuit even of natural science. For there are in nature very many things whose apprehension or explanation is greatly aided by the light of divine truth. Not unfrequently, too, God, in order to chastise their pride, does not permit men to see the truth, and thus they are punished in the things wherein they sin. This is why we often see men of great intellectual power and erudition making the grossest blunders even in natural science.

10. It must therefore be clearly admitted that, in the life of a Christian, the intellect must be entirely subject to God's authority. And if, in this submission of reason to authority, our self-love, which is so strong, is restrained and made to suffer, this only proves the necessity to a Christian of long-suffering not only in will but also in intellect. We would remind those persons of this truth who desire a kind of Christianity such as they themselves have devised, whose precepts should be very mild, much more indulgent towards human nature, and requiring little if any hardships to be borne. They do not properly understand the meaning of faith and Christian precepts. They do not see that the Cross meets us everywhere, the model of our life, the eternal standard of all who wish to follow Christ in reality and not merely in name.

Christ the Life

11. God alone is Life. All other beings partake of life, but are not life. Christ, from all eternity and by His very nature, is "the Life," just as He is the Truth, because He is God of God. From Him, as from its most sacred source, all life pervades and ever will pervade creation. Whatever is, is by Him; whatever lives, lives by Him. For by the Word "all things were made; and without Him was made nothing that was made." This is true of the natural life; but, as We have sufficiently indicated above, we have a much higher and better life, won for us by Christ's mercy, that is to say, "the life of grace," whose happy consummation is "the life of glory," to which all our thoughts and actions ought to be directed. The whole object of Christian doctrine and morality is that "we being dead to sin, should live to justice" (1 Peter II., 24)-that is, to virtue and holiness. In this consists the moral life, with the certain hope of a happy eternity. This justice, in order to be advantageous to salvation, is nourished by Christian faith. "The just man liveth by faith" (Galatians III., II). "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews XI., 6). Consequently Jesus Christ, the creator and preserver of faith, also preserves and nourishes our moral life. This He does chiefly by the ministry of His Church. To Her, in His wise and merciful counsel, He has entrusted certain agencies which engender the supernatural life, protect it, and revive it if it should fail. This generative and conservative power of the virtues that make for salvation is therefore lost, whenever morality is dissociated from divine faith. A system of morality based exclusively on human reason robs man of his highest dignity and lowers him from the supernatural to the merely natural life. Not but that man is able by the right use of reason to know and to obey certain principles of the natural law. But though he should know them all and keep them inviolate through life-and even this is impossible without the aid of the grace of our Redeemer-still it is vain for anyone without faith to promise himself eternal salvation. "If anyone abide not in Me, he shall be cast forth as a branch, and shall wither, and they shall gather him up and cast him into the fire, and he burneth" (John XV., 6). "He that believeth not shall be condemned" (Mark XVI., 16). We have but too much evidence of the value and result of a morality divorced from divine faith. How is it that, in spite of all the zeal for the welfare of the masses, nations are in such straits and even distress, and

that the evil is daily on the increase? We are told that society is quite able to help itself; that it can flourish without the assistance of Christianity, and attain its end by its own unaided efforts. Public administrators prefer a purely secular system of government. All traces of the religion of our forefathers are daily disappearing from political life and administration. What blindness! Once the idea of the authority of God as the Judge of right and wrong is forgotten, law must necessarily lose its primary authority and justice must perish: and these are the two most powerful and most necessary bonds of society. Similarly, once the hope and expectation of eternal happiness is taken away, temporal goods will be greedily sought after. Every man will strive to secure the largest share for himself. Hence arise envy, jealousy, hatred. The consequences are conspiracy, anarchy, nihilism. There is neither peace abroad nor security at home. Public life is stained with crime.

12. So great is this struggle of the passions and so serious the dangers involved, that we must either anticipate ultimate ruin or seek for an efficient remedy. It is of course both right and necessary to punish malefactors, to educate the masses, and by legislation to prevent crime in every possible way: but all this is by no means sufficient. The salvation of the nations must be looked for higher. A power greater than human must be called in to teach men's hearts, awaken in them the sense of duty, and make them better. This is the power which once before saved the world from destruction when groaning under much more terrible evils. Once remove all impediments and allow the Christian spirit to revive and grow strong in a nation, and that nation will be healed. The strife between the classes and the masses will die away; mutual rights will be respected. If Christ be listened to, both rich and poor will do their duty. The former will realise that they must observe justice and charity, the latter self restraint and moderation, if both are to be saved. Domestic life will be firmly established by the salutary fear of God as the Lawgiver. In the same way the precepts of the natural law, which dictates respect for lawful authority and obedience to the laws, will exercise their influence over the people. Seditions and conspiracies will cease. Wherever Christianity rules over all without let or hindrance there the order established by Divine Providence is preserved, and both security and prosperity are the happy result. The common welfare, then, urgently demands a return to Him from whom we should never have gone astray; to Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, - and this on the part not only of individuals but of society as a whole. We must restore Christ to this His own rightful possession. All elements of the national life must be made to drink in the Life which proceedeth from Him legislation, political institutions, education, marriage and family life, capital and labour. Everyone must see that the very growth of civilisation which is so ardently desired depends greatly upon this, since it is fed and grows not so much by material wealth and prosperity, as by the spiritual qualities of morality and virtue.

13. It is rather ignorance than ill-will which keeps multitudes away from Jesus Christ. There are many who study humanity and the natural world; few who study the Son of God. The first step, then, is to substitute knowledge for ignorance, so that He may no longer be despised or rejected because He is unknown. We conjure all Christians throughout the world to strive all they can to know their Redeemer as He really is. The more one contemplates Him with sincere and unprejudiced mind, the clearer does it become that there can be nothing more salutary than His law, more divine than His teaching. In this work, your influence, Venerable Brethren, and the zeal and earnestness of the entire Clergy, can do wonders. You must look upon it as a chief part of your duty to engrave upon the minds of your people the true knowledge, the very likeness of Jesus Christ; to illustrate His charity, His mercies, His teaching, by your writings and your words, in schools, in Universities, from the pulpit; wherever opportunity is offered you. The world has heard enough of the so-called "rights of man." Let it hear something of the rights of God. That the time is suitable is proved by the very general revival of religious feeling already referred to, and especially that devotion towards Our Saviour of which there

are so many indications, and which, please God, we shall hand on to the New Century as a pledge of happier times to come. But as this consummation cannot be hoped for except by the aid of divine grace, let us strive in prayer, with united heart and voice, to incline Almighty God unto mercy, that He would not suffer those to perish whom He had redeemed by His Blood. May He look down in mercy upon this world, which has indeed sinned much, but which has also suffered much in expiation! And, embracing in His loving-kindness all races and classes of mankind, may He remember His own words: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself" (John XII., 32).

14. As a pledge of the Divine favours, and in token of Our fatherly affection, we lovingly impart to You, Venerable Brethren, and to your Clergy and People, the Apostolic Blessing.

Given at St. Peter's in Rome, the first day of November 1900, in the 23rd year of Our Pontificate.

LEO XIII

Copyright © Libreria Editrice Vaticana

©Copyright - Libreria Editrice Vaticana