



Singulari Nos

On The Errors Of Lammenais

Encyclical Of Pope Gregory XVI

June 25, 1834

To All the Patriarchs, Primate, Archbishops, and Bishops.

Venerable Brothers, Greetings and Apostolic Blessing.

The illustrious examples of faith, obedience, and devotion conveyed by the enthusiastic reception given everywhere to Our encyclical letter of August 15, 1832, gave Us great joy. We declared in it the only sound doctrine to be followed concerning the main points in the fulfillment of the duties of Our office for the whole Catholic flock. The statements made by many who had approved those counsels and opinions which so grieved Us have increased Our joy, for they have acted as prompt defenders and supporters of Our decrees. We recognized that that evil which is still inflamed against both sacred and civil matters is not yet removed. Widely disseminated but very shameless pamphlets and certain gloomy machinations openly denoted those things which We condemned in a letter sent to Our venerable brother, the bishop of Rennes, in the month of October. Moreover, his response to those things which cause Us so much concern and anxiety has been gratefully received. His statement sent to Us on December 11 of last year distinctly confirmed that he would follow solely and absolutely the teaching transmitted in Our encyclical letter and that he would not write or approve anything which differs from it. In that matter We opened Our heart in paternal love to the son who was moved by Our warnings. We should also have trusted that he would produce more brilliant writings in time to confirm his compliance in word and deed with Our decision.

2. It hardly seemed believable that he whom We welcomed with such good will and affection would so quickly forget Our kindness and desert Our resolution. We can hardly believe that the good hope which occupied Us with the fruit of Our teaching has died. However, We have learned of the pamphlet written in French under the title *Paroles d'un croyant*, for it has been printed by this man and disseminated everywhere. It was written under a pseudonym, but matters of public record make clear the author's identity. Though small in size, it is enormous in wickedness.

3. We were very much amazed, venerable brothers, when at first We understood the blindness of this wretched author, for in him knowledge does not come from God, but from the elements of the world; this "knowledge" bursts forth. Against the oath solemnly given in his declaration, he cloaked Catholic teaching in enticing verbal artifice, in order ultimately to oppose it and overthrow it. We expressed this in Our letter mentioned above concerning both the dutiful submission toward authorities and the prevention of the fatal contamination of the people by indifferentism. It also concerned measures to use against the spreading license of ideas and speeches. Finally, it concerned that freedom of conscience which should be thoroughly condemned and the repulsive conspiracy of societies enkindling destruction of sacred and state affairs, even from the followers of false religions, as We have made clear by the authority handed down to Us.

4. The mind shrinks from reading through those things in which the author tries to break the bond of loyalty and submission toward leaders. Once the torch of treason is ignited everywhere, it ruins public order, fosters contempt of government, and stimulates lawlessness. It overthrows every element of sacred and civil power. From this, the writer transposes the power of princes, through a new and wicked idea, to the power of Satan and an omen of subterfuge, as if it were dangerous to divine law, even a work of sin. He brands the same marks of wickedness on the priests and rulers because of the conspiracy of crimes and labors in which he dreams they are joined against the rights of the people. Not content with such temerity, he thrusts forth every kind of opinion, speech, and freedom of conscience. He prays that everything will be favorable and happy for the soldiers who will fight to free liberty from tyranny, and he encourages groups and associations in the furious combat which engulfs everything. He stands so firm in such heinous thoughts that We feel him trample right from the beginning Our advice and orders.

5. It is annoying to recount here everything which throws all human and divine affairs into confusion with the wicked fruit of impiety and daring. But these things especially arouse Our indignation and should clearly not be tolerated by religion. Especially dangerous is the fact that holy Scriptures that have been tainted with the errors of this author are disseminated to the unwary. Acting as if he were sent and inspired by God, he speaks in the name of the Trinity and then uses Scripture as a pretext for releasing the people from the law of obedience. He twists the words of holy Scripture in a bold and cunning manner in order to firmly establish his depraved ravings. He does this in order that, as St. Bernard used to say, "He might spread clouds for light or give poison for honey, or rather in the honey, creating a new Gospel for the people and laying a different foundation from the one which is already laid."

6. He who placed Us as scouts in Israel for bids Us to hide in silence the great harm brought to sound doctrine. So We must warn about the error those whom Jesus, the author and perfecter of the faith, entrusted to Our care. Therefore, We consulted many of Our venerable brothers, the cardinals of the Holy Roman

Church. We have studied the book entitled *Paroles d'un croyant*. By Our apostolic power, We condemn the book: furthermore, We decree that it be perpetually condemned. It corrupts the people by a wicked abuse of the word of God, to dissolve the bonds of all public order and to weaken all authority. It arouses, fosters, and strengthens seditions, riots, and rebellions in the empires. We condemn the book because it contains false, calumnious, and rash propositions which lead to anarchy; which are contrary to the word of God; which are impious, scandalous, and erroneous; and which the Church already condemned, especially in regard to the Waldensians, Wycliffites, Hussites, and other heretics of this kind.

7. Venerable brothers, it will now be your duty to strongly support Our orders which We urgently demand as necessary for the safety and welfare of both sacred and civil affairs. Let us see that no writing of this kind comes out of hiding into the light, since it would be that much more harmful if it were to set sail through the passion of insane reform and creep far and wide like a crab among the people. It should be your duty to encourage sound doctrine through this whole affair and to make known the craftiness of the innovators. Watch more keenly over the care of the Christian flock, so that zeal for religion, piety of actions, and public peace might happily flourish and increase. We wait for this, trusting in your faith and commitment to the common good so that, with the help of God who is the Father of lights, We might give thanks (with St. Cyprian) that the error has been understood and weakened and then laid low, because it was recognized and discovered.

8. As for the rest, We greatly deplore the fact that, where the ravings of human reason extend, there is somebody who studies new things and strives to know more than is necessary, against the advice of the apostle. There you will find someone who is overconfident in seeking the truth outside the Catholic Church, in which it can be found without even a light tarnish of error. Therefore, the Church is called, and is indeed, a pillar and foundation of truth. You correctly understand, venerable brothers, that We speak here also of that erroneous philosophical system which was recently brought in and is clearly to be condemned. This system, which comes from the contemptible and unrestrained desire for innovation, does not seek truth where it stands in the received and holy apostolic inheritance. Rather, other empty doctrines, futile and uncertain doctrines not approved by the Church, are adopted. Only the most conceited men wrongly think that these teachings can sustain and support that truth.

9. While We write these things to understand and preserve the sound doctrine divinely delegated to Us, We sign over the harsh wound inflicted to Our heart by the error of Our son. In the great sadness We suffer, there is no hope of consolation, unless We can recall him to the way of righteousness. Therefore, at the same time, let Us raise Our eyes and hands to Him who is the leader of wisdom and the corrector of the wise. Let Us beseech Him with repeated prayer to give this man a docile heart and a great spirit to hear the voice of the most loving and most sorrowful Father. May he hasten the joy of the Church, the joy of your order, the

joy of this Holy See, and the joy of Our unworthiness. Certainly We shall provide an auspicious and happy occasion to take hold of him and embrace him as a son returning to the bosom of his Father. We are and We shall be very optimistic from his example that others will come to their senses, others who might have been led into error by the same author. May there be an agreement of teaching, one course of thinking, one harmony of action and study, among all for the good of sacred and public matters. We need you and We expect you to beseech the Lord with Us in your pastoral concern for this great gift. We pray for divine assistance in this work and We lovingly impart Our apostolic blessing on you and on your flock as a sign of this.

Given in Rome, at St. Peter's, on June 25, 1834, in the fourth year of Our pontificate.