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THE FOUR GREAT  
EVILS OF THE DAY

ADAPTED FROM CARDINAL MANNING

BY

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## THE FOUR GREAT EVILS OF THE DAY

“But yet the Son of Man, when He cometh  
(to judgment) shall He find, think you, faith  
on the earth?”  
Luke 18, 8.

In these words is contained God's infallible prediction that in the course of time large masses of mankind will reject and disown the saving truths of Christianity and once more return to paganism, that is, to a mode of living from which God is excluded and in which Christian morality plays no part. Men will so far depart from the rule of the Gospel that they will live a merely natural life, freely indulge their animal passions and make the pleasures of earth the end and aim of their existence.

St. Paul gives us a larger outline of the conditions that will prevail during the time pointed out by our Lord as the age of unbelief, when he writes: “Know also this that in the last days there shall come dangerous times: Men shall be lovers of themselves, covetous, haughty, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, wicked, without affection, without peace, slanderers, incontinent, unmerciful, without kindness, traitors, stubborn, puffed up, and lovers of pleasures more than of God; having an appearance indeed of godliness, but denying the power thereof.” (2 Tim. 3, 1). And: “Now the Spirit (of God) manifestly saith, that in the last times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to spirits of error and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy and having their conscience seared.” (1 Tim. 4, 1.)

And how the supernatural will be scoffed at, is indicated by St. Peter: “In the last days there shall come deceitful scoffers, walking after their own lusts, saying: Where is His (Christ's) promise or His coming?; for since the time that the fathers slept all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.” (2 Pet. 3, 3.)

The gradual rejection of the Christian faith by large portions of mankind is clearly foretold in these few passages. What the necessary result of this will be, is further pointed out by our Lord: “As in the days of Noe so also shall the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking,

marrying and giving in marriage, even till that day in which Noe entered in to the ark, and they knew not until the flood came and took them all away; so also shall the coming of the Son of Man be.....Likewise as it came to pass in the days of Lot: they did eat and drink, they bought and sold, they planted and built, and in the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all, even thus shall it be in the day that the Son of Man shall be revealed.” (Matt. 24, 37; Luke 17, 28.)

In other words, an intensified wordliness and forgetfulness of God shall prevail during the times that shall precede the end of the world. People shall be so intent on the pursuit of the things of this life that they shall completely lose sight of the duty of serving God and of looking to the salvation of their immortal souls.

When our Lord says: “When the Son of Man cometh, do you think He shall find faith on the earth?” He does not imply that His Church will have succumbed to the onslaughts of her enemies and disappeared from the face of the earth, but He gives us to understand that the number of faithful souls will be so small, in comparison with the greater number of unbelievers, that it will appear as if there were no more faith left on earth.

We can trace out four steps in the fulfilment of our Lord’s prediction as to the decay of faith in the world. The first is the revolt of the human intellect from God in the rejection of revealed religion; the second, the revolt of the human will from God in the rejection of the commandments; the third, the revolt of society from God in the adoption of principles of conduct in direct opposition to the will and law of God; and finally the prevalence of that spirit of opposition to God which can only be termed the spirit of Anti-Christ.

## I. THE REVOLT OF THE HUMAN INTELLECT FROM GOD.

In order that man might be in a position to work out his eternal destiny, God was pleased to reveal, that is, make

known, to him all that is necessary for him to believe and to do. Eternal reward can be procured only by such work as God has appointed. Failing to fulfill his duty in this regard, man of his own accord shuts himself out from receiving the share of endless glory appointed for him.

Now it is a common experience that man carries in his heart an inborn inclination to rebel against the authority of his Creator. He resents being subject to Him. This unhappy disposition is one of the baneful effects of original sin. Among other things it manifests itself in a great reluctance and unwillingness to accept the truths of religion as made known by God, while it is ever ready to listen to deceit and error and welcomes false religions as more congenial and flattering to human nature. This is the scriptural **Pride of Life**, which is at the root of all heresy, schism, unbelief, and all other sins against the virtue of faith.

### 1. Heresy.

1. Man presumes to pose as a critic of God's revelation, and to reject those truths which he finds hard to believe, or which he dislikes, or which impose unpleasant duties and obligations on him, e. g. the Blessed Trinity, the Blessed Eucharist, the evil of sin, the necessity of penance, the existence and eternity of hell, etc.

2. But the rejection of any single one of God's truths is destructive of the whole structure of Faith, just as the removal of any one stone from an arch must sooner or later prove ruinous to the entire building which rests on it.

3. From the very beginning of Christianity down to our own day a large number of heresies has sprung up, and large portions of mankind have through them been separated from the Church and lost to her. Heresies like Arianism, Nestorianism, the Greek Schism, Lutheranism, Anglicanism, and the numerous sects of Protestantism, have alienated entire peoples and nations from the unity of the Church of Christ.

4. The rejection of various truths of faith by heretics has by necessity led in the course of time to the complete denial of the whole Christian religion. The last great here-

sy—the so-called Reformation—has paved the way to deism, rationalism, liberalism, atheism, etc.; and finally to absolute unbelief.

## 2. Deism.

1. Deism admits the existence of God, but denies the actuality, and even the possibility, of revelation; that is, of the making known of supernatural truths by God speaking to man.

2. Refusing to accept and to be guided by the light of faith, deists are left to grope in the darkness of religious error. They remain in ignorance of their supernatural destiny and are helpless in their endeavor to lead virtuous lives; for

3. Without the clear instruction of God's truth man can not always distinguish between good and evil; he will often mistake the one for the other; and without grace he can not avoid sin and practice supernatural virtue.

## 3. Rationalism.

1. Rationalism proclaims the supremacy and sufficiency of human reason, and declares it to be the final judge of all truth, both of the natural and of the supernatural order.

2. Hence it does not recognize the obligation of believing divine truths as they are revealed by God and taught by the Church of Christ.

3. Rejecting revelation it necessarily rejects the commandments and the principles of the Gospel; hence it directly induces the spread of immorality.

## 4. Atheism.

1. Atheism denies the very existence of a Supreme Being. According to its teachings the universe and all it contains was not created, but is simply the result of blind chance.

2. Accordingly man exists for himself alone; he is his own master, is not responsible to any authority higher than himself; he is a law unto himself.

3. There are therefore for him no commandments that he is obliged to observe; and he considers himself per-

fectly free to think and act as he pleases. He claims to be responsible to no one for his actions.

4. From this it is evident that atheism opens wide the floodgates of immorality and licentiousness.

### 5. Materialism.

1. Materialism or Monistic Evolution denies the existence of spiritual substance (God, angels, the human soul), and admits the existence of matter and force only.

2. All things that exist in the universe, minerals, plants and animals, man included, are the product of blind and purposeless evolution.

3. Man has slowly evolved from lower forms of life, having attained the highest form so far known on the earth. But he is only an animal, and has no spiritual, much less an immortal soul. Thought and will are nothing else than the products of chemical activity and reaction that go on in his brain and nervous system.

4. Since he has no soul, he ceases to exist when he dies. There is for him no hereafter any more than there is for the beasts of the field. Hence no judgment after death, no eternal reward or punishment, no heaven and no hell. Immortality, the resurrection of the dead, the next life, are all a myth.

5. Man has no free will; what he does he does under compulsion. Hence there is no sin and no virtue. There is no original sin, no Redemption, no Revelation.

6. Materialistic evolution has filtered down into the lowest strata of society by means of the press, literature and secular education. It is taught in nearly all the secular schools of the world, from the highest to the lowest. Thus the rising generations are systematically trained in its teachings. Being destructive of faith and morality, its power of spiritual ruin and devastation is simply beyond all calculation.

### 6. Spiritualism.

1. Spiritualism admits the existence of spiritual beings, and pretends to establish communication with the souls of the dead.

2. It is a form of religion which is founded on the craving, which is natural to every man, of learning the secrets of life after death.

3. Like other religious errors, it promotes irreligion and immorality, as well as physical ills. It is forbidden by the First Commandment, as are all other forms of false worship.

### 7. Indifferentism.

1. One of the natural and necessary results produced by the "war of opinions" of countless contending sects is a very widespread indifference to all religious truth.

2. It adopts maxims like these: "One church is as good as another"; "It does not matter what one believes, just so he does what he thinks is right"; "All religions lead to God, though by different ways" and the like.

3. It does away with Christ's express declaration: "He that believeth not, shall be condemned"; and: "He that believeth not, is already judged."

### 8. Weakened Faith and Liberalism.

1. Owing to unavoidable intimate association of Catholics with heretics and unbelievers in family, social, business and civil relations, many absorb various false and erroneous ideas and opinions, and adopt them as a rule of conduct.

2. In this way they come to compromise and temporize with religious truths and easily yield to the temptations to smooth over and soften down teachings that are hard and unpleasant, as for example, the impossibility of salvation outside the Catholic Church, or, the existence and eternity of hell.

3. They no longer think with the Church, but find fault with her on many points, e. g. the necessity of religious education, the sinfulness of divorce, the indissolubility of marriage, vocation to the religious life and the priestly state, etc.

### 9. Practical Unbelief.

1. The final effect which continual association with heretics, unbelievers and liberal Catholics has on many chil-



dren of the Church is what may be called **Practical Unbelief**. They believe in a fashion, but their faith is sterile. It is not reduced to practice. They live as if they did not believe. Their private, family and social life is not influenced and molded by the spirit of Christ.

2. They accommodate themselves readily to their non-Catholic surroundings. They want to be broad-minded. There is no sense and no fear of sin in their conduct, and they make no attempt to keep aloof from the spirit of worldliness and pleasure, and become examples of Christ-like living.

3. They are more or less ignorant of the life and example of Jesus Christ, and make no attempt to conform their lives to the precepts and maxims of the Gospel.

How the "revolt of the intellect from God" has gained momentum during the last half century, is plainly illustrated by the religious census of the United States. Out of a population of over a hundred million, sixty million profess no religion whatever. They are pagans. What gives this figure a special significance is the fact that by far the greater number of these are descendants of immigrants who were Christians (Catholics and Protestants) at the time of their arrival. A system of secular, God-less education has been a mighty engine for making the revolt of the intellect from God a well-nigh universal thing in our country at least.

## II. THE REVOLT OF THE HUMAN WILL FROM GOD

The inevitable and necessary result of the revolt of the intellect from God by the partial or total rejection of revelation, and by practical unbelief, is the going astray of the human will in the moral order. The human will is known as a blind faculty which in all things follows the guidance of the intellect. When the intellect has been led astray by religious error of any kind, the will is bound to go astray in like manner. Man will no longer be able to avoid evil and do the good required of him. He will follow the lead and promptings of his evil inclinations, and thus

surrender himself a helpless victim to the dominion of sin and vice.

Hence the revolt of the intellect from God brings about a condition which can very appropriately be designated as lawlessness, i. e. the complete setting aside of the law of God in daily life and conduct.

### 1. Lawlessness.

1. Having been despoiled by original sin of his original wonderful endowments of nature and grace, man now finds himself under the tyranny of a host of evil inclinations and unruly passions, which continually clamor for indulgence and satisfaction.

2. Either ignorant of his true destiny or indifferent to it, he becomes impatient under the restraints which the law of God imposes on his conduct; he rejects this law, and declares himself emancipated and free to do as he pleases; he becomes lawless. This lawlessness manifests itself in the prevalence of the scriptural three great lusts: the pride of life, the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh.

### 2. The Pride of Life.

1. Pride is the root of all sin. Its motto is: "Non serviam," "I will not serve." It makes man rebel against all forms of authority: God, religion, the Church; in the home, family and society.

2. In regard to religion it adopts false principles: Man is free to believe what he likes; one religion is as good as another; it does not matter what a man believes, just so he does what he thinks is right, etc.

3. In its relation to obedience it adheres to the false principle: "The ruling and governing powers derive their authority from the consent of the governed." This gradually leads to the rejection of all authority, ecclesiastical as well as civil, divine as well as human. It favors and advocates rebellions and revolutions.

4. All heresies and schisms and all forms of unbelief have their source in this pride of life. Men claim the right to believe what suits their fancy, and to reject what displeases them or imposes unpleasant duties.

5. The pride of life is at the bottom of that spirit of independence from God, and of that exclusion of God's will and law from the actions of men and from the public affairs of nations which characterize the present age and make the total forgetfulness of God one of the great sins of the day.

### 3. The Lust of the Eyes.

1. By the Lust of the Eyes is meant avarice, greed, the inordinate desire for riches, money-madness; the uncurbed craving for the accumulation and possession of the greatest possible amount of this world's goods.

2. It naturally leads to the neglect of religious duties, to dishonesty in business, to injustice, graft, disregard for the rights of the poor and of the laboring classes.

3. On a large scale it leads to unfair competition in business, the crushing out of weaker competitors, to huge combinations, trusts and mergers, to the cornering of commodities, especially those necessary for life, together with arbitrary fixing of prices; to profiteering, frenzied finance, embezzlement of public moneys and properties; and the accumulation of immense profits in times of war at the expense of the blood of millions.

4. In turn, the possession of wealth promotes luxurious and voluptuous living, softness and licentiousness of conduct; revelry and the unrestrained enjoyment of every pleasure and gratification money can procure.

5. To this lust of the eyes must also be traced the growing bitterness and antagonism between Capital and Labor. Capitalists treat laborers as mere machines, paying little or no attention to their bodily and spiritual welfare, and often underpaying them. The laboring classes become exasperated and look for opportunities to throw off their yoke and set themselves free.

### 4. The Lust of the Flesh.

1. By the Lust of the Flesh we understand all the sins condemned by the sixth and the ninth commandments: "Thou shalt not commit adultery," "Thou shalt not covet

thy neighbor's wife." It stands for the illicit enjoyment of the pleasures of the sexual appetite.

2. The rejection of religion and the spread of irreligion and unbelief necessarily bring on a lowering and breaking down of old moral standards, and a decay of esteem for the virtues of modesty, purity and chastity.

3. This decay is hastened by a number of agencies: obscene art and licentious literature, newspapers and magazines retailing filthy crimes and teeming with vile and suggestive illustrations. All these are a mighty factor in the widespread diffusion of immoral ideals and tendencies.

4. By and by lewdness and immorality, which were formerly held more or less in check by a healthy public opinion, begin to show themselves openly—on billboards, in show-windows, in immodest dances and balls, in suggestive movies and theatricals, in immodesty in dress, and the licentious revelries which often accompany public celebrations.

5. The sacredness of the married state is lost sight of; marriage is considered merely as a means of sensual gratification; divorce is sanctioned by the civil law; fornication and adultery are practised extensively and condoned by public opinion.

6. Long established standards of morality disappear rapidly. This is especially true of the young in regard to reserve between the sexes. Young persons, and often mere boys and girls mingle promiscuously and engage in dangerous pastimes and amusements without supervision of any kind. This is bound to lead to the loss of purity and modesty.

7. Habitual attendance of young people, even of small children, at movies in which all sorts of crime, and especially sex-matters are shown, destroys the very roots of virtue in the hearts of thousands even before they have reached their fifteenth year.

8. Many Catholics are drawn into this vortex of moral corruption, so that they sin frequently against the virtues of purity and chastity. Imitating the example set by their

pagan surroundings, young married people refuse to have children for a number of years, or they limit them to one or two; they join in ridiculing those parents who have large families, and the like. Christian ideals are supplanted by pagan ones. The lust of the flesh induces rebellion against the law of God.

### 5. Luxury.

1. As a very natural and necessary result of the prevalence of the three great lusts, people lose sight of the true meaning of life, and surround themselves with every available means of comfort, luxury and pleasure. A mania for pleasure takes possession of them. There is no self-denial in their lives. Self-indulgence is the rule. Pleasure becomes the one purpose of life.

2. This upsets social relations. Parents become unwilling to bring up children; women refuse to attend to housework and the care of the home; hence expenses and waste increase, which in turn has a direct bearing on the "high cost of living."

3. When married and domestic life is not properly regulated, temptations to marital infidelity on the part of both man and wife become very numerous. The door is opened to adultery and other sins against the holiness of marriage, with their attendant misery to the family.

4. Impelled by selfish motives young people, whom God has destined for the married state, refuse to marry. They want to be free to lead an easy-going life of enjoyment and pleasure. They are unwilling to shoulder the duties they owe society.

5. For the same reason many young men and young women, whom God has destined for the religious state, refuse to heed the call. The love of the world and its pleasure chokes and kills the grace of vocation.

6. Many women take up work which was never intended for them by Divine Providence, and which unfits them for the duties of homelife. They prefer to work in stores, factories and offices rather than in the home, because it gives them a large amount of time and money for

amusement and pleasure. In the meantime many men are living in enforced idleness.

7. Two other evil effects spring from this condition. First, the strain which certain kinds of work put on the nervous system impairs the general health of young women, so that many of those who marry are physically unfit to bear children, while the children they bear are often puny and defective. And second, they are often exposed to great dangers to purity and chastity from their co-workers and not rarely from their employers.

8. Another result of the prevalence of the spirit of luxury is the growing aversion for work that is found in so many people. They take a pagan view of it, consider it a disgrace, an unavoidable evil, instead of a means of salvation appointed for them by God. They do not try to sanctify it and make it a means of grace and merit.

9. Honesty, fidelity and reliability disappear. People will do the least amount of work for the most money they can get. There is no attempt at thoroughness and completeness. Waste of time, "loafing on the job," scimping of work, are very common occurrences.

10. The rich lead an idle, soft and sensual life. No thought of self-denial or mortification ever enters into their minds; and they neglect altogether the performance of works of charity and mercy.

11. The poor envy the rich; in their endeavor to imitate them they live above their means, and in this way contract debts which they can not pay.

12. The love of pleasure makes many people abandon the country for the city. Thus, the cities become overcrowded, idleness increases, articles of food become more costly, crimes become more numerous, property and life insecure.

## 6. Mistaken Christianity.

1. Among Catholics there is the danger of mistaking external activity and display for the practice of genuine Christianity. Magnificent churches, elaborate celebrations, flowery sermons, select music, etc., may flatter the senses,

but if the heart remains unconverted, nothing is gained.

2. Many fail in the essentials of true religion: avoidance of sin, flight of worldliness, practice of virtue, sanctification of daily life, and especially the exercise of charity towards the needy and poor.

3. Great external activity may co-exist with great internal sinfulness. The "better class Catholics" are often abominable sinners in the sight of God.

#### 7. Compromise.

1. Many try to do the impossible, namely to serve God and the world at the same time.

2. In many there is an absence of mortification of the intellect, which manifests itself in indiscriminate reading, especially of books and articles which must produce temptations against faith and purity.

3. Often there is a readiness to carp at the Church for making certain laws of conduct: e. g. in regard to secret societies, forbidden books, mixed marriages, secular education. There is also a tendency to be ashamed of one's religion and to hide it before others.

### III. THE REVOLT OF SOCIETY FROM GOD.

It has been shown in the foregoing that man's will must of necessity go astray in the moral order when the intellect has been blinded by the loss of the light of revealed religion. This has actually taken place in the world. At first only a few minds were bold enough to profess their unbelief openly; but in the course of time a band of followers gathered around them, which slowly kept on growing larger and larger. This continued until whole communities, and in some cases entire nations, became involved in the loss of the true faith, and officially renounced their submission to the Church of Christ.

While this went on, ideals underwent a radical change. Christian ideals were gradually displaced by un-Christian ones; pagan views of life and its destiny began to prevail once more in the world. By and by men without faith and without Christian principles gained the ascendancy in

public life and controlled public affairs—writers of books, editors of newspapers and periodicals, professors, doctors, lawyers, politicians, statesmen, law-makers, etc., and these wielded a powerful influence and created a new form of public opinion which is diametrically and irreconcilably opposed to the principles of the Gospel and the Christian religion. A new paganism, whose chief characteristics are pure secularism and naturalism and a complete exclusion of God from the affairs of men, has spread over the so-called civilized world, and is plunging it into an abyss of immorality, which threatens its very existence.

In this way it has come about that in place of the Ten Commandments and the Maxims of the Gospel, society adheres to a code of morality, which is in direct opposition to the divine law. In other words, we have the **revolt of society from God.**

### 1. False Principles.

1. In keeping with the above we find that most modern nations, governments and legislatures have rejected Christian principles and adopted false ones, which must in the end spell ruin to the people. Some of these are the following:

2. The civil society of man is the fountain and origin of all right, and can be limited by no other authority.

3. The governing powers derive their authority from the consent of the governed.

4. In conflicts between the spiritual and civil authorities, the civil authority is supreme and must determine.

5. Education belongs to the state as being what is called a matter of civil competence, and ought to be strictly secular, that is, without any kind of religious instruction.

6. Kings and princes (and other rulers) are exempt from ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

7. The State ought to be separated from the Church and the Church from the State.

### 2. Correct Principles.

1. Human society is created by God. He created the individual, instituted the family and the political order.



All ruling powers derive their authority from Him.

2. There are three great principles by which all forms of society must be governed: a) Authority which rules; b) Obedience by which the governed must obey; and c) Equal and reciprocal justice.

3. Since revolutions are the result of violations of these principles, all revolutions are the offspring of sin.

4. The Ten Commandments apply to all men, not only individually, but also collectively. Hence the family and the state are subject to the law of God.

5. The State is subject to the Church in all things spiritual.

### **3. Effects of Application of Correct Principles.**

1. Christianity gradually transformed the ancient pagan society and elevated it to a high level of civilization.

2. It taught respect for authority, insisted on justice in rulers, abolished slavery, taught the nobility of labor, elevated womanhood and established Christian morality and thus made for the suppression of crime.

3. The laws of the various nations were drawn up in conformity with the Ten Commandments; and justice was administered according to Christian principles and ideals. A high standard of public morality was thus created.

4. In case of encroachment of the governing powers on the rights of the governed, or vice versa, the authority of the Church could be invoked to adjust the difficulties. In this way society could be preserved from tyranny on the one hand, and from the horrors of rebellion and revolution on the other.

### **4. Effects of Application of False Principles.**

1. The religious revolution of the sixteenth century (wrongly called Reformation), marks the beginning of a slow, but steady, return to paganism, in consequence of the rejection of true, and the adoption of false, principles in civil and political life.

2. One by one nations that were once Christian have rejected the true faith and have officially renounced their allegiance to the Catholic Church.

3. The doctrine of the absolutism of the State was accepted and applied to the affairs of men. The principle that the State is for the individual, and not the individual for the State, was ignored.

4. There arose an exaggeration of the Rights of Man. Along with that the Rights of God and the Duties of Man towards God were ignored. The growing insistence on the Rights of Woman, and her intrusion into political life, to the loss of her reserve and modesty, and frequently to the neglect of her duties in the home, belong to this phase of the revolt of society from God.

5. The State arrogated to itself the exclusive right of educating the young without regard to the rights of the parents. It established compulsory education, and this compulsory education was made strictly secular, that is, religion was excluded absolutely.

6. In this way millions of young people were sent out into the world year after year, completely devoid of the knowledge of God and His holy law. In two or three generations Christianity disappeared entirely and a new form of paganism has taken its place.

7. As a necessary result of the removal of the restraints, which religion puts on the passions of men, we find the modern world fast lapsing into the depths of moral degradation. Crimes of all kinds multiply at an alarming rate; property and life are insecure; courts of justice become a travesty; trials are an occasion of perjury and false oaths and of heavy expense to the state.

8. Legal sanction is given to what is directly opposed to the divine law. The state grants divorce, declares adulterous unions lawful, though it has no more right to do this than it has to sanction arson and murder.

9. Public sentiment is created in favor of immoral practices, such as the unrestrained mingling of the sexes, trial marriages, the various practices by which race-suicide is accomplished, sterilization of defectives and criminals, euthanasia, etc.

10. To all this we must add that the materialistic view

which a large number of people take of life has in recent years made them pleasure-mad. In their mania for enjoyment they observe no moderation, nor do they stop at forbidden and immoral pleasures. Whatever can be indulged in is considered perfectly lawful.

11. Among the nations there is developed a spirit of exaggerated nationalism. This in turn begets intensified rivalries and hatreds among them, threatening the very existence of the weaker ones.

12. In the absence of an acknowledged arbiter and judge (such as the Holy Father is best fitted to be), wars are not easily averted, and when they do break out they are carried on with a ferocity and brutality that is almost unbelievable.

13. Lastly, in the absence of religion, right does not triumph over might, but might tramples right into the dust.

In this way it has actually come about that the revolt of society from God has introduced into the modern world a state of affairs which fills thinking men with alarm in regard to the future. Family life is more and more disrupted, dishonesty and corruption in private and public are increasing, youthful depravity is growing alarmingly, so that the outlook for the next generation is gloomy indeed.

The nations have sowed the whirlwind and are now beginning to reap the storm.

#### IV. THE SPIRIT OF ANTI-CHRIST

Christ foretold that a continuous war would always be in progress between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan; between the Church and the "gates of hell"; and between the spirit of God and the spirit of the world. The spirit of the world is nothing else than the spirit of Anti-Christ, the great enemy and opponent of Christ.

The word **Anti-Christ** has a twofold meaning; first it stands for the spirit of opposition and enmity against the Church of God as we find it in every age and every

country; and second, it denotes the violent persecutor who, according to prophecy, shall appear in the world before the last judgment.

According to the predictions of St. Paul and St. John, he will command a very large following, and will exercise great power and wage cruel persecutions against the faithful members of the Church.

What deserves to be specially noted about his coming is the fact that he will find a hearty welcome when he does appear. He will come when the apostasy of mankind from God shall have progressed so far that it will be easy for him to gather them under his banner of rebellion against all that is divine. A long preparation will have preceded his coming. An extended period of religious decay will have disposed the masses for a favorable reception of this enemy of God and the Church. We must always bear in mind that no one man could, single-handed and in the short space of a life-time, gain such an ascendancy over the minds of men as to induce them to reject the true faith and abandon the Church in such great numbers as shall come to pass under his rule. The way will have been prepared, and he will merely be the man of the opportune hour.

St. John writes: "As you have heard that Anti-Christ cometh; even now there are become many Anti-Christis." In a certain sense every teacher of false religions is an Anti-Christ, and contributes towards promoting that spirit of opposition to God's truth which will culminate in the final great apostasy.

St. Paul represents the Anti-Christ as coming "according to the working of Satan, in all power and signs and lying wonders,—and in all seduction of iniquity to them that perish," and then he assigns the reason—in punishment of their refusal to receive and profit by the grace of salvation that was offered them — "because they received not the love of the Truth, that they might be saved. Therefore God shall send them the operation of error, to believe lying."

Do we not see the "operation of error," in the modern system of God-less and seëular education, by which millions of souls are yearly added to the vast army of unbelievers; and in the materialistic philosophy of life, by which the masses are taught that they are nothing more than animals with no more than an animal destiny?

The various ways in which the spirit of Anti-Christ manifests itself in the world has been sufficiently explained in the foregoing pages; still, the following points must be added:

### **1. Impatience Of All Revealed Religion.**

1. Large numbers of men are impatient of every kind of religious restraint. They would be free to belong to any religion as they are to belong to any political party of their choice.

2. They prate much about "independent religion" and "independent morality," little thinking that such a thing is just as impossible as "independent arithmetic" or "independent laws of health."

### **2. Opposition And Enmity Towards The Church**

1. A bitter enmity is fostered against the Church. All manner of lies, false statements and calumnies have in every age been industriously spread against her.

2. These are perpetuated by having been introduced into works of history and into textbooks that are used by the rising generations. Though refuted times without number, they are re-stated again and again and kept before the public by those who speak and lecture against the Church.

3. Catholic doctrines, devotions and practices are mis-stated, distorted, and held up to ridicule and scorn.

4. Anti-Catholic societies and organizations are tireless in promoting prejudice and fostering bigotry by hiring lecturers, preachers, ex-priests and ex-nuns to speak against her, and by freely distributing slanderous literature among the people.

5. The various Protestant sects, always at war with

one another as to doctrine, are united when there is question of calumniating and fighting the Church.

### 3. Opposition And Enmity Towards The Papacy.

1. The Papacy is the very special object of the hatred of the "gates of hell." They never cease trying to destroy it. They resort to lies for the purpose of creating public sentiment against it; they resort to spoliation of ecclesiastical domain; they try to hinder the free communication of the Pope with his spiritual subjects throughout the world, etc.

2. One of the avowed aims of Freemasonry is the destruction and abolition of the papal power.

### 4. Enmity Towards The Religious Life.

1. Men may embrace any kind of religion or practise any form of religious worship, no matter how fantastic or fanatic, and no one will trouble himself about it; but persons who renounce the world to embrace the life of the Evangelical Counsels often encounter the most violent opposition and persecution.

2. This enmity for the life of the Counsels also shows itself in the countless books and pamphlets that are full of lies and calumnies about religious communities; and especially in the persecutions which are at different times waged against them, to the extent even of putting religious men and women to death or exiling them as though they were the worst of criminals.

### 5. Enmity Towards The Priesthood.

1. Finally, there is the world's hatred against the priesthood. As our Lord was hated, persecuted and put to death, so also are the bishops and priests of His Church subjected to the same fate.

2. The enmity of the world is especially directed against the Confessional and the Altar. It would destroy every confessional and every altar if it could. When civil authorities forbid processions, or make the procuring of altar-wine difficult, we have a few of the manifestations of this enmity.

### Conclusion.

Jesus Christ came into the world to save it by His Doctrine, His Redemption and His Grace, which is to be communicated to the souls of men in His Church by means of the Sacraments.

The remedies which the heavenly Physician offers to men are infallible in their cure, provided they accept and apply them as He has directed. Outside the remedies He has prepared there are no others that can heal the festering wounds inflicted on mankind by the evil of sin. No human legislation, no matter how carefully devised, can take the place of the Ten Commandments; nor can the most ingenious system of philosophy replace the precepts, maxims and counsels proclaimed by the Saviour of the world in the Sermon on the Mount.

Those who deliberately reject these remedies as offered them by divine wisdom and goodness render themselves guilty of a very serious and disastrous sin, for they despise and spurn God's greatest and best gifts. He could not have given them better ones. Their sin is a sin against the Holy Ghost—a sin far greater in its malice and more deserving of punishment than are the sins of the flesh. He who rejects the known truth is more guilty in the sight of God than is the pagan to whom the truth has never been made known.

The same is true of nations and peoples. Nations that have apostatised and have renounced their allegiance to the Church are guilty of an enormous sin, and consequently must expect that their punishment will be proportionately great. As their sin is greater, so also must be its punishment. The parable of the return of the seven devils applies to such nations no less than it applies to individuals. The one devil that possessed nations, namely, paganism, was cast out by the Church when she evangelized and civilized them in compliance with Christ's command: Go and teach all nations! They were made Christian, and enjoyed the blessings of the Redemption. But for the last four hundred years, and especially during the last

century, the devil has come back with seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and has succeeded in regaining possession of a large portion of the world from which he has been dislodged by the power of the Church. "And the last state of those nations shall become worse than the first." They will fall below the level of pagan morality.

This will go a great way to explain how it will come about, as our Lord plainly foretells, that towards the end of the world "iniquity shall abound to such an extent that the charity of many shall grow cold," and that "there shall be great tribulation such as hath not been from the beginning of the world, nor shall be," a time marked by so much misery and suffering, that "if those days were not shortened, no flesh should be saved."

If we inquire into the reasons why these things will take place, we can see no other than this: The willful rejection of God's truths must naturally end in an intensified selfishness, in greed for the things of earth, and in the riotous enjoyment of the pleasures of the flesh. The dictates of the two fundamental virtues of justice and charity will be utterly ignored, so that man will trample on his fellowman, and nation will rise against nation in the struggle for the possession of the material goods of this world.

There is then no salvation for the world except in a return to Jesus Christ and to His Church. If the nations can be induced to take this step, their welfare is assured; if they refuse to repent and place themselves again under the sovereignty of Christ, nothing is in sight for them except the fulfillment of the sad predictions of the Saviour: "There shall be great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world, until now, neither shall be. And unless these days had been shortened, no flesh should be saved; but for the sake of the elect, those days shall be shortened." (Matt. 24, 21).