



THE MARGINALIZATION OF THE CHURCH (L'Emarginazione della Chiesa)

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From "Il Dovero Dell'Ortodossia"

The destruction of the moral and spiritual institutions continues. All this seems to be happening according to a precise and preordained plan. Now, at least in our Italian environment, it is the time of the Concordat. It is not at issue whether a Concordat should be good for all centuries. Centuries change and so change Concordats; what is at issue is whether the Church is to make, or have any.

What do they want? They want to relegate the Church to the margin of civil society. That the secularists would be looking forward to this comes as no wonder. But they are not alone. There are also others to want a Church without any recognition, completely privatized, ignored, lacerated, ragged, and hungry, with no dignity and decorum. The attack is against the public figure of the Church, and it had long been expected, as the attempted strain of the Canon Law had long been actuated. The first attempt is linked to the second.

All this, when Catholics are involved, is an error and could be worse. In fact:

1. Revelation, whose custody and Magisterium are entrusted to the Church, is a public fact and it is destined to humanity. God is the creator and his affairs objectively affect in full right man's affairs. That Christ had prophesized struggles and persecutions of all kinds regards man's sin; but it does not in the least undermine the right of the divine Revelator. The consequences of all this are clear. The human order must make sufficient room for an institution of divine origin. To say the contrary one must negate God and Revelation. For communities and men, who are to find themselves «alone» to face the ineluctable death, it is far too dangerous
2. The divine Founder has instituted the Church as a society, and a visible one. She cannot and must not replace or contradict unjustly the civil society, but has her space by positive divine right. The visibility of the Church in her hierarchical order, in her cult, in her host of relations, implies some contacts. Any contact ends up, at least tacitly, into an agreement, in a tolerance more or less reciprocal, into a conflict. To deny the public character of the Church, notwithstanding that it would be denying the evidence, it would be denying the Church herself. It is therefore clear where the twisted arguments of certain people are

headed for. Contacts, agreements, often find their only fair solution in Concordats. It is surely possible to fancy countries in which the civil rights attain a larger recognition of the freedom of association, and examples are not wanting. In such countries the Church can live serenely, exploiting the edge left to freedom. But one must not deceive himself: all it takes is the return of someone's dominating will, and persecution is back with us. The Church cannot fear it, St. Cyprian, and with him many pastors, have feared and fear the contrary so much more. But he who loves the souls does not give in to the thought that persecutions can populate hell

3. Men, individual and community, because they are mortal, have no right to prevent other men from attending to their eternal life. Behaving differently would be cruel, other than unfair. If the Church is, as she is, a necessary society for the eternal salvation, it is obvious that any State, even agnostic, must let her the necessary space to act, as much as – at least – it must permit its citizens to freely attend to their afterlife.
4. The Church has the mission of preaching, sanctifying, and governing herself. God gave it her. To go counter is not to deny space to the Church, but to God himself. Historically these contracts between Church and civil society have the most varied applications, even improper, at times. But, on both sides of the aisle it is a trait of human freedom to know abuses, as well as unexpected and disconcerting complications. The abuse of freedom does not deprive of its use. Let us put ourselves on the level of he who believes he has no Catholic faith. Let us reflect: the Church, as a public law institution, has been historically the greatest guarantee of human freedom, precisely because objectively she poses herself as autonomous of all powers and deals with these as with social subjects from which she does not depend. The proof is that, when an attempt is made on the freedom of peoples, the starting point is always religious, and, in reality, the freedom of the Church.

All the condemnable dominations seek above all to possess the soul of men, because, if they do not possess it, they know they will not last. On this ground to defend freedom they find but the Church, who generously offers her deported, her afflicted, her martyrs; she withdraws into the catacombs, but from the catacombs she makes the earth quiver, even for the human freedom of the peoples. The secularists should remember that all becomes for them more uncertain and dangerous, when they do persecute; the Church becomes more purified and freer when she is persecuted. Without the Church, before the great and tyrannical dominations, men remain alone. And technology, before the power, will render, making the latter stronger and stronger, men more alone.

Let us, therefore, seek the ways of the peace, and not those of the violence.

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