St. Anthony Mary Claret

THE RAILWAY

El ferrocarril

From the Spanish of the Colección de opúsculos, vol. III (Barcelona, 1860)

English translation

Contributed to Mind of the Church by a friend of the library who wishes to remain anonymous

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About this translation

Translated from *El ferrocarril, ó sea medios de lograr la felicidad y evitar la infelicidad y desgracias*, in the *Colección de opúsculos* of Claret, vol. III (Barcelona: Librería Religiosa, 1860). The translation is complete.

The notes give the references to Claret's sources and the notes he printed himself; the modern editors' commentary and the translator's own remarks are not reproduced.

The Railway, or Means of Attaining Happiness and Avoiding Unhappiness and Misfortune

The Train Has Come off the Rails

Don Prudencio, Don Juan and Don José.

DON PRUDENCIO. Good evening, gentlemen.

DON JUAN. And a good evening to you. \[Spanish *Que buenas las tenga V.*, literally "May you have them good."\]

DON JOSÉ. A good and holy evening, Don Prudencio. \[*Buenas y santas*, a pious way of returning the greeting.\]

DON PRUDENCIO. Have you not heard the great and dreadful news?

DON JUAN AND DON JOSÉ. And what is it?…

DON PRUDENCIO. The train has come off the rails!!! And the worst of it, as you may imagine, is that there have been a great many very grievous casualties!!!

DON JUAN AND DON JOSÉ. Holy God! What are you saying, Don Prudencio?…

DON PRUDENCIO. The report has only this very moment come in… The authorities are taking the most suitable measures… People are already setting out for the place!…

DON JOSÉ. And where did so dreadful an accident happen?…

DON PRUDENCIO. At the Rincón del Cerro \[literally "the corner of the Hill"\]. The lines there form a curve, so one has to go with more care and less speed. Whether through the driver's lack of caution, or through some obstruction that threw the wheels off, the fact is that the train came off the rails. Engine, carriages and all the people, and there were not a few, went rolling without stopping right down into the river!… And since the river there is so deep and wide, it is greatly to be feared that all the travellers have drowned in it, if they did not die already from the repeated blows and heavy bruising they suffered along the long stretch from the Hill down to the pool the river forms lower down…

"Jesus!" exclaimed Don Juan. "And how exposed our lives are!…"

DON PRUDENCIO. More exposed than one can imagine. Would that people thought about it, for they would live better!

"The fact is," answered Don José, "that whether we think about it or not, death comes and snatches us away for ever. With it life is over, and all those things of the world are over too, which distract us so much and make us forget God and ourselves, because we think only and always of them."

DON PRUDENCIO. What a truth Don José has just spoken!… And what good will it do a man to have thought so greedily, and before all else, about worldly things?… What will it profit him to have gained even the whole world, as the Gospel says, if in the end he comes to lose his soul?…[1]

"This alone, well meditated," said Don Juan, "is enough to convince us how much it is to our advantage to live well. If one lives well, one travels well and arrives perfectly well at the end of life. That end is also the end of time for each one, and for each one it is likewise the beginning of eternity, in which everything, happiness and misfortune, is without end. For according to each one's works, good or bad, God, who is a most just judge, will give each his due for ever;…[2] and from that dread Judge there will be no escape, whether they like it or not \[*mal que les pese*, literally "however much it weighs on them"\], neither for the

unbelievers, nor the ungodly, nor…"

"This is just what I have often thought," added Don José, "especially about the unbelievers who deny everything, or at least despise everything and laugh at everything. Suppose that with their heresies and blasphemies, with their impieties and buffooneries, they could destroy these truths that trouble them so much. Suppose they could escape in this way the threats they fear in spite of themselves. Suppose it were granted them to silence in this way the remorse of conscience, of that conscience which, very loudly and from the depths within, keeps reproaching them with their wickedness and crying to each one: 'You are not going well; you are doing wrong.' Then they might be thought prudent in some way, by the world's standards. But alas! with all their contempt and empty clamour they make no progress in what they attempt. On the contrary, all they manage is to grow angrier and more exasperated, and to increase their pains and sorrows by as much. For it happens to them as it did to Saul (Saint Paul), who fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him: *Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?… I am Jesus whom you persecute: it is hard for you to kick against the goad.*"[3]

DON PRUDENCIO. That reflection is very much to the point. For truths do not cease to exist because some people stop thinking about them or believing them. Nor do people destroy their existence by mocking the witnesses who affirm and assert them, by persecuting those witnesses, or by taking their lives. No; nothing of that can annihilate them, because they are independent in themselves and stand firm in spite of men and of whatever men do or fail to do. Would it cease to be true, perhaps, that there is a city called Peking; that there are others and others again called London, Paris, Madrid, Rome, and so on; that they have this or that form of government; that justice is administered in them in this way or that? Would all this cease, I say, to be true, even if one or a few or many fools denied it, even if they insulted or ill-treated all who say and affirm it? Well then, here is our case. There exists an almighty God. Trustworthy and unimpeachable witnesses proclaim and assert it: the heavens, the earth, and all upright men. This God created all things out of nothing and preserves them all. This God created all men so that they might serve him during time and be happy with him during eternity. He created them all free, that is, with the power to do or not to do the good that he commands them, and even to do the evil that he forbids them. He did this so that the human will might be seen plainly, in conformity or in opposition to the divine, and so that its merits or demerits might stand out more and more. According to these God will give the corresponding reward or punishment: heaven for the good, hell for the wicked.

These truths, like all the others, exist of themselves. However much the ungodly and the unbelievers shout and struggle against them, they will not be able to diminish or escape them. They will die; they will be judged; and the verdict that falls on them will without fail be a sentence of condemnation, pronounced by the mouth of that very Judge whom they now so hate and pretend not to know: *Depart from me, you cursed*, the Lord will say to them, *into the everlasting fire which is prepared for the devil and his followers!*…[4] Until so unhappy a fate befalls them, they already suffer not a little, since they are kicking against the goad. They suffer and they cause much suffering; they hurt themselves and they hurt others as much as they can; they have gone off the road, and they do all they can to lead others off it and drag them with them into the abyss. The just, however, follow the solid and straight path of justice, on whose rails they have been set. They are already happy, as far as one can be happy in this unhappy world. Keeping always the same train of life \[*tren de vida*, which also means "way of life"; the pun runs through the whole work\], they travel on and make great progress without ceasing towards the homeland, where they will arrive swiftly and safely.

"Allow me, Don Prudencio," said Don Juan. "Do you not think there is a good deal of likeness between what you have just said and what we see happen on the railways?"

DON PRUDENCIO. That was precisely my idea, and I was going to use that very simile or comparison. Indeed; since men need to move from one place to another, from this city to that, from this kingdom to another and others again, they have always tried to have and keep roads open. And to do it with greater

comfort and speed, human ingenuity lately invented the railways. By their means, travelling carefully and steadily along the rails or lines, one covers a great deal of ground in little time and with all possible comfort. But if, through this or that accident, the wheels leave the lines, woe to the travellers! Unless a miracle from heaven saves them, they then suffer the greatest disasters, like the one we are now lamenting…

Now here is the application. All of us men are called to set out on, and follow, the road to the Jerusalem of glory. God himself has laid it out for us, and that road is none other than love. Like the iron roads \[*caminos de hierro*, the usual Spanish for railways\], it has two lines, which are: to love God, and to love one's neighbour.[5] The locomotive is charity, which goes faster or slower in direct proportion to its degree of heat, that is, of love. Each of the carriages in which people travel bears the same name, which is the will of God. Each and every one of them has four wheels. The two front wheels are Religion and Morality. The other two are Obedience to Ecclesiastical Authority and Obedience to Civil Authority. If these four wheels all turn, and all run on the two lines laid down, the travellers will cover much ground and arrive happily at the city of Glory, without mishap or weariness, and with all the riches of merits and good works that they stored up and carry with them. But unhappy all those who, through their culpable negligence or malice, let the wheels of their carriage leave the rails laid out for them! For then they are thrown one on top of another, battering each other in confusion and horror, and they all go rolling without stopping down to hell!…

That, gentlemen, is how I picture it: each town, each province and each kingdom rides in a carriage of this railway. Happy are they if they always keep on the rails! For then harmony reigns among them, and with it peace, with peace temporal happiness, together with the hope of eternal happiness. But woe to the province, the kingdom or the empire that comes off the rails! For then, instead of harmony, they have discord, and with it anarchy, and with anarchy misfortunes without number, until they fall headlong into the chaos of every misery and darkness, where no order reigns, but everlasting horror!!![6]

"This is a most beautiful comparison, Don Prudencio," exclaimed Don José and Don Juan together.

DON PRUDENCIO. I still have something to add to complete it. Man, as the philosophers define him, is a rational and social animal. We can and must, then, consider him now as an individual, now as a member of society. Considered in the first way, he cannot possibly go well unless he is in good order in Religion and Morality, which are, as we said, the two front wheels. Considered as a member of the social body, he likewise cannot possibly keep to a good road without the other two wheels, which are Obedience to the canons of the Church and to the laws of the State.

"Truly," said Don José, "this last point completes the idea perfectly, an idea that was already as ingenious as it is apt. But I should like you to be so kind as to explain each of those four things to us in particular."

DON PRUDENCIO. With the greatest pleasure. The two front wheels are, as we have already said, the Religion and the Morality that a man must have and put into practice. And just as in every carriage the two front wheels have the same axle, so too those two virtues are concerned with the same object, God. Religion pays him the tribute of honour, homage and love that we owe him. Morality regulates man's free actions and directs them to God as to the supreme Good, the last End and the Object to which all is referred \[*Objeto de atribucion*, a scholastic term\].

The two rear wheels stand, as we have also said, for the observance of the canons of the Church and of the civil laws. These two wheels also have one and the same axle, God. From him proceed the two powers, ecclesiastical and civil, which he commands us to obey. So whoever does not obey them disobeys God, and whoever resists them resists the very ordinance of God, as Scripture says;[7] and it adds that those who resisted God never had peace. Therefore, if towns, provinces and kingdoms are to have peace, and prosper, and be happy, they must take care to keep the wheels of obedience to the Church and to the civil Government well on the rails. These premises laid down, let us now speak of each of the four wheels in particular, and let the first be:

[1] Mt 16:26; Mk 8:36.

[2] Rom 2:6; Mt 16:27.

[3] Acts 9:4–5 (with 26:14, where the phrase about the goad appears in the best manuscripts).

[4] Mt 25:41 (“his angels” in the Gospel; Claret’s Spanish has “sus secuaces”, “his followers”).

[5] Mt 22:37–40 (charity).

[6] Vulgate *ubi nullus ordo, sed sempiternus horror inhabitat*.

[7] Rom 13:1–2.

The Train Has Come off the Rails

Religion

To understand properly the importance and necessity of this first wheel, we must remember that God created us in his image and likeness; that it is he who preserves, rules and directs us. God is therefore our first principle, and he himself must be our last end. Our soul, whatever the ungodly may say, does not perish with the body but will survive it, immortal. It will have to appear one day in the presence of this same God, who as supreme Judge will call it to account for all its actions, and then give it reward or punishment according to its deserts. Already in this life, then, we must prepare ourselves for the next. We must know and acknowledge our origin, and think of it, if only out of gratitude. And never losing it from sight, we must think of our destiny, that is, our last end, with the desire and hope of attaining it. Providence has marked out and determined for us the means of attaining it, and these means are provided and supplied to us by Religion. Without it man would be in the world like a poor orphan without guide or protection, who does not know where he came from or what his future is.

“How true!…” said Don Juan. “And how many thanks we ought to give God continually for having given us a Religion that has for us the heart of a tender mother, the understanding of a wise teacher and the solicitude of a charitable benefactress, making us happy in time and in eternity!…”

DON PRUDENCIO. So it is indeed. And this is why man must love God, not only in himself, because he is infinitely good and lovable, but also because he has heaped so many benefits on him. For these benefits man must render him unceasing thanksgiving, and for his infinite perfections he must adore him as Creator and Lord of heaven and earth. All these acts, and the others, interior as well as exterior, by which man renders worship to God, he must perform in a way that is pleasing to his divine Majesty, and as befits a rational creature offering his homage to the supreme Maker. From this follows clearly and incontestably the need for certain fixed rules for worship, marked out by God himself and not subject to the fickle whim of men. It also follows, and therefore with no less clarity and evidence, that there always has been, and always must be, among men one Religion, the same for all. In it they have the assurance that by observing what it prescribes for them they fulfil the will of God and walk on the path that leads to eternal happiness.

“Every time I hear this subject spoken of,” said Don Juan, “it seems to me that God imposed on men the law of Religion in the same way as he gave the law of gravity to all bodies. Religion is and must be one, just as the law of gravity must be one. Religion embraces all men without distinction, as the law of gravity embraces all bodies without exception. Bodies always keep it, and only in cases of violence do they fail to obey it; but as soon as the violence ceases they return to their necessary observance of it. Men, however, do not act by necessity of nature as heavy bodies do, but with free will. And so, although there is for all the same Religion, enjoined and promulgated by God himself, men driven by the violence of the passions depart from it, as a stone thrown into the air departs from its centre of gravity. There is this difference, however: the stone is not and cannot be guilty, and men are, because they act freely and can never suffer irresistible violence in their interior acts. This is seen clearly in the Martyrs, who in spite of every seduction, violence and torment remained always firm in the one true Religion. Along with the passions, pride, which breeds and feeds the spirit of independence, is often the cause of men’s departing from the true Religion. And since one cannot live without religion, those who free themselves from the true one forge another for themselves, which is therefore false.

“Now more than ever,” said Don José, “I see the absurdity and madness of those who say that all religions are equally good; that it matters as little to a man to be a Christian as a Mohammedan; that it is all the same to be a Jew or an idolater. To my mind this amounts to denying divine Providence. It is the same as asserting that after creating the world God stopped caring for his work. It is to claim, in short, that the whole human

race is moving without a fixed destination, without purpose, at random, like a flock without a shepherd."[1]

DON PRUDENCIO. Both of you, gentlemen, have reasoned perfectly in what you have just said. Particularly apt and fitting is the comparison Don Juan made between Religion and the law of gravity, saying that the one is for men what the other is for bodies. *Law* (*ley*), according to its etymology, is said to come from *ligando*, "binding", because it binds or ties one to its due fulfilment. The law of gravity so holds or ties all bodies to the fulfilment of their destiny that of themselves they never depart from it. In this way, by virtue of that law, everything in the terrestrial and celestial globes, that is, in the whole great and wonderful machine of the universe, is kept in perfect balance. Two forces that seem to repel one another are observed in all the planets, the centrifugal and the centripetal. But they are balanced with such foresight and precision, so well concerted, and their movements are so exact, that they do not vary one jot in all the movements they make around the sun. What would become of the universe, and what would happen, without that law? Sooner or later the globes would meet and collide with one another and destroy each other, and with them the harmony of the universe, and the universe itself, would be destroyed.

"If I remember rightly," said Don José, "the word *religion*, in Latin *religio*, is equivalent, so I have heard, to *rem ligo*, 'I bind a thing': as though the Creator joined or united us to himself by means of Religion."

DON PRUDENCIO. It is as you say. And for this union to be brought about lovingly by means of Religion, it must first be brought about, also by its means, intellectually. That is, before a man loves, he must know the two extremes that are to be united. Hence above all we must ask of God what Saint Augustine asked: *Noverim te, noverim me*: "Grant, Lord, that I may know who you are and who I am."[2] Though infinitely inferior to God, man, made in his likeness, is his image. God, and God alone, can be and is the adequate object of man's longings. God, and God alone, can be and is the centre of man, and therefore only in him can man's heart find rest. All the things of the universe, separately or together, may occupy it more or less; but to fill it, to satisfy it, that only God can do. We all feel within ourselves an irresistible desire to enjoy. And since the things of this world, however great, flattering and good they may seem to us, still leave our hearts hungry, nothing remains for each of us but to exclaim with the Prophet: *I shall be satisfied when your glory appears.*[3] For then, since God is goodness itself and supreme goodness by essence, and since goodness of its nature spreads and communicates itself, God by means of it will make us sharers in the immense treasures of his goods and joys, which alone can content us.

But God is not only the object of our will through his infinite goodness, which alone can content it by fulfilling all its desires. He is also, through his infinite wisdom, the adequate object of our understanding, which is as eager to know as the will is to enjoy. Since God, in all his perfections and operations, is a most pure act, he sees, knows, wills and is able, in his one and the same essence, all that he sees and knows, all that he wills and can do. In him and through him whatever is possible is possible; in him and through him whatever has being and life exists and lives; in him and through him whatever has intelligence understands. The perfection of intelligence is in direct proportion to the things known and in inverse proportion to the ideas; that is, many things known comprehended in few ideas. One sees this in a sum or amount of money, whose idea becomes simpler as the coins are reduced from *cuartos* to *reales*, from *reales* to *pesos*, from *pesos* to gold *onzas*. This explains our desire to reduce things to one single thing, the many to the one, the conditional to the unconditional, the relative to the absolute, the finite to the infinite. This is an instinctive and universal feeling, for it extends to all countries and all times. A precious feeling, a beautiful and sublime tradition, which, preserved across the centuries and generations amid the ebb and flow of events, presents to us as though by inspiration the idea of the Godhead presiding over the origin and destiny of the universe.

The unity so sought by the philosophers is none other than the Godhead itself; yes, the Godhead whose glory the firmament proclaims,[4] and whose august face appears to us within our conscience with ineffable splendour. It is the Godhead that enlightens and consoles the true philosopher, and blinds and disturbs the proud sophist. It is the Godhead that the true philosopher calls God, and reveres and adores in the sanctuary

of his soul; it is the Godhead that the senseless philosopher, with sacrilegious profanation, calls “I”. It is the Godhead, considered in its personality, in its omnipotence, in its infinite intelligence, in its most perfect freedom, that is the foundation and the dome of RELIGION. It is the Godhead which, distinct from the world and independent of it in its being and acting, drew all things out of nothing, preserves all things, governs all things, and leads all things by mysterious paths to the destiny fixed beforehand in its wise and just, eternal and unchangeable decrees.

“Now I see it,” said Don Juan, “and I understand the truth perfectly, the whole truth. Ah! How I should like Hegel, Schelling, Fichte, Berkeley, Kant, Wolff, Fourier, Cousin, Damiron, Jouffroy, Lerminier, Michelet, Quinet, and so many other German and French philosophers who are mad about their ‘I’, to hear this!… I remember hearing it said that they all teach that the ‘I’ is the Pontiff, the Gospel, the Alpha and the Omega, God!…”

DON PRUDENCIO. You called them mad, Don Juan, all that string of philosophasters, and truly that is the name that suits them best. Not even Adam, who, as we read in the Holy Scriptures, gave each of the animals with great propriety the name that best suited it,[5] could have given a more fitting name to that rabble \[*cáfila*, literally “a string of camels”\] of French and German animals. Do they not imitate, in their absurdities, those poor lunatics of whom one says and believes he is King, another Pope, this one God, that one the eternal Father?…

“Well, I do like that description,” exclaimed Don José. “And I believe,” he added, “that they are not only mad, but each one of them combines in himself the madness of all the madmen. ‘Every madman has his own theme’ \[*Cada loco con su tema*, a proverb: each madman has his own obsession\], says the adage, and so I have seen it in the asylums: one says he is Emperor, another that he is a divine Person, and so on. But that whole crowd of senseless philosophers believe, or at least say and assert, that each of them is everything, King, Pope, God!… See whether it would be easy to find greater madness, or even as much, in the brain of a man, however unhinged \[*destornillado*, literally ”with a screw loose”\] he might be.”

DON PRUDENCIO. Those gentlemen are truly much to be pitied; and God forbid that we should ever listen to their blunders. The Lord gave us our understanding and preserves it; thanks be to him for it. May he himself grant that we go on making use, without abusing them, of the reason and the faith that he granted us in his infinite goodness and mercy.

Faith and reason! Here are two things that can easily be made sisters, if we use them as we ought. In each of us there are two instincts, two needs, equally innate, equally strong and indestructible, with regard to truth: the need to believe and the need to reason.

The need to believe is so strong, so imperious in man, that he sometimes prefers to believe too much, to believe everything, rather than to believe nothing. He prefers to abdicate all reason rather than renounce all faith: this is one of the causes of superstition.

The need to reason is no less strong and imperious in him. To yield to this need he sometimes prefers to believe nothing rather than believe everything blindly; he prefers to renounce all faith rather than abdicate all reason: this is one of the causes of unbelief.

All religions of human manufacture can be summed up in the following two categories: Religions of the senses, such as Idolatry, Paganism, Mohammedanism, etc.; and Religions of pride: Heresy, Schism, Protestantism, Rationalism, and all the philosophers who worship the “I”.

The fundamental principle of all religions of the senses is: Everything to authority, nothing to reason.

The fundamental principle of all religions of pride is, on the contrary: Everything to reason, nothing to authority.

Only the Catholic religion, divine in its origin, divine in its spread, divine in its preservation, says to man: Respect for authority, and lawful use of reason. So we read in the sacred Scriptures: “Begin,” says Saint Paul, “by bringing your understanding into subjection in homage to the faith, and believe that this homage is reasonable.”[6] To make this truth clearer still, the comparison Don Juan made a little while ago between Religion and the law of gravity will be of no little use to us. Just as the constant regularity of the movements of all the planets results from the balancing of the centrifugal and centripetal forces, so too the balance between belief and reason results from the lawful and due use that man makes of his reason and of faith. Acting together and within their limits, the two forces, centripetal and centrifugal, make all the planets move with such balanced exactness that they do not vary one jot in any of their movements. Hence, years and years ahead, one can calculate and assert without fear of error that on such a day, at such an hour and at so many minutes, such and such a conjunction or eclipse will take place. But if those two forces did not keep their due balance, that is, if the centripetal force were too great, it would drag the planets towards the centre and they would crash down on one another. If, on the contrary, the centrifugal were greater, they would roll at random through space, and God knows where they would end up.

The same happens to the man whose faith and reason are not duly balanced. If he lets himself be carried away by too great a readiness to believe, he will believe falsehoods and fall into a thousand errors, wickednesses and vices. But he will be preserved from such falls if he first attends to the motives of credibility, which are the banner and guide of truth, and which only the Catholic religion, the one true religion, can present to him.

The same would happen, though in the opposite direction, to the man who let himself be guided by his reason alone, without believing anyone. He would be like a planet without a centripetal force to keep it in its orbit. He would go on and on, wildly and without order, according to the impetus of the centrifugal force. Breaking the harmony of the planetary system laid out by God, he would be a disturber of the universe; he would knock the other heavenly bodies out of place with his rough and repeated blows, until he himself was completely battered and broken. This, then, is what man is when he lets himself be carried and dragged along by his reason alone in what he must believe: a planet without centripetal force, rolling at random according to the more or less violent impetus of the centrifugal force. In proof of this truth one need only go through the histories and books of the learned and much-praised philosophers of antiquity. Let the wise and most eloquent Cicero suffice for all and for our case. After writing three great books, after examining and recording all that the wisest men of Greece had written and taught, this man, truly worthy to be counted among them, is forced to confess that reason by itself can decide nothing with certainty, not even about the existence of God. So, in fact, it is borne out by so many centuries of study, so many inquiries, journeys, disputes and reasonings of those times; for in all of them philosophical reason could not establish a single truth. The one and only thing it did was to sponsor all errors and shelter all vices.

The modern philosophers do the same as the ancients, led like them by blind reason alone. All their metaphysics consists either in a disheartening idealism or in a degrading materialism. Their morality is accordingly what it cannot fail to be: Sensuality or pride… Here is what human reason is when left to itself. Listening only to itself, it does not and will not believe the voice of faith, and does not even deign to examine the motives of credibility.

“And what are these motives of credibility,” asked Don Juan, “which only the Catholic Church possesses and presents?”

DON PRUDENCIO. They are many, and all very convincing. The chief among them are: the prophecies made many centuries in advance and afterwards most exactly fulfilled. The rapid and universal spread of the Catholic religion, carried out by the Apostles, poor and unlearned men, without protection and without any human means; with the very notable circumstance that they preached a doctrine wholly opposed to the strongest and most dominant passions. The prodigious multitude of Martyrs, the countless miracles, and

especially those of the life, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. His miracles and doctrine we must accept, believe and keep, according to what we read in the Gospel: *And a voice was heard from heaven: This is my beloved Son, in whom I have always been well pleased: listen to his words.*[7] And as to his own doctrine and miracles as preached by the Apostles and their successors, Jesus Christ says in the same Gospel: *He who hears you hears me; and he who despises you despises me.*[8]

"Truly," said Don Juan, "our duty could not be clearer or more definite. I have no doubt that if all the unbelievers read the Holy Scriptures well and searched them without prejudice and in good faith, they would be more than convinced of the solidity of the truths that the Catholic religion commands us to believe. These truths, though supernatural, or placed beyond the reach of reason, are not contrary to it. They are obscure, yes, because the very nature of faith requires it. But this obscurity is not and cannot be a sufficient reason to deny them, especially in view of the motives of credibility that Don Prudencio has just set out, motives that certainly leave no room for any doubt or subterfuge."

DON PRUDENCIO. Another matter of no small importance now occurs to me. The Catholic can make, and does make, two uses, both lawful, of the reason God granted him. He uses it in purely natural things; and since this is its immediate and proper ground, he moves there at his ease \[*á sus anchuras*, "as wide as he likes"\], as the saying goes. He reasons, calculates, combines, discovers, invents, and perfects what others have invented or discovered. In this vast field human reason meets no hindrance. In this endless branching of the natural sciences the Catholic has the same freedom and independence as the ungodly man and the unbeliever. And he has this advantage over them: in studying and contemplating natural things he knows how to find in them, see and praise the Creator of all. The unbeliever and the ungodly study and meditate on the same things, and however wonderful they may seem to them, they do not see the light of the Godhead shining in them. Blinded by pride, such a man boldly puts himself between God and created things; the unhappy man remains in the dark because he turns his back on God, and he himself, says Saint Augustine, casts a shadow over the natural things he is investigating. Hence even in this heaven seems to have wished to reward the praiseworthy use the Catholics make of their reason. For it is they who have made the most numerous and most important discoveries in nature, and a great many of these are due to churchmen.

The Catholic also uses his reason in supernatural things, and this is the second use he makes of it. Since this is unknown and dark ground for him, he needs a light and a support: reason lends him the support, faith gives him the light. The one and the other are for him, as we have already said, what the centrifugal and centripetal forces are for the planets. By virtue of the centripetal force the planet gravitates towards the centre of attraction without straying in any direction from the orbit it must travel. By virtue of the centrifugal force it reaches out and extends itself as far as it can, but without overstepping the limits of its course; and its course is more or less swift according to its greater or lesser distance from its centre. So the nearer it is to the centre, the more quickly it completes its revolutions. Herschel, for example, which is 666,000,000 leagues and more from the sun, needs 30,689 days to go once round that star. The earth, which is 34,000,000 and more from it, needs only 365 days and 6 hours to go round the sun. Mercury, which is only 13,000,000 leagues and more from the sun, goes round it in only 87 days and 23 hours.

It is a practical and undeniable truth that the man who has a good foundation of faith moves and progresses in all the sciences with greater ease than the man who is at odds with that virtue and has little or none of it. The man without faith is a creeping animal. He moves, yes, but he advances little and suffers a great deal. He moves, but like a traveller who, without road or guide, goes climbing steep mountains, crossing deep valleys and fording swollen rivers, slipping on some, losing his way on others, and finally perishing, swept away by the rushing current of the waters. The man who has faith, however, finds in his course no mountains to climb, no valleys to go down into, no rivers to ford. His road is solid and always level, because at all the difficult and dangerous places authority takes care to build bridges for him, which make his passage easy, without danger or weariness. How much to be pitied, therefore, are the poor unbelievers! They see the Catholics

walking safely along the royal road of faith and authority, and yet they persist in wanting no guide but their own reason and no road but the one their mad fancy marks out for them!…

“This,” said Don Juan, “is the great question of the day, as I have read in a speech of M. Guizot. ‘What, gentlemen,’ he says, ’speaking at bottom and in religious terms, what is the great question, the supreme question, that occupies minds today? It is the question that stands between those who acknowledge and those who do not acknowledge a supernatural order, certain and sovereign, though impenetrable to human reason; the question set (to call things by their name) between supernaturalism and rationalism.

“’On one side are the unbelievers, the pantheists, the sceptics of every kind, the pure rationalists; on the other, the Christians. Among the former, the best leave standing in the world and in the human soul the statue of God, if one may use such an expression; but only the statue, an image, a piece of marble. God himself is not there. Only the Christians have a living God.

“’It is the living God, gentlemen, that we need. For our salvation, present and future, it is necessary that faith in the supernatural order, that respect and submission in the supernatural order, should enter the world and the human soul: in great minds as in simple ones; in the highest regions as in the humblest. The real influence of religious beliefs, the truly effective and regenerating influence, lies in this condition. Apart from it they are superficial and little better than vain.

“‘And do not be troubled by the difficulties of the task, nor by the small number of those who already believe, nor by the great number of those who do not believe and do not care about it. The difficulties and the number of adversaries were without doubt very different when Christianity appeared in the world. There is more power in a single grain of faith than in mountains of doubt and indifference.’”[9]

DON PRUDENCIO. I already knew that fragment of a speech by that opponent of our immortal Balmes. One must admit that M. Guizot says many great truths in it. But as to the great question, which he does no more than point to, you should know that Saint Thomas put it so simply and precisely that anyone can understand it and settle it once and for all. “If by his own means,” he says, “that is, if by reasoning and private reflection man could arrive easily, with certainty and without admixture of error, at forming his beliefs and his duties, revelation would be useless.” Therefore, I say, if on the contrary man cannot formulate his beliefs and duties easily, precisely and with certainty without the help of a higher revelation, then all these great philosophers, all these intellects as empty of reason as they are full of pride, must come and bow their heads and bend their knees at the august feet of the one true Church founded by the God-Man, and hear from her lips the words of life and the doctrine he entrusted to her… With this Rationalism is defeated (and would that it were also convinced \[the Spanish plays on *vencido*, “defeated”, and *convencido*, “convinced”\]) with all its specious and sophistical theories. It appears to us as it is: an enormous extravagance of reason, a culpable and unheard-of delirium of the human intellect. Let the intellect humble itself, then, once and for all, before truths that are not contrary to it but above it. To humble reason before the God on whom it depends in its being, development and understanding is not to debase it; it is to exalt it; it is the best use man can make of it. “Take captive your understanding,” said the Apostle, “in obedience to Jesus Christ, and believe that this obedience is reasonable.”[10]

“Would you be so good, Don Prudencio,” said Don José, “as to clarify a little more this question that is occupying us, and on whose solution the future of the world depends?”

DON PRUDENCIO. I will do so with all the precision and clarity I can, setting out its two sides. The question being debated today between the Church and the Schools, between Catholicism and Rationalism, between Religion and Philosophy, is this. The philosophers claim that man is sufficient of himself to know perfectly his nature, his relations with all beings, and his final destiny. Catholics, on the contrary, affirm that for all this man has need, great need, of a heavenly light. He must therefore submit to the teaching of the Son of God, made man to instruct man, for such is the will of God the Father, who commands us to hear him:

Ipsum audite, "Hear him."[11]

"And what do you think," asked Don Juan, "of the proofs or reasons the philosophers bring forward for their cause?"

DON PRUDENCIO. I say that they have no convincing or sufficient reason, nor can they have one, for continuing in their errors. The very pride that rules them blinds them completely and does not let them see either the misery of man or the fatherly providence of God. To bring out this most important truth properly, it is best to take things from their beginning. "God," says the sacred Scripture, "created man from the earth, and from the body of the man formed the first woman, to be the companion of his life, for she was like him in nature. Immediately after their creation God granted to both the perfect use of their senses and faculties, the rule of the intellect, the law of the spirit and of the heart, thought, feelings and speech; so that from the beginning they might walk, act, think, hear, reason, will and speak. God himself revealed evil to them so that they might avoid it, and good so that they might practise it. God also deigned to look with a special love on the souls of the first human beings, to raise them up to himself. He showed them the divine magnificence of his works. He taught them to worship his name, not only because this name alone is mighty, but also because it alone is holy. God taught them not to glory in themselves but in him, regarding themselves as the noblest work of his hands; and to tell their children the wonders of the creation of the world. God, finally, taught them how to conduct themselves, giving them the knowledge of life, which they were to bequeath as an inheritance to their descendants. By means of his grace he made with them an eternal covenant of love, and fixed its conditions for them in the revelation he made to them of the holiness of his precepts and the severity of his judgements." (Ecclus. 17.)

Here are words which, well meditated, are more than enough to confound all the modern philosophers and to show them up as deluded and prejudiced in all their claims. According to this magnificent text of the holy Books, God was to the first human beings what he wished our parents to be to us. Our parents not only gave us the physical life of the body, which is bound up in the union of body and soul, but they also procured for us intellectual life, which consists in the union of our mind with the truth. What every good father has done with his children in the succession of time, God himself did in the beginning, and in a single instant, with the first man. From this we may gather that when Scripture tells us that man came forth a living soul from the hands of the Creator,[12] it means us to understand that from the first instant of his creation man began to live with the twofold life proper to him: the life of the body through the soul, and the life of the soul through the truth.

"I am sure," said Don José, "that if Rousseau, Diderot and company, instead of reading the satires of Horace, the inventions of Cicero, and so on, had busied themselves in going through and meditating on that historical narrative of the origin and destiny of man, they would not have come out with their absurd plagiarism of those ancient philosophers. I mean the dreamed-up *Social Contract*, which turns men into brutes, the wise into eccentrics, and the peaceful inhabitants of a nation into incorrigible revolutionaries. For they turn their backs on God and will not so much as mention his name on the most solemn occasions, regarding it as useless and contemptible…"

"How true!" exclaimed Don Juan.

DON PRUDENCIO. Listen now to how the angelic doctor Saint Thomas reasons on the origin and destiny of man, that "almost infallible man", as a sound and learned philosopher of our century calls him. "Adam must have had, from the very instant he was created, the knowledge of natural things, not only in their principle but also in their term. For God created him to be the father of the whole human race; and children must receive from their father not only their material being by generation but also the rule of life by instruction.

"Adam, then, must have been perfect in his whole being: as to the body, so that he could become a father at once; and as to the spirit, so that he could teach in his capacity as master of the whole human race.

“Adam was perfect in body and in spirit, as a finished work that came immediately from the hands of God. As to the body, he did not know the weaknesses of infancy; and his spirit was free from the darkness of ignorance. He obtained from the first instant what we obtain gradually during the whole first period of life. By divine action he received what we receive by human education: a perfect body, and a spirit endowed with reason and wonderfully enlightened by the truth. It would have been contrary to the perfection proper to the first of men that he should have been created without the fullness of knowledge, and should have been obliged to learn this knowledge through the senses, gradually and with much labour.

“Besides natural knowledge, Adam also received the knowledge of grace in many supernatural things, by means of a particular revelation, which human reason by itself cannot attain.

“But since he knew the things of the supernatural and divine order only by revelation, and believed them only on the authority of the word of God, who had spoken to him, he also had and practised faith from the first instant.”[13]

As soon as he had children, Adam carried out his mission towards them, instructing them in all necessary things, especially in Religion. The sacred history of Genesis shows this clearly and definitely. There we read that Cain and Abel, the first sons of Adam, offered sacrifices to God. Abel, who was a shepherd, consecrated to him promptly and generously the best of his flocks, and so his offerings were pleasing to the Lord. Cain, who was a farmer, offered him on the contrary the worst of his harvests, and did so tardily, and with envy of his brother, whom he killed.[14]

Adam had another son called Seth, whom he also brought up and instructed in Religion and in everything else. Seth in his time had a son called Enos, of whom the sacred History says (Gen. 4:26) that he *began to call upon the name of God*. This is to be understood to mean that he did it solemnly and publicly, because in his time people were already increasing in number. While society is in the domestic state, everything, even Religion, is arranged in it privately. But when people already form a numerous society, there is then need of a priest for worship, and worship is, and must be, public.

As soon as the race of Seth, called that of the sons of God, was constituted as a public body, it occupied itself above all with Religion; while that of Cain, called that of the sons of men, occupied itself exclusively with industry.[15]

“From what we see, Don Prudencio,” said Don Juan, “nowadays almost all men must be of the accursed race of Cain, since all, or almost all, put Religion last and busy themselves only with matters of industry, commerce and…”

DON PRUDENCIO. The race of Seth, I was saying, occupied itself above all with the things of Religion. It built the first altar to the Godhead and organised worship under the direction of Adam himself, who was still living. Enos was the first priest with a public and legal character, and as such he rendered to the Lord a collective, social and public worship. This continued until God sent the flood upon the earth to punish the ungodliness, injustice, impurity and other vices to which in the end the whole of mankind gave itself up. All were submerged and drowned in the waters that the wrath of God poured out on the world, except Noah and his wife, and his three sons and their wives: eight souls in all and no more. In his second letter (2:5), Saint Peter calls Noah “the eighth herald of justice”; and Saint Paul, in the letter he wrote to the Hebrews (ch. 11), says that Noah condemned the unbelieving world and was made heir of the justice that is by faith.[16] In the one thousand six hundred and fifty-six years from the creation of the world to the flood, Noah was the tenth patriarch, according to the following genealogical order: 1, Adam. 2, Seth. 3, Enos. 4, Cainan. 5, Malaleel. 6, Jared. 7, Henoch. 8, Methuselah. 9, Lamech. 10, Noah. When the Prince of the Apostles, then, calls Noah the eighth herald of justice, it is clear that he considered him only in the order of the priesthood, of the supreme pontificate, which began in a solemn and public way, as we said, in the person of Enos. For only in this order was Noah the eighth, and only in this order was he

made “heir of the justice that is by faith”. That is, he succeeded his father Lamech in the supreme priesthood of the true Religion, and was the eighth of the faithful trustees, the infallible interpreters, the pontiffs, the high priests, before the flood.

I will not stop here to explain what happened from the times of Noah to the coming of Jesus Christ. According to what we read in the Gospels written by Saint Matthew and Saint John, it is beyond doubt that the high priests then had the gift of prophecy, that is, the gift of interpreting the Law and the Prophets infallibly.

From what has been related so far, it is clear that once the primitive revelation had been made to man, God never allowed it to disappear completely from among men through their malice. He always chose among them some men who would keep whole and pure that heavenly light which he himself had kindled in the world from its beginning, so that it might serve humanity as a lighthouse amid the dark and repeated storms of all the errors and vices that were to break out in it.

That divine light grew gradually and providentially until, happily for the earth, there rose above its horizons the eternal Sun of justice, the Only-begotten of the Father and of the Virgin Mother, who by himself and by his Spirit taught us all truth. Saint Paul recalls this in his letter to the Hebrews, chapter 1: “God,” he says, “who at other times spoke to our fathers on various occasions and in many ways through the Prophets, has lastly spoken to us in these days through his Son Jesus Christ, whom he appointed universal heir of all things, through whom also he created the ages and all that has existed in them. He, being as he is the brightness of his glory and the living image of his substance, upholding and ruling all things by his mighty word alone, after purifying us from our sins, is seated at the right hand of God the Father in the highest heavens.”[17]

In these few words of the Apostle the whole plan, the whole economy, of the Religion with which God wishes to be honoured is clearly and grandly traced. He himself revealed it to men, and afterwards he himself taught it to them by word of mouth. He spoke to those of old through the Patriarchs and Prophets, and lastly he has spoken to us through his own Son Jesus Christ, commanding us solemnly and formally to listen to his words and accept them: *Ipsum audite*. This Jesus Christ is, as God, the eternal Word, the Word who in the beginning already was, and was with God. Through him all things were made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men; and this light shines in the midst of the darkness of errors and vices. The Word was the true light which, as far as it depends on him, enlightens every man who comes into this world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, and yet the world did not know him. He came to his own house, in the midst of Judaea, a people specially chosen by him; and his own, whom he had so favoured and distinguished, did not receive him. But to those who have received him, believing in his name, he gave power to become children of God: who are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but are born of God by grace. For this the Word became flesh, that is, united human nature to himself, and dwelt among us; and we have seen his glory, glory such as the Only-begotten of the Father was to receive, full of grace in his wonderful works and of truth in the wisdom of his words.[18]

This is how the evangelist Saint John presents the divine light that has always and everywhere enlightened the inhabitants of this wretched world, from Adam to us, and which, being inextinguishable, will likewise enlighten all who come until the consummation of the ages. This same substantial and eternal light, in order to shine more closely in the world, came into the world uniting to itself another substance, which is flesh, so as to enlighten, redeem and save all flesh. It has taught us the truths we must believe. It has instituted the Sacraments we must receive, depositing in them its merits, which are of infinite value. It has deigned, finally, to teach us itself how to pray, so as to obtain graces and all we need, for the body as well as for the soul, for time as well as for happy eternity. That eternity is the end God set himself in creation, and the wage he will give us if we are faithful in observing the one true Religion he gave us, to which we belong by his infinite goodness and mercy.

“I really do not know,” said Don Juan, “what the ungodly, the unbelievers and all who side with Rationalism can answer to all this.”

“Come,” added Don José, “the truth and necessity of Religion are manifest and palpable. There is no answer to this.”

DON PRUDENCIO. There is none, truly; and yet the rationalist gentlemen go on and on with their irrational claims. It is not surprising. They are wilfully blind; and just as there is none so deaf as he who will not hear, so there is none so blind as he who will not see. A most beautiful comparison of Saint Augustine, which happily comes to my mind at this moment, fits our case very well: “Just as a blind man,” he says, “placed in front of the sun is as though absent from it, though the sun is present to him, so every wicked man, every ungodly man, every unbeliever, is blind in heart. The light of wisdom is present to him; but since it is present to a blind man, it is as though absent from him. It is not that the light is really absent from his eyes, but that his eyes are absent from it.”[19]

Since, then, we have the happiness of seeing or believing what others will neither believe nor see, in spite of the light that the true and divine Religion we profess is continually shedding on all, what matters to us above all is to exercise ourselves more and more in its worship. What concerns us entirely is to cultivate it in our mind and heart, so that it may produce in them abundant fruits of virtue and holiness, to the greater glory of God and our own profit. Otherwise, for failing to do so, Jesus Christ may say to us what he said to the Jews: *The kingdom of God* (the true Religion) *shall be taken from you, and shall be given to a people that will make it bear fruit.*[20] An estate without cultivation produces nothing either for the owner or for the tenant. Religion without worship is of no use either to God or to man; it is useless. It is therefore an inescapable duty for us to practise Religion. Not that God has need of our paltry homage; but we need to render it to him: considering his immensity, and revering his sovereign Majesty as present everywhere; remembering and acknowledging his benefits, giving him thanks for them \[the text is damaged here; sense from context\]; listening eagerly and docilely to his divine word, which we must keep faithfully in our hearts and put into practice; receiving devoutly and frequently the holy Sacraments, which he instituted for our good; offering him, with the sacrifice of the Mass, sacrifices of praise, prayer and submission to his divine will; trusting, finally, in his fatherly goodness, and loving him above everything created. Thus and only thus can Religion bear fruit in us. Thus and only thus will this first wheel of the carriage in which we ride, which is, as we have said, the will of God, run safely and well on the rails.

“For my part,” said Don Juan, “I cannot but give you a thousand thanks, Don Prudencio, for the great kindness with which you have been pleased to give us explanations as enlightening as they are profitable.”

“I too,” said Don José, “am grateful to you for them. And since it is now well into the night, and you wish, rightly, to retire, I hope that another day, if your occupations allow it, you will be so good as to come back to this house, which is yours \[*esta su casa*, the Spanish courtesy formula\], and give us another delightful time by completing for us the explanation of the railway that you began so happily today.”

DON PRUDENCIO. I shall take as much pleasure in it as you, and I believe that before long, God willing, we shall see each other again. Meanwhile, good night, gentlemen, for it is time to rest.

DON JUAN AND DON JOSÉ. God be with you, Don Prudencio. \[*Vaya V. con Dios*, the usual farewell.\]

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[1] Gregory XVI, *Mirari vos*, 1832; Pius IX, *Qui pluribus*, 1846.

[2] Augustine, *Soliloquies* II.1.1: *Deus semper idem, noverim me, noverim te.*

[3] Ps 16 (17):15, *satiabor cum apparuerit gloria tua*.

[4] Ps 18 (19):2, “The heavens declare the glory of God.”

[5] Gen 2:19–20.

[6] A paraphrase combining 2 Cor 10:5 (“bringing every understanding into captivity to the obedience of Christ”) and Rom 12:1 (*rationabile obsequium vestrum*, “your reasonable service”).

[7] Mt 17:5 (compare Mt 3:17).

[8] Lk 10:16.

[9] *de la otra*.

[10] 2 Cor 10:5 with Rom 12:1, as above.

[11] Mt 17:5; Lk 9:35.

[12] Gen 2:7, *factus est homo in animam viventem*.

[13] The doctrine paraphrased is that of Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 94, a. 3 (“Whether the first man had knowledge of all things”).

[14] Gen 4:2–8.

[15] Gen 6:1–4. Augustine, *City of God* XV.

[16] 2 Pet 2:5 (*octavum Noe justitiae praeconem*, Vulgate); Heb 11:7. The Spanish gives the reference to 2 Peter as “II, 11”.

[17] Heb 1:1–3, freely paraphrased.

[18] A paraphrase of Jn 1:1–14 with explanatory additions.

[19] Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 1.19 (on Jn 1:5).

[20] Mt 21:43.

The Railway, or Means of Attaining Happiness and Avoiding Unhappiness and Misfortune

Morality

DON PRUDENCIO. Good afternoon, Don José. How have you been since last night?

"Perfectly well," answered Don José. "And you, Don Prudencio?"

DON PRUDENCIO. Thanks be to God, I am going on as usual. I have come to see you earlier today because a very important matter requires me to be at home at nine this evening. I thought I should find Don Juan here already, but it seems he has not come yet.

"He cannot be long now," said Don José, "for it is about to strike six, and that is the hour we had agreed to go for a walk until the time you usually favour us with your visit. I am sure that… Do you hear? That is he coming in."

"God keep you, gentlemen," said Don Juan.

"And you too, my friend," answered Don José.

DON PRUDENCIO. I say the same to you, Don Juan. And since you are going for a walk, and the weather invites us to it, we will go together to take the air, and as we walk we will do what we would have done sitting in this drawing room.

You will remember, gentlemen, that we said the two front wheels were Religion and Morality. The first was explained last night; it remains for us today to explain the second. I think you will also remember that, as we pointed out, these two wheels have, and must have, the same axle; I mean, the same or an equal tendency towards God. Religion pays him the tribute of honour, homage and love that every rational creature owes him. Morality regulates and directs all the free actions of man to his divine Majesty as to his supreme Good, his last End, his sovereign Lord, who deserves, requires and commands it, promising rewards to the obedient and threatening punishments to those who transgress his law.

This moral Law, considered in itself, or in God its author, is called the divine and eternal law, and is defined as: The divine reason or will of God, which commands that the natural order he has established be preserved, and forbids that it be disturbed.[1]

Considered, however, as stamped on the brow of every rational creature, in the Apostle's expression; as a participation in the eternal law; as dictating, commanding or forbidding what by the light of reason alone we know to be lawful, commanded or forbidden; it is then called the natural law, and can be defined as: A certain ordinance of reason, which comes immediately from God as author of nature.

Indeed: just as God, the author of nature, established and laid down laws for all things, so that all might serve and tend, each in its own way, to the end he set himself in creating them, so too on man, who is not so much a thing as a person, that is, a moral and therefore free being, he imposed a law no less suited to the end of his creation. It is a law that commands and forbids: it commands good and forbids evil, *averte a malo, et fac bonum*, "turn away from evil and do good".[2] Creatures incapable of reason and lacking freedom do necessarily whatever they do. But man, as a rational and free creature, can act or not act, can do good or do evil instead, and so deserve reward or punishment, according as he observes or breaks the Law, or the order that God wishes to reign in the moral world. The Creator and Lawgiver of man, desiring his temporal and eternal happiness, engraved that law himself on the brow and heart of this his favourite creature. But man, instead of withdrawing into himself and consulting his conscience, lets himself be carried away by the senses and seeks outside himself what he could find within himself. So God willed to present his law to him in a

form the senses could grasp, and gave it to Moses written on two tables of stone, both engraved by his own finger.[3] Nor was he content with this. Knowing that example is the most powerful argument to convince, and the most eloquent and moving means to stir, he willed to give, and gave, to man that same law in person, in his own eternal Son, made man to redeem those who were subject to the law: *ut eos qui sub lege erant redimeret*.[4] Not that Jesus came into the world to abolish the law and free us from observing it; he came to fulfil it and perfect it by the most exact fulfilment of all its precepts: *Non veni solvere legem, sed adimplere*, "I have not come to abolish the law but to fulfil it."[5]

"How good, wonderful and just is the law of the Lord!" exclaimed Don Juan. "As Creator, he made man for himself, for his own glory; and he made all things for man, putting them all under his feet, for his well-being. He set himself the same ends as Lawgiver. For the first three precepts of the Decalogue have as their object the honour and glory due to God, which man must render him by loving and serving him; and the other seven are all directed to man's well-being, temporal and eternal."

DON PRUDENCIO. Perfectly put. Don Juan has just reasoned and spoken like an accomplished theologian. In the first three precepts of the Decalogue we do indeed turn to God, offering him our affections, words and works. In the first, which is to love God, we regulate our affections, loving God above all things, and things in God and for God, solely as means to love God more. In the second we honour God with our words, abstaining from unlawful oaths, blasphemies and other bad expressions, and uttering instead words of praise, confessing his holy name, and swearing with the due conditions when it is necessary. In the third we honour God with our works, abstaining on Sundays and other feast days from all servile or forbidden work, and exercising ourselves in good works

such as hearing holy Mass, receiving the sacraments of Penance and Communion, and practising the virtues.

"A few words have been enough for you, Don Prudencio," said Don José, "to explain to us satisfactorily the precepts of the first table, which others explain at such length. Would you be so good as to set out those of the second for us in the same way?"

DON PRUDENCIO. That is exactly what I was going to do. You know that the precepts of the second table are all directed to the good of our neighbour. Since our parents are the first of our neighbours, they are put in the first line of that table. God commands us in it to love them, obey them, revere them, serve them and help them. After that all our other neighbours are included. And since men, when they forget the love they owe one another, injure one another in their persons, in their goods and in their honour, the remaining commandments are directed to preventing those three kinds of injury. The fifth, the sixth and the ninth forbid injuries to persons; the seventh and the tenth forbid injuries to temporal goods; the eighth forbids injuries to the honour and good name of our fellow men.

These ten precepts are like so many branches coming from two main branches, which are love of God and love of neighbour, both nourished by the common trunk, which is Love. Love is so natural and necessary to man that without it he cannot live. It is so easy for him that, provided he wills it, he can. It is so sweet to him that, when he loves God and his neighbour as he ought, he feels his heart as though flooded with a balmy and delightful sweetness; while remorse shakes and tortures it if, instead of love, he lets hatred into it.

"Since you, Don Prudencio," said Don Juan, "have the gift of clarity so well joined to an admirable conciseness, I should like you to be so kind as to explain these four things, which are rather obscure to me: Eternal Law, Synderesis, Reason, Conscience."

DON PRUDENCIO. You do me too much honour, Don Juan, far too much. But let us leave compliments aside and come to the point. ETERNAL LAW, I said already, is the divine reason, that is, the will of God, who wills and commands, and cannot but will and command, that the natural and moral order he has established be preserved, and forbids that it be disturbed.

SYNDERESIS is the natural capacity or faculty of the soul for understanding moral principles, such as: Good is to be done; evil is to be avoided; and so on. It is a habit that the Creator himself infused and engraved in the human soul as a spark and image of the Godhead, which always approves good and condemns evil.[6] From synderesis is born what is called common sense, because it is found in all men. When a crime of whatever kind is committed in public, everyone raises his voice condemning such wickedness. When, on the contrary, we witness a heroic act of virtue, we all celebrate and applaud it. When someone finds himself in some difficulty or imminent danger, by sea or land, he turns at once, and as if by instinct, to God; though afterwards he forgets him and often continues in his habitually criminal train of life… The divine law and synderesis are always in perfect agreement, like the seal and the image it stamps.

REASON is taken in a broad sense for the faculty of reasoning, but more particularly for the very act of the understanding that reasons. And note well the difference between synderesis and reason. The former is a capacity, a power, an infused habit for reasoning; the latter, rather than a faculty, is the very act of reasoning. The former is like a piano, let us say; the latter is like the piece played on the piano. The former is like a mirror in which the light of the divine face is reflected; the latter is the reflection itself. The former dictates good and condemns evil in general. The latter, measuring things by their circumstances of time, place, and divine and human laws, approves the one and condemns the other in particular. Synderesis is like a queen who, set in the brain as in her palace, commands and disposes from there without anyone daring to contradict her. Reason is like a maidservant who has to go out into the street and walk all over the world, where she meets a thousand obstacles and difficulties. One flatters her, another threatens her, and all distract her from her service and often lead her astray. The very passions of the soul, her inseparable companions, are like eyeglasses that now magnify objects for her, now make them smaller, now paint them in different colours, now disfigure them entirely. So she sometimes calls evil good and good evil, and not infrequently takes error for truth and abandons truth as if it were error… After this you will not be surprised that those who have no other counsellor than reason should go so far astray, in spite of their good intentions.

CONSCIENCE is a judgement of the understanding that applies and determines the universal practical principles to one's own particular action.[7] I call conscience a judgement because it is an act and not a power or a habit. I also say that conscience applies the universal practical principles, because it dictates in particular what they express in general. I say, finally, that it applies them to one's own particular action, because conscience does not meddle with other people's affairs, but only with the business of its own house. We can, then, regard conscience as a household maid who never leaves the house, unlike reason, who is a great one for walking about and is therefore always exposed to a thousand stumbles and dangers, unless she finds a charitable Mentor to guide her. Since conscience never leaves the palace of Queen Synderesis, she is always under her mistress's eye; so she cannot do, say or think anything in particular without the mistress seeing or knowing it. If she does something wrong, the mistress scolds her at once, and the poor little maid, pensive and sad, is devoured by remorse. Quite the opposite happens to her when she does everything well; for then, full of joy and gladness at having done her duty, she goes about always very content and holily satisfied. This can be seen in all truly virtuous people, who always enjoy a very great and enviable inner joy; while those who live badly have within themselves a monstrous vulture that devours their entrails. Having no inner rest or joy, they seek it eagerly outside themselves, in riches, honours and pleasures: today at balls, tomorrow at the theatres, and almost always in filthy and shameful vices. But the unhappy creatures are like those fever patients who drink cold water to calm their burning and insatiable thirst. For the moment they find in it some relief for the heat that is consuming them; but hardly do they take their lips from the deceitful cup when their distress is doubled by the frustration that consumes them…

"I tell you, Don Prudencio," exclaimed Don Juan, enthusiastic and visibly pleased, "that, as you know, I have read many works of moral theology, but in none of them have I found an explanation so brief, so clear and so completely satisfying as the one you have just given us. From this I see without a doubt that you have studied

the inner man a great deal, and that while you know all the folds and creases of his heart, you are not ignorant either of the many springs of his soul. Now, since you have finished the explanation of morality in general so thoroughly, I should like you to be so kind as to tell us, keeping to that subject, what you think of the Gospel Morality."

DON PRUDENCIO. The Morality of the holy Gospel is an explanation, a perfected and complete declaration, of the natural Morality. Jesus Christ, true God and true man, said that he did not come to take away the moral law but to fulfil and perfect it, as we have already said, and as can be seen in the four Gospels, or rather in the four books of one and the same Gospel. There is no virtue that it does not commend, nor vice that it does not reprove; there is no passion whose fatal effects it does not show, nor state of life whose duties it does not explain. To give men an effective remedy against vice, and to root evil out of their hearts, it forbids even criminal thoughts and disordered desires.[8] However, since the most powerful motive for keeping the law is love for the lawgiver, Jesus Christ, when he declared and explained the first precept of the Decalogue, said that man must love the Lord his God with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind and with all his strength.[9]

Jesus Christ founded his Morality on the best and most solid foundation, the will of God, who as supreme Lawgiver had laid it down and was laying it down. He then explained its certain and irrevocable sanction, which consists in the rewards and punishments of the next life. He calls his commandments the will of his Father, and recalls and represents him to us as a stern and just Judge who condemns the wicked to eternal fire and gives the just the endless happiness of his glory, as can be seen in chapter 25 of Saint Matthew.[10]

This he promises for the life to come, without forgetting, for this life, any of the natural and secondary motives that can move man to virtue. To those who faithfully observe his holy law he promises peace of conscience, peace of soul, dominion over all hearts, the esteem and respect of their fellows, and even the temporal blessings of Providence.

"Take my yoke (that of my precepts and of my cross) upon you, and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls; for my yoke is sweet and my burden light" (Matth. 11:29–30). He calls the moral doctrine he teaches, and whose fulfilment he requires, a yoke, so that we may understand the grace he himself gives by his example to those who take it up to keep it. A yoke is said of two that are joined for the same work or ploughing; and Jesus does not abandon or leave alone the Christian who embraces his Morality, but joins himself to him and helps him. He does not act like the Scribes and Pharisees, who laid very heavy burdens on others and would not touch them themselves even with a finger.[11] Jesus Christ, on the contrary, takes upon himself the yoke he lays on others, so that it may be all the lighter for whoever takes it.

"Blessed," he says, "are the meek, for they shall possess the earth… Let men see your good works and glorify your heavenly Father… Do not be anxious about your livelihood in time to come, for your heavenly Father knows what you need…"[12] Those who are resolute and steadfast in practising this holy Morality bear witness that their trust was never disappointed, and that the divine word always took effect.

To such sublime lessons Jesus always joined the force of his example, in this differing from all other teachers of Morality. He commanded nothing that he did not practise first himself. He is given to all of us as a model, and certainly he could not have proposed a more perfect one. "If you do what I command you," he said, "you will be constantly loved by me, as I am loved by my Father because I keep his commandments" (John 15).[13] It is not surprising, then, that with a manner of teaching so exemplary and persuasive he should have won the goodwill of the world, and led so many men to practise the most heroic virtues.

"You may be sure," exclaimed Don Juan, "that all these 'philosophers' by antiphrasis \[that is, called lovers of wisdom by the opposite of what they are\], who are held up to us as models of honesty and humanity, have not done, do not do and will never do as much. They want to reform everything, on the pretext that

everything needs it; and those who need it more than anything are themselves, who speak one way and act another. That is why their teachings cannot fail to be… what they have always been: barren of good, but extraordinarily fruitful in every kind of evil… And that the world should still let itself be seduced by these modern scribes and Pharisees!… And that there should be so many, many people who, to follow the maxims of these overturners and devastators of nations, fail to embrace or practise the maxims that produced so many millions of Saints for heaven and gave so much happiness to the earth!!!…"

"And what can be the cause," asked Don José, "of such blindness? What motives can there be for so many unhappy people letting themselves be led astray in this way? What reason…"

DON PRUDENCIO. The reason for all this is very clear and obvious. Ignorance in matters of Religion is great nowadays, almost universal; and the worst of it is that very many people take pleasure in it. They prefer darkness to light; they would rather have vices than virtues.[14] Lured by the coarse pleasures they have before their eyes, they take no notice, and do not want to take notice, of the joys of heaven which the Lord has promised and prepared for them if they believe and act as he commands them. They act like those unclean animals which, with their feet in the mud and wallowing in it, eat with insatiable greed without so much as raising their heads to see the tree that gives them food, and often bite one another over an acorn. So live those who do not live according to the Morality of Jesus Christ. They will not live according to the spirit but according to the flesh. They will not be disciples of Christ but of the voluptuous Epicurus: *Epicuri de grege porcus*, "a pig from Epicurus's herd". And living like this, what can they expect but to die in the same way?… And afterwards?… Unhappy creatures!…

"Don Prudencio is very right," said Don José.

"Very right? What do you mean?" exclaimed Don Juan. "Everything he has said so far is the very truth itself; it is what we see every day…"

DON PRUDENCIO. Gentlemen, I think what has been said is enough for us to consider the second front wheel of our carriage sufficiently explained. Another day, with God's favour, we will deal with the two rear wheels. I would gladly begin explaining both of them today, but it is about to strike a quarter to nine, and I do not know whether these poor legs will carry me home in a quarter of an hour; and, as I said, I must be there at nine o'clock sharp. Without more ado, God keep you, and rest well.

DON JUAN AND DON JOSÉ. And you likewise, Don Prudencio.

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[1] This is Augustine's definition of the eternal law (*Contra Faustum* XXII.27), *ratio divina vel voluntas Dei, ordinem naturalem conservari jubens, perturbari vetans*.

[2] Ps 33 (34):15.

[3] Ex 31:18; Deut 9:10.

[4] Gal 4:5.

[5] Mt 5:17.

[6] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 79, a. 12.

[7] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 79, a. 13.

[8] Mt 5:21–28.

[9] Mk 12:30; Mt 22:37.

[10] Mt 25:31–46.

[11] Mt 23:4.

[12] Mt 5:4 (5:5 in some numberings), 5:16, 6:31–32.

[13] A paraphrase of Jn 15:10.

[14] Jn 3:19.

Obedience to the Church

DON JOSÉ. What do you think of Don Prudencio, my friend?

DON JUAN. I say that he is a man of uncommon talent, of very vast learning, and of singular wit.

DON JOSÉ. Had I been asked, I would have answered the same as you. What a man! And how he knows how to make pleasant everything that comes from his lips! What grace, what beauty and exactness in all his comparisons! I should never tire of hearing him, I am so taken with his eloquence and purity of diction.

DON JUAN. The same happens to me, and I am already impatient to see how he will put on the rails the other two wheels that he still has to explain.

DON JOSÉ. It is very strange that he did not come yesterday, and no less strange that, being accustomed to come at seven, he is not here yet now that it has struck half past. Perhaps he is unwell; and if you like, we could go to his house instead of waiting for him.

DON JUAN. Very gladly, but… here he is. Good evening, Don Prudencio. We were just about to set out for your house.

DON JOSÉ. Indeed. We thought that, since you did not come yesterday and were late today, perhaps you were ill, and…

DON PRUDENCIO. I was, in fact, yesterday; but today, thanks be to God, and above all this afternoon, I am completely recovered.

"We are infinitely sorry for the first and no less glad of the second," said Don Juan and Don José.

DON PRUDENCIO. I thank you for it. And without further preamble we will pass, if you agree, to the explanation of the wheels we know of. Only, since I have come rather late, instead of explaining the two that remain, which are Obedience to Ecclesiastical Authority, that is, the Church, and Obedience to Civil Authority, I will explain only the first, keeping the second for another day.

Like the two front wheels, these others also have one and the same axle, which is God. Whoever hears and obeys the Superiors of the Church hears God and obeys God; and whoever despises them despises God.[1] I will say, or rather I say now, the same of the civil Authority. Whoever does not obey it, when it commands in accordance with God's ordinance, disobeys God and resists God's ordinance. There is only one difference between the two Authorities: the first derives immediately and exclusively from God, while the second proceeds immediately from the very men it governs, and only mediately from God. Through both, therefore, God rules on earth, as we read in the sacred Scripture.[2]

"Already I can see," said Don Juan, "how exact the comparison is in all its parts. For if those two wheels come off their rails, it follows that in towns, provinces and kingdoms everything must go topsy-turvy \[*de arriba abajo*, "from top to bottom"\] and roll down into the abyss."

"Clearly," said Don José. "But since Don Prudencio is going to give us the pleasure today of explaining the first of the two Authorities, I should like him to be so good as to tell us what the Church is, and how she is to be obeyed."

DON PRUDENCIO. That indeed must be our starting point. The Church is the congregation of all who follow the law of Christ. This congregation has and acknowledges as its invisible head Christ himself, and as its visible head his vicar, who is the Pope. This congregation, or Church, is the only true one, because she, and she alone, is one, holy, catholic and apostolic. Her hierarchy, spread throughout the whole known world, forms the most beautiful and magnificent picture one could see: a whole as uniform as one could wish, as well organised and governed as one could desire, through its constant and admirable unity of command and obedience. As it happens, I have here a note from the Statistics of the year 1851: Supreme Pontiff, Pius IX. Cardinals, 67. Patriarchs, 23. Archbishops, 147. Titular bishops, 899. Archbishops and bishops *in partibus*,

461. Vicars apostolic, 100. Prefects apostolic and Delegates with ordinary jurisdiction, 400. Priests, innumerable. Faithful or brethren, 200,000,000. One alone commands all, and all form only one that obeys him; and in obeying him, it obeys Jesus Christ, God!!!

This is that Church of which Jesus Christ, her true and only Founder, said that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her.[3] So the more the devil, and with him the tyrants and their henchmen, have striven to destroy her, the stronger and more solid she has become. Like Noah's ark, which was her figure, the more the waters of her tribulations have risen, and the more fiercely the waves of persecution have raged against her, the more majestically she has kept her course, floating fearless and triumphant over all the highest mountains, that is, over all hostile minds, even the proudest and most rebellious!… The Church is the precious and chosen Vineyard of the great Father of the family, God. Watered copiously with divine and human blood, she spreads her luxuriant and fruitful branches over the whole earth. She is the favourite Vineyard of the heavenly Father, who in his adorable and wise providence uses the wicked and the enemies as a pruning knife, to cut off the branches that bear no fruit, so that the others may bear more abundantly: *ut fructum plus afferant*.[4]

"What Don Prudencio is stressing," said Don Juan, "always struck me very much when reading history: that the Church has always grown, in proportion as her enemies joined their fury and persecutions to dismember and annihilate her. The tyrants persecuted her, sacrilegiously wounding her spotless bosom, and from it came forth a countless number of Martyrs, whose blood was like the wheat that, sown in good ground, yields a hundredfold.[5] Then the heretics persecuted her, and at once she brought forth a most prodigious number of learned men who, shielded by the truth, brought her safely out of their wretched sophistries. Finally, in all places and at all times, the slaves of the most abominable and loathsome vices have persecuted her; and besides the anathemas that her pure mouth hurled against them, the Church at all times and in all places has begotten and produced countless models of holiness and angelic purity."

DON PRUDENCIO. Everything Don Juan has just said is exactly historical and true. It is true that in our days we no longer see the bloody persecutions of early times. But the persecutions her enemies wage against the Church with their errors and vices have not slackened; rather they have gone on increasing and are still increasing, though uselessly as always. If we did not know it already by another channel, this alone would be enough to show us the necessity, and the imperative duty, that all of us faithful have of following scrupulously the one unchanging and infallible rule of faith and morals that the Church sets before us, so as to tell truth from error and virtue from vice at once. All of us must without fail have a true idea of God, and also of the origin of man, of the end for which he was created, and of the conduct he must keep to attain it, putting into practice besides the means God provides him for that same purpose. For all this man needs the rule I spoke of, as a guide, as a light, without which he could not avoid the most lamentable errors, nor protect himself against human quibbles.

That light was, is and will be unfailing and inextinguishable, because it is divine. Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, kindled it to last as long as the ages last. He himself taught his Apostles by word of mouth. He founded on them his infallible and indestructible Church, and ordained that she, as a living, universal and perpetual organ, should serve as a witness to the whole world, present and to come, of all he had come to teach on earth. The clear and definite words the Lord said to his Apostles, which we read in the holy Evangelists, show this. "All power," we read in Saint Matthew, "is given to me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And be sure that I myself will be with you to the consummation of the ages."[6] "Go into the whole world," we read in chapter 16 of Saint Mark, "preach the Gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptised will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."[7] Saint Luke, after relating what happened when Jesus appeared to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, adds that he said to them: "Thus it was written, and it was necessary that the

Christ should suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and the forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things; and I am going to send you the divine Spirit whom my Father has promised you by my mouth."[8] This promise was fulfilled when the days of Pentecost were accomplished: "Then they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in various tongues the words that the Holy Spirit put into their mouths." So we read in chapter 2 of the Acts of the Apostles.[9] And in chapter 15, after relating that some restless men had risen up teaching what they ought not, without mission and without truth, and that the Apostles met to deliberate on what should be done, we read that they settled the question, heading their decision with these words: "It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us, inspired by him, that…"[10]

All I have said so far shows in an indisputable and irrefutable way that Jesus Christ provided his Church with everything she needed: both so that the peoples she was to teach would believe her, and for the complete security of her ministry and teaching office, so that she could never err in either.

"Yes," said Don José, "and for that very reason every Catholic can be sure of not erring when he listens to the Church and receives her pronouncements in everything concerning faith and the observance of the divine precepts. In listening to her and submitting his reason to her authority, he submits it to, and listens to, an authority constituted immediately and exclusively by God to teach and direct him. It is an authority endowed with infallibility by the very One who gave it this charge. It is an authority that is not only the trustee of divine revelation but also a witness of the very facts of this revelation, and the interpreter of the true sense in which it was communicated, and of the genuine sense in which all that is recorded about it in the sacred Books is to be understood. He submits his reason, in short, and listens to God, when he submits it and listens to the authority that God himself instituted, and assists and directs in the high and sublime functions of his divine ministry."

DON PRUDENCIO. Don José reasons very well. And I add that in all this man does not debase or degrade himself, as not a few senseless people claim. Rather he is raised up and ennobled by listening to the Church and obeying her. What he does is, yes, an act of humility; but by it he pays homage, he renders a free and voluntary tribute, to the Author of his life and of his reason, to the supreme Being, to the Lord of the universe, to his God, who has a full and absolute right over him. In this he does no more than fulfil a duty, pay a debt that the creature cannot avoid owing the Creator. And could man dishonour himself by honouring God? Lower his dignity by humbling himself in his presence? Does he not act in this as what he is, that is, as a rational and free being, distinct from all the other beings below him? Man has the same obligation to submit his reason to God's truthfulness and obey his will as to turn to his goodness, begging him to help him in his frequent sorrows and needs. And would it occur to anyone that it is a shameful humiliation for man to acknowledge and lay bare his misery before a God who can and, in his goodness, will draw him out of it?

It makes no difference whether man hears God mediately or immediately. In both cases the homage to his divine Majesty is equally complete, because being mediate or immediate changes nothing in its essence. Therefore, whenever a man is sure that the one he believes and obeys is sent by the Lord, and that in believing and obeying this envoy he believes and obeys God himself, the homage, the tribute of his whole person that he renders, is equal and equally acceptable in God's divine eyes. And can the Catholic doubt that he hears and submits to God when he submits to the Church that teaches and commands him? The Church, in God's divine name, or better, having him with her (for he never leaves her), and therefore clothed with his supreme authority, proposes to man the truths he must believe and the precepts he must keep. What, then, is there, what can there be, in the submission of man's reason and will that is not worthy of his greatness and proper to his dignity?

Besides, the teaching Church, considered in herself, forms and presents a most venerable Body from whatever point of view one looks at her. If one considers the illustrious members who make up her harmonious and admirable whole, it is nothing less than the entire Episcopate, spread throughout the Catholic

world, with at its head its one and supreme visible Chief, the Sovereign Pontiff. If one considers her antiquity, she goes back to the Apostles, the immediate disciples of Jesus Christ. If her extent, she knows no limits but those of the globe. If her doctrine, none can be compared with it, for none has given, or can give, such results. How many learned men she has produced, and how many heroes she has begotten!!! Ah, no; no school, no society can boast of having so long and so well-linked a series of men illustrious for their learning, men most celebrated in every branch of science. No; none will ever be able to record in its annals, as the Catholic Church does in hers, so many deeds of the most sublime heroism, in charity, in fortitude, in greatness of soul and in holiness… Compare any other institution with her, then, or all of them together if you like; and in doing so, I am sure, they will all lose their merit and disappear entirely, as the stars disappear in the presence of the sun… What then, if she seems so great and venerable to us when we contemplate her with the human eye, what will she be when we consider her with the eyes of faith, clothed with the very infallibility and power of her divine Founder, who is in her and with her, teaching what she teaches and commanding what she commands? Will she not be worthy of all our admiration, all our respect and docility, all our obedience and submission?…

"What you were saying a little while ago, Don Prudencio," said Don José, "has often occupied my attention. I used to think that even if the Catholic Church had nothing divine about her, the mere consideration of the countless multitude of learned men she has given to the world, all thinking, speaking and teaching the same thing at all times, in all places and in all the languages of the world, this alone, I say, would be more than enough to make all men admire her, believe her and follow her. Men naturally attend to and listen to the one who knows most among them. The child listens to his mother; disciples to their master; the masses of the people to the man they consider a man of talent; and the learned themselves listen gladly to those more learned than they, read their writings, believe what they say, and copy or adopt the ideas they put forward. Well, if in the natural order children and men of every rank and condition act like this with regard to things that are often of little importance, how is it that they do not do the same in the spiritual order with regard to things on which their salvation depends? How is it that they do not listen to the Church, who, more than any mother, better than any master or any learned man or man of talent, can instruct them?"

DON PRUDENCIO. That is a very apt reflection, and it can and should serve us, who happily believe and do what the Church commands us to believe and do, to confirm us more and more in our beliefs and obedience. It is very natural that children and disciples should listen docilely, as Don José was just saying, to their mother and their master. And besides its being very natural for us to do the same with regard to the Church, whose children and disciples we are, we must remember that in listening to her and obeying her we are not obeying and listening to just any mother and teacher, but to a mother and teacher charged by God himself with teaching us, directing us and saving us.[11] Whoever hears her hears God; whoever despises her despises God himself. So Jesus Christ declares in his holy Gospel. Happy those whose upright conscience tells them that they do the first! Unhappy those who, by system or by negligence, do the last!!!

It would now be time, gentlemen, to begin explaining the obedience we also owe to the civil Authority, the fourth and last wheel of the carriage in which we are travelling towards eternity. But although

our conference has not been very long, it is already rather late because I was somewhat delayed, and I find myself obliged to leave you, not without promising you the conclusion of our railway for tomorrow.

And so, good night, gentlemen; until we meet again…

DON JUAN AND DON JOSÉ. Until tomorrow, God willing, Don Prudencio.

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[1] Lk 10:16.

[2] Prov 8:15, "By me kings reign"; compare Rom 13:1.

[3] Mt 16:18.

[4] Jn 15:2. The vineyard image: Is 5:1–7; Mt 21:33–43.

[5] Compare Tertullian, *Apology* 50: “the blood of Christians is seed”. Mt 13:8.

[6] Mt 28:18–20.

[7] Mk 16:15–16.

[8] Lk 24:46–49.

[9] Acts 2:1–4.

[10] Acts 15:28.

[11] *Mater et Magistra*.

Obedience to the Civil Authority

DON JOSÉ. Welcome, Don Prudencio. Don Juan and I were waiting here for you impatiently, because truly we long to hear from your eloquent lips the explanation of the obedience we owe to the civil Authority.

DON PRUDENCIO. Without meaning to offend you in return for your kindness, I will take the liberty of telling you to keep your praises for someone who deserves them more than I, and above all for God. And let us come to the point. I ask you, instead of the impatience with which you have been good enough to wait for me, to have the patience now to listen to me.

The power of the Church, and the obedience we owe her, have now been explained. That power derives, as we said, from God: not only in the general sense, that is, in so far as every being comes from God; not only in the social sense, that is, in so far as the Church, being a society, God willed that there should be in it a power to govern it; but in a most special sense and manner, namely, that God instituted this power himself, established its form himself, and himself designated the person who was to exercise it, him and his successors. Consequently, all the Pontiffs who have succeeded and will succeed Peter in his See were and will be clothed with the same power that he received from God. By divine right they were and will be supreme Pastors of the universal Church, having over the whole of it the primacy of honour and of jurisdiction.[1]

“We are well convinced of this truth,” said Don Juan, “for its proofs leave no room for any doubt or reply. But I should like Don Prudencio to tell us, with the same frankness with which I ask him, whether we can and must believe that the civil power likewise proceeds from God.”

DON PRUDENCIO. Without any doubt, Don Juan. The civil power comes from God. For every power is a being, and God is the source of all being. The civil power is a dominion, and God is the Lord and first Owner of all things. It is a right, and in God is the origin of all rights. It is a moral mover, and God is the universal cause of every kind of movement. Lastly, the civil power is directed to a high end; and God, as he is the beginning, so too is the end of all things, which are all disposed, directed and governed by his Providence gently and effectively.

I will give you another reason, no less clear and no less convincing. God created man, and he did not create him to live alone but made him social. His existence presupposes a family, and his natural inclinations tend to form another and others; without this the human race could not be perpetuated. Families are bound to one another by intimate and indestructible relations. They have common needs. Some cannot either survive or be happy without the help of others, and this common and mutual need is what has always obliged them to live in society. Now, society cannot subsist without order; order cannot subsist without justice; justice and order are not possible without laws; and laws necessarily presuppose a lawgiver, an interpreter and an executor of them. Here, then, is the civil power. Let us sum up. God created man; he wills the preservation of the human race; he wills the existence of society; he therefore wills the power that society needs in order to preserve itself. The existence of this power is therefore in harmony with the will of God, as is that of paternal power in the family. And just as the family needs paternal power and God gave it, so society needs the civil power and God gave it too. So important a truth had to be invulnerable and indestructible, and God deigned to shelter it

from the errors and quibbles of unruly men, at odds with all order and all society, by telling us in the Book of truths that there is no power that does not come from God, that we are obliged to obey the powers, and that whoever resists them resists the ordinance of God.[2]

"Don Prudencio," said Don José, "knows how to prove his assertions with such lucidity and precision that he leaves nothing to be desired. I no longer had the least doubt about the truth we are considering. Once, finding myself at a gathering of first-rate scholars, I heard one of them make it evident with comparisons so natural and exact that I was completely convinced of it even then, and freed from the imaginary, as well as foolish and ridiculous, assertions I had unluckily read in Rousseau's *Social Contract*."

"And do you still remember them?" asked Don Juan.

"Do I remember them!" answered Don José. "Can one forget such shocking nonsense, even if one wants to?"

DON PRUDENCIO. Would you be so kind as to enliven our conversation with them?…

"Since you wish it, I will oblige you at once," said Don José. "'If man,' wrote Rousseau, 'had to live alone, like many of the animals, he would need no one to direct him to an end; each would be his own king, under the authority of God, the supreme King, in so far as he directed himself in his acts by the light of reason that the Creator has given him. But it is natural to man to be an animal not only rational but social and political, and therefore he must live in community, unlike the irrational animals; and natural necessity itself makes this plain. To the other animals nature has provided food; clothing of wool, hair or feathers; means of defence, teeth, horns, claws, or at least speed to escape. But man it has endowed with none of these things. Instead it has granted him reason, by which, with the help of his hands, he can procure what he needs. To obtain this one man alone is not enough, for he would not be sufficient for himself even to preserve his own life; therefore it is natural to man to live in society. Moreover, to the other animals nature has given discernment of what is useful or harmful to them; thus the sheep naturally dreads its enemy the wolf. There are also certain animals that naturally know the herbs that can serve them as medicine, and other things necessary for their preservation. But man has no natural knowledge of what is necessary for his life, except in general, in so far as with the help of reason he can come from universal principles to the knowledge of the particular things necessary for human life. Since, then, it is not possible for one man alone to attain all this knowledge by himself, it is necessary that man live in society, and that one help another, each occupied in his own task: one in medicine, for example, another in this, another in that; so remedying natural needs and also those that men have created for themselves.

"'If, then, it is natural to man to live in society, there must be someone among them to rule the multitude. For if many men were gathered together and each did what seemed good to him, the multitude would break up unless someone took care of the common good; as would also happen to the human body and to that of any animal, if there were no force ruling it with an eye to the good of all the members. Considering this, Solomon said: *Where there is no governor, the people shall be scattered.* In man himself we observe that the soul rules the body, and in the soul the irascible and concupiscible powers are governed by reason. Among the members of the body there is also one principal member that moves them all, such as the heart or the head. And so in every society there must be a ruler.'"[3]

"Well, my friend," said Don Juan, "I thought Don José was going to fire off a string of absurdities at us \[*espetarnos una sarta de disparates*, literally "to skewer us a string of nonsense"\], and I do not find that Rousseau spoke so badly in what he has just related."

DON PRUDENCIO. Quite the contrary; in this the said philosopher was very happy, as he always was when he did not let himself be carried away by the fiery impulses of his misguided reason. The string of absurdities he really did utter, which Don Juan was waiting for, will come afterwards, if Don José will be so good as to amuse us with it. For now he has given us an explanation that I call most beautiful; but its merit is not to be

attributed to the Genevan philosopher. For long, long before him, Saint Thomas had given it, in Book I of *De regimine principum*.[4] Another similar one was given later by Cardinal Bellarmine. After quoting what is written in the book of the Proverbs of Solomon, *By me kings reign, by me princes rule…*, and in that of Daniel, *until you know that the Most High rules over the kingdom of men, and gives it to whom he will…*, he says that political power considered in general (that is, without coming down in particular to monarchy, aristocracy or democracy) derives originally from God alone. For since it is necessarily joined to the nature of man, it proceeds from him who made man's nature. This power is moreover of natural law, and does not depend on the consent of men; for, whether they will or no, they must have a Government, unless they wish the human race to perish, which is against the inclination of nature. But natural law is divine law; therefore government too has been introduced by divine law.[5] Whoever, then, resists the civil power resists the ordinance of God, as we said already with Saint Paul.

"With this," said Don José, "the absurd satire of Horace is dispelled. In it we read that the first men came out of the earth like mushrooms or toadstools; that they lived like brutes; that they were without reason and speech; that they made war on one another for a handful of acorns or a wretched hut to shelter in; that at first this was a war of scratches and knocks on the head; that next they fought with sticks, and finally with weapons; that in view of this they made laws, and so on, as can be read in his Book I.[6] Cicero said the same in his treatise *De inventione* I, but he said it as a sort of joke; for speaking seriously afterwards in his book *De legibus* I, he says: 'This animal that we call man, provident, shrewd, subtle, endowed with many faculties, his memory and mind full of wisdom, was begotten in an ineffable and magnificent way by the supreme God,' and so on.[7]

"What Don Prudencio has said also dispels the whole theory that the sadly famous Rousseau managed to forge by heaping up all Horace's rubbish and Cicero's dreams. In that theory he makes everything depend on human conventions: the existence of society, the rights of the civil power, and so on, and other follies of the kind, which Don Juan will excuse me, I hope, from relating. Finally, with that explanation all the absurd systems of some Protestants, and of other heretics before them, come crashing down. Invoking Christian liberty, they claimed to condemn and abolish all powers…"

DON PRUDENCIO. There is still something else wrapped up in what I have already said, or rather made plain by it. It is the difference between the two powers, ecclesiastical and civil, with regard to the cause from which each proceeds. The civil power proceeds from God only in a mediate way, and only considered in general is it of divine right; considered in particular it is of public law or of the law of nations. The ecclesiastical power, however, in whatever way one looks at it and takes it, is of divine right, and derives solely and immediately from God.

If the reasons I have just put forward were not enough to convince (and they are), I could present, and I will give, another that no one can reject, for it is a proof from fact. Let us open history. What do we see in the space of eighteen centuries? That there is no known kingdom on the whole globe that has not changed the form of its government again and again, and that some disappeared entirely along with those forms. While we see this in the kingdoms of men, what do we observe in that of God, that is, the Catholic Church? That the finger of the Lord is always fixed on her: *Digitus Dei est hic*, "the finger of God is here".[8] That she continues, and will continue to the end of the world, in the same form of government that her divine Founder established in her. Persecutions do not matter to her. They are themselves the most palpable proof that she is not a human work but a divine one; and that the words of Jesus Christ to Saint Peter, which she has written in indelible characters on her serene and fearless brow, are, as they always were, an undeniable truth: YOU ARE PETER, AND ON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH; AND THE GATES OF HELL SHALL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT.

"Now more than ever," said Don Juan, "I see all the exactness and ingenuity of the comparison you made for us, Don Prudencio, when you told us that obedience to the canons of the Church and to the laws of the State

are like the two rear wheels of the railway carriage, and that both have one and the same axle, which is the disposition or ordinance of God. I also understand, and anyone can understand it as I do, that if one of these wheels were tied fast, the carriage would not run well; that if both were taken away it would be worse still; and that it would be much worse yet if the axle were taken from the wheels themselves, for then each of them would run out of true and be lost. Now, the application of all this to our case seems to me so natural that no one can fail to see it. The regalists, to an excessive degree, tie fast the *wheel* of the Church with the chains of their overreachings. The Protestants take away both *wheels*: first they took away obedience to the Authority of the Church, and afterwards they have tried to shake off the yoke of the civil Authority. Finally, Rousseau and the other atheist philosophers, leaving God out of everything and for everything, took the axle away from the wheels; and here they are, rolling off the rails. Without obedience to God, or to the Church, or to the civil Authority, societies fall victim to internal, continual and devastating revolutions!…"[9]

DON PRUDENCIO. Don Juan has grasped perfectly the whole substance of my thought, and has spared me the very trouble he has just taken.

"That point about the royal prerogatives \[*regalías*\] that Don Juan spoke to us about," said Don José, "I cannot see as clearly as he seems to suppose."

DON PRUDENCIO. Then I will explain it to you. The two rear wheels of a carriage, like the two front ones, having, as we said, one and the same axle, must go together, just as a bird beats its two wings at once. If one of a bird's wings were cut or tied, it could no longer fly, or the poor little thing would fly badly. If one of the rear wheels of the carriage were tied fast or taken off, it could not but run badly. And this is what the hot-headed partisans of the royal prerogatives did with the wheel of the Church. To hamper, and even make impossible, the majestic progress of society, whose enemies they are as well as the Church's, they began by exalting to the clouds, or rather to the stars, the royal Authority, attributing to it faculties and rights which it neither had nor can have, under the fine title of *Regalías* \[royal prerogatives\]. Maliciously forgetting the precept

of the Lord, *Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's*,[10] they said that everything belongs to Caesar. As a result they enslaved the Church, tying her wheel fast with chains and flattering the civil Authority. So we see it in France in the century of Louis XIV. But what happened soon after? That once the wheel of the Church had been tied fast, they next tied fast that of the State. Once the Church had been vilified in her rights, her hands bound and herself enslaved, the civil Authority, in the person of Louis XVI, soon saw itself likewise vilified, enslaved, and… led at last to the scaffold!… No one is ignorant of the consequences of all this, to be lamented for ever: the train came off the rails, and dragged the nation with it into an abyss of errors and horrors, the mere memory of which makes us shudder!…

"Now I understand very well," exclaimed Don José, "the harmful and diabolical wiles of the extreme regalists… If only the civil authorities did not let themselves be flattered with exaggerated, and therefore false, rights, and were content with the duties of defenders and protectors of the Church, they and their subjects would not sooner or later find themselves caught up in the same misfortunes as she!…"

DON PRUDENCIO. You now bring back to my memory, Don José, another comparison I mentioned on another occasion. I will use it again, enlarging it and applying it to our case. You will remember that not long ago I compared the Church to a vine or trellised vine spreading its branches or shoots over the whole earth. Well, you know that the more a vine spreads, the more supports one tries to give it with forked props and poles. The poles and props in our case are the civil authorities. On them the vine of the Church rests its leafy shoots; and she in her turn protects them with her shade, and offers them and their subjects the delicious and wholesome fruits, or grapes, that she never ceases to produce in all seasons and climates. If here or there her supports fail her, the vine will not die for that, nor will it cease to bear its abundant fruit in due season; for it knows how to give fruit even when thrown to the ground and under the ground, as in the catacombs. One or

another of its shoots may be cut off, or all of them if you like, in this nation or that; but it has strength enough to put out new shoots on another side and others, as luxuriant and fruitful as those taken from it, or more so. Meanwhile the props and poles will be left uncovered, exposed to all weathers. Split by the sun, worm-eaten and decayed, rotted, in short, by damp and rain, they will be taken away as old sticks, good only for the fire… Woe to the kings and kingdoms that, far from supporting, sustaining, protecting and defending the Church, despise and persecute her! They in their turn will be deprived of her beneficent and protecting shade, without the beauty of grace, without the greenness of virtues, without the fruits of good works. Like old sticks they will find themselves eaten away by their own passions and vices, worm-eaten with injustices, rotted with unspeakable damps, broken, in short, thrown out, cast aside, abandoned by heaven, made the laughing-stock and scorn of the earth, with no future for their inhabitants but the unquenchable fire of hell!…

"These are truths," said Don José, "that I should like to see engraved on the fronts of the public buildings of every nation."

"If only," exclaimed Don Juan, "the nations and peoples would let themselves be persuaded by them, living and acting as their temporal and eternal interests demand!…"

DON PRUDENCIO. Gentlemen, since for some time now the nations and peoples seem obstinately bent on not listening to truths or practising virtues, rejecting, to their misfortune, or despising with culpable indifference the one Religion that saves the world in time and in eternity, let us be on our guard not to let ourselves be swept away by the current. Let us try to keep and practise the Catholic religion; to observe the morality commanded by God in his holy law, taught and practised by Jesus Christ, his eternal and divine Son. Let us be obedient to the Church, our mother; for it is well known that whoever does not obey her disobeys God, and he cannot have God for his father who does not acknowledge and have the Church for his mother. Let us be obedient also to the legitimately constituted civil authorities. In this way, with these four wheels running evenly and well on the rails, our carriage, and we with it, will arrive without a stumble and in all happiness at the end towards which we are travelling.

"Congratulations, Don Prudencio," said Don Juan, "on having explained to us so happily and so aptly this railway of yours, whose idea pleased us so much from the very beginning."

"My words cannot express to you," said Don José too, "all my gratitude for the trouble you have taken to oblige us, so usefully and so kindly, to the end of these enlightening explanations of yours. I have them, and shall keep them, engraved on my memory. And not only that: I have taken some notes on them, which I hope will be of no small use to me in the constant dealings my profession obliges me to have with people who can profit greatly from such instruction."

DON PRUDENCIO. Our railway being now finished, I would not consider our conferences ended, if I did not fear to trouble you with another on a subject of no small importance.

"You have never troubled us," added Don José, "and you never will, even with a thousand more. Don Juan and I accept gladly what you are good enough to promise us, and thank you for it in advance." \[the text is garbled here; probably *desde ahora*, "in advance".\]

DON PRUDENCIO. Enough for today, then, and until tomorrow, God willing.

DON JUAN AND DON JOSÉ. Farewell, and rest well, Don Prudencio.

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[1] *Pastor aeternus*.

[2] Rom 13:1–2.

[3] Prov 11:14. *De regimine principum.*

[4] Thomas Aquinas, *De regno ad regem Cypri* I, 1 (often printed as *De regimine principum*).

[5] Robert Bellarmine, *De laicis* (*Controversiae,* De membris Ecclesiae III), ch. 6, citing Prov 8:15 and Dan 4:22 (4:25).

[6] Horace, *Satires* I.3.99–106.

[7] Cicero, *De inventione* I.2 (men once wandered like beasts until a wise man gathered them) and *De legibus* I.22–23.

[8] Ex 8:19 (8:15 in the Vulgate).

[9] *regalías*. *exequatur*.

[10] Mt 22:21.

Instruction

DON JOSÉ. Welcome, Don Prudencio… How have you been since yesterday?

DON PRUDENCIO. In spite of my many years and the ailments that go with them, I have, thanks be to God, nothing in particular to report. And you?

DON JUAN. We too, thanks to the Lord, are going on with nothing new. So, as you led us to hope yesterday, you have come today to give us another good time?

DON PRUDENCIO. I do not know whether the subject I have come to treat in this conference will be to your liking. As for me, I believe, as I hinted last night, that it is of the greatest importance for society, for the family, and for the individuals of which both are composed. "What can that be?" you will ask me. INSTRUCTION.

Knowledge is wealth, enlightenment is happiness; instruction is therefore a necessity. What is man, and what can he do, on earth without it? With instruction everything can be achieved. Without instruction man cannot fulfil his duties, nor relieve his needs, nor…

"Nothing can be done without instruction," said Don Juan, "and for that very reason I believe that, to make those under it happy, instruction is one of the things that every Government must attend to urgently, first of all and constantly, adopting a plan of teaching able to bring the fruits that are to be desired. Every nation has its own; but it seems to me that few have succeeded in choosing the best. Let Don Prudencio say whether this is not so, he who has travelled so much and is so competent in the matter, by taste and by his careful learning."

DON PRUDENCIO. Of all the methods or plans of instruction I have seen during my frequent and long journeys through the nations of Europe, the one I have liked most, and believe to be the best for its simplicity, economy and happy results, is the plan of the kingdom of Prussia. I have read it many times with the greatest attention, and each time with greater pleasure. I have been taken with it, and more and more convinced of its very great and effective usefulness. Practice or experience supports my way of thinking; for since it was put into effect, which was in 1819, it has not ceased to yield there, in every class of person, the finest and most abundant fruits one could desire.[1]

In case you do not know of it, and would like to know how this important branch of public Instruction is set up in that kingdom, I will set it out for you at length, though as briefly as possible.

DON JUAN AND DON JOSÉ. You will give us great pleasure by it, Don Prudencio.

DON PRUDENCIO. In the year mentioned the King of Prussia created a secretary of State with the title of Minister of Public Instruction and of Ecclesiastical and Medical Affairs. This Minister has the superintendence of national education in religious establishments, medical schools, health institutions, universities, academies, libraries, museums, botanical gardens; in short, in all establishments suited to the moral and intellectual culture of the people.

Under the immediate direction of this Minister there is a Council made up of three bodies: an ecclesiastical one, of thirteen members, most of them churchmen; one of public instruction, of twelve persons, most of them laymen; and one of medicine, of eight members, all of the profession.

The kingdom of Prussia is divided into ten provinces, and each province has its university, whose rectors communicate with the Minister of the department without the intervention of any other authority.

For the department of education there is besides in each province a board called the provincial Consistory, divided into three sections, all under the direction of a supreme president. The first section deals with ecclesiastical instruction; the second with popular instruction; and the third, called the medical board, with everything concerning health. The second board has under its direction all the primary and grammar schools. The university professors form in each province a board of examiners to examine schoolmasters and those who seek to enter the university. The plan for primary instruction is as follows.

Each province is divided into regencies or districts \[*regencias ó corregimientos*\]. Each district is divided into circles or divisions, and each division into communes or parishes.

Each parish has a school with approved masters, and the parish priest is the inspector of the school.

In towns where there is only one parish, the priest, the mayor and the councillors form a board to deliberate on everything concerning the school.

In the chief towns of the divisions, where there is more than one school, there is a board made up of the parish priests and magistrates; and in cities where there are many schools there is a higher board presided over by an inspector. This inspector is appointed by the Minister, to whom he reports all matters concerning primary and grammar instruction. He visits all the schools of the district and stimulates the zeal of the other inspectors, of the boards and of the schoolmasters. He is the Royal director of instruction in each province, and through him everything belonging to this most important department passes to the Minister.

“Certainly,” said Don José, “no simpler plan could be devised, nor one better suited for popular instruction, which is so neglected in many places. But it occurs to me that all this will be like a table very well laid and supplied, but with no guests to attend it. Do the children and boys go to school? Do not be surprised at this question, Don Prudencio, for we all know how irksome school is to them, and how much they all dislike work and application. They are like water, which rises only when it is forced to rise. Besides, do we not all know the negligence of so many fathers of families who, just because they do without any instruction themselves, say that their children will do without it too? And the greed of so many others who, as soon as their children can earn a *real*, send them to work, without caring in the least for their instruction?”

DON PRUDENCIO. All this has been foreseen, Don José. To prevent such fatal negligence and culpable greed in fathers of families, the law obliges them all either to send their children to school or to prove before the magistrates that they are in fact providing them with instruction at home. The law does not oblige only parents; it lays the same obligation on guardians, on factory owners, on master craftsmen with regard to their apprentices, and on all persons who have in their care children of either sex from the age of seven to fourteen complete. All the magistrates, together with the parish priests, are likewise expressly obliged to present every six months a list of all the children of either sex who, within their respective parishes, are not educated at home, and to compel their parents to send them to the public school. If the parents prefer to instruct their children privately, besides proving it, as we said, they are nevertheless obliged to contribute money to the support of public instruction.

All schoolmasters have the duty of handing in to the local board every fortnight a list of the children who have not attended regularly during those days, stating the reasons or causes, if any, why they did not.

So that master craftsmen who have apprentices, and parents of poor children, may not be deprived of the domestic service the children can give them, certain hours are set aside in each school for their instruction.

If parents are negligent in sending their children to school, they are called by the parish priest and exhorted to obey the law. If the pastoral exhortation has no effect, they are summoned before the local board and severely reprimanded for their disobedience. If the reprimand to the parents is not enough, the children are

taken to school by force, and the parents are fined, or sent to prison if they cannot pay; and if there is an aggravating circumstance in their disobedience, they are sentenced to public works. Finally, so that the law of public instruction may be duly carried out everywhere, it is ordered that in places where there are several country houses, cabins, farmsteads, cottages and so on, without forming a village, a board of the chief residents be organised, so that in agreement with the district board the school may be set up where it is most convenient for the easy and punctual attendance of the children.

“With such a plan,” said Don Juan, “it is materially impossible for a single child to be left without instruction…”

DON PRUDENCIO. So it is in fact, and you can gather it from the figure I am going to give. The census of the population of Prussia is about 13,000,000 inhabitants, and every day, in the whole kingdom, 2,021,491 children of either sex attend the public schools.

“Holy God! How fine this is!…” exclaimed Don José.

“And what does this instruction consist of? What is it about?” asked Don Juan.

DON PRUDENCIO. I will answer this with the very words of the law, which, I may say, is carried out most scrupulously: “The principal object of every school,” it says, “is to educate youth in such a way that, through knowledge of the relations of God with man and of man with God, there may be born in their tender minds the desire to order their lives according to the spirit and principles of Christianity.” With this object, all the masters are specially charged with instilling habits of piety in the children and accustoming them to these; with beginning and ending the day’s instruction with a suitable prayer to God; with implanting, in short, religious sentiments in their minds. As to social and public morality, they are likewise obliged to teach them

obedience to the laws, respect for the authorities, and the most lively love of their country.

The lower public schools are of two kinds: some called elementary, such as those of the towns, villages and hamlets; others called civic, which are those of the cities.

In every elementary school there must be taught, and there are taught: the Christian religion, reading, writing, the language of the country, elementary geometry, the general principles of drawing, arithmetic, geography, general history and the particular history of the kingdom, singing, gymnastic exercises, and some simple manual work. In rural schools, or those of small places, one or another of these subjects is left out.

In the civic schools are taught Religion, morals, the language of the country, Latin, arithmetic, mathematics, the physical sciences, histories, laws, and, more thoroughly, drawing, singing and gymnastic exercises.

Each and every pupil is obliged to follow the course of instruction prescribed by the regulations, and no father of a family may exclude his children from any branch of the teaching decreed.

“That kingdom of Prussia with its Government,” said Don Juan, “has often caught my attention, and I think it can catch that of every thinking man. Its government is absolute, and yet it is the most liberal in the education of the people. It is almost military, yet it has as its chief object to make all the sciences popular. It has no freedom of the press, yet it orders everything worth knowing to be taught. It hates and checks every revolution, yet it strives with singular eagerness to spread human knowledge, passing it as it were from hand to hand down to its humblest subjects, together with Religion, morals, peace and love of country.”

“Happy the nations,” exclaimed Don José, “that adopt so admirable and profitable a plan of instruction, to provide the instruction so necessary for boys and girls! Happy they will be beyond doubt, for in this way they will banish ignorance, the mother of impiety, immorality, irreligion, cruelty and barbarism, and the inexhaustible spring of all vices, crimes, abominations and misfortunes. One of the great philosophers of Greece said very rightly that a well-instructed and well-brought-up man is a jewel, but that he who lacks instruction and morality is the worst of animals, worse than a wild beast; for none does such harm to society

as the man without instruction, without education, without morality or religion."

DON PRUDENCIO. Instruction can and should be considered in two ways, in particular and in common. Common instruction is the name for that which extends to and includes everyone; and that is why the Prussian plan obliges all boys and girls to receive it from the age of seven to fourteen complete. This instruction is most useful, and even necessary, for all the occupations there are in society: trades, the mechanical and liberal arts, and so on. Particular or professional instruction is the special instruction that those who devote themselves to a particular and learned profession or career must obtain, for example law, medicine, the priesthood, and so on, all very necessary in society. For physicians are necessary for the health of the body, lawyers and judges for temporal goods and matters of justice, priests for the moral and spiritual goods of the faithful, the dignity of Religion, and so on.

This instruction is given in the universities and in the seminaries, so called because they are like seed-beds \[*semilleros*, from Latin *seminarium*\] of good clergy. Experience has shown that clergy come out better from the seminaries than from the universities, however well set up these may be. The reason is that in the universities, as their very name indicates, only a universal instruction can be given; whereas in the seminaries all the instruction is directed, particularly and specifically, to the end the Church sets herself, rearing these her chosen children as at her own breast, so that they may afterwards be fathers and teachers of others. In the universities the principles and conclusions of the sciences are set out in a dry and abstract way, and their knowledge serves the various ends that teachers and students respectively have in their study. In the seminaries no subject should be treated without its being directed, from its first line, wholly to the holy end of the seminarian. In the universities, finally, all the care and diligence of the masters comes down to the instruction of the students alone; nor can it be, so to speak, otherwise, given all the circumstances of a vast and general place of study, to which, precisely because it is such, so many and such various professors come with such different intentions and ideas. Quite the contrary happens in the seminaries. Since their principal aim is to form ministers worthy of the Lord and of the Church, the very instruction given to the seminarians, and their progress in it, must be and are directed by the masters to the high end of their vocation, never losing sight of it in any lesson or circumstance, so as to form their minds in the sciences and dispose their hearts to virtue, inclining them to it.

It is in the seminaries, and not in the universities, that young men meditate on and examine the dignity and excellence of the priesthood, its great duties and their difficult fulfilment. In the seminaries they learn that no one should aspire to so sublime a dignity but he who is called by God, as Aaron was.[2] In the seminaries young men understand that, even with a true vocation, they cannot carry out the functions of their high ministry well without exposing themselves to an evident danger of being lost, unless they have a great purity of life and conduct, and the corresponding store of instruction and doctrine.

This is why the Church has always desired and sought that young men who devote themselves to the ecclesiastical career be brought up in the shade, under the care and direction, of the bishops and priests, to drink at their pure source the crystal waters of the instruction, maxims, habits and conduct suited and necessary to their vocation.[3] This is a matter of such consequence that on it depend not only the salvation or perdition of the clergy themselves, but also the edification or ruin of souls, the purity or corruption of the morals of the people, and the honour of the Church, or her discredit and disgrace.

Let us repeat it, then, for it will not be too much to do so. It is in the seminaries that, under the immediate direction of learned, virtuous and experienced priests and under the eye of the bishop himself, young men come to know their true vocation; where they practise all the Christian virtues and the means of acquiring, preserving and increasing them. Retirement, modesty, frugality, profound respect for the truths and mysteries of our most holy Religion, the frequent reception of the holy Sacraments with the disposition and preparation to receive them well, devotion to the most holy Virgin, and the exercise of mental and vocal prayer: here is the first part of the seminarian's occupation, which consists in his own sanctification. The second, which

looks to the sanctification of others, consists in the seminarian's application to the study of Latin grammar, rhetoric, languages, mathematics, philosophy, theology, sacred Scripture, history, canons or ecclesiastical discipline, liturgy, the ecclesiastical computus \[the reckoning of the Church calendar and the date of Easter\], chant, and the method of catechising, preaching and administering the holy Sacraments. To all this the seminarian must apply himself with holy zeal; and to be more profitable and useful to his fellow men, he should occupy himself in his spare moments with the natural sciences, especially domestic medicine, agriculture, natural history and the liberal arts.

Hence the young men who, brought up and educated in the seminaries, are adorned and enriched with these virtues and this knowledge, once ordained priests and placed in the parishes, are, by their good example, modesty, exhortations and so on, the admiration and edification of the people. The parishioners come to them with confidence and satisfaction to consult them, not only on matters of conscience but also on their temporal and domestic affairs. Experience teaches, in fact, that no one inspires greater confidence in the hearts of the faithful, or as much, as their own parish priest, when they see these gifts of virtue and learning united in him. They do not see in him then a man like other men, but an angel of God who stands as a mediator between God and men.[4] They see in him a guide who directs them, a teacher who instructs them, a father who loves them, who consoles and helps them spiritually and temporally. They see in him a faithful friend who never abandons them, who accompanies them continually from the cradle to the grave, and even beyond it with his prayers and supplications for the eternal rest of their souls. He takes part in their joys and feasts; he pours over them the balm of consolation in their sorrows and afflictions; he presides at their mourning; and the greater his parishioners' sorrows, the more frequent are the Father priest's visits and the greater the services he renders them…

"What a series of truths," exclaimed Don Juan, "Don Prudencio has just related! And how much to be desired it would be that the channel of public instruction should reach to the farthest bounds of the nations, multiplying its branches in all the provinces and extending them to all the districts, towns and villages, without depriving a single one of the benefits of its fertilising waters!"

"And how much to be desired it would also be," exclaimed Don José in his turn, "that each branch of instruction should be in the charge of those to whom it belongs; that the university should impart its own; and that no obstacles should be put in the way of the Church in providing religious instruction to those who are one day to be her representatives among the people! How much to be desired it would be that, since she can, will and must suckle her dearest children with her own pure and abundant milk, she should not be obliged, as we have seen more than once, to hand them over to a wet-nurse who has none, or none so abundant or so good! The evidence that experience gives us speaks loud and clear, and only calumny can obscure the results of instruction in the seminaries that Don Prudencio has just described to us. For my part I believe that the very virtues and learning of the Catholic priests, which have always won them so much respect and love from the faithful, have likewise stirred up in the Protestants and other heretics, and in bad Christians, a rage and envy that they could neither hide nor contain. It has made them, and still makes them, break out in every kind of calumny, sarcasm, nickname, and… not infrequently in atrocious persecutions."

DON PRUDENCIO. I believe so too, Don José. For our priests are neither as bad and ignorant as those people pretend to believe and try to make out, nor, most of them, less learned and good than we could wish. Their detractors, who are usually ignorant and vicious, neither know how nor are able to wield any weapons but those that rage and spite suggest to them. Servile imitators of their masters *Luther* and *Voltaire*, they have always put into practice, as they know no other, the infernal doctrine those masters taught them: *Lie, lie like a devil, and not timidly or for a while, but always and boldly. Slander, slander without ceasing, for something is sure to stick!*…[5] The Protestants and the libertines know well that the decline of public and private morals and good conduct in a kingdom, province or town is always in direct proportion to the decline and discredit of the priests. For once the teachers are discredited and stripped of authority, their teaching and doctrine must

needs be despised: *cujus vita despicitur*, says Saint Gregory, *restat ut ejus praedicatio contemnatur*, "when a man's life is despised, it follows that his preaching is scorned."[6] The devil knows it well too, and for that very reason he tries, and has always tried, to set his mad dogs on to bark at Catholic priests, spewing out against them at once and always every sort of lie and calumny. Nor do they spare the simple faithful on that account, the good and true believers. They spend themselves against them in unworthy sarcasms and insults, to intimidate them and make them abandon virtue, and with it Religion. This is their whole endeavour, and those are the disloyal and reprobate weapons they use to achieve it. But all this, besides being unworthy and abominable, amounts to no more than human means, or, if you like, human-diabolical ones; and these do not prevail against the divine means by which the Church stands. They may, yes, rob her of some or many children in one place or another, in this kingdom or that; but put an end to her!… Oh, that no. That was not granted them, IT WILL NOT BE GRANTED THEM, neither to them nor to the whole of hell!!!…

Eighteen centuries of unceasing disappointments ought, it seems, to be enough to make them abandon their ever-frustrated enterprise. But blinded and obstinate as they are, they go on and will go on with it, to their misfortune, until the end of the ages… No matter; for if up there there is an Archangel who, with the cry *Quis ut Deus?*, "Who is like God?", routed the hosts of Lucifer,[7] can the Church fail to win a like victory over the hosts of the world, even though they are joined with those others, when she has God himself at her head?… The war, then, is open, here, there, everywhere;… and though the Mother has nothing to fear for herself, she does not cease to fear for her children. Solicitous for the salvation of all, she says to all, priests and faithful: "Be on the alert, my children!… Be faithful to God, be faithful to me!… Constancy and perseverance!… Let nothing daunt you that your enemies, who are mine and God's, may say or do!… Keep always before you, for your comfort and triumph, those words with which the divine Redeemer encourages us all: *Blessed shall you be when men curse you and persecute you for my sake, and say falsely every kind of evil against you. Rejoice then, and be glad; for very great is the reward that awaits you in heaven.*"[8]

"Bravo, Don Prudencio!" said Don Juan. "Would you believe that at this moment it seems to me I should have the courage to suffer even martyrdom?…"

"I am not surprised, Don Juan," said Don José, "for Don Prudencio's words are so full of truth and energy that, well meditated, they could, now and always, turn the most faint-hearted believer into a hero."

DON PRUDENCIO. With this we will end our conferences for now, in the hope of resuming them with others as soon as my occupations, and you, allow me.

"As for us," said Don José, "we are always ready to listen to you, and we long already for the moment when you will deign to grant us the same favour as now."

"Would that it were tomorrow!" exclaimed Don Juan.

DON PRUDENCIO. It will not be so soon, but it will be. Goodbye, gentlemen.

DON JUAN AND DON JOSÉ. God give you life and health, Don Prudencio.

End of The Railway.

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[1] *Kultusministerium*.

[2] Heb 5:4.

[3] The Council of Trent ordered the founding of diocesan seminaries (Session XXIII, 1563, *Cum adolescentium aetas*, can. 18).

[4] 1 Tim 2:5.

[5] *Calumniare audacter, semper aliquid haeret*.

[6] Gregory the Great, *Homilies on the Gospels* I.12.1 (Hom. 12); the text is quoted in Gratian's *Decretum*.

[7] The name Michael means "Who is like God?"; Rev 12:7–9.

[8] Mt 5:11–12.