

Boston University

OpenBU

<http://open.bu.edu>

Boston University Theses & Dissertations

STH Theses and Dissertations (pre-2014)

1893

Papal evolution

<https://hdl.handle.net/2144/47348>

Downloaded from DSpace Repository, DSpace Institution's institutional repository

Papal Evolution.

There has always been in the Roman Catholic Church two tendencies, one of which has laid emphasis on the word Roman, the other on the word Catholic. The one school has inherited the imperial ambition of ancient Rome; as Rome declined it has sought to make the Church succeed to her power, and to superimpose her authority over the nations that once the Empire had ruled.

The other tendency in the Church has been toward spiritual, rather than temporal supremacy — for unity of faith and purpose, rather than imperialism. Its aim has been toward catholicity, rather than Romanism.

The conflict between these two tendencies has made up a large part of

Roman Catholic history... With occasional ascendencies of the more liberal party, the general drift of the church has been in the opposite direction—that of exalted claims to both spiritual and temporal supremacy. Even since the temporal power of the Pope has been taken away from him, and after the repeated reverses of the Romanist party in the expulsion of the Jesuits from one country after another, these claims have not been given up or modified, but rather reiterated and still further advanced.

Romanism may be said to have reached its culmination when the Vatican Council of 1870 declared the Pope to be infallible in all matters of faith and morals.

To many, this action seemed to set the seal on all possibility of reform in the Romish Church.

Dean Stanley said at the time, "I can see but one way to bring about a real

"And widespread reform in the Latin Church

"and that is by having a liberal Pope."

At that time, under existing circumstances, even such a possibility as this seemed beyond all human probability.

But the seemingly impossible has come to pass

and the strange anomaly of a liberal Pope has been actually realized in the person of Leo XIII.

The reforms which he, and those in sympathy with him, have sought to introduce in the Roman Church, and the broad and liberal spirit which has characterized his pontificate will constitute the content of the present paper.

To fully appreciate the significance of recent events indicative of Leo's policy, we would do well to consider, first, the condition of affairs in the Roman Catholic Church under his immediate predecessors in the pontifical chair.

Under Pius IX, Ultramontanism had

reached its highest point. He was a man who, both in belief and spirit, belonged to the Middle Ages rather than to the Nineteenth Century. How far his views were from harmonizing with the spirit of the age in which he lived, may be seen in the two new dogmas promulgated by him, that of the immaculate conception of the Virgin, (Dec. 8, 1854), and that of the infallibility of the Pope (Vatican Council of 1870).

Still more suggestive of Medieval ecclesiasticism, is his famous Syllabus of Dec. 8, 1864. In this encyclical, he condemned as heretical the ideas of liberty of the conscience, liberty of the press, the independence of the secular government from the ecclesiastical, the equality of laymen and the clergy before the law, the right of a people to make their own laws and elect their own magistrates, — in short, in these

eighty-four theses, he condemns as heretical all the leading ideas of modern civilization.

Not only was he at variance with the spirit of his time in his views, but in methods of administration he showed a lack of prudence and diplomatic art which brought him into conflict with nearly every European power. At the time of his death (Feb 3, 1878), Pius IX was in rupture or in strained relations with every liberal government in Christendom, republican or monarchy, Catholic or Protestant.

The present Pope, Leo XIII, has brought a different spirit to the Papal See. He is a statesman and a diplomat rather than an ecclesiastic. Perceiving the growing power of republican institutions and the waning influence of everything that savors of absolutism, he has steadily and persistently, since his accession

to the pontifical office, sought to bring the Church into harmony with an age whose dominant note is democracy. And he has done this, not only in practical antagonism to the autocratic declarations of his predecessors, but often in the face of persistent and bitter opposition from his subordinate ecclesiastics.

Seeking to make the Church Catholic rather than Roman, he has steadily pursued a policy whose object is not an imperial supremacy for Rome, but the loyalty and enthusiastic support of the common people. He has always been ready to recognize varieties of national temperament and need, to allow differences in method under varying conditions, and to permit each of the great national churches to deal with its own problems in its own way, so long as they were bound together by a common loyalty to the same spiritual head.

Following in the line of this broad policy, he has vastly increased the efficiency of the Church, and relieved it of many of the embarrassments brought upon it by the mistaken policy of his predecessors.

In Germany he has by careful diplomacy overcome the antagonism excited by the course of Pius IX.

In France, he has been the means of bringing about a reconciliation between the Church and the Republic. In Ireland, he has won the love of the people by his vigorous support of home rule; in England, by his earnest espousal of the cause of labor.

And he has so far recognized the spirit of democracy in America as to make of it practically an American Catholic Church. Today, not only are all Christian governments in friendly relations with the Papal See, but even the Grand Turk and the Emperor of China are bent on showing

him favor. At the Pope's jubilee a few years ago, the tiara he wore was a gift of the Sultan, and some of the other most gorgeous insignia were presents from the schismatic Czar of Russia, the Protestant Queen of England, and the heretical Emperor of Germany.

In his recognition of the practical and social questions of the day, Leo has also shown a great appreciation of the demands of the age, and has sought in every possible way to meet them.

In a word, Leo XIII stands to-day as a representative of the broadest and most catholic element in the Latin Church, the wing of the Church that in the past has included such men as Augustine, Fenelon and Cardinal Newman, and represented today, in our own country, by such men as Archbishops Ireland and Keene, Cardinal Gibbons, and Dr. McGlynn.

The Roman Catholic Church is, without doubt, the most conservative body that has ever existed in the world's history. Even under the leadership of such men as we have named, progress must be necessarily slow and by almost insensible gradations. There are many reasons for this immobility. Large bodies always move slowly, and this must be especially true of such an unwieldy organization as the Roman hierarchy, made up as it is of every land and people on the face of the earth, of men differing widely in temperament, in customs, and in traditions, and separated by conditions that vary all the way from semi-savagery to the most enlightened civilization. It is obvious that progress in one favorable locality would not necessarily affect the general body of the Church, and that great reforms would require, perhaps, centuries to permeate the entire

mass of the organization.

Another reason for the slowness of papal evolution is the traditional spirit that rules the church. In its ecclesiasticism, in its government, in its doctrine and practice, it belongs to the Middle Ages, and these peculiarities have become so interwoven with the fibre of the organism as to resist any progressive influence.

The bridling of the individual conscience, and the discouragement of freedom of thought and speech have also exerted a benumbing influence on intellectual progress in the church.

But in spite of all these preventing influences, it would be strange, indeed, if even such a rigid organization as the Roman Catholic Church could live through such an age of progress as the Nineteenth Century and be unaffected by its spirit. It is one of the fund-

amental laws of development that an organization, in order to maintain its existence in the struggle for life, must keep itself continually in correspondence with its environment.

Human organizations and institutions are no exception to this rule. They must develop along the lines marked out for them by the changing conditions of each new age, or failing to do this, they must give way to other institutions which meet these conditions.

No better illustration of this principle can be found than in the failure of Jesuitism to meet the demands of the age, and in the consequent developments of recent Roman Catholic history growing out of the effort to bring the Church into harmony with these new conditions.

In an address delivered in New York last November, Dr. McGlynn made the prediction that "in another generation" the bitterest opponents of the Catholic

a corresponding loss of power to the church

The past five years have been especially rich in indications of this new spirit in Roman Catholicism. We select a few of the more important of them for special consideration:

1. The Labor Problem

No church has had to face this problem so directly as the Roman Catholic Church has had to do. The spirit in which it has been met is seen in the declaration of Leo XIII that "some remedy must be found and quickly found for the misery and wretchedness which press so heavily on a large majority of the very poor."

In the hope of alleviating in some degree the conditions of labor, the Pope has recently issued an encyclical on this question in which he takes advanced ground, advocating arbitration in labor difficulties, associations of working men

for mutual assistance, protection of the state to both capital and labor, and mutual cooperation and sympathy between employer and employee.

While, perhaps, no new ground is taken in this encyclical, and no new measures are suggested to meet the difficulties of the problem, still the fact that this question has been made the subject of special consideration by the Pope shows that the Church is fully alive to the needs of the hour.

The Pope has also shown himself to be the friend of the wage-earner in many ways, and the same spirit has animated many of those in authority in the Church.

In the great strike two years ago among the London dockmen, no influence had more to do with bringing about an amicable settlement than that of Cardinal Manning.

In our own country the same sympathy

with the laboring classes has been displayed in the course of Cardinal Gibbons, whose interposition has secured the papal recognition of the Knights of Labor, and whose identification with the interests of the working-men has been frankly avowed.

2. Recognition of Republicanism.

The Roman Church in its own government has always upheld the principles of absolutism, and it is not strange, therefore, that in all its history, its influence has been thrown in that direction, to the disparagement of all liberal movements.

Numerous facts in history might be cited in proof of this statement.

A disposition lately shown to recognize existing institutions is therefore of the deepest significance as an expression of the present policy of

the church. Leo XIII has repeatedly given expression to his views that "any form of government is good, provided it tends to further public welfare," and his whole course in relation to the two great republics of France and the United States has been in accord with this view.

The recognition of republicanism in France is worthy of special mention. Hitherto, the Church in France has refused to recognize the Republic as a legitimate government. Less than five years ago the Ultramontane University of Paris was declaring that the Republic was the Beast of the Apocalypse, and that "between the Republic and the Church there could be only a war to the death, which could end only by the disappearance of one or the other from the French soil." When, therefore, the Pope issued his encyc-

lical of February 1892 to the French clergy, it threw consternation into the ranks of the Ultramontanes. In it, he distinctly favored republican institutions in general, and required the Church in France to recognize and reconcile itself to the existing government.

This action of the Pope aroused for a time considerable opposition among the higher dignitaries of the French Church, who are in slight sympathy with the present progressive policy of the Vatican, but in the end, the bishops were compelled to submit.

We can scarcely, at this time, estimate the importance of this action, but in its striking contrast with the past history of the Church, it is without doubt a bold step towards liberty and progress on the part of the Pope.

3. The appointment by the Pope of Mon-

Signor Satolli as a permanent represent-
ative of the Vatican in the United States
is also an illustration of the prog-
ressive character of Leo's administra-
tion.

Satolli has been sent by the Pope to this country as Apostolic Delegate, at first, only with a view to the settlement of difficulties that had arisen in the American Church - notably, the school question, and the McGlynn case. His decisions having been found fault with, and an attempt having been made to have him recalled, the Pope replied by making the office of Apostolic Delegate permanent, and appointed Monsignor Satolli as the first to fill it.

While this act does not in any way take the supervision of the church in America out of the hands of the Propaganda, it does insure for the future the settlement of questions by a court

sitting in this country, and one, therefore, able to examine all questions from an American point of view. --- This practically, though not formally, creates an American Catholic Church. While Rome preserves her spiritual supremacy, the church in America is to be allowed to use methods in harmony with American life and institutions.

We believe that this step means a larger life for the Catholic Church in this country, and the fact that Monsignor Satolli has from the first allied himself with the leaders of the progressive wing of the American Church is equally significant as indicating the direction in which this larger liberty is to tend.

4. The McGlynn Case.

This case is specially worthy of

note on account of the great notoriety it has attained, and the wide discussion it has provoked both in and out of the Church.

About a year ago Father McGlynn, a parish priest in New York City, was removed from his church by Archbishop Corrigan, for sustaining Henry George's doctrine that land is not properly a subject of private ownership.

Afterwards, he was excommunicated because, when summoned he refused to go to Rome.

His case was finally left to the decision of the Pope's Legate, Monsignor Satolli, who after an examination of the facts, restored him to his priestly office, without requiring any retraction of his economic opinions.

In view of the active partizan nature of Dr. McGlynn's course both before and after his excommunication, and of his severe criticism of his re-

ecclesiastical superiors - even of the Holy Father himself, - this action of Satolli may be taken as an indication of increased liberty of thought and speech in the Church.

5. Cooperation with Protestants.

We have already noted the friendly relations that have been established between the Vatican and the Protestant powers of Europe, during the pontificate of Leo XIII.

The same spirit is beginning to manifest itself elsewhere in a willingness to overlook differences of creed and practice, and to cooperate with Protestants in charities and moral reforms.

While it is too soon to expect many indications that the mutual prejudices of centuries have been overcome, still there are not wanting instances that show that this ancient bigotry has begun to give way.

An example of this may be seen

in the recent union of the churches of East End Pittsburgh for systematic parish work. Among the Christian ministers thus associated together is a Roman Catholic priest.

Another step in this direction was recently taken by the House of the Good Shepherd in Washington, D. C., an institution owned and controlled by Roman Catholics, in the election of Dr. Wm. A. Bartlett, pastor of a Presbyterian Church of that city, to a place on its Board of Direction. This was done, too, with the approbation of Cardinal Gibbons, in whose diocese the Home is located.

Archbishop Ireland, also, has always been a warm advocate of pacific and friendly relations with Protestants, and has proved his sincerity by acting as president of the Law and Order League of St. Paul, and, with other Catholic clergy, cooperating with Protestants in labor and temperance reforms.

6. The Bible among the Laity

Hitherto the Bible has been to a great extent a closed book to the laity of the Roman Church, and there is no more remarkable indication of the new attitude of the Church than the disposition lately shown in a number of instances to encourage, rather restrict the use of the Bible.

At least two prominent Catholic periodicals have recently expressed a willingness to cooperate with the American Bible Society in the distribution of Bibles among Roman Catholics.

The subject of Bible study has been made the occasion of the last encyclical of the Pope, in which he urges on all Catholics a more thorough study of the Scriptures, and especially, upon the priesthood, he urges such a study of the Bible as will enable the Church in its instruction to keep abreast of schol-

only research and criticism

In Italy, Sonzogno, a wealthy Italian, is with the Pope's consent printing the Bible in leaflets, with illustrations and brief commentaries for the common people.

The contrast between this and the previous attitude of the Church with reference to the Bible is so striking as to need no comment.

7. The School Question.

The recent controversy between the progressive and the reactionary parties in the Catholic Church on the school question, and the triumph of the liberal party furnishes another illustration of the new attitude of the Church.

The position of the Roman Catholic Church in this country on the subject of education, hitherto, is too well known to require an extended review. Assuming that education belongs to the Church rather

than to the State, the hierarchy has persistently upheld the parochial school system as opposed to the Public Schools, and has sought to secure a share of the public funds to support the same. Catholic children have been allowed to attend the public schools only in places where the parochial schools could not be supported, or were not far enough advanced in their instruction to meet the demand; and those who disobeyed this rule were denied the sacraments of the church.

The history of the present advance movement is rather a complex one. The difficulties under which the church has labored in attempting to educate Catholic children have brought about finally some endeavors at compromise with the public school system. For nearly eighteen years there has been at Poughkeepsie, N. Y., a parochial school, which has been under the control of the city,

and supported by the city. Recent attempts of a similar nature have been made at Stillwater and Faribault, Minn., in both of which instances the parochial schools have, with the consent of the Archbishop of the Diocese, been turned over to the control of the city, the only difference between them and the public schools being in the retaining of the Catholic teachers.

Of these instances, the Faribault experiment is best known from the bitter controversy which has been aroused with reference to it, the two leaders being Archbishop Ireland, in whose diocese Faribault is located, and Archbishop Corrigan of New York. The outcome of this particular controversy is important, not so much for the immediate result accomplished, but because it has shown so plainly the great conflict going on within the Church. It has

brought out in many cases opinions of leading men in the Catholic Church which are in harmony with the claim of Protestantism that education belongs to the State rather than to the Church. In his endorsement of the Fairbank experiment the Pope has placed himself clearly on the side of the American party in this country, just as he has placed himself on the side of the republican party within the Catholic Church in France. By this action, he practically, though not formally, reverses the attitude which has previously been taken by Roman Catholic ecclesiastics, and sanctions, if he does not commend, that public school system which events are proving to be as dear to some of our Catholic citizens as to Protestants.

8. Liberalism in Doctrine.

On matters of doctrine, progress is obviously very difficult to measure. The

data for noting any development in this respect lie for the most part below the surface, and can be judged only as they manifest themselves in action. It is of course, useless to expect any formal retraction of the dogmas peculiar to Romanism.

The difficulties which have met the Presbyterian Church in an attempt to modify even slightly its standards of doctrine, would convince us that in so conservative a body as the Roman hierarchy, a formal change of doctrine would be almost impossible.

But there is abundant evidence in recent years that many of the objectionable dogmas, as well as practices, of the Romish Church are believed in only in a formal way by ^{intelligent} classes; and this has been accompanied by a corresponding emphasis upon the essential doctrines of Christianity, with the effect of bringing Catholicism closer to the religious consciousness.

ness of the age. Indeed, we believe that the whole spirit of liberalism which has distinguished the administration of Leo XIII, is the outgrowth of this softening of the hard dogmas of Romanism. Life and faith reciprocally affect each other. A change in one indicates a corresponding development in the other. The attempt to meet the demands of a new age of progress shows, consciously or unconsciously, the need of a larger faith, and the dogma that fails in this practical test, while it may not be formally resigned, soon becomes a dead letter.

This has been the case to a very large extent with the great dogma of Papal Infallibility. One has but to read the labored attempts of Roman Catholic writers to explain the inconsistencies of this dogma, to see the slight hold it has upon real life and faith.

Most of them practically explain away the infallibility altogether, or else so limit the claim as to make it mean nothing.

If anything more were needed to show the desecration of this doctrine to-day, it would be the course of the present Pope in repudiating again and again the policy of his predecessors in the Papal See.

9. In practical religious work, the same forward movement is being felt. Compare the missionary enterprises of former periods with the work of Roman Catholic religious workers to-day, and the difference will be apparent. Something more is now aimed at than a mere formal assent to a creed. The great saving truths of Christianity are emphasized as never before. The sermon is becoming more prominent in worship, more of the vernacular is employed in the service, a preaching of Christ

unselfish, pure, and simple, is more frequent. In Italy, the zealous Franciscan monk, Padre Agostino da Montefeltro is filling the great cathedrals by preaching the simple gospel. The wonderful power wielded by Dr. McGlynn over his large audiences of laboring men in New York is not so much his masterly exposition of his economic views, as the presentation to the people of the Christ of the Gospels, and of God as the Father of all men.

10. On the Temperance question, many earnest workers are to be found in the ranks of the Catholics. Owing largely to the character of their membership, progress along this line has been slow, but a number of Catholic journals have lately taken up the issue, and many of the most prominent clergy — notably Archbishop Ireland, of St. Paul — have taken an advanced position on the question.

Roman Catholic Total Abstinence Societies are becoming common, and there is every reason to believe that the Church is rapidly coming into line with other Christian churches on this question.

Other facts that indicate the new spirit in the Church are, the advanced position taken on the latter question, the quietus put upon the so-called Cahenly movement, the inauguration of summer schools on the plan of Chautauqua, the formation of Young Men's Societies, and the encouragement of free discussion, in some cases of subjects upon which formerly the Church reserved the exclusive right to pronounce.

There are two standpoints from which the events and facts which have been quoted may be viewed, and our interpretation of their meaning will vary in accordance with the view we take. Indiscrimin-

enulogy and indiscriminate condemnation are alike easy, and a discriminating judgement is always difficult.

If we are to look at the Church of to-day as the lineal descendant of the Church of the Middle Ages, inheriting the same bigotry, the same love of power, the same unrelenting spirit, our view of the recent changes of policy will be colored by this medium through which we look.

To those who would take this view, the changes of attitude of the Roman Church to-day are only apparent, and not real.

What would seem to be concessions made to the spirit of a progressive age, are really only diplomatic moves made for the sake of still further advancing the claims of the hierarchy.

Every move, then, must be looked upon with suspicion, and we are not to be thrown off our guard by any apparent concessions.

We believe this to be a one-sided and unfair view. The Roman Catholic Church of to-day is not the Church of the 15th Century any more than the Presbyterian Church is the Church of Calvin. An impartial judgement of either must take into account the changed conditions of the present age, and it is unfair to bring the spirit of an age of bigotry and persecution into our estimate of events of to-day.

We believe that the true attitude from which to measure the Catholic Church of to-day is that which looks upon it, not as the Modern Babylon, the Beast of the Apocalypse, the Antichrist, but as a branch of the great Church of Christ. The stream which was pure and clear at its source back in the early Church of the 1st Century has become foul with the impurities of Pagan superstition, as it has flowed down through the Middle

Ages; but it is still a divine stream for all that, and because of the inherent strength and power of Christianity which it still retains, the good in Roman Catholicism will yet triumph over the evil. The age of freedom in which we live is giving to the Church the opportunity of throwing away the accumulated rubbish of the centuries, and of reaching out into the larger and purer life into which the other branches of the Church of Christ, more highly favored, have preceded her.

Interpreting recent history in this light, we believe that the Roman Catholic Church is, in the Providence of God, beginning to cast off the Paganism of the Dark Ages, while it retains the inspiration of the Christ spirit, which gave it its early power. And this spirit so long quenched through centuries of superstition and prej-