



UNIVERSALITAS & PERVASIVITAS

IL COSTITUIRSI E DIFFONDERSI DELLA S.J. E SUOI ECHI (1540 - 1773)

di A. Pisani

Schede di approfondimento di argomenti generali

ULTRAMONTANISMO

Ultramontanism: A term used to denote integral and active Catholicism, because it recognizes as its spiritual head the pope, who, for the greater part of Europe, is a dweller beyond the mountains (ultra montes), that is, beyond the Alps. The term "ultramontane", indeed, is relative: from the Roman, or Italian, point of view, the French, the Germans, and all the other peoples north of the Alps are ultramontanes, and technical ecclesiastical language actually applies the word in precisely this sense. In the Middle Ages, when a non-Italian pope was elected he was said to be a papa ultramontano. In this sense the word occurs very frequently in documents of the thirteenth century; after the migration to Avignon, however, it dropped out of the language of the Curia.



In a very different sense, the word once more came into use after the Protestant Reformation, which was, among other things, a triumph of that ecclesiastical particularism, based on political principles, which was formulated in the maxim: *Cujus regio, ejus religio*. Among the Catholic governments and peoples there gradually developed an analogous tendency to regard the papacy as a foreign power; Gallicanism and all forms of French and German regalism affected to look upon the Holy See as an alien power because it was beyond the Alpine boundaries of both the French kingdom and the German empire. This name of Ultramontane the Gallicans applied to the supporters of the Roman doctrines--whether that of the

monarchical character of the pope in the government of the Church or of the infallible pontifical magisterium--inasmuch as the latter were supposed to renounce "Gallican liberties" in favour of the head of the Church who resided ultra montes. This use of the word was not altogether novel; as early as the time of **Gegory VII** the opponents of **Henry IV** in Germany had been called *Ultramontanes* (ultramontani). In both cases the term was intended to be opprobrious, or at least to convey the imputation of a failing in attachment to the Ultramontane's own prince, or his country, or his national Church.

In the eighteenth century the word passed from France back to Germany, where it was adopted by the Febronians, Josephinists, and Rationalists, who called themselves Catholics, to designate the theologians and the faithful who were attached to the Holy See. Thus it acquired a much wider signification, being applicable to all Roman Catholics worthy of the name. The Revolution





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adopted this polemical term from the old regime: the "Divine State", formerly personified in the prince, now found its personification in the people, becoming more "Divine" than ever as the State became more and more laic and irreligious, and, both in principle and in fact, denied any other God but itself. In presence of this new form of the old state-worship, the "Ultramontane" is the antagonist of the atheists as much as the non-Catholic believers, if not more--witness the Bismarckian Kulturkampf, of which the National Liberals rather than the orthodox Protestants were the soul. Thus the word came to be applied more especially in Germany from the earliest decades of the nineteenth century. In the frequent conflicts between Church and State the supporters of the Church's liberty and independence as against the State are called Ultramontanes. The Vatican Council naturally called forth numerous written attacks upon Ultramontanism. When the Centre was formed as a political party it was called by preference the Ultramontane party. In a few years the "Anti-Ultramontane Reichsverband" came into existence to combat the Centre and, at the same time, Catholicism as a whole.

As our present purpose is to state what Ultramontanism is, it is beside our scope to expound the Catholic doctrine on the power of the Church and, in particular, of the pope, whether in spiritual or temporal matters, these subjects being treated elsewhere under their respective titles. It is sufficient here to indicate what our adversaries mean by Ultramontanism. For Catholics it would be superfluous to ask whether Ultramontanism and Catholicism are the same thing: assuredly, those who combat Ultramontanis are in fact combating Catholicism, even when they disclaim the desire to oppose it. One of the recent adversaries of Ultramontanism among Catholics was a priest, Professor Franz Xaver Kraus, who says ("Spektatorbrief", II, quoted in the article Ultramontanismus in "Realencycl. für prot. Theol. u. Kirche", ed. 1908): "1. An Ultramontane is one who sets the idea of the Church above that of religion; 2. ...who substitutes the pope for the Church; 3. ...who believes that the kingdom of God is of this world and that, as medieval curialism asserted, the power of the keys, given to Peter, included temporal jurisdiction also; 4. ...who believes that religious conviction can be imposed or broken with material force; 5. ...who is ever ready to sacrifice to an extraneous authority the plain teaching of his own conscience." According to the definition given in Leichtenberger, "Encycl. des sciences religieuses" (ed. 1882): "The character of Ultramontanism is manifested chiefly in the ardour with which it combats every movement of independence in the national Churches, the condemnation which it visits upon works written to defend that independence, its denial of the rights of the State in matters of government, of ecclesiastical administration and ecclesiastical control, the tenacity with which it has prosecuted the declaration of the dogma of the pope's infallibility and with which it incessantly advocates the restoration of his temporal power as a necessary guarantee of his spiritual sovereignty."

The war against Ultramontanism is accounted for not merely by its adversaries' denial of the genuine Catholic doctrine of the Church's power and that of her supreme ruler, but also, and even more, by the consequences of that doctrine. It is altogether false to attribute to the Church either political aims of temporal dominion among the nations or the pretence that the pope can at his own pleasure depose sovereigns that the Catholic must, even in purely civil matters, subordinate his obedience towards his own sovereign to that which he owes to the pope, that the true fatherland of the Catholic is Rome, and so forth. These are either pure inventions or malicious travesties. It is neither scientific nor honest to attribute to "Ultramontanism" the particular teaching of some theologian or some school of times past; or to invoke certain facts in medieval history, which may be explained by the peculiar conditions, or by the rights which the popes possessed in the Middle Ages (for example, their rights in conferring the imperial crown). For the rest, it is sufficient to follow attentively, one by one, the struggle kept up in their journals and books to be convinced that



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this warfare by the Rationalist-Protestant-Modernist coalition against "Clericalism" or "Ultramontanism" is, fundamentally, directed against integral Catholicism--that is, against papal, anti-Liberal, and counter-Revolutionary Catholicism.

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