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THE POLITICAL THOUGHT OF F. LAMENNAIS

by

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ABSTRACT

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The enormous prestige that Félicité Lamennais had during his lifetime and the great influence that he exerted between 1820 and 1848 have not stood the test of time. Yet the issues to which he addressed himself were important and perennial; they reduced themselves to the basic question of the compatibility of order and freedom in society.

In spite of his wide knowledge, Lamennais did not have the training, or the talent, to deal successfully with such issues. He was a brilliant polemicist who rejected one after the other all of the political doctrines and ideas of his age. None could measure up to his envisioned synthesis of all he thought best in the modern world, the freedom and dignity of all men, and of all he thought best in the Christian tradition, stability and order.

He held the skepticism of modern philosophy and its positivist expression responsible for the disunity and strife the western world exhibited. At first he saw the French Revolution merely as the culmination of that disunity. However, as he became increasingly sensitive to the dehumanizing effects of positivism and increasingly aware of the extent to which modern philosophy permeated the attitudes and behavior of the upper classes, he came to view the Revolution as a desperate struggle by the lower classes for the restoration of humanism. He believed that Thomas Aquinas provided the philosophical and political concepts necessary to reverse the morally dangerous tendencies inherent in positivism.

From 1817 to 1830, he sought to make the Pope the spiritual leader behind whom kings and ruling classes would align themselves for the greater benefit of all. He failed to notice that Aquinas' theocracy had only been an ideal blueprint for a society in which the Church's moral suasion was well established

In the enormously different conditions of the early nineteenth century, such a concept had few chances of being taken seriously. Moreover, he was not aware of the secularism of his thought. The Church for him was never more than an institution designed to fight political and social injustices. Neither the Church nor the Bourbons heeded his advice.

Misunderstanding the nature of the French Liberalism of the late 1820's, he sought for a brief period to influence the Liberals, unsuccessfully trying to "catholicize" them. In early 1830, he turned somewhat abruptly toward democracy as the political tool for his ideas. If God's law could not be imposed from the top, the voice of the people would impose it from below. From 1830 to 1848, he worked on a massive philosophical structure designed to show the necessity and logic of the imposition of this higher law on all men everywhere. But not until he was confronted with political facts in 1848 did he fully realize the dilemma he had always faced and failed to resolve. However closely related they may be, ethics and politics deal essentially with different aspects of man. If a higher law was to be imposed, a man or an institution had to be responsible for its interpretation and application. This violated the essential equality that, he believed, all men share before God. He evaded as long as he could the inevitable conclusion that God's law, in a democracy, cannot be other than what the people said it was -- a doctrine he had fought all his life and which made nonsense of his belief that ethics and politics must be one. The basis for his democratic creed clashed with his belief in the necessary imposition of a higher law to maintain social order.

As a strict Thomist, he had few chances of being heard by a generation which had forgotten Thomism. Yet his popularity among the lower classes testified to his having touched upon a theme whose meaning they understood.

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C O N T E N T S

INTRODUCTION

Few French ecclesiastical figures have attracted as much attention as Lamennais. Between 1890 and 1930, literally dozens of books and articles were written about him and every few years since, a new work appears. Yet in spite of this, few important nineteenth-century figures are less well comprehended and less objectively treated. It has recently been said that the two best biographies of Lamennais are that of F. Duine, a French work written in 1922, and A. Vidler's English work written in 1954.[1] However, F. Duine's biography has serious shortcomings. Overly favorable to Lamennais, it attempts no analysis of his ideas, contains inaccuracies, and cites no references although Duine is the author of the only bibliographical essay on Lamennais.[2] Vidler's work is not a biography of Lamennais, but, as the author states, it is an ecclesiastical history.[3] Both of these works reflect the standard approach of French scholars on the subject. Lamennais is seen only in the context of religious history, or as part of the romantic movement, when that movement is itself seen as a religious revival. With the possible exception of Harold Laski, who emphasized the political aspects of Lamennais' ideas,[4] most English-speaking historians have followed the trend established by French historians since 1890.[5]

Since most French historians interested in Lamennais are Catholic writers, and even Catholic propagandists, their works have produced an imbalance which is reflected in the general studies of the period. Lamennais influence is stressed during the period 1820-1834, while his name hardly appears during the period 1834-1854. In addition, his influence is only mentioned in connection with the religious controversies of the late 1820's and early 1830's, particularly as it affected other writers. No notice has been taken of his enormous political influence over the lower classes from 1834 to 1848.

If Lamennais were only a figure in the history of the Church during the first half of the nineteenth century, then what Ernest Renan wrote in 1857 would be true: the ideas of Lamennais would have nothing to teach us, having become thoroughly incorporated by the Church.[6]

The reason for Lamennais' popularity with the French Catholics is not hard to understand. With the exception of the essay of Renan, which was an anti-clerical elaboration of the essay Sainte-Beuve had written in 1837,[7] very little of value was written about Lamennais from his death in 1854 until 1890. Then the deluge began. It coincided with the speech of Cardinal Lavigerie of November 12, 1890, calling on all French citizens to "rally" to the support of the Republic. In spite of the coolness with which Cardinal Lavigerie's speech was received, Pope Leo XIII issued his great encyclical Rerum Novarum on May 15, 1891. The more liberal among the Catholics and the clergy were, at last, free to express themselves. They needed a standard-bearer; Lamennais was the most prestigious at their disposal. Since he was the first French priest to have advocated freedom of education, they used his arguments to support their demands in the perennial battle of clerical versus lay control of the schools. Since he had so clearly addressed himself to the broad masses of the people, they used him in their attempts to bring religion to "the people." Since, for twenty years, he had fought for democracy, they followed his lead founding the first French Christian Democratic party. He was even used as a stick to beat Rousseau, in what is still the best biography of Lamennais' early years.[8] And as late as 1945, a major new political formation, the Mouvement Républicain Populaire, adopted him as its

spiritual godfather. An attempt was even made in 1942 to show a parallel between some of his ideas and those of Marshal Pétain's National Revolution.[9]

The French Catholic writers who sought to exploit Lamennais' ideas did no violence to them. But they merely used them in a very partisan manner. Lamennais is a complex author, who touched on many subjects, and who foresaw earlier and more clearly than other clerics the turn that political and social events would take. His vision could be recalled by those who sought to reconcile religion and democracy. At the same time his prescience made him anathema to all those opposing such a reconciliation.

Lamennais portrayed himself accurately as a political thinker. He disliked being called an apologist for the Church and rightly so, for this characterization misrepresents his primary concern which was not to increase Papal power, or that of the Church, but to check the growth of the power of the State. This characterization also overlooks his bitter quarrel with the Society of Jesus beginning in 1820, his sharp attacks against the political rigidity and lack of social concern of French bishops, and his repeated criticisms of the lack of erudition among the lower clergy.

Lamennais was primarily a critic, a prophet of doom who, confronted with an intractable political situation, was forced to look for an alternative to what he perceived as hopeless choices. His career can be divided into two principal parts: Lamennais the critic, which will be the subject of Chapter III, and Lamennais the political thinker, which will be the subject of Chapters IV and V. But, in

order to analyse his criticisms in the context of his thoughts, a presentation of his major concepts will be made in Chapter II.

Lamennais' career spans the forty years between 1808 and 1848, which is a period far more shadowy than the one that precedes it or the one that follows it. Although ideas and concepts with which we are familiar emerged during this period, many of them underwent radical changes following 1848. Liberalism is one such an idea, and the nature of political organization and activity is one such a concept. To analyse Lamennais' thought and the nature of the issues he raised, without referring to the time and place in which he lived, would diminish our understanding of him and of the period. Thus, this study begins with a sketch of his life and of the events which entangled it.

INTRODUCTION

FOOTNOTES

1. H. G. Schenk, The Mind of the European Romantics (Garden City, New York, Doubleday, 1969), 116-117.

2. F. Duine, La Mennais, sa vie, ses idées, ses ouvrages (Paris, Garnier, 1922), and Essai de bibliographie de Félicité Robert de la Mennais (Paris, Garnier, 1923).

3. Alec R. Vidler, Prophecy and Papacy (New York, Scribner, 1954).

4. Harold Laski, Authority in the Modern State (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1919).

5. Foremost among these are: Waldemar Gurian, "Lamennais," Review of Politics, vol. 9, No. 2 (April 1947), 205-229; J. L. Talmon, Political Messianism, The Romantic Phase (New York, Praeger, 1960); E. L. Woodward, Three Studies of European Conservation; Metternich, Guizot, The Catholic Church in the Nineteenth Century (London, Constable, 1929); Peter N. Stearns, Priest and Revolutionary; Lamennais and the Dilemma of French Catholicism (New York, Harper and Row, 1967).

6. Ernest Renan, Essais de morale et de critique (Paris, Levy, 1859), 143.

7. This essay, first written for the Revue des deux mondes, was published February 1, 1832. It was subsequently included in volume I of Critiques et portraits littéraires, 5 vols. (Paris, Renduel, 1836-1839).

8. Christian Maréchal, La jeunesse de Lamennais (Paris, Perrin, 1913); hereafter referred to as Maréchal, Jeunesse.

9. Claude Carcopino, Les doctrines sociales de Lamennais (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1942).

Chapter I: LAMENNAIS, HIS LIFE AND WORKS

Louis XVI granted his last patent of nobility in 1788 to Pierre-Louis Robert de la Mennais, a wealthy merchant of the town of St. Malo, a fishing and commercial port on the northern coast of Brittany. The new noble had lost his wife the year before and was left with six children, the fourth of whom, Félicité Robert de la Mennais, had been born prematurely on June 19, 1782.[1] Pierre-Louis Robert de la Mennais' brother, Robert des Saudrais, a wealthy merchant himself and something of a philosophe, began assuming charge of his nephew, Féli, and continued to do so after his wife died in 1793.

Both brothers were prominent members of the Breton middle-class, both prosperous and self-motivated and hence prepared for the Revolution.[2] They had a reputation of being enlightened and of favoring reform of the Church as well as of the State.[3] Ideology, however, was not the only explanation for their attitudes. As good businessmen, they had everything to gain from a more efficient government.[4]

Until the age of twelve Lamennais, reared according to the principles of Rousseau's Emile,[5] was a rather impetuous and self-willed child unable to preserve good relations with any of his instructors. Subsequently, as he became more tranquil, he began to read voraciously.[6] Lamennais' uncle was more secular minded than his father. Not only did he make his nephew read all of Rousseau by the time he was ten, but as early as March 1790, he was

supporting a movement which encouraged and helped monks to abandon their cloisters.[7] He was also among those most in favor of the Constitution Civile du Clergé.[8]

But the Jacobinism of 1793-1794 cooled him off, as it did all of Lamennais' family, and they all slowly turned back to traditional Catholicism.[9] The Lamennais family suffered partial economic ruin, too, as a result of the measures of the revolutionary government of 1794.[10] The revolutionary activity of Lamennais' father and uncle has been questioned as being purely tactical, because of a story told fifty years later by Lamennais' nephew that mass was celebrated at night in the attic of his father's house. This would supposedly show that Lamennais was brought up rigorously in the Catholic tradition and made to hate the Revolution. Spuller is the **only** one to give credence to this story.[11] The thorough grounding in Rousseau and the philosophes, as well as the method of teaching to which his uncle subjected him, is enough to discredit, or at least raise questions concerning the validity of this interpretation.[12]

The other story, often debated, deals with Lamennais' First Communion. Although this ceremony usually takes place when a child reaches the age of twelve, Duine tells us that Lamennais did not do it at that time (1794) because of the Terror of the Year II. But normal conditions had returned, more or less, after 1795. Lamennais, however, made his First Communion only in 1804, at the age of twenty-two. This seems to suggest the existence, until at least 1804, of lingering doubts in his mind about the wisdom and utility of a return to traditional Catholicism.

St. Malo was the scene of some of the most ferocious phases of the Terror. Not only was the Vendée very close, but the port, facing the Channel, had a strategic significance. Repression in the Vendée and the need of securing the port against possible British invasion compelled the revolutionary government to adopt a harshly repressive policy.[13]

Sainte-Beuve reports that in 1796-1797 Lamennais sent to a provincial Academy a discourse which was a violent attack on the philosophy of the Enlightenment. He held the philosophes directly responsible for the Terror.[14] For want of extant copies of this discourse it cannot be determined if, at this time, Lamennais associated the Enlightenment with the destruction of religious values as he did some years later. Sainte-Beuve's report can only be taken as a further indication that Lamennais and his family had considerably moderated their political opinions after 1794, and welcomed the return of order with the establishment of Bonaparte as first Consul in 1799.[15] During this period, Lamennais spent his time practicing vigorous sports and learning several languages, some of which, like English and Spanish, he needed for helping in his father's business. It was also during this time that his uncle introduced him to Pascal. This may indicate, at least in Robert des Saudrais, that his political moderation was accompanied by a return of interest in religious faith. None of these reports, however, are inconsistent with Christian Maréchal's affirmation that by the turn of the century Lamennais was still a thorough skeptic.[16]

Then something happened to his character which permanently changed him. No one has explained exactly why, but he withdrew into himself, became melancholy, and was, from then on, subject to frequent and deep depressions.[17] It is also at this time that the influence of his uncle waned, and that of his brother Jean, two years older than he and a priest, became the dominant influence in his life. Both brothers were avid readers of La Harpe, a late and tempestuous convert to Catholicism, who was to have a dominant influence on Czar Alexander I as his preceptor. Lamennais began to take the Christian side in his many conversations, but Sainte-Beuve, who was to be a close friend thirty years later, tells us that it was a purely intellectual exercise, that neither his heart nor his life was ruled by Christianity.[18]

From 1600 to 1804 a powerful Catholic resurgence occured in France. Chateaubriand's Le Génie du Christianisme appeared in 1802 and through it Pascal became Lamennais' intellectual master.[19] Le Génie du Christianisme is an important work because it marks the first significant literary attempt, not very effective to be sure, to find a Christian solution to the psychological crisis precipitated by the French Revolution. Chateaubriand's generation was the product of a century which examined and questioned everything. But all the illusions were shattered in 1793-1794; it seemed useless to dream any longer, the only real hope being a return to a Christian life. But Christianity's appeal was not based on any principle embodying "Truth" but rather on the claim that it is beautiful. Although such a claim

is rather "unsubstantial," it is, according to Vidler, "the classical exposition of the romantic case for Christianity."[20] Originally, Le Génie du Christianisme contained René which is the clearest exposition of le mal du siècle. René, who is no other than Chateaubriand himself, does not believe in happiness, his life has no longer any sense, and yet he is full of life. His search for meaning and new experience ends only in a heightened awareness of the meaninglessness of all things terrestrial. The idea of suicide suggests itself. We can see therefore that Chateaubriand's advocacy of religion is not the result of a deep religious commitment, but rather the last thread of hope to which he hangs on for fear of what might happen if he let himself be carried off by his feeling of total loss.

Four days after the publication of Chateaubriand's work, Napoleon's Concordat was promulgated in Paris (April 18, 1802). The peace of Amiens, bringing ten years of war to a close, was signed the same day. Lamennais, writing seven years after, said of this reconciliation: "Suddenly the storm ceased. A powerful stream of energy in a moment restored life to all these ruins ... . Feuds and animosities were stilled, and a multitude of innocent victims of a disastrous revolution forgot their sufferings now that they could weep at the altars of the God who consoles."[21]

But peace and the reconciliation of the State with Rome could not fulfill the need for order that Lamennais felt so keenly.[22] If anything, his irritability increased, his depressions deepened

and became more frequent, and what H. Brémond calls his "morbid absence of will" (aboulie), became even more intense.[23] To calm his doubts, he seems to have turned more and more towards religion.[24] Lamennais' brother, whose influence was considerable at that time, pushed him in the direction of the Church. His own story of Lamennais' conversion indeed casts doubt if not on the sincerity of this conversion, at least on its authenticity. He told his brother, "confess," and on the spot, "he fell on his knees, tears streaming down his eyes, Grace shone on his face, and rising up he said, 'J'ai la foi.'"[25]

This is strangely similar to the conversion that Chateaubriand experienced and described in his Mémoires d'outre-tombe: "J'ai pleuré et j'ai cru."[26] This sentence, incidentally, appeared in the original preface of Le Génie du Christianisme that Lamennais had read. Be that as it may, what we know of this period of his life reveals the authenticity of Lamennais' ongoing psychological and moral crisis. If later on Lamennais became the "chaplain of the romantic movement" and could touch his generation so powerfully, it is because he "knew their state of mind from inside.... He was the natural spokesman of a generation that had been educated in the doctrines of the eighteenth century and then had been horrified by the way in which they had issued in anarchy and despotism during the revolution, and yet a generation that had not abandoned the axioms of its youth, since so far it had found no positive faith with which to replace them."[27]

The period 1804-1814 in Lamennais' life is relatively obscure. He seems to have been totally dependent on his brother. His conversion to Catholicism seems to have been slow and difficult and seems to have been dominated by a desire to imitate his brother whose life reflected assurance and order, the two qualities that he struggled so hard to reach.[28] He did not reach the religious certitude that he was seeking, and his remaining doubts may have been the germ of his rebellion of 1833.[29]

The view has often been expressed that Lamennais' failure to commit himself unreservedly to religion was due to the profound influence Rousseau had on him.[30] But to give up every hope of earthly happiness and plunge oneself into mysticism in order to become a saint cannot be a rational decision. And it does not seem quite fair to blame Rousseau for what has been seen by many French writers as Lamennais' betrayal of his duties to the Church.[31]

The question of how deep an influence Rousseau had on Lamennais is quite beside the point, simply because there is no way of ascertaining it.[32] Rousseau may have been the first to give expression to a new attitude toward life, and as such was probably very influential. The very success of his works shows that this attitude was widely prevalent.[33] What is important is Lamennais' sensibility, a sensibility that is almost morbid and which is revealed in a constant need for reassurance and advice.[34] His brother made practically all the necessary decisions until the day he became disturbed by the extreme docility of Lamennais. (In a rather pathetic

letter to his brother in 1814, Lamennais pleads, "J'ai besoin de quelqu'un qui me dirige, qui me soutienne, qui me relève; de quelqu'un qui me connaisse et à qui je puisse dire absolument tout.")[35] This letter may indeed be a turning point in Lamennais' life, for from that time on his brother stopped their collective dreaming and began to work hard at his own ministry. It was the end of a very close relationship which had lasted for fourteen years.[36]

In spite, or maybe because, of the extreme psychological instability which characterizes this period of Lamennais' life, he became the violent and sarcastic propagandist of Ultramontanism. From 1804 on, he engaged in polemics with various writers in defense of Catholicism.[37] In 1809, he published, in cooperation with his brother, his first major work, which at the time attracted only the attention of the police. Réflexions sur l'état de l'église was written before Napoleon's break with the Papacy. The first edition contained a great deal of praise for Napoleon, because of the efficient government that he had established and the hope was expressed that he would bring about a full restoration of religion.[38] However, these praises did not prevent the police from seizing the copies of the published manuscript. When it was later reissued, the praise of Napoleon had been expurgated.[39]

The ideas which will dominate Lamennais' thinking for the next twenty years are expressed in this work. Authority must be based on a firmly established principle (Principe de Certitude) which will remain the most basic of Lamennais' principles and the one to

which he will adhere for the rest of his life. All of the sciences must be brought under the metaphysical, and ethical, sway of religion. Indifference in matters of religion is looked upon with horror. The Church must be independent of temporal power, and education must be freed from the monopoly of the University of France.

This book is a violent attack on every sort of heresy. It dismisses with contempt the achievement of the eighteenth century, because anarchy and revolution are the results to be expected when freedom of thought is granted. The central point of the book is the profound belief in the inadequacy of the human mind. The sway of religion over men's minds must be reestablished, but the clergy will be able to perform their duty only by first rediscovering the spirit of their original mission. This book was, therefore, a manifesto addressed to the clergy,[40] and it already pointed to the different conception Lamennais had of religion and of its role. All of these ideas, Lamennais developed at length between 1816 and 1828.

For the time being, not having made any impact with this first epistolary effort, Lamennais and his brother went on teaching in a school for the training of priests. Under the law, such a school was clearly illegal and they had repeated trouble with the administration. But both brothers seem to have enjoyed their work a great deal. In 1812, the school was suppressed and replaced by one which conformed to the law. This deprived both men not only of an occupation they enjoyed, but also of a livelihood, the

Lamennais family never having recovered from the economic disaster of 1794. In August 1813, his father was forced to declared bankruptcy. The war and the continental blockade had finally ruined the family fortune.[41]

In order to earn a living Lamennais began to write for various journals. The only newspapers in which he could publish were in the hands of the "Ultras" who most eagerly welcomed him -- yet he thoroughly disliked them.[42] They were mainly Gallicans and royalists. Lamennais had already taken his position for Ultramontanism and when he put his faith in royalty, it was not as a political institution, but rather as an instrument designed by God for the rule of law as upheld by the Pope. The "Ultras" do not seem to have understood that his reasons for opposing the Charter were quite different from theirs, and all of them were to be bitterly disappointed when he clarified his position in 1828.

Although many different explanations have been offered for Lamennais' changes of heart concerning religion, the Church and royalty, it can be seen that all of his problems spring essentially from the confusions and uncertainties which permeated his early life. Having grown up in a world in which chaotic conditions prevailed, he keenly felt the need for order. Being of an extreme sensibility and having seen the values with which he was brought up completely discredited, his search for personal equilibrium compounded this need for order, and led him to believe that what he and society needed most was a system which would produce this

condition. Having absorbed Pascal's and Rousseau's ideas at an early age, he came to the conclusion that Catholic truths could form a system for the maintenance of order. Catholics are "not a group of men who can believe anything they please."[43] By having men obey these truths, order would automatically follow. What he did not perceive, however, was that those truths were represented in what can be called the Catholic life, and were not necessarily upheld by the Catholic Church.

In 1810 there began a five-year period during which his fears increased; his apathy was so profound that he was constantly in tears.[44] From this period on, he often called for death to deliver him from his torments.[45] He resisted his brother's attempts to push him toward the priesthood. But his brother's influence was reinforced by that of two other priests in 1814-1815, both of whom saw Lamennais' potentialities as a polemicist for their cause. They importuned him to become a priest. At last he yielded and was ordained on March 23, 1816. But the decision had been so difficult that he immediately fell ill. He did not hide his feelings and went on for years bitterly complaining about the pressures that had been brought to bear upon him to take his decision.[46]

For therapy, the Abbey Teysseyre, one of his two advisors, suggested that he write an essay on religious indifference. The first volume of the Essai sur l'indifférence en matière de religion appeared in December, 1817, and was an immediate and resounding success. From a dejected little priest, Lamennais was propelled to prominence; he was compared to Pascal and Bossuet.

The subject of this first volume was an exposition of the reasons, as he saw them, for the state of moral and political chaos that the world seemed to be in. Lamennais was not the only one concerned with this subject. Until 1815 the question of order did not come up simply because Napoleon had imposed order on France and to a certain extent on Europe. But as E. L. Woodward has pointed out, Napoleon was too great and could have no successor. "Who, then, was to affirm an order of government -- and what order of government -- in the states which had been harrowed by war and excitement and political experiment for nearly twenty-five years?"[47] That the question of order had appeared as early as 1809 in Lamennais' writing is not surprising when we know something of his personal experience. But it is in 1816, when he was writing the first volume of his Essai, that all his efforts were bent on discovering a secure foundation for the authority he thought necessary for the maintenance of order not only in France but in the world.

We will discuss later the ideas that he developed in this work. What can now be done is to show that his concern was shared by a great many people at this time in history. First of all, all of the statesmen at Vienna, from Castlereagh to Alexander I, from Metternich to Talleyrand, tried to devise a scheme that would establish a world order designed to keep the peace permanently.[48]

But Napoleon's overthrow merely highlighted the political side of this question. The need for order went much deeper, and reached farther back than 1815. Until about 1750 birth defined everyone's social role; society did not pose a problem of personal identity for the individual. The whole social system was legitimized by religion. As the eighteenth century progressed the attacks on orthodox Christianity increased, undermining the whole social structure. The French Revolution achieved the demolition, until all of the ready-made answers upon which man based his knowledge of who he was, were swept away. Men then had to face a future largely unknown for which none of the answers had prepared them; they had to find out who they were, what they were supposed to do, and why they were supposed to do it. Some turned to the past, others to the future, all of them turned inward, away from a world in which they had become strangers. (Mme. de Staël advised such a move in 1800 in her widely read and very influential book De la littérature).

What is being suggested here is that Lamennais' concern for order was not an idiosyncratic stand. His search for a universal principle of authority to guarantee a world order was his answer to a deep psychological crisis; he was attempting on a different level what Saint-Simon and Fourier, among others, were doing. In a newspaper article in 1818, Auguste Comte pointed to the ills of a society in complete moral anarchy. He called for the urgent need to reestablish a spiritual power whose control would be accepted

by all. Opposed to Lamennais, whom he considered retrogressive, Comte was pointing to the need for a new spiritual power, not to the reestablishment of the old.[49] Benjamin Constant, at the same time, saw the problem very much in the same terms.[50] All of them were convinced that no social changes could be achieved but those imposed from the top. This was the implicit acknowledgement that they recognized the power of the state to lead and mold the masses, just as Napoleon had shown them. And just like Lamennais, by 1829 Constant was no longer sure that religion was the means through which a regeneration of society was possible.[51]

Lamennais' concern for order is not a mere authoritarian stand on his part. Order meant peace and stability for society, the prerequisites for the enjoyment of freedom and the pursuit of happiness. The search for a principle which would make the establishment of such an order possible remained constant throughout his life. What changed was the seat of authority invested with the power to maintain order. That these changes were forced upon him by circumstances cannot be denied. When he realized that the Pope could not and would not make the necessary sacrifices to assume such a position, he turned to the masses. His abandonment of religion, far from being the sign of extreme instability, was the sign of a great single-mindedness of purpose, he gave up what he had fought for for fifteen years when he realized that he had been mistaken as to its nature. The primary purpose of his life was not service to the Church, but service to society.[52]

When Lamennais' career is analyzed in a vacuum as is most often done, these changes are difficult to reconcile. But when Lamennais is looked at as one among many of his contemporaries, these changes acquire a new perspective. Most romantic writers, Constant, Vigny, Coleridge, Carlyle, Hugo, etc., were strongly antiegalitarian in the 1820's.[53] Not all of them changed from that position, Coleridge and Vigny being cases in point. But for many others a dramatic change took place in the late 1820's. Lamartine, Chateaubriand, Hugo turned away from their earlier position to assume a much more liberal and egalitarian one.[54] Victor Hugo characterizes this change most dramatically in 1827.[55]

If the first volume of the Essai impressed everyone, including Hegel,[56] the second created a furor and split the French Catholic Church in two. Yet Lamennais was merely continuing the work he had begun in volume one. But what was beginning to emerge was the unorthodoxy of the purpose behind his search for truth. Religion, it began to appear, did not fulfill its role by simply caring for the souls of men. Religion had a social and political function which ought to be its primary function. The Jesuits and some members of the French hierarchy were furious, and they began a series of attacks that Lamennais' death, thirty-four years later, did not still.[57]

Lamennais, then, took time out of his main work to publish, in 1821, a defense of his position.[58] In it, he clarified and amplified the defense of his position and, as a result, further

widened the split in the ranks of the Church. It seems to have been at this time that Lamennais' fame became international. Apparently, his arguments responded to a widespread feeling among the younger and more liberal members of the clergy in France, Germany, the Italian provinces, what was to become Belgium, and even Hungary. Lamennais reached such prominence that for the next ten years, he was able to exercise what one of his biographers has called "a veritable dictatorship over the French Catholic Church."[59]

Yet, in many ways, the work of Lamennais over this period, is disappointing. Instead of presenting his ideas in a coherent form, he did battle with issues of the day, spent the better part of his time writing for newspapers, founding a school, and continuing the preparation of his magnum opus. Through the voluminous writings of this period, it is sometimes difficult to perceive the positive ideas that he tried to put across. The failure to systematize his thinking when he was at the height of his power proved disastrous when all the external supports he counted on were knocked out from under him in 1832.

The last two volumes of the Essai were published in 1823, and were elaborations, sometimes long and tedious, of the arguments advanced in the first two volumes. The first part of De la religion considérée dans ses rapports avec l'ordre politique et civil was published in May 1825, the second part in February 1826.[60] It is a determined attempt to show that religion is the foundation of the political and civil order. In it, Lamennais makes extensive

use of Plato's Republic and Laws, Aristotle's Politics and Rhetoric, and Cicero's Laws. No doubt is left after reading the first chapter that he relates his work to that of these "ancient legislators."[61]

Three years later he published Des progrès de la révolution et de la guerre contre l'église.[62] This is undoubtedly Lamennais' most controversial book whose publication brought Lamennais' conflict with the French hierarchy to a head. In it, he accused the French Church of collusion with the Martignac ministry in the enactment of the laws of April and June 1828 forbidding teaching to non-authorized religious societies. He further implied that Rome's backing of these actions was due to some evil influences, without the full knowledge of the Pope, emanating from Paris. Des progrès de la révolution is a violent attack on freedom of thought, which coupled as it is with a demand for complete freedom of education, appears as an obvious contradiction. Freedom of education did not entail for Lamennais freedom of thought. Quite the contrary, the freedom he demanded was for priests and religious orders to conduct the type of education they wanted without any lay controls. He accused the King and his ministers of adopting the Liberal, i.e., anti-clerical, philosophy. And what enraged him the most was to see that the French hierarchy, by supporting the actions of the government, demonstrated its utter subservience to the throne. He called on all Catholics to dissociate themselves from such a stand, and contemptuously dismissed monarchy as a form of government suited

for the times. He even went so far as defending the Jesuits -- a compliment that the Society of Jesus received with something less than pleasure.[63]

What the period, and the works, between 1820 and 1829 betray most profoundly is the confusion, wavering and anxiety of a man deeply disturbed by what he sees around him. The anger and frustration mix with enthusiasm and hope to form violent contrasts. He works with a limited stock of received ideas which clash at every turn with events not fully understood. He despises the traditionalism of the Ultras and of the society they are dreaming to re-establish, yet he despises as strongly the Liberals and the philosophy they stand for. There is, in Des progrès de la révolution, a vague hint that true Catholics and Liberals might work together, in a sort of pragmatic alliance, for political purposes. But he makes it quite clear on the first two pages that the position he advances is the only true and correct one: the Liberals had best change some of their ideas if they wanted his support.

With this book, Lamennais gained in addition a reputation of prophet. He predicted the overthrow of Monarchy;[54] but his prophetic gifts have been overstated. Not only were many others becoming disillusioned with Charles X's regime, but there exists a letter, dated December 1827, addressed to Lamennais from a friend who was an official in the finance ministry telling him that but for the Duc of Orleans' cowardice the revolution would already have taken place. It was, the author of the letter says, the talk of the town.[66]

He spent the year 1828 writing the manuscript of Des progrès de la révolution fully aware that his document would be a bombshell.[67] The book came out in February 1829 and was immediately attacked by the French hierarchy. Pope Leo XII had just died (10 February 1829), and the Archbishop of Paris thought it was time to put Lamennais in his place. It seems to have been just the excuse Lamennais was looking for to give the Church a lesson in theology, and at the same time bring pressure on the hierarchy while St. Peter's seat was vacant.[68] These attempts at intimidation failed, but Lamennais did not realize it. Pope Pius VIII was elected on March 30, 1829, and, although he sent encouraging words to Lamennais soon after, he had already privately condemned the book as "one vomited by the volcano of Mount Etna."[69]

Lamennais' purpose at this time is perfectly clear. Both the book and the two letters are attempts to bring the Church back to its original mission, that is, to give up its alliance with monarchy and the upper classes everywhere, to turn toward the masses and assume the political and social responsibility to lead these toward "Christian freedom". He believed that this was the mission with which Christ had charged the Church, to protect, defend, and lead the poor and the oppressed everywhere, from the power, greed, and selfishness of the rich.

These appeals were indeed revolutionary at the time, but what introduced some misunderstanding was Lamennais' repeated uses of the term "Christian freedom." The right, symbolized by the review

L'Ami de la Religion, accused him of being a left-wing revolutionary, while the left accused him of being a right-wing revolutionary. Lamennais waited many months before spelling out what he meant by "Christian freedom." When he did, the Liberals of the period stopped calling him their friend.[70]

Des progrès de la révolution and the two letters to the Archbishop of Paris show, however, a sign of evolution on Lamennais' part that was to have an enormous impact on his later thinking. In these are found numerous indications of scholarly research and textual criticisms that are not found in his earlier works. To be sure, these studies do not seem to be directed towards a better understanding of the past nor of the factors at work in the making of a new world. He already has in mind to write a multi-volume Esquisse d'un système de philosophie catholique, and he is accumulating material that can support the arguments that are to be the building blocks of a modern Summa Theologica.[71] The corrosive effect of these studies, however, would not become apparent to him until later.

The founding of the newspaper L'Avenir, following the events of July-August 1830, has often been described as the apotheosis of Lamennais' career. L'Avenir is supposed to have generated a movement that had an enormous and lasting impact. The ideas that it propounded are always described as Lamennais' ideas and the influence it acquired because of these ideas are taken as a measure of Lamennais' dominant position.[72] Peter Stearns, in 1960,

reestablished a welcomed balance in the account of this movement where homogeneity is clearly a myth. Professor Stearns also questioned and reduced to its proper proportion Lamennais' position and influence in the movement.[73]

L'Avenir was founded not by Lamennais, who wrote only thirty articles for it in its thirteen months of publication, but by A. Harel du Tancrel. Du Tancrel's closest collaborators were Lacordaire, de Coux, Montalembert, and Gerbet. Although all of them publicly acknowledged Lamennais' leadership, and built up his image in countless articles and references, they differed with him on crucial issues and took advantage of his long absences from Paris to put across their own ideas. In fact, reading this newspaper over several months gives one the feeling that some of them were deliberately using Lamennais' name and prestige to advocate their own positions. De Coux was the loudest in demanding a political association between Catholics and Liberals,[74] while Montalembert and Harel du Tancrel showed their distaste for democracy.[75] As for Lacordaire, his only concern was to advance the interests of the Church.[76]

These positions clashed with the program Lamennais, faithfully aided by Gerbet, had tried to promote. Lamennais supported demands for association of all Catholics, not only with those calling themselves Liberals, but with all those seeking freedom from oppression. The need for association was not, however, part of a political program to achieve specific reforms. It was made necessary to

reestablish a sadly lacking unity without which nothing could be accomplished.[77] His goal in asking for such an association was directly opposed to that of de Coux who, in demanding that Catholics and Liberals get together, wanted a limited reform of the Charter.[78]

Lamennais demanded a complete reform of the administration in order to do away with the centralization which took all power from provinces and communes and placed it in the hands of the government in Paris. This demand was a corollary to his demand for universal suffrage. He saw both as a way to give each individual an equal amount of political power. Montalembert and du Tancrel supported his demand for decentralization but their hopes were that such a reform would return some local power to the old, traditional social groups which had been deprived of it since 1789.[79] Both were opposed to Lamennais on the issue of universal suffrage.

What appears as the most bitter conflict was the one between Lamennais and Lacordaire, and explains the fact that Lacordaire was the first to break with Lamennais in 1832. Lacordaire was not opposed to democracy, but it is quite clear that democracy was not, as it was for Lamennais, a paramount issue. Both demanded freedom; but whereas Lamennais saw freedom as a positive social good, as a means towards political and social evolution, Lacordaire saw it as the means that would allow the Church, as a spiritual institution, to regain its dominant position. Professor Stearns is correct to

see in this divergence of views the reason for Lacordaire's submission to the Church in 1832, "while Lamennais, with his secular interest in a liberal society, equally naturally left the Church."[80]

Lamennais, after months of indecision and wavering, came to the conclusion that democracy was the only viable political system for the foreseeable future. This conclusion represented a perfectly logical evolution of his earlier thinking.[81] He was quite down-to-earth about it: a democracy guided and educated by the spiritual power of Rome was the only logical alternative to a monarchical form of government which had demonstrated its unwillingness and inability to acknowledge the supremacy of the Pope in spiritual matters. No other option was admissible if man's natural equality before God was to be preserved.

Lamennais' inclusion of freedom of speech, freedom of press, and freedom of education as spiritual matters, however, is a clue to a radical change in Lamennais' thinking which, except for Professor Stearns, has not been otherwise noted. This is the secularism that emanates from everything Lamennais wrote from 1830 onward. There is considerable doubt that Lamennais was aware of this change. Not only are all of the topics he treated of a political nature, but he seemed to have been totally unconcerned about the Church's primary religious role. The political and social roles that he demanded from the Church often appeared in his writings to be the only desirable ecclesiastical functions.

Professor Stearns labelled as Liberal all three currents of thought represented in the Avenir movement. Although it is fairly difficult to know exactly what is meant by Liberal in the France of the 1830's, it is fairly certain that those who can properly be called Liberals did not look on democracy with favor and viewed appeals to "the people" with distaste.[82] If one must look for the birth of French Liberal Catholicism in the Avenir movement, -- and nothing but the tradition established at the turn of the century forces one to do so -- attention should more properly be focused on the current represented by de Coux, Montalembert and Harel du Tancrel, than on the currents represented either by Lacordaire or Lamennais and Gerbet.[83] As Stearns properly stated, the failure of the Avenir movement was undoubtedly due to the profound differences existing between these groups on issues bearing directly on this question.[84]

To show that Lamennais was not responsible for everything the Avenir movement did, said or stood for, is not to imply that the period 1830-1831 was not a crucial one for him. If the role he played in public life is far less important than it has been made out to be, the evolution of his thoughts and the much greater awareness of the complexity of political problems which appeared in his subsequent works, make this period all important for understanding him. To be sure, from the material he published at this time, it is hard to pin down firmly any substantive changes. It is only in the late 1830's and early 1840's that he published what he worked on after his political change of heart in early 1830. To obscure

the situation further, he published two books, Paroles d'un croyant, in 1834, and Le livre du peuple, in 1836, which became enormous publishing successes and gained widespread attention; yet neither provided any deeper insight into Lamennais' views. They are more prises de position on his part, or justifications, than substantive contributions to a specific doctrine.

Lamennais had come to the realization months before the July Revolution that the authoritarianism of the traditional political structure was no longer capable of coping with the changed attitude of the masses. As a purely political phenomenon, Liberalism seemed to represent a step forward, particularly in its more critical aspects. By its attacks on political traditionalism, Liberalism could be truly liberating, thus helping to reestablish the fundamental equality of all men before God. What condemned Liberalism, however, was that, in Lamennais' eyes, politics could not be made to stand outside the metaphysical foundations that had given rise to it. By rejecting the necessary metaphysical implications of their political creed, Liberals were in fact setting up a political free-for-all which allowed practices as unjust and as evil as the traditional political structure itself. Where freedom was as unrestricted as that demanded by the Liberals, money would become, and in his opinion had already become, the new vortex from which the new principles, greed and selfishness, would henceforth rule.

Lamennais perceived that as a political creed Liberalism undoubtedly had some valid elements, but it could not become the doctrine that French society needed to replace the old one. The only alternative was democracy, and, for a few years, Lamennais did become enthusiastic about the possibility of a radical democratic doctrine within a moral framework which would achieve the early Christian ideal of Fraternity, Equality and Liberty.

A doctrine which reconciled a democratic political system with moral Christian values needed, however, a rejuvenated Church and a dedicated and educated clergy which would teach, and protect these values against the more destructive forces always at work in man and in society. This belief helps explain the variety of Lamennais' activities during this period. He founded and led the famous Congrégation de Saint-Pierre, which seems to have been an institution dedicated exclusively to teaching the gospel according to Lamennais. A few months later, the Agence générale pour la défense de la liberté religieuse came into existence. Although Lamennais was too busy to direct it himself, he firmly establish the goal of this organization, which was to defend the legality of religious freedom against all attacks, and to serve as a cover organization in which all kinds of associations for the protection of the weak and oppressed would seek refuge.

Despite an intense public life Lamennais continued to write extensively. His articles for L'Avenir formed only a small part of a determined attempt to reach as wide an audience as possible. He also had numerous correspondents from many parts of Europe

and the volume of his correspondence became enormous. Moreover, he had not yet given up the idea of writing a large synthetic work on Catholic philosophy and seemed to have spent a great deal of time studying and formulating the format for such a work. The frenzied activity of the years 1829 to 1831 underlay his convictions that the Church must change, must adapt herself to her new role of leading the masses towards a world politically and socially more just. Lamennais was utterly convinced that this was the Church's original mission, and only by returning to it could she hope to play the part that was rightfully hers.

This conviction is what the French writers of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century did not recognize, nor chose to recognize. It was not simply a matter of reconciling a more liberal Church to a more liberal political regime. It was not a matter of having Rome rallying itself to the Republic. The Church had to change radically in order to help change society as radically.

What followed is too well-known to warrant lengthy exposition. Rome had no intention of following Lamennais on such a risky course and, even if it had been willing, neither Metternich nor the July Monarchy would have allowed it to do so. On August 12, 1832, the encyclical Mirari vos condemned the program of L'Avenir without naming Lamennais. Judging the encyclical to be a mere political document written as a sign of the submission of Rome to St. Petersburg and Vienna, Lamennais prepared the text that would justify

him in the eyes of the people: Paroles d'un croyant. The second and final condemnation followed a few weeks later in the encyclical Singulari nos. One of the two elements of Lamennais' political doctrine -- namely, the Church -- had refused to accept her assigned task. Was democracy any longer possible under these circumstances?

The basis for the belief that democracy had to be buttressed by religion was only partly philosophical. Religious or moral principles are indispensable to any political system for the protection and welfare of all. Without these principles tyranny is an ever present possibility. But if Lamennais seemed to have realized that the traditional political structure could no longer be reconciled with the aspirations of the masses, he also realized that democracy would automatically alienate those attached to a more authoritarian, traditional view of politics. In other words, both alternatives split French society with little chance of early reconciliation. His belief that a society must be united in order to be stable and orderly led him to reject both alternatives and pushed him to try to formulate a synthesis on which unanimity could be achieved.

His writings of the 1830's and 1840's endlessly repeat the plea that equality, political, social, and economic, cannot be achieved by taking from some in order to give to others. Taking from the rich to give to the poor can only alienate the rich and thus fail to achieve the needed reconciliation between those who have and those who have not. Therefore, in spite of the pronounced secularization of his thought from 1829, Lamennais always refused

to accept either atheistic democracy or the new materialism of capitalism and socialism.

Most writers have closed their narratives of Lamennais' career in 1834, and some of those who do not, like F. Duine, dismiss his later writings. In this context, it seems significant to point out that compared to the inordinate amount of attention paid to L'Avenir, whose circulation never reached 3,000, little has been written about Le Peuple Constituant, the newspaper Lamennais published during the 1848 revolution, whose circulation was more than twenty times that of L'Avenir, reaching the then incredible number of four hundred thousand copies on its last day of publication. Of course, as Duine said, the influence of a newspaper cannot be assessed in terms of its circulation.[85] But all the evidence points to the fact that Lamennais' influence increased rather than decreased after 1834. In the 1820's he addressed himself to the clergy and upper classes and enjoyed a substantial influence. In the 1830's and 1840's he addressed the masses, and, as testified by the sale of his books and his several elections in 1848-1849, his influence in terms of numbers, seems to have been much greater. This, of course, conflicts with the interpretation given of Lamennais' life and works by most French writers.

With the exception of Paroles d'un croyant, which occasionally appears on the reading list of courses on nineteenth-century French literature, his later works are no longer read and are not supposed to have any historical or literary significance. Nothing could be

more erroneous. For the sheer beauty of the language, the Affaires de Rome contains some of the most exquisite pages ever written in French.[86] To understand this period, Du procès d'Avril et de la République, written in 1836, Politique à l'usage du peuple, which consists of two volumes of articles published in Le Monde between February 10, and June 15, 1837, De l'esclavage moderne, and Le pays et le gouvernement, are valuable sources.

These works give an insight into the political atmosphere of the July Monarchy not to be gained by the reading of more "moderate" authors such as Duvergier de Hauranne,[87] a friend of Lamennais', or Thureau-Dangin.[88] And, undoubtedly of all of his works the best and the most penetrating introduction to understand Lamennais is his Discussions critiques et pensées diverses sur la religion et la philosophie, written between 1833 and 1838 and published in 1841.

Lamennais' public activity between 1834 and 1847 is of little interest. He withdrew into isolation in order to complete his self-appointed task. The often-repeated story that his break with the Church resulted in twenty years of poverty and loneliness is a myth. He was never well-off since he was a poor businessman who was repeatedly cheated by his publishers, but he managed quite well, leaving a considerable sum at his death.[89] And his numerous letters show him to have had many sincere and warm friendships. This period of his life is only interrupted by a stay of one year in prison as a result of the government's prosecution for the publication of Le pays et le gouvernement in 1840.

It was a period of hard work. He tried to formulate a political and social doctrine, but he was constantly interrupted by events and issues which forced his attention away from his main task. In a way, this is illuminating. Through his writings, we can glimpse the evolution of his thoughts, we can ascertain what problems appeared most crucial and which gave him most difficulties. For he did not have the training required for such an ambitious task. He was neither a philosopher, nor a theologian, nor a political theorist. And his magnum opus, L'Esquisse d'une philosophie, in which he tried to be all three at the same time, is at times a monumental bore.

Lamennais faced a dilemma. He had a certain vision of what society could be and ought to be. He was deeply human but never fooled himself as to the altruism to be expected from men. In fact, he was profoundly convinced that man could not be trusted ever to deal fairly with his neighbors. With such a material, how could a better society be made to work? No one before or since has found an entirely satisfactory solution to this problem. But whereas many give up hope of ever improving society in the face of this dilemma, Lamennais never lost hope. He foresaw the split between a conservative, religious right and a revolutionary, atheistic left that was to characterize the later French political experience, and he projected this vision into the world. He feared that this split would eventually mean death for all mankind, and he thought it was all the more urgent to convince people of the feasibility and desirability of a society in which peace, unity, and order would reign.

A strong sense of urgency prevented him from thinking matters out carefully. To convince people, he had to repeat under various guises the arguments he thought most important. His assumption of the oneness and inter-relationship of all things led to a confusion and obscurity that mar most of his later works. His fascination with his own vision led him to overlook some of the economic and political consequences of the very conditions that he described. And he never had any real appreciation of what constitutes power in a modern society.

It is somewhat futile to regret that in 1843 Lamennais rejected Karl Marx and Arnold Ruge's offer to collaborate in the Annales franco-allemandes. To agree to collaborate in such a project would have meant the acceptance for Lamennais not only of the division of society he so feared, but also of the possibility of seeing one dictatorship replacing another. We shall observe later that Lamennais' refusal to accept any of the various collectivist theories then being proposed was based on his fear that they would eventually lead to the worst totalitarianism of all.[90] And it takes more than a fair amount of dogmatism to explain Lamennais' reputed failure simply because he did not adopt a "scientific" attitude "towards the conditions of the masses."[91]

In the eyes of orthodox Catholics and rigid Marxists, Lamennais failed because he refused to accept either of the solutions they offered. He perceived the two alternatives they presented, the mutual exclusiveness of these alternatives, and the respective threats these posed to French society.

The attacks of which he was the object during the 1840's by the left led to his exclusion from the socialist list in the elections of April 23, 1848. At the same time he had acquired on the right the reputation of a dangerous revolutionary. He was feared and ridiculed by the very group of people, including Montalembert, who had lionized him in the 1820's. Duine's suggestion that this may have been due to their incomprehension of the radical change that his career exhibited is the most plausible explanation for an otherwise unwarranted reputation.[92] Because by the 1840's, Lamennais showed himself both violently anti-clerical and violently anti-Catholic, those, like Montalembert, Benoît D'Azy, and Lacordaire, who were sincere Catholics and did not question the Church's authority even when they disagreed with her position on some issues, may have seen Lamennais' secularism as a betrayal of a position they had believed similar to theirs.

Lamennais' political failure is not due to the fact that he refused to take sides, but rather it is due to the fact that he never succeeded in presenting a new political philosophy on which all men could unite. In spite of his claims, there was nothing new in what he said. It often seems as if his only reason for reading what other French writers were writing was to dismiss them. He had severed all connections with the German writers with whom he had maintained a steady correspondence in the 1820's and early 1830's. And he does not seem to have been aware of what was being discussed anywhere else. Yet he was widely read.

What his readers saw in him varied with their political temperament. Did they like his criticisms of the July Monarchy and his refusal to align himself with any group, or did the fact that he was a former priest appeal to a growing secularism among the working classes? There is also the possibility that before 1848 there existed among many Frenchmen a longing for some sort of political and social middle road to which, however inadequately, he gave expression. If he was a failure as a political thinker, he certainly was an enormous success as a propagandist.

Five days after the beginning of the revolution of 1848, on February 27, the first issue of Lamennais' newspaper Le Peuple Constituant appeared. It immediately became one of the most widely read newspapers in Paris, and thousands of subscriptions flowed in from the provinces. This success had one immediate result: Lamartine, leader of the Moderates, went to some length to meet Lamennais often to try to keep him from enflaming the situation -- something that Lamennais had no intention of doing in the first place. On April 23, he was elected on Lamartine's electoral list, and he began to write what he thought was the constitution France needed to become once more a unified, stable, and just society.

The publication of this constitution led the National Assembly to elect him on May 17, as one of the three members of the commission charged to draw up a constitution for the Second Republic. He

received fewer votes than Cormenin* but more than de Tocqueville. What may also have helped him in this election was an article he published the day before strongly disapproving the mass demonstration of May 15. In this article he expressed a fear which is to be found under various guises in almost all of his writings, that anarchy must be avoided at all costs for it always leads to repression and loss of freedom.[93]

For reasons that he never divulged he resigned from the commission charged to draw a constitution at its second meeting. And he went on to vote against the adoption of the constitution of the Second Republic, mainly, it seems, because it had been the outcome of political bargaining among various groups in the Assembly.

Nothing illustrates Lamennais' limitations as a thinker as well as his reaction to the bloody June days. If he expressed some understanding of the misery, suffering, and disillusion of the poorer classes, he simply did not understand what could have made the Assembly behave the way it did. He took refuge in the position of a pleading martyr, preaching forgiveness, charity and brotherhood.[94]

What seems to have radicalized him more than the June days was the law requiring that newspapers pay a 24,000 frs. guarantee to continue publication. Unable to raise this sum, he ceased publication on July 11, but went on in the National Assembly to do in speech what he could not do in writing.

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* Cormenin, Louis Marie de Lahaye, vicomte de, 1788-1868; he had published what seems to have been regarded as an important introduction to administrative law entitled "De la centralisation," in 1842.

In the elections of May 1849, he was reelected on a Democrat-Socialist list. Since his salary as representative was insufficent, he assumed the direction of the newspaper La Réforme for three months at the end of 1849. On May 15, 1850, he was among those who voted against the Loi Falloux, ostensibly to refuse to the Church the control over education that he had earlier refused to the government.

It is only late in 1852 that, in a conversation with the American newspaperman Parke Godwin, he adopted a bluntly radical position. All efforts at reconciliation having failed, and the "aristocrats" having shown repeatedly their unwillingness even to share power with the people, the only solution left was their wholesale suppression.[95] In spite of these occasional outbursts the new regime left him alone. There are, however, evidences that the imperial police kept a close watch on what he was doing, and even worried over the extent of his influence.

The news of his death on February 27, 1854, spread so rapidly and so widely that, warned by the Archbishop of Paris, the government ordered that he be buried at seven in the morning of March 1, and that only the close family be allowed to attend the funeral for fear of possible demonstrations. In spite of these precautions, thousands of Parisians followed the procession and a clash occurred with the police at the cemetery of Père Lachaise in which several persons were injured. It was widely noticed that he had requested before his death that he be buried in a pauper's grave without religious service.

Admittedly, Lamennais was able to transcend neither the ideas nor the issues of his time. The solution that he proposed was a strange mixture of revolutionary ideas and traditional concepts. He reflects, perhaps better than any other French thinker of the period, the confusion, hope, despair of a generation confronted by a set of circumstances only dimly understood, but for which all its received ideas are glaringly inadequate.

To understand Lamennais and, through him, the thousands who hearkened to him during the 1830's and 1840's, the conflicting interpretations of his thoughts must be left aside. His own stated purpose must not be subordinated to doctrinal disputes. His style must not be taken for the content of his thoughts. That most of his arguments were couched in the language of religion should not blind readers to the fact that his concern, throughout his life, was political. And, most important perhaps, ideas that were exposed or clarified later must not force themselves onto parts of what was an organic structure, thus shunting aside or making nonsense of the rest.

CHAPTER I

FOOTNOTES

1. Until 1837, Lamennais used his given name of Félicité Robert de la Mennais, "Féli" for his friends. In 1837 he changed it to F. Lamennais. For the sake of simplicity, this last spelling is used throughout this essay.

2. Vidler, 18.

3. Duine, 3.

4. Maréchal, Jeunesse, 4.

5. Christian Maréchal, La famille de Lamennais, (Paris, Perrin, 1913), 13-17; hereafter referred to as Maréchal, Famille; also Vidler, 30-31.

6. Vidler, 31.

7. Maréchal, Famille, 235-237.

8. Maréchal, Jeunesse, 4-5.

9. Maréchal, Jeunesse, 5; Vidler, 27.

10. S. E. Spuller, La Mennais, étude d'histoire politique et religieuse (Paris, Hachette, 1892), 35.

11. Vidler, 30.

12. Duine, 5.

13. Vidler, 29.

14. Maréchal, Jeunesse, 22.

15. Duine, 6-7.

16. Maréchal, Jeunesse, 46.

17. Ibid., 46-47.

18. Sainte-Beuve, I, 549.

19. Maréchal, Jeunesse, 72.

CHAPTER I
FOOTNOTES - continued

20. Vidler, 36.

21. F. Lamennais, Oeuvres complètes, 12 vols. (Paris, Daubré et Cailleux, 1836-1837), VI, 72, Vidler's translation, 39. In spite of the title, these twelve volumes contain approximately half of Lamennais' published works, without counting the many volumes of his edited letters.

22. Maréchal, Jeunesse, 75.

23. Henri Brémond, Pour le romantisme (Paris, Bloud et Gay, 1924), 37.

24. Maréchal, Jeunesse, 75-77. But Maréchal doubts the sincerity of this change. He seems to suggest that Lamennais should have submitted with less hesitation to the authority of the Church; that doing so was the only way out of the moral torment that Lamennais felt. H. Brémond rightly criticizes Maréchal for this. See Brémond's comments, 38-39.

25. Auguste P. Laveille, Jean-Marie de la Mennais, 1780-1860, 2 vols. (Paris, Poussielgue, 1903), I, 47-48.

26. F. R. de Chateaubriand, Mémoires d'outre-tombe, 4 vols., edited by M. Levaillant. (Paris, Flammarion, 1948), Part I, Book XI, 492.

27. Vidler, 72-73.

28. Maréchal, Jeunesse, 148-149.

29. Ibid., 259.

30. Ibid., 297.

31. Christian Maréchal is the best known of these, but every writer hostile to Lamennais, such as Villerabel, Frémont, Mourre, Peigné, etc., either takes or assumes the same stand.

32. Brémond rightly takes Maréchal to task for picturing the ten years between 1804 and 1814 as a period during which the devil (Rousseau) fights God (Bossuet, Bonald, Maistre) for Lamennais' soul. For as he points out, no man's mind is a monolith. See Brémond, 50.

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33. Philippe Van Tieghem, Le romantisme français (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1968), 6-12.

34. Brémond, 50-52.

35. Quoted in Duine, 43.

36. Duine, 43-45.

37. Maréchal, Jeunesse, 82.

38. Vidler, 45.

39. It is not included in the 1836-1837 edition of Réflexions..., in his Oeuvres complètes, VI.

40. Oeuvres complètes, VI, 114.

41. Duine, 39-40.

42. Ibid., 53.

43. Laski, 268.

44. Duine, 37.

45. F. Lamennais, Un Lamennais inconnu: lettres inédites à Benoît D'Azy, edited by Auguste Laveille (Paris, Perrin, 1898); this is particularly clear in the letters of the year 1818, 4 ff. This work will hereafter be referred to as Benoît D'Azy.

46. F. Lamennais, Oeuvres inédites, edited by A. Blaize, 2 vols. (Paris, Dentu, 1866), I, 217-219 and 263. For the various opinions whereas Lamennais should ever have become a priest or not, see Charles Boutard, Lamennais, sa vie et ses doctrines, 3 vols. (Paris, Perrin, 1905-1913); I, 121 ff.; Paul Janet, La philosophie de Lamennais (Paris, Alcan, 1890), 6-7; Duine, 56-58; Jean-René Derré, Lamennais, ses amis et le mouvement des idées à l'époque romantique, 1824-1834 (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), 55; Brémond, 40. This topic seems, in fact, to have become an industry, the works of Bréhat, Frémont, Giraud, Mienvielle, Peigné, Roussel, Vallery-Radot, Harispe, Mourre, and others (see bibliography for details) all revolve around this question.

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47. Woodward, 9.

48. Harold Nicholson, The Congress of Vienna, A Study in Allied Unity: 1812-1822 (New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1946), 39, 242, 249-250; Hans Kohn, Absolutism and Democracy (New York, Van Nostrand, 19 ...), 30-31; and for a particularly striking parallel between Lamennais and Metternich's principles, see Woodward, 38 ff.

49. Duine, 107.

50. Derré, 75.

51. Ibid., 112-114.

52. It is Harold Laski who claimed that "service to the Church was the primary purpose of his life." (Laski, 198). To say this, one must not only disregard two-thirds of Lamennais' writings, but also fail to notice the total absence of concern with the moral problems of the Christian life in his works. (Derré, 721-722). Service to the Church was not Lamennais' primary purpose in life before 1816 or after 1832, and there is considerable doubt that it was when he was its most vocal supporter. In 1820 the second volume of his Essai was very badly received. Many within the Church attacked him, Rome remained silent in the debate that ensued. But Lamennais in a letter to an old friend, the Abbé Caron, suggests that if by any chance Rome were to refuse to support him, he would not hesitate to refuse to accept the decision. There is then, even at this early date, "the frightening thought [in Lamennais' mind], to accept Rome's decision only if it is favorable to him." (A. Laveille, Un Lamennais Inconnu, XXXI). That the 1834 break with the Church is foreshadowed fourteen years earlier ought to dictate caution in trying to figure out what was Lamennais' purpose in life in a partial reading of his works.

53. Schenk, 14.

54. Janet, 3.

55. Van Tieghem, 24, 50.

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56. "Eloquently and impressively as the Abbé Lamennais reckoned it ...," Georg W. F. Hegel, The Philosophy of History, trans. by J. Sibree (New York, Dover, 1956), 58, note 2.

57. The specific elements of Lamennais' doctrine which clashed with the then commonly accepted view are analyzed in Chapter IV and V below. For the details of the battle that followed the publication of Volume II of the Essai, see Christian Maréchal, Lamennais: la dispute de l'éssai sur l'indifférence (Paris, Champion, 1925).

58. F. de la Mennais, Défense de l'éssai sur l'indifférence en matière de religion (Paris, Méquignon, 1821); this volume appeared as Volume V of his Oeuvres complètes. It is to this later edition that all further references are made.

59. Duine, 66.

60. The complete work forms Volume VII of his Oeuvres complètes.

61. Oeuvres complètes, VII, 1.

62. Published first in Feb. 1829, it was reissued as Vol. IX of his Oeuvres complètes.

63. Duine, 128-136.

64. Oeuvres complètes, IX, 74-75.

65. J. Paul-Boncour, Lamennais (Paris, Alcan, 1928), 11.

66. Letter from Benoît D'Azy of December 23, 1827, quoted by Duine, 114-115.

67. He announces that his book is in the press, and adds "je sais qu'il fera du bruit." Letter of January 8, 1829, to Benoît D'Azy, 227.

68. The first letter was published in March, the second in April, and both were included for publication in the same volume with Des progrès de la révolution, in a later edition at the end of 1829. This may have been a way to emphasize that the subject of all three writings was the same. This latter volume was published, relatively unchanged, as Volume IX of Oeuvres complètes.

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69. Duine, 132.

70. Lamennais' definition of freedom is discussed in the last section of Chapter II.

71. This work will eventually appear as L'Esquisse d'une philosophie, from 1840. Yves Le Hir found an autographed manuscript of a sketch entitled Essai d'une système de philosophie catholique, supposedly dated 1831. He edited and published it in order to show that many of the ideas contained in L'Esquisse were already fully developed ten years earlier. (F. Lamennais, Essai d'un système de philosophie catholique; texte inédit publié et présenté d'après la manuscrit autographe, par Yves La Hir, Rennes, Plihon, 1954). But, as has been so well illustrated by Derré, the baron d'Eckstein had advanced in the early 1820's most of the ideas that Lamennais takes up only after 1830. (Derré, 156-164).

72. For analyses of the program of L'Avenir which assign the dominant role in it to Lamennais, see Boutard, II, 137-169; Duine, 146-159; Vidler, 163-183; Adrian Dansette, Histoire religieuse de la France contemporaine, 2 vols. (Paris, Flammarion, 1948), I, 300-302. For the clearest assertion of Lamennais' exclusive power over L'Avenir, see also Georges Weill, Histoire du Catholicisme libéral en France (Paris, Alcan, 1909), 31.

73. Peter Stearns, "The Nature of the Avenir Movement, 1830-1831," The American Historical Review, LXV (July 1960), 837-847.

74. De Coux' position was most clearly expressed in his articles of Nov. 17, 1830, Jan 2 and Oct. 5, 1831.

75. Montalembert's aversion to democracy shows in every one of his articles; for Harel du Tancrel's position, see his articles of Dec. 16, 1830, Jan. 3 and April 9, 1831.

76. Lacordaire's views are most clearly expressed in his articles of Nov. 25 and Dec. 23, 1830 and June 27, 1831.

77. See specifically his articles of Oct. 16, 30 and 31, 1830.

78. See specifically his article of Dec. 7, 1830.

79. Cf. Stearns, 843-844.

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80. Ibid., 846.

81. This evolution is analyzed in detail below in Chapter III.

82. "Liberals felt obliged all along to take action against another new creed: democracy ... . The democratic ideal -- that all political power should belong to the people -- seemed to the liberals to spell tyranny rather than liberty." Irene Collins, "Liberalism in Nineteenth Century Europe," in From Metternich to Hitler, edited by W. N. Medlicott (New York, Barnes and Noble, 1966), 32.

83. Lamennais' position vis-à-vis Liberalism is analyzed in Chapter III below.

84. Stearns, 847.

85. Duine, 146.

86. First published in 1836, this book forms Volume XII of his Oeuvres complètes.

87. P. Duvergier de Hauranne, Histoire du gouvernement parlementaire en France, 1814-1848, 10 vols. (Paris, Levy, 1857-1872).

88. P. M. Thureau - Dangin, Histoire de la Monarchie de Juillet, 7 vols. (Paris, Plon, 1884-1892).

89. Duine, 309-311.

90. Lamennais' view of Socialism and Communism is developed in Chapter III.

91. "Because he did not adopt a scientific attitude in regard to the conditions of the masses, he did not see what was growing in their breasts, and which one day was to overcome all obstacles."

This is the opinion of Jean Bruhat in "Lamennais et le mouvement ouvrier français," Europe, 32e année, No. 98-99, (Feb. March, 1954), 94. Bruhat, reflecting the attitude of Marxist historians, reproached Lamennais for his failure to see that communism was the only true answer to modern society's ills!

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92. Duine, 279.

93. Le Peuple Constituant, May 16, 1848.

94. Ibid., June 26, to July 10, 1848.

95. Quoted in full in Duine, 293-297.

Chapter II :THE NATURE OF LAMENNAIS' CONCERNS

The fundamental problem to which Lamennais addressed himself was as old as political philosophy itself: how to maintain the social order. Order, he assumed, is society's required state without which it cannot survive, because each member of society requires this order so as to evolve freely into what he ought to evolve. A power must exist which, at society's bidding, maintains order while assuring the freedom for individual development. But power by its very nature always seeks to expand, thus being itself the greatest threat to what it is supposed to protect.

Lamennais strove for a solution in the form of a political system which would restrain the ever-menacing apocalyptic triumph of evil in human society so as to prevent the rise of despotism. To achieve this dual purpose, this system had to be anchored in the True Law. By this Lamennais meant the unity which binds man to man and all men to God. Obedience to this law would produce the order which would allow men to evolve freely towards their appointed destiny.

The truth, for him, had therefore to be proclaimed, and the necessity of social unity explained. Men had to be shown the true form of order and at the same time the real meaning of freedom had to be explained to them. Truth, Unity, Order, Freedom: these are the concepts Lamennais consistently used and which must be examined if the nature of his social and political criticisms is to be understood.

Truth

Freedom, for Lamennais, cannot be of primary concern as it is first of all the result of a specific order that must be established according to definite conditions. There cannot be freedom without order, and order is the result of unity -- a unity which itself is the result of the imposition of truth. If truth and unity are treated as secondary concerns, and order and freedom as primary ones, one can easily end by mistaking Lamennais' definition of freedom for that proposed by either Guizot or Royer-Collard.

Truth, for Lamennais, is the indispensable condition from which everything else flows. It is not, however, a metaphysical statement compelled by a need to fulfill some spiritual goal such as the correct way to attain salvation. In Lamennais' view truth lacked doctrinal features, especially those associated with traditional religious belief. Truth is God, Eternal Law, Life, Justice, Religion, depending upon when and in what context Lamennais was writing. Truth indicates the form and content of the good life, and, more specifically, what human law must be in order to produce and guarantee an orderly, stable society.[1] Truth is a set of statements about man, what man really is, and as such truth is what enables him to be and at the same time to become what he truly can become. In other words, truth is a vision which arises out of what man and his history are thought to be. Now, a concept such as truth is elusive at best unless one believes oneself to be in possession of it. Throughout his life Lamennais believed himself so possessed. His concern, therefore, was not so much to elaborate on the nature of truth as to show the necessity of believing

in it. From 1817 to 1848 he pointed indiscriminately at the Scriptures and at history to show what he meant by truth. Only after 1834 was he at pains to emphasize that the lessons to be drawn from the Scriptures differed from the Church's interpretation of them. Scriptures, history, mankind's common sense, all offer the same lesson: in all times and in all circumstances man has acknowledged a definite set of laws which enable him to become what he is -- that is the truth, and the best way to prove it is to show that deviation from these laws produces chaos, disorder and death.[2]

Lamennais began his career as a polemicist determined to show that the dreadful stage reached by society was primarily the result of a spreading disregard for truth. He began his Essai sur l'indifférence en matière de religion with these words: "The most unhealthy period in history is not the one which takes great interest in false beliefs, but the period which neglects or scorns the truth.... European society is rapidly advancing toward this fatal stage."[3] To scorn the truth is to disregard willfully what makes man different from other living things, and to give up any attempt at bettering the human condition.[4]

> The primary cause of this shameful degradation is not so much the weakness of our reason as its submission to the body. Subdued by his senses, man gets into the habit of judging only by them. Reality is reduced to what he perceives; all the rest appears as vague abstractions, fancies, ... and what is remarkable is that the growth of the physical sciences which ought to show man his superiority over the brute, has only accelerated this abject tendency to lower him to the level of animals.... Man, brutalized by his senses, wholly occupied with physical pleasures, naturally becomes destructive.[5]

The situation in which man no longer cares for his spiritual needs, in which he merely follows the dictates of his senses, and in which the notion of right and duty are totally subordinate to what is useful, Lamennais calls indifférence. This state of affairs is clearly opposed to both the nature of society and the nature of man as he conceived them. Beliefs determine both man's actions and society's fate.[6] Therefore a lack of interest regarding beliefs is not only harmful but a lack of concern regarding what are correct beliefs is the greatest danger that can face man and society.[7] Lamennais' purpose in writing the Essai sur l'indifférence was not only to show that indifference was harmful, but also to show that it was the result of the error of modern philosophy. The fundamental cause of this degradation, this sinking into a state of indifference, was to be found in "the principle of the sovereignty of man."[8]

This principle first appeared in Ancient Greece but was vanquished by the arrival of Jesus Christ. It reappeared in the West when the philosophy of Aristotle, adopted by the Arabs, was brought from the East.[9] Protestantism was a direct result of the reintroduction of Aristotelian philosophy into the West.[10] Descartes and his disciples tried to destroy this principle's influence and succeeded in imposing a new philosophy. But Descartes failed to give to his system a solid base because he began from the very same principle the Greeks had and, therefore, despite their differences, the philosophies of the Greeks and of Descartes resulted in the same

thing: scepticism. Since Descartes, essentially three schools of thought have attacked the problem. All of them started with the same assumption, that man's reason is sovereign, and all of them have failed for this reason to give an adequate answer to this most fundamental of all questions: how is man to know the truth?[11]

Each of these three schools of thought corresponds to one of the three ways man can know. Reliance on man's senses as the means to know the truth produced Materialism. This system was first advocated by Locke and followed by Condillac, Helvétius and Cabanis. Reliance on man's feelings to perceive the truth produced Idealism. This system was being taught by Kant and his followers. Reliance on man's reason to discover the truth produced Dogmatism. This system was invented by Descartes.[12] Although these systems rely on three different means to reach the truth, all of them produce the same result: uncertainty is greater than before. Their basic error is that they take the individual and his reason as the given in their speculations. This is not only anti-Christian but "opposed to nature" as well.[13]

For Lamennais the modern world begins with the rise of Protestantism and is characterized by Materialism and Hedonism.[14] The exclusive concern with the material world and the placing of the individual at the center of all inquiries results in the banishment of God's laws into the realm of fancy.[15] Yet God's laws, Reason, Truth and Justice,[16] are the bases of universal duties and rights.[17] These in turn are the foundations of human society. To banish

God's law into the realm of fancy is, therefore, to negate the existence of universal duties and rights. Yet society, to be worth the name, must have a social, political, and juridical basis. In the absence of God's laws, this is provided by force, a purely human attribute, resulting in injustice, disunity and war.[18] For Lamennais, a society for which duties and rights have become relative, subject to individual caprice, cannot be called a "legitimate society."[19]

It can thus be seen that for Lamennais Society embodies a moral structure which the State is designed to preserve. Society gives rise to the State in order to be served by it and not the other way around. Such an order can be preserved only as long as moral restraints keep the State within its legitimate sphere. Once these moral restraints are broken, there is nothing to prevent the extension of the State's power over Society until the natural order is reversed and Society is made subservient to the State. The perfect example of this reversal was the Napoleonic State which exercised control, without justification and without giving account of its actions to anyone or anything, over all of Society's activities, religious, moral, intellectual, educational, and economic.

Although that monster had been destroyed, the doctrines which had made this possible had not been banished. Therefore the potentiality for despotism remained and would persist until its root causes had been destroyed.

The idea is now well established that "modern philosophy begins in a sceptical crisis."[20] Lamennais would have agreed. But whereas the modern world seems to have found ways to accomodate itself to the idea that "certain knowledge of reality"[21] is beyond its reach, Lamennais remained convinced that there was no way around this epistemological issue; he insisted that a principle of certitude could be established. This insistence[22] was the result of his belief that men needed assurance about the correctness of their beliefs not only in order to act but to act in a manner befitting their nature. But if it is in the nature of man to believe, man in general cannot be left free to decide what he believes is true. In other words, reason cannot help an individual arrive at the truth, he must receive this truth once it has been established, believe it and act accordingly.

This essentially metaphysical problem remains a constituent part of Lamennais' overriding political concerns. An insistence on metaphysical clarification is merely an indication of the distance that separates us from Lamennais. For him religion was the necessary foundation upon which the political superstructure should be built.[23] To separate politics from religion was, of necessity, to institute despotism as the fundamental principle of the State.[24]

He pointed to history to show that:

> Of all times it has been felt that religion was the unique foundation of duties, as in turn, duties are the sole societal bond. Nothing can make up for conscience for conscience makes up for everything.... The legislators of antiquity did not misjudge this; instead of foolishly arguing against religion, they used it to consolidate the social structure; they place it everywhere, in the family and in the State, as a part of the constitution and of the government.[25]

This is an argument he used again and again, to show the conjunction of his ideas on this point with those of Plato, Aristotle and Cicero.[26] Throughout his career, several of his works were written specifically to show that civilized man and civilized society cannot survive when politics is cut off from religion.[27] This idea had been held continuously by the Roman Catholic Church since the late Roman Empire as Lamennais often stressed.[28] And his attacks on the Gallican bishops in the 1820's and on the Papacy in the 1830's show that he was adhering to this idea while in his opinion the Church was betraying it.

To build "a bridge to certain knowledge of reality" is essentially what Lamennais was trying to do. Scepticism left man without any guide for his actions and had, inevitably, to lead to the belief that man's reason was the proper tool to apprehend the truth. The end result of this was indifference, once man was confronted with the fact that truth kept on escaping him. Thus, either misinformed or influenced by Catholic propaganda, he concluded that "Protestantism is the source of indifference," and "Descartes' system is nothing but the philosophical theory of Protestantism."[30] Such a philosophy

Lamennais claimed, allows any madman's claim to be proven true;[31] a very logical conclusion, according to Professor Popkin.[32]

Philosophically then, Lamennais assumed that "the principle of the sovereignty of man" is to be found in the assertion that "individual reason is infallible"[33] and this infallibility he utterly denied.

> Where can we find the assurance of an immutable, necessary rapport between truth and certain operations of our mind? The rules for reasoning, relative to our nature, are perhaps not less erroneous than the first notions from which we deduce them; and we ignore if our logic, instead of being a tool to reach the truth, is not a theory to promote error. To say that the existence of reason demonstrates its infallibility is to say nothing; because this so-called demonstration supposes the very infallibility we are supposed to demonstrate.[34]

It is not surprising that Lamennais did not wholly trust in human reason for establishing with certainty what he called God's law. Contrary to what has often been asserted, this attitude had little to do with his Catholicism. He was one among many, including Mme de Staël, benjamin Constant, Guizot, Chateaubriand, steeped into a tradition which had been badly shaken by the Terror of 1793-1794, and later by the excesses of Napoleon.[35] This attitude was widely prevalent among certain circles at that time -- circles from which Lamennais had not yet detached himself. His faith in human nature was rightly shaken, and his strong sense of justice (<u>équité</u> is a word he used very often) revolted against the abuses of power, the cynicism and venality he saw around him.[36] Convinced that the underlying causes of the turmoil, injustice and suffering

he was witnessing resided in the various philosophies prevalent at the time, he could not but be dismayed by their continued acceptance.

The noxious philosophy which had made its appearance in Europe with Protestantism had for Lamennais become embodied in two doctrines. One was Gallicanism, the other Liberalism. After 1830 a third doctrine made its appearance, and, in spite of its differences with the other two, it was essentially founded on the same idea. This third doctrine was Socialism. During the 1820's Lamennais fought both Gallicanism and Liberalism. His activities during this period was, according to Professor Woodward, the death-blow of Gallicanism.[37] Liberalism was not, however, to be defeated so easily; and from the early 1830's onwards, Lamennais unsuccessfully confronted it while having to battle against the rising tide of Socialism. It is quite clear that his opposition to these three doctrines was based primarily on the fact that he saw them as materialistic doctrines which subordinated the moral world to the physical, when their practices did not deny its existence altogether.

The clearest expression of this opposition is perhaps to be found in his struggles against the independence of the French Catholic Church from Papal authority. The accusation that Gallicanism was a materialistic doctrine may seem odd and Lamennais never made such an accusation. However, Gallicanism was part cause, part result of the assumption by men of an attribute which is God's alone, Sovereignty. In other words, Gallicanism both acquiesced in and helped Caesar to replace God.

Of all the blasphemous acts, this was for Lamennais the greatest. Not, however, because of what it took from God but because of the effects it had on men. Sovereignty meant for Lamennais what it had meant for most political thinkers since Jean Bodin : sovereignty was the attribute of inalienable and unconditional political power.[38] But whereas this attribute belongs to the sovereign in modern political theory (no matter who or what is defined as the sovereign) Lamennais insisted that such an attribute cannot belong to man or to a human institution such as the State. "Quiconque fait la loi, exerce la souveraineté,"[39] said Lamennais, clearly meaning that the law to be legitimate must conform to reason, truth and justice. Reason, truth and justice were not attributes that a man or a group of men can possess; therefore, no man can make the law: no man can be sovereign.

Upon the assumption of sovereignty by one man or a few, degeneracy spread rapidly throughout Society.[40] By separating the notion of justice, that man cannot determine, from that of sovereignty, power and force become synonymous.[41] Sovereignty to be real and legitimate must be based on the universal law of justice.[42] Sovereignty independent from this law cannot have any other basis than force. Therefore, the assumption of sovereignty by men is essentially despotic, and no matter what regime assumes this sovereignty, including Democracy, it always remains potentially despotic for it at any time can disregard justice.[43]

The concept of sovereignty of man is the direct result of indifference. Indifference, as has been shown, is itself the result

of the failure of philosophy to establish the existence of universal duty and right with certainty. It is this failure which forced philosophy to declare that each man is master of himself.[44] And if each man is master of himself, the only ground upon which one man, or a group of men, can declare his sovereignty over other men is force. A society which insists upon separating sovereignty from the universal law of justice which <u>is</u> God, cannot but have slavery as its essential foundation.[45]

Truth, therefore, for Lamennais, is an objective reality independent of man's reason. It is the source of the laws governing man and society and that which must be made evident and imposed on all men if society is to become the unity that it is supposed to be. That truth is the essential foundation upon which must rest an adequate political system is a belief that Lamennais never doubted, even when, later on in life, this belief led him to a dilemma he was unable to solve.[46]

Unity

The existence of truth as an objective reality dictates that its rule is always and everywhere the same. Since the object of this rule is first of all society, unity is society's primary characteristic and condition. The survival of society, and implicitly of man, depends, therefore, on the obedience to laws designed to ensure and protect unity. But man's reason is unable by itself to distinguish truth from falsehood, and, if man is let free to do as he pleases, some of his acts will be disruptive because they will be contrary to what he ought to do. At this point Lamennais's critique replies to Descartes' assertion in his Meditations that "Whatever is clearly and distinctly perceived is true." Such an assertion can only produce endless competition between various claims to truth, and thus shatter the unity of thought necessary to society's survival.[47] But Lamennais' attacks on Cartesianism were due to its having given philosophical legitimacy, in his opinion, to Protestantism. He put the blame squarely on Luther for having started the whole controversy and on Hobbes for having given it political legitimacy. "Modern philosophy," as Lamennais called the whole trend of thought since Luther, flatter man's importance and made him lose his ability to recognize the truth. The competition between the various claims to truth since the Reformation had shattered the unity achieved by Christendom; wars and further claims to truth had multiplied endlessly, ending in the utter chaos of the 1790's.

Now, although unity was clearly the result of the rule of truth, its necessity was made clear by man's universal desire to be happy.

"Happiness is the natural end of man, he desires invincibly to be happy; but too often unreliable reason and passions blind him, lead him away from the term to which he aspires so fervently."[48] The laws designed to make possible, or bring about, happiness in man must conform to the laws to which men by nature are subject.

These laws, their study and propagation are the province of religion, whereas the enactment and enforcement of human laws are the province of politics. In other words, natural law is to positive law what religion is to politics. And whatever in positive law does not conform to natural law is automatically invalid. Lamennais was thus taking up the position that the "ecclesiastical party" had founded five hundred years earlier in order to establish "the sovereignty of the Spiritual Power."[49] The main point of Des progrès de la révolution (1828) is that Christianity, in recognizing no absolute sovereignty but that of God, does not abandon the masses to the tender mercies of kings and princes, but "acknowledges the existence of a law of justice and truth above human powers."[50] To establish the validity and truth of such a law is essentially what Lamennais tried to do in the first four volumes of Esquisse d'une philosophie published from 1840. This was an attempt to formulate a moral philosophy which would serve as a foundation for his political theory. Christianity, however, does not play any part in this

work. The theory, therefore, which, in the 1820's was used by him as it had been used centuries earlier to establish the absolute power of the Church over all temporal affairs, was used in the 1840's as a revolutionary appeal to try to sweep injustice and greed out of government. But his point remained the same. The lack of unity is the result of disregard for truth. The lack of unity fosters disorder which allows some men to take advantage of their strength to impose their wills on others, thus fostering further disorder and disunity.

At the beginning of his Des progrès de la révolution, he wrote: "Institutions, laws, governments draw all their strength from an unquestionable general convergence of thoughts and wills. What is power without obedience? What is Right without Duty?"[51] To these questions he provides an answer in a defiant challenge addressed to the Liberals. "And where else but in God can the reason for duty be found, the principle of obligation which submits heretofore independent wills to another equal will? What right does man possess over man?"[52] In other words, the duties which bind men together are the principles of obligation which legitimatize power.[53] If rights are to be guaranteed, duties must be performed by all. But power, to be legitimate, must not only respect and guarantee rights as well as enforce duties, the duties that give it legitimacy must themselves be legitimate. Power of man over man, or force, is not and cannot be legitimate. Only duties imposed by God are. It therefore follows that unity, "the principle of society,"[54] can only result if universal duties are enforced and obeyed by all.

In 1817, Lamennais made a point of stressing the oneness and universality of the Church, thus emphasizing his belief that "civilized" society was nothing but the body of the Roman Catholic believers.[55] This body was the only one that had chosen to obey Christ's words, following "the constant practice of all the centuries."[56] Those who had rejected the authority of Christ's words as interpreted by the Church and replaced it with free inquiry were responsible for all the inequities that followed.[57] Now, this was not simply another doctrinal dispute between Catholics and Protestants. Arguments showing the superiority of the Catholic doctrine over the Protestant one are nowhere to be found in Lamennais' works.

His argument rested on a single assumption: man needed assurance of the correctness of his beliefs in order to behave as he should behave, and this assurance could only come from the unquestioned acceptance of these beliefs by all. Acceptance of monotheism must lead to acceptance of the idea that duties were the same for all. To question the uniqueness or the universality of these duties was tantamount to denying the existence of God.[58] He cited the example of Bolingbroke who, having rejected authority for free inquiry, had been led to justify polygamy, libertinage, adultery, incest, etc....[59] Thirty years later, having in the meantime rejected the authority of the Church himself, Lamennais still held on to the idea that duties that bind all men everywhere and at all times were the same. The uniqueness and universality of these duties had to be recognized so that all men not only would know

what they must do, but also would know that what they did was right. The performance of these duties in their sum effects, gave rise to unity -- a unity necessary for it underlied the order that was required if men's desire to be happy were to be fulfilled.

Order

Lamennais' concept of unity was closely bound with that of order. They were respectively each other's cause and result. There could not be unity without order, not could order be possible without unity. If unity was to be achieved through universal acceptance of God-given duties, order was achieved through the performance of these duties. The end result of both was to be human happiness. Now, for Lamennais, happiness was neither a materialistic nor an hedonistic concept. It was the state of beings who have reached their perfection: "The happiness of men is in their perfection and, the closer they get to perfection, the closer they get to happiness."[60] The process by which everything naturally tends toward perfection is what Lamennais called order.[61] "The perfection of all creatures being relative to their nature, it follows that no being, and man in particular, can be happy except by living in perfect conformity with the laws which result from his nature. In other words, happiness exists only within order."[62]

Here is in brief St. Augustine's vision of a universal order within which everything in its essence underscores a cosmic unity.[63] This is not meant to suggest a comparison between the works of St. Augustine and those of Lamennais. Lamennais was almost exclusively concerned with the temporal order and, more specifically, with man's relations to power. In fact, although he borrowed terms and ideas from St. Augustine, he depended much more heavily upon the medieval theory of society as developed by St. Thomas Aquinas. Order, however, was

not merely an external condition imposed with more or less coercion by the State. It was also and primarily an internal condition. Man's happiness depended first "on the proper ordering" of his various faculties, and second on the condition that "each of his faculties either reach their perfect development or enjoy the object that corresponds to it."[64] The State therefore must respect and acknowledge the proper ordering of man's faculties, and, equally, acknowledge the condition suitable for their development. In the first case this knowledge was that of the laws derived from man's nature and in the second of laws derived from the nature of society. Order thus resulted from obedience to laws both in a personal and a social sense. Laws were rules whose unquestioned acceptance was a necessity no one could do without; they were the basis not only of the relationships among men but also of an individual's immediate actions.

The laws which were derived from the nature of society must be obeyed so as to produce peace which was the "necessary condition as well as the result of harmonious relations between men."[65] These laws, however, were not made by one man, for this was the essence of despotism.[66] They were the laws of God as manifested in the general sense of mankind.[67] In effect, "one can neither conceive of possible order without laws, nor of true laws if they are not compulsory rules applying to the ruler himself."[68] If the authority of the State was the embodiment of a set of rules reflecting God's will, it goes without saying that its power was not to be synonymous with force. Yet force, of necessity, could not be

entirely absent; it was according to Lamennais, a component of power. Power, he said in his discussion on freedom, "is the union of authority and force."[69] Power and force become synonymous when the notion of justice is separated from that of sovereignty.[70] "Rights and Justice" must be the base of all relations between subjects and sovereign, otherwise authority is illegitimate.[71] In other words, the laws derived from the nature of society were what Lamennais called Justice, or God's will.[72] It was exclusively from their application that right order ensued. Order imposed by an illegitimate authority, i.e., any authority not applying these laws to society and to itself, could not result in peace.

The various claims to truth that had arisen since Luther's time had produced competition and conflicts which had disrupted society's natural order. To solve this problem and avoid error man had to be made to heed St. Augustine's advice: "Natural order requires that, when we learn something, authority precedes reason."[73] It could of course be objected that such an advice, if followed, would lead to an authoritarianism totally disrespectful of dissenting claims not necessarily having anything to do with objective truth. Conscious of this objection, Lamennais in 1828 made a point of emphasizing that the jurisdiction of the spiritual authority is always voluntary, that whatever it decides has any result only so long as the "minds submit to it freely." No one can ever complain about its judgments "which could not possibly be executed, unless accepted first, because the tribunal from which they emanate is deprived of all coercive force."[74]

We can see then that "authority," that is the legal power of the State, whose duty was to maintain order, had two different jurisdictions, one societal, the other spiritual. But both were inextricably mixed: whatever an individual believed would determine not only his personal behavior but also his social behavior. The laws deriving from the nature of society would be therefore closely linked to the laws deriving from the nature of man. What this meant in fact was that there could not be two authorities but only one. The temporal authority whose duty was to maintain societal order must also be the spiritual authority whose duty was to maintain personal or man's inner order. In fact, the spiritual order (the domain of religion) was the condition sine qua non of societal order. In other words society could not exist without religion,[75] because religion was "the exact expression of the natural or necessary relationships between men," expressed in "the constitution, the laws, the customs ... converging in perfect harmony towards the same goal," -- which was "a State well ordered and a happy society."[76]

Order became possible only when power emanated from God: religion must control politics. To dissociate religion from politics, which was what he accused Hobbes and Shaftesbury of doing,[77] was to substitute force for justice (God's law), as the basis for power, and thus lay the ground for despotism and disorder.[78]

With such a view Lamennais could resolutely reject this "degrading and deadly doctrine according to which man, slave to the unique influence of self-interest, has no other motive for his actions than

love of self."[79] This doctrine -- which propounded the notion that men "owe each other nothing, have no other rule than their individual wills directed only by their self-interests, and thus are established in a permanent state of war,"[80] -- produced exactly the competition and conflicts that he saw as inimical to society's survival and opposed to man's search for happiness.

Because he conceived order as the very condition of society's survival, Lamennais spent many years trying to establish with certainty the validity of the rules man ought to follow. He ultimately recognized the impossibility of reaching the truth and confessed his failure,[81] but he never lost hope that, with the help of science, greater knowledge of history, and of "man's laws," eventually Truth would be discovered.[82]

Lamennais can be, and has been, criticized for his failure to understand that man does "not feel the necessity of relating every action to some ultimate principles; ... [that he is] unaware of or unworried by inconsistency between belief and practice; ... [that he is] cheerfully muddling through without soul shaking and breast beating."[83] He failed to see that logically there is no necessary connection between knowledge and action.

From this discussion it can be seen first that order for Lamennais meant obedience to a legal framework which would have its source in the laws of God. It can also be seen that any political doctrine rejecting these laws, or accepting them in theory but rejecting them in practice, could not achieve what for him was essential and still preserve the second condition necessary to a healthy society: freedom.

Freedom

So much stress has been placed upon Lamennais' authoritarianism in the early phase of his career that it has been generally overlooked that his concern with order was merely an indispensable first step toward establishing firm foundations on which real and effective freedom could rest. The notoriety of his first major work, Essai sur l'indifférence en matière de religion, obscured the fact that he was at the very same time writing several short works on the nature of freedom.[84]

In these he said that man can be free only in a society in which power, i.e., the legitimate authority of the State, maintains order.[85] But, as we have seen, order was not simply the result of obedience to any law. Lamennais remained convinced that human law, if separated from God's law, was bound to lead to despotism.

According to Lamennais, despotism could come about in three ways. Under a monarchic form of government despotism came about when the sovereign was freed "of all rule of justice externally imposed." This was what Gallicanism "in the name of God" had done by freeing the French Crown from Papal authority.[86]

Under a liberal, i.e., parliamentary, form of government "all notion of right and duty" was overturned because liberalism "denies that there exists any fixed rapport between God and man" and thus leads to anarchy and despotism "by substituting for legitimate and true power, a purely human power; that is to say in confusing sovereignty with blind force."[87] We will see later that Lamennais'

opposition to Liberalism was based on his understanding that the proponents of this doctrine, in which he included Rousseau,[88] placed ultimate authority for man's actions in individual reason. This, for him, was tantamount to asking for total freedom in the abstract, which could only lead to anarchy and hence to despotism.[89]

Under a collectivist form of government, either socialist or communist, what made man potentially and effectively free, i.e., the necessarily individual moral bond that tied each man to God, was taken away from him; he became but a small fraction of a large whole called society. This depersonalization effectively laid the ground for the worst type of slavery.[90] Thus despotism could be the result of either too little or too much freedom.

It can even be said that Lamennais' dislike of all modern philosophies since the sixteenth century was based on a fear that they, by one means or another, removed all the restraints man had previously known. "All the errors that have ever existed in the world ... come from the negation of authority. The heretic denies the authority of the Church, the deist denies that of Jesus Christ and of all Christian societies, the atheist that of mankind. It is the same thing in politics and even in the sciences."[91] There was then no such a thing as freedom as an abstract concept. This denial was not so much the result of his scant faith in human reason as of his belief that personal freedom would be irrelevant in a society that met all the needs of the individual, not excluding the spiritual ones. This is what led him to state that "since man is free only in society and society is not able to survive without power, it follows that power is the first condition of freedom."[92]

Now this statement may be interpreted as an index of Lamennais' authoritarianism. It simply meant, as he was careful to explain, that the State must be the guarantor of certain rights. In other words the existence of rights presupposed the existence of governments, or in Lamennais' word "authority." "In political society, authority is the general sense of society as given expression in the laws. Power is the union of authority and force. Man is free when he obeys /this/ power, because he obeys reason, the order that preserves society and each of its members."[93] But distortions occur either in society, and thus by reflection in the State which ought to reflect the general sense of society, or in the State itself which will then "contaminate" society.[94]

Hence the need of religion on which depends "the perfection of authority" by "enlightening and developing the general sense of society."[95] Preservation and development of freedom was therefore the first point of contact between politics and religion: "Power being the foundation of freedom, freedom will be greater as power is more perfect."[96]

As early as 1820, Lamennais had thus sharply delimited the context in which he proposed to deal with the problem of freedom. To say, in an article entitled "De la liberté," that "in political society, authority is the general sense of society as given expression in the laws" was a very short step from saying that governments derive their powers from the consent of the governed, or at least of those who have acquired and given expression to the "true" sense of society.

And to say that despotism was "the reason of one man substituted for the general sense of society,"[97] was to say that the State which ought to be the guarantor of freedom was also its greatest threat.

This article was an elaboration of thoughts he had expressed earlier in volume one of his Essai. Criticizing the Social Contract theory of Hobbes he had stated:"Servitude consists not in obedience to authority, which is, quite the contrary, the only real liberty, but it consists in submission to an authority devoid of right."[98] If obedience to rightful authority was truly freedom, subjects must have specific claims to freedom from that authority. In his writings these claims were usually formulated as specific demands directed against actual abuses on the part of the government. Several implications flow from this assertion. First, to be legitimate these claims to freedom must be seen as inherent rights belonging equally to all. Second, their acknowledgement by the government was the first condition of a morally acceptable society. Third, freedom could not be equated with power to do certain things; governments were not free to use their power as they chose: if they represented "rightful authority" the use of their power was a duty; if their authority was not legitimate, obedience was not due to them. This meant that governmental powers were placed under the same restraints that apply to the subjects.[99] And finally, since rights were claims on other persons, rights never ceased to have an ethical content.

The conclusion that emerged from this was the absolute need for an infallible authority which would guarantee that the law was respected by all and specially by those in positions of power.[100] It also followed that it was impossible to separate ethics from politics. These were indeed the two points Lamennais repeatedly made in his writings. Until 1832 he was torn between revelation and history as the source of infallibility; after 1834 both history and science were to be the sources of it.[101] There was a similar break in his thought concerning the nature of the restraints imposed on politics. Until 1832 religion and politics could not be separated because religion was God's law, and God's law was what must guide men's actions. After 1832 religion still meant God's law but the emphasis was no longer on the religious but on the ethical. This break betrayed his growing awareness of the impossibility to bridge the chasm that existed between what he called Christianity and Catholicism. After his break with the Church, Christianity remained a set of ethical principles to which the Church had simply refused to be brought back.

This belief in the existence of ethical principles, largely religious at the outset, offered a solid ground for criticism of existing ideas and practices. These principles were seen as "natural," eternally and universally applicable. They could be contrasted with the conventional, the varied, transient of everyday life, and thus could be used as a powerful solvent against the rigidity of customary behavior and traditionalism of political institutions.

Belief in such principles can only lead to a rejection of the definition of politics as conquest and use of power. And the form of government matters less than its conduct. This belief in the existence of ethical principles, God's gift to man, was the justification for his claims to freedom, and at the same time determined the nature of these claims. One of these claims was freedom of education. A discussion of this topic at this time will serve to illustrate both Lamennais' concept of freedom and the importance of education in his doctrine. As early as 1814 he had called for the granting of total freedom to set up schools and colleges.[103] In 1818 he wrote a pamphlet entitled "Education Considered in its Relationship to Liberty" in which he demanded complete freedom of education.[104]

But at that time Lamennais still placed his confidence in authority to impose changes and the freedom he demanded was limited. This pamphlet was in fact less a demand for freedom of education than a demand for education free from the secular control of the State. He called this control "servitude of mind," "the most degrading of all despotisms, because it is exercised over what is noblest in men, thought."[105] The government must not and cannot be in control of what is taught because "it is through education that necessary truths and useful knowledge is propagated; it is education which develops intelligence, regulates customs, and forms the mind." Such control would reduce mankind to a "kind of automaton, an organized mass which would receive its thought, not from

its environment and its needs, but from the government," thus destroying "man's natural liberties."[106] But this did not mean that the government did not have duties regarding education. If it must offer education to all -- free and universal education provided by the government was a right which Lamennais claimed throughout his life as one of the most basic; reference to it is to be found in almost every one of his writings after 1834, -- it had the duty to oversee what was taught, to suppress schools where the teaching was "dangerous for the State, for morality, or serves to propagate doctrines that are bad for society."[107]

This statement clearly demanded a censorship of what was taught and conflicts with Lamennais' demand that "man has a right to learn everything his faculties and social position allows him to learn ... thus, by its nature, the teaching of human knowledge is essentially free and the rules to which it is proper to submit it are equitable only so long as they respect this freedom."[108] And he added further, "The abuse that men make of their knowledge is not a reason to forbid it to them."[109] Having been a teacher himself he may not have recognized this as a contradiction, since he placed his faith in the "morality" of those who would propagate knowledge. What was more probable was that Lamennais believed that error, bad habits and false opinions were the result of the advocacy of doctrines justifying the use of force for the sake of the domination of some men over others. If this domination were ended, in the case of education by freeing it from State control, free education would quickly destroy these doctrines and men would again be in a position to distinguish where the truth lies.

What made domination of men by men "unnatural" and the doctrines, such as that of Hobbes, which legitimized this domination, so vicious, was that "all men are equal" and that no one had the right to arrogate to himself what was preeminently God's, namely sovereignty.[110]

Freedom was thus a function of equality. This equality was the possession of reason, the ability to discriminate between right and wrong, which was the result of the eternal law that binds all men to to God. "Intelligent beings are united by a divine law, anterior to all positive institutions, and without which they would be eternally isolated. This universal law constitutes society because it alone creates duties and rights."[111]

Thus freedom was the right not to have false opinions and beliefs imposed on oneself. It was the right to be what by nature one was, that is, fundamentally able to recognize right and wrong and follow an innate ability to choose correctly.[112] This is why, more than thirty years later, 1851, he voted against the loi Falloux. Being then convinced that the Church's authority was as harmful as that of the State, he opposed its imposition over education as he had opposed that of the State throughout his career. If in 1818 he was willing to place power of censorship into the government's hands it was because he was then hoping that "true Monarchy" could be restored.[113] Two years later he published a pamphlet in which he exposed what he thought liberty was.[114] The same idea underlies what he said: freedom resulted when society allowed man to be what

he is; this was in fact what made a society morally acceptable. But the State must ever be present to enforce society's standards, i.e., make sure that "man's passions" were kept under control.

> Liberty is not free will; because by virtue of free will itself, nations as well as individuals can lose their freedom ... . Liberty is not independence either, because independence is a chimera, a word empty of meaning unless it signifies nothingness. Every created being necessarily depends on his creator; he depends on everything that is, because nothing exists in isolation. It is this reciprocity of communication and subjection which maintains the harmony in the magnificent ensemble of the works of God.[115]

What was liberty, then if it was neither independence nor free will? Liberty, in the most general sense, was the condition which allowed man to become what he ought to become.[116]

Man cannot be intellectually free except in society, because, cut off from interaction with other men, his intelligence vegetates and dies.[117] Man cannot be morally free except in society, because only in society can he know religion which "contains his passions."[118] "In fact, passions and liberty are mutually exclusive."[119] Man cannot be physically free except in society because by himself in nature he would have to live like a beast.[120]

The attainment of liberty therefore depends on the individual's willingness to be free and on the society in which he lives. If society does not allow man to be free, intellectually, morally and physically, man cannot of himself be free or consider himself free. But given a society which allows man to be free, man must will his freedom, intellectually by developing his intelligence, morally by "containing" his passions, physically by behaving like a human being.

For Lamennais then, freedom was not a spiritual state one can reach regardless of the physical environment in which one lives; it was a state wholly dependent upon society, which was itself served by the legitimate authority vested in the State. Freedom, so to speak, was the principle which, within limits, allowed men to participate actively in their own moral, intellectual, and material improvements. "Everything which supports the development of human beings, either directly, or by pushing aside the obstacles which oppose this development, favors freedom."[121]

Laws and their enforcement by the State could either favor or prevent the development of freedom. "Two things constitute liberty: the legitimacy of power and the conformity of its action with immutable justice; and liberty therefore, is the first law, the fundamental, essential law of society."[122] This statement written in 1829 was in all essentials similar to those found in his writings ten years earlier. The only difference was that by now he had lost his confidence in monarchy as the power that could be made legitimate. Also his advocacy of force as a means to combat error had disappeared.

> Renounce to put men's minds in chains; understand that when they err, they are never brought back but by free persuasion, and that they can be submitted to what is just and true only by spiritual weapons. Evil, the great evil, is that there is no faith in the power of Truth, that we believe in man's violence and do not believe in the strength of God.[123]

This undoubtedly represented a liberalization of Lamennais' thought, if by liberalization is meant a greater generosity of spirit, a

greater tolerance of others, a greater belief in the worth and dignity of man and a rejection of physical means of repression.

This liberalization was completed with the enunciation of the freedoms demanded by L'Avenir in 1830. Freedom of education was no longer hedged about by a right of censorship by the government and was preceded by the demand for freedom of conscience "full, universal, without distinction and without privileges."[124] Freedom of the press was a corollary to freedom of speech, and freedom of association was spelled out as a precaution against the encroachments of power.[125] His fifth demand was a direct result of the implication that freedom was dependent on equality: suffrage had to be extended to all.[126] But all these claims to freedom were not to be granted by law, or embodied in a constitution. The State "does not make the law, it simply executes it. The law is, in everything touching man's freedom, the will of the collective individual called society."[127] Freedom thus did not find its origin in the law; it was pre-existent to political society and the function of the State was to guarantee its conservation.[128] On May 23, 1831, Lamennais violently attacked the king for having said that freedom consisted in the rule of law.[129] This article was a direct slap both at the Social Contract theory and at the partisans of majority rule. For the law, man-made law, could be as unjust and as tyrannical as the unlimited power of one man. "Is there freedom when the law orders or sanctions slavery?" he not improperly asked.[130]

In Lamennais' view freedom could not be legislated. Man-made laws must conform to a higher law, to Justice "because Justice is God."[131] How, it may be asked, can we be sure that positive law truly will conform to this higher law? There was no suggestion in Lamennais' writings that the free clash of ideas and opinions could produce the truth. The demands he enunciated in 1830 covered, in all essentials, man's needs to himself and gave him the means to protect himself from illegitimate power. Lamennais may have hoped that removal of restraints over men's minds would allow truth to emerge. In the constitution he wrote in 1848 a high court, elected by all the judges in the nation, themselves elected locally by universal suffrage, was given the power to review all laws adopted by the National Assembly and reject all those which in any way threatened the freedom and equality of opportunity of individuals.[132] Were the judges of this high court, elected be it noted, not by universal suffrage or nominated by the government but by all the elected judges of the nation, a modern version of the Stoics' "wise men?"[133]

It will be noticed that throughout Lamennais' discussion, he always emphasized freedom from restraints imposed on men by men, while freedom itself was nothing but the ability to make a choice -- choice that was seriously limited by both natural and positive laws. The limits, however, imposed by natural law were the very conditions of the existence of freedom on the one hand, while the limits imposed by positive law were the very conditions of its conservation. This was the reason for the necessary conformity of positive law to natural law.

If man was free to choose, there was no assurance that he would choose correctly even if he was "reasonable." ("Tout est mixte dans la vie humaine: pas un acte raisonnable qui ne renferme un usage bon ou mauvais de la volonté, et qui par conséquent ne relève de la loi morale.")[134] Fifteen years earlier, he had already stated his belief in the complete relativity of man's moral sense.[135] Thus anyone's rights to do anything involved not only possible curtailment of someone else's freedom but also power to prevent and correct bad "usage" of these rights.

This two-fold paradox Lamennais attempted to solve by trying to instill in all men a common sense of obligation. If all individuals were made aware that they all shared something in common, they would put social goods above individual ones and conflicts of interest would disappear. Moreover if they recognized that the law they must obey was just, they would obey it, thus obviating the need for coercion.

The problem was thus two-fold: to evolve an absolute standard of justice which would serve as the basis for laws, and to foster a universal sense of obligation. Lamennais' solution of the first problem is the subject of analysis in a subsequent chapter. What must be examined here are his attempts at fostering a sense of universal obligation.

In 1825 he said that to declare "that sovereignty is tied to no obligation either towards God or towards men is to constitute a monstrous despotism and prepare for an anarchy more monstrous

still."[136] Freedom was antithetical to despotism and anarchy. But we have seen that for Lamennais modern philosophies propounded a theory of sovereignty affecting both man and the State. To declare that man was sovereign was to endow the State with the same character. The result of this was the denial of any obligation either on the part of the State to a higher law on the one hand and to its subjects on the other, or on the part of individuals towards one another. This for Lamennais effectively isolated individuals and prevented them from keeping an effective watch over those who govern them. It also removed any restraint from those wielding power. Since the nature of power is to continually expand, lack of restraint on the part of those wielding it was bound to result in despotism, which as far as he was concerned, had already occurred.

Thus the need for a theory of obligation, binding individuals together, was a precondition for establishing a morally acceptable, orderly society. This theory of obligation Lamennais found in religion. "Religion, superior law of free and intelligent man, comprises at the same time the precepts which, regulating his will, regulate his acts in respect to good and evil, and give the reason for the existence for these precepts."[137] This sentence was written in 1848, in the preface of the first volume of Part III of his Esquisse d'une philosophie. The subject of this volume was a demonstration that politics and morality were two faces of the same coin. At that time he was convinced that religion, which was "the moral order outside of which no life is possible,"[138] consisted of

time-tested propositions recognizable throughout the history of mankind, and whose definition and precision evolved as did knowledge. Until the mid-1830's he equated these propositions, or rules, with the Catholic doctrine. At that time, prompted doubtless by the two encyclicals of 1832 and 1834, he began to make a distinction between Catholicism and Christianity. The doctrine giving legitimacy to the spiritual authority of the Church, had fallen out of step with the march of history and could no longer serve as a guide to mankind; yet Christ's words, even if Christ's divinity could not be maintained, represented a body of truths eternally valid.[139]

"According to mankind's universal belief, there exists a certain order of truths which have the character of laws, and which, in this respect, are outside the realm of reason or free will."[140] This statement, written in 1835, summarized better than any other what he always believed. These laws were contained in "revelation" when Lamennais was inside the Church, in history, if one looked for them, when he was outside of it. What muddled much of his writings from 1817 to 1834 was his continued attempt to prove that these laws, as contained in revelation, made of the Catholic doctrine the "True Law." Yet in spite of this he could not prevent ambiguity from cropping up in some of his arguments.

In 1821 he reproached Pascal for not having "distinguished the faith inherent in human nature from the Christian faith."[141] This criticism was an almost exact reproduction of Montesquieu's.[142]

Lamennais began the first volume of his Essai thus:

> Doctrines determine everything; customs, literature, constitutions, laws, well-being of counties as well as their disasters, civilization, barbarism, and all these frightful crises which sweep away nations or revive them according to the amount of life that remains in them. Man acts only because he believes, and men, en masse, act always in conformity with what they believe, because the passions of the masses are themselves determined by the beliefs held.[143]

The belief that doctrines were at the bottom of all things made it imperative for him to try to determine a precise doctrine if total relativism, and in his mind the inevitable chaos ensuing from it, were to be avoided. It is for this reason that he was led to try to establish a criterion of certitude, "one of the most abstract and subtle philosophical questions."[144] If doctrines determine actions, then indeed was faith necessary to man.

His early attacks on Descartes centered on this point: by his erroneous speculations he had given philosophical legitimacy to arguments which destroyed the Church's criterion of certitude.[145] What his writings clearly show even then is that he was less concerned with the ideal life and the practice for attaining the values of the ideal life than with the nature of right and the determination of the good. In other words his concern was ethical rather than religious. There is, to be sure, a very thin line between the two, and this line is quickly erased if one attempts to find a justification for the ethical principles in a world-view taking God as its departure. Quite obviously, to establish a criterion of certitude, or as he did later in his Esquisse, to

present an all-encompassing world-view upon which to base such a certitude, were of secondary importance to him. His main problem was "to demand of history and religion what was the cause and then what could be the cure" for the "frightful social disintegration" that he thought he witnessed.[146]

The cause of this disintegration was to be found in the spread of doctrines which took the individual as a point of departure. The cure therefore could be found in what was explicitly rejected by these doctines -- namely, the bond that allows men to live together, to help one another, what in fact impels them towards a communal life, the will to live which he equated, perhaps incorrectly, with the belief in Life.

Lamennais was conscious from the start that by identifying faith as the cornerstone of his philosophical doctrine he was reviving the old dispute between rationalists and anti-rationalists. He bluntly placed himself on the side of the early Christian thinkers by his attacks on philosophy and was thereby accused of following the trail blazed by Tertullian, who went so far as to assert that faith defied reason.[147]

Faith is usually thought to be a supernatural virtue to which our mind assents as a result of divine grace. Faith is therefore antithetical to reason. Yet for Lamennais reason begins in faith and the two, instead of being antithetical, are radically linked.[148] In other words, in discussing faith and its relation to reason, Lamennais was not concerned as a theologian with the topic of grace

but as a thinker concerned with man's state of mind and its impact on his own life as well as that of society. It can even be stated that grace is not a topic to be found in Lamennais' writings.

His real concern is nowhere better illustrated than in an article he wrote in 1819 entitled "On Suicide."[149] Taking a page out of Pascal he showed the human necessity of belief. Loss of faith resulted in an existential crisis, endless anguish, and possible suicide. And what was true of man was also true of society. Faith therefore was the belief in a law -- a spiritual law[150] -- which explained to man the meaning of his life by showing him what united him to all other men. "Faith is love and the cult of men, it unites them by uniting them to God Himself."[151]

Lamennais' eloquent call for a return to the faith was not then an appeal for a mystical experience as a way out of the miseries of this world. It was instead a call to his contemporaries' inherent rationality, a call to their better instincts as a way to improve both their moral and material condition on earth. At the beginning of his career he summoned the upper classes and the better educated members of the clergy. In Le livre du peuple, published in 1836, the law man must believe in became a "moral and religious law"[152] which was the basis of men's rights and duties[153] and which therefore could enable them to change, for the better, conditions, political and social, that prevailed. Even when he preached obedience to "the highest visible authority" as the repository of revelation[154] it was

a call not for blind obedience to something beyond understanding, but an appeal to obey what he then thought was the visible embodiment of that great bond which unites men to one another. Could the replacement of faith by hope -- so prominent a feature of the more radical movements within the Church today -- be traced to Lamennais?[155]

After 1834 he did exactly what he had reproached Pascal for doing. He turned from Catholicism to "the faith inherent in human nature,"[156] and attempted to make it the source of his idea of justice. The third part of his Esquisse d'une philosophie -- which he never completed -- was supposed to be a political theory taking as departure a set of laws which men everywhere and at all time have recognized as self-evident because of the very faith in life that they all share. These laws in other words were nothing but the duties men have always more or less willingly performed in order to live together. By setting them forth as a theory of obligation, Lamennais was trying to show that what united men was more important, more vital, than what separated them. But no longer accepting any religion as the embodiment of "truth," and seeing no solution to his problem in the social contract theory, he was forced to formulate a watered-down Catholic doctrine which every one, then and since, found meaningless.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER II

1. Oeuvres complètes, I, 22-35.
2. For Lamennais "common sens " is not what we mean by it today. "Sensus communis" really means humane for him; it is what distinguishes man from other organic beings, it is man's share of Divine Reason. Hence the constant reference to history as the record of man's reason through which can be read God's law.
3. Oeuvres complètes, I, i-ii.
4. Ibid., i-ii.
5. Ibid., iii-v.
6. Ibid., xii.
7. Ibid., 1-2.
8. Ibid., 3.
9. Ibid., V, 13.
10. Ibid., 13-16.
11. Ibid., 17.
12. Ibid., 17-31.
13. Ibid., 17-18.
14. Ibid., 43.
15. Ibid., 43.
16. Ibid., IX, 338.
17. Ibid., VIII, 69-71.
18. Ibid., I, 309; VII, 150-151.
19. Ibid., IX, 15.

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20. Richard H. Popkin, "The Sceptical Crisis and the Rise of Modern Philosophy," The Review of Metaphysics, VII, No. 3 (March, 1954), 509.

21. Ibid., 510.

22. Although he admitted in 1834 that this problem was perhaps beyond solution for the moment because of a lack of knowledge concerning the laws of human behavior (Oeuvres complètes, X, ix), the first four volumes of his Esquisse d'une philosophie, published from 1840, is clearly meant as a solution to it.

23. Oeuvres complètes, IX, 1-2.

24. Ibid., 5; I, 16 ff.

25. Ibid., I, 22-23. Unless otherwise noted all translations from the French are the writer's.

26. Ibid., I, 341; II, 150 ff.; VII, vii ff.; VIII, 414; etc.

27. Essai sur l'indifférence ... (1817); De la religion considérée ... (1828); De la société première ... (1848).

28. See his first letter to the Archbishop of Paris, Oeuvres complètes, IX, 331-371.

29. Popkin, 510.

30. Oeuvres complètes, I, 36.

31. Ibid., VIII, 317.

32. "The rule of faith of the Reformers thus appears to have been subjective certainty, the compulsion of one's conscience. But this type of subjectivism is open to many objections. The world is full of people convinced of the oddest views!" Richard H. Popkin, The History of Scepticism, from Erasmus to Descartes (New York, Harper, 1968), 7.

33. Correspondence inédite entre Lamennais et le baron de Vitrolles, ed., E. Forgues (Paris, Charpentier, 1886), letter of 17 Oct. 1820, 69; hereafter referred to as Vitrolles.

CHAPTER II
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34. Oeuvres complètes, II, 15.

35. Cf., Mme de Staël's attitude in De l'Allemagne(1813).

36. This appears particularly clear in his correspondence with Vitrolles and Benoît D'Azy as well as in Politique à l'usage du peuple, (Paris, Pagnerre, 1839), II, 62-63. His correspondence with Benoît D'Azy was edited by Laveille, op. cit., hereafter referred to as Benoit D'Azy. For unknown reasons Laveille did not include all of Lamennais' letters to Benoît D'Azy in this volume. For the letters he did not include, perhaps because they disclosed an intimacy some might have thought suspect, see "Une correspondence intime de Lamennais," in La Quinzaine (Juillet-Août, 1896), 141-159, 328-357, 447-466.

37. Woodward, 274.

38. John Plamenatz, Man and Society, (London, Longman, 1963), I, 101-106.

39. Oeuvres complètes, VII, 12.

40. Ibid., 8.

41. Ibid., IX, 412.

42. Ibid., 336-337.

43. Politique à l'usage du peuple, II, 113-115, hereafter referred to as Politique.

44. Oeuvres complètes, IX, 26.

45. Ibid., 26.

46. See below, III

47. Oeuvres complètes, V, viii-xvi.

48. Ibid., I, 223.

49. Otto Gierke, Political Theories of the Middle Age, trans. Frederic W. Maitland (Boston, Beacon Press, 1958), 9 ff.

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50. Janet, 59-60.

51. Oeuvres complètes, IX, 18.

52. Ibid., 26.

53. The word "pouvoir" so often used by Lamennais does not have in French the authoritarian connotation it has in English; it is synonomyous with authority and the legal action of the State.

54. F. Lamennais, De la société première et ses lois ou de la religion (Paris, Garnier, 1848), 3; hereafter referred to as De la société.

55. Oeuvres complètes, I, 147-149.

56. Ibid., 134.

57. Ibid., 7-8.

58. Ibid., 123-125.

59. Ibid., 123-124.

60. Ibid., 223-224.

61. Ibid., 224.

62. Ibid., 224.

63. Christopher Dawson, "St. Augustine and his Age," in M.C. D'Arcy et al, St. Augustine (New York and Cleveland, Meridian,1957), 66-67.

64. Oeuvres complètes, I, 230.

65. Ibid., VIII, 69-71.

66. Ibid., 238.

67. Ibid., 237.

68. Ibid., X, xxvi; Cf. Cicero Laws, book II, IV-V, C. W. Keyes' translation (New York, Heinemann, 1928), 379-387.

69. Oeuvres complètes, VIII, 237.

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70. Ibid., IX, 412.

71. Ibid., 411.

72. Ibid., I, 349.

73. Quoted twice in Oeuvres complètes, V, 43 and 47.

74. Ibid., IX, 356.

75. Ibid., I, 21-47.

76. Ibid., 278.

77. Ibid., 34 ff.

78. Ibid., 349-350.

79. De la société, 99.

80. Ibid., 74.

81. Oeuvres complètes, X, ix.

82. Ibid., ix-xii.

83. Talmon, 230.

84. Two of these are: "De l'éducation considérée dans ses rapports avec la liberté," written in 1818, reproduced in Oeuvres complètes, VI, 370-376; and "De la liberté," written in 1820, and reproduced in Oeuvres complètes, VIII, 232-238.

85. Oeuvres complètes, VIII, 236-238.

86. Ibid., IX, 337, his italics.

87. Ibid., 336-337.

88. Ibid., I, Chapter V.

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89. Ibid., IX, 21-22; see also Politique, 65-66, where he says: "What is anarchy? it is the absence of recognized laws, of effective laws. You, who in all things see and only want to see facts, you are the true anarchists; and it is because anarchy is the result of your system, is your system itself, that instinctively you look for a cure in despotism."

90. Discussions critiques et pensées diverses sur la religion et la philosophie (Paris, Pagnerre, 1841), 176 ff., hereafter referred to as Discussions critiques; and Du passé et de l'avenir du peuple (Paris, Pagnerre, 1841), 91 ff., hereafter referred to as Du passé.

91. Oeuvres complètes, II, lxxxx; see also VIII, 188-189 for his description of the effects of modern philosophy on man.

92. Ibid., VIII, 236.

93. Ibid., 237.

94. Ibid., I, 95 ff.

95. Ibid., VIII, 237.

96. Ibid., 237.

97. Ibid., 238.

98. Ibid., I, 35.

99. Ibid., IX, 15.

100. Ibid., 337.

101. Discussions critiques, 13 ff.

102. His desire to bring back the Church to the teachings of the Christian Fathers is nowhere better illustrated than in his Second Letter to the Archbishop of Paris, of April 1829, reproduced in Oeuvres complètes, IX, 388 ff.; see also, X, lxxx.

103. In a pamphlet called "De l'université," reproduced in Oeuvres complètes, VI, 308-328.

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104. Above, note 84.

105. Oeuvres complètes, VI, 370.

106. Ibid., 370-371.

107. Ibid., 371.

108. Ibid., 373.

109. Ibid., 374.

110. Ibid., I, 350-356.

111. Ibid., VIII, 417.

112. A comparison of some of Lamennais' ideas with Cicero's has already been suggested, see above, note 68. In this case the comparison is even clearer: "If bad habits and false beliefs did not twist the weaker minds and turn them in whatever direction they are inclined, no one would be so like his own self as all men would be like all others." Laws, Keyes' translation, 329.

113. See below Chapter III for discussion on Ultraroyalists.

114. See above, note 84.

115. Oeuvres complètes, VIII, 233.

116. Ibid., 234.

117. Ibid., 235.

118. Ibid., 235.

119. Ibid., 235.

120. Ibid., 236.

121. Ibid., 234.

122. Ibid., IX, 25.

123. Ibid., 68.

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124. Ibid., X, 199-200.

125. Ibid., 201-203.

126. Ibid., 203.

127. Ibid., lviii-lix.

128. Ibid., lviii.

129. Ibid., 303-305.

130. Ibid., 303-304.

131. Ibid., cxxii.

132. Projet de constitution de la République Française (Paris, Le peuple constituant, 1848), articles 155 to 158.

133. G. Sabine and S. Smith have shown how the Stoics tried to reconcile the conflict between positive and natural, or higher laws, and have pointed to the essentially anti-democratic nature of their solution. Cf. G. Sabine and S. Smith's introduction to Cicero's On the Commonwealth (Columbus, Ohio University Press, 1929), 16-20.

134. Oeuvres complètes, X, xxxvii.

135. Ibid., II, 19-20.

136. Ibid., VII, 294.

137. De la société, v-vi.

138. Ibid., v.

139. Oeuvres complètes, X, cii : this passage, written in 1834, shows that Lamennais is becoming convinced that Catholicism is dying, but that its death is due to Catholicism's own shortcomings; see for example Discussions critiques, 24, written at about the same time. In a letter to Ballanche written Oct. 6, 1834, he deplores the fact that it is no longer possible to be human and a Roman Catholic at the same time because of the Church's position (B. N. Ms, fr MA. 14081).

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140. Ibid., X, xli.

141. Ibid., V, 67.

142. Montesquieu, "Pensées," in Oeuvres complètes (Pleiade; Paris, Gallimard, 1964), I, 1551.

143. Oeuvres complètes, I, 2.

144. Janet, 14.

145. Oeuvres complètes, V, 78-107; 167 ff.

146. This is the way he stated what had been and still was his purpose in late 1828. (see his first letter to the Archbishop of Paris in Oeuvres complètes, IX, 331-371, and specifically 335-336.) If this distinction is made between religion and ethics his suggestion that it is the task "of government to try to prevent this terrible dissolution by protecting against the passions vital doctrines, source of the vigor and energy to be noticed in certain societies" (Oeuvres complètes, I, 15) is not a call for coercion as has often been stated (see in particular Janet, 14-15) but rather a call for obedience to laws -- obedience that any civilized society is entitled to expect.

147. Tertullian, A. D. 160-225; his enthusiasm "carried him eventually into the spiritual 'nonconformity' or 'methodism' of the Montanist Order." (Ernest Barker, From Alexander to Constantine, Oxford, Clarendon, 1956, 446-460.)

148. Oeuvres complètes, II, introduction to the fourth edition written in 1829, lxxxii-lxxxiv, 19-21.

149. Reproduced in Oeuvres complètes, VIII, 186-192.

150. Ibid., IX, 393, his italics.

151. Ibid., 394.

152. Le livre du peuple (fourth ed.; Paris, Pagnerre, 1838), 108.

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153. Oeuvres complètes, X, xli-xlii.

154. Ibid., II, 186-204.

155. For an illustration of this trend, see Gary Wills, Bare Ruined Choirs: Doubt, Prophecy, and Radical Religion (Garden City, Doubleday, 1972).

156. See above, note 141.

Chapter III : LAMENNAIS' POLITICAL CRITICISMS

Anti-Gallicanism

Lamennais devoted most of his life and most of his writings to criticisms of the prevailing social doctrines. The period of his life from 1815 to 1829 was dominated by one issue: his campaign against Gallicanism. From 1830 to 1848 he battled unsuccessfully against Liberalism, dividing his attention during the 1840's between the practices of the Liberals and those of their new enemies on the left, the collectivists. He came to these tasks with less than the theological and philosophical training required, but with some quite definite notions on how to proceed. He seldom cited his sources and the extent of his readings has often been minimized. He is often thought to have relied heavily upon the works of Bossuet, Pascal, De Maistre, and De Bonald, because of the superficial resemblance of some passages in his works with those of these authors. Their intellectual influence disappeared from his writings after 1834.[1]

Lamennais was thoroughly familiar with the works of St. Augustine and St. Thomas, and relied heavily upon their their works and the writings of the Church Fathers during the early years of his career. But as he encountered difficulties, first in his squabbles with the Jesuits in 1820, then with the French hierarchy, he seems to have gone back to earlier classical sources. St. Thomas remained the strongest influence in his life but he made much more extensive use of the works of Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and some of the Stoics. This

seems to have compounded his problems rather than solved them, and very soon, he turned toward the eighteenth century as well as contemporary works to bolster his arguments.[2] But all his readings do not seem to have done anything but provide materials to support the ideas, sometimes contradictory, to which he stubbornly held.

In the early 1820's Lamennais wrote that "when universally acknowledged truths no longer exist, there cannot be a universally acknowledged justice; and this is what is happening to us: society has lost both its reason and its conscience."[3] This sentence is to be found in a review of a book by M. Laurentie which showed that "Descartes' system is nothing but the philosophical theory of Protestantism..."[4] -- the latter defined as "the principle of private judgment or sovereignty of individual reason."[5] We have seen that for him it is to this principle that society's troubles are to be traced.[6] A few years later he wrote: "As soon as we admit /the legitimacy/ of a human power, we sanction servitude; as soon as we reject the divine law, we reject the principle of an obligatory justice and we sanction slavery; as soon as we separate the political order from the religious order, we deprive ourselves of all imaginable guarantee against arbitrariness."[7] For him, "the rule of a will independent in its action from the universal law of justice is despotism."[8]

We have here, not only the gist of Lamennais' thought, but also the reason for his intense dislike of Gallicanism. Gallicanism had not only acquiesced in the transfer of sovereignty from a divinely inspired institution to a human one, but Gallican

bishops had actively participated in this transfer. For him,bishops were the very men who should have done everything to resist this transfer. They were Christ's deputies on earth whose primary duty was to defend the people against the arbitrariness of men of power. This, for Lamennais, seemed very often to be the primary duty of pontifical power.

The very existence of Christianity depends on "peace and the happiness of people."[9] Therefore to help substitute force for justice as the arbitrator of rights[10] was indirectly to help destroy Christianity by bringing about despotism. His denunciation of the actions of the parlements of the ancien regime was based on exactly the same argument.[11] For Lamennais Gallicanism "is a weak imitiation of Anglicanism and of Lutheranism; it is the same principle. The common idea is that sovereignty is independent of God. It is power without moral and spiritual bases, and therefore without restraint."[12] But secularization of state power is not only the assertion that sovereignty is independent of God, it is also the assertion that sovereignty is independent of any obligation towards men.[13] This assertion clearly leads to Bodin's definition of citizenship as subjection to a sovereign,[14] which is why Lamennais called Gallicanism "a false theory of obedience" preached by certain bishops to the human, i.e., royal, authority; a theory which is directly opposed to what Christ ever wanted.[15]

Lamennais' attacks continued for several years focusing often on the adoption of the Gallican articles of 1682.[16] What appears most clearly in all of his arguments on this subject is that Lamennais was not so much defending Papal power as attacking the lack of restraint of temporal power.[17]

To assert the independence of one power from another is to assert the duality of the world and destroy therefore any possibility of unity.[18] Gallicanism helped in the establishing of the independence of temporal power from the spiritual, thus helping to destroy the unity which Lamennais saw as fundamental to Life. He went so far as saying that the separation between a civil society founded on self-interest and a religious society founded on right "put into question the existence of human kind."[19] There are good reasons to believe that Lamennais' hatred of Gallicanism was a direct outcome of his experience under the Napoleonic regime. He perceived that the desire to dominate the Church was not peculiar to Napoleon but would be a consistent policy of governments. This is why he dedicated himself to the struggle for a free Church.[20]

He very often linked his attacks on Gallicanism with his attacks on the Imperial University. As early as 1814 he called for the abolition of state monopoly over education.[21] He wanted unrestricted freedom to found schools and colleges. This attitude was not, as Vidler calls it, "a striking anticipation of his later political liberalism,"[22] this attitude was fundamental to Lamennais' thinking throughout his life. Fundamentally, it sprang from his revulsion

to the idea that one man or a group of men can impose his will on other people. It is the idea, stated in 1820, when he was supposed to be at his most authoritarian, that men are right "to attach so much value to freedom; this feeling is in their nature, and is in it as invincible as the desire to live."[23]

Anti-Liberalism

Before analyzing Lamennais' thoughts on Liberalism, a question of interpretation must be clarified. Whether favorable or hostile, all major works on Lamennais assumed a three-fold development in his political ideas. By all those writing before 1946, he is considered one of the leaders of Ultraroyalism until 1828. In 1946, Christian Maréchal published a monograph, Lamennais au drapeau blanc, épisode de la presse quotidienne sous la Restauration. In this work, Maréchal showed that Lamennais' turn to Liberalism must be dated at 1823 when he realized the danger for religion of too close an association of Throne and Altar.[24] Since 1946 some writers have adopted Maréchal's point of view, while others have not. But all portray Lamennais as a Liberal until 1834 when he is supposed to have turned to a mystical type of democracy which led him to a close affiliation with the Communists by 1848. Lamennais' ideas on Socialism and Communism will be dealt with separately. What must be first clarified is Lamennais' association with Ultraroyalism and Liberalism.

It has already been noted that Lamennais' Ultramontanism was the product less of a desire to see the Pope's power increased than of a desire to see temporal power checked.[25] History for Lamennais demonstrated that temporal power not only cannot be checked by parliaments or nobility but is actually increased by a parliamentary system.[26] Traditional institutions can no longer be counted on to

check "power which, like water, advances until it encounters a hill."[27] There is then a fear and distrust of unchecked human power for the very reason that such power is necessary for the survival of society. In effect power is indispensable for the maintenance of order and stability and this must be used to impose, by force if necessary, the very principle that it embodies.[28]

Power therefore is not the means to enforce decisions reached by an independent will, it is "the means to order in society, it is only living justice."[29] This is a point which he stressed throughout his works: there must be a temporal authority to which obedience is due; but this authority must be legitimate in that it exists only to enforce duty and protect right or else it ceases to be legitimate. In the first edition of the first volume of the Essai he included a sentence which read: "When a revolution is inevitable, wisdom commands that those in power should make it themselves, in order to direct it."[30] This sentence was suppressed in later editions at the request of his brother.

The context in which this remark appeared seems to suggest that Lamennais would not have been adverse to a coup d'état by the king, thus getting rid of the Charter, this "scrap of paper" which is the consequence of the disregard by private interests of God's law. In effect the Charter is a recognition that private interests have a right to interfere with the power of the king, power which could be made legitimate by being subservient to the spiritual authority of the Pope. This interference produces disorder and prevents the administration of the true law equally to all.[31]

Lamennais' opposition to the Charter is what endeared him to the refugees in London during the Hundred Days. That is the only thing they saw in him; had they looked closer they would have noticed his profound dislike for both Gallicanism and their royalism.[32] Had they read him more closely they would have realized that his position was radically opposed to theirs and they would have been less shocked at his supposed defection from their ranks in 1828.

If Lamennais was calling for the reestablishment of absolute monarchy under the spiritual control of the Pope, this was neither a call for despotism, nor a call for loyalty to the Bourbons for whose return he was less than enthusiastic.[33] His dislike for the émigrés and his repeated attacks on governments was the result of his belief that governments were "the first to stop believing; and irreligion begins with the people in power, or those around them, to spread step by step to all ranks of the nation." It was they, "the rich and the great," who used religion as a political tool; and he attacked Hobbes violently because Hobbes advocated submission to a prince regardless of his moral behavior.[34]

Alongside these displays of hostility towards the upper classes there runs through his writings, particularly throughout his correspondence with Benoît D'Azy, a sympathy and a concern for the lower classes which is more than the result of Christian charity.

Lamennais held that the interests, both spiritual and material, of these classes were badly served by the upper classes in whose hands power lies. In order to be more easily controlled this power should be

concentrated in the hands of one man only, the king. Lamennais' absolutism was not, therefore a demand for a return to the seventeenth-century type of absolutism, but for a return to an earlier period when "power was protected from the subjects and the subjects from power, by the Sovereign of the universal religious society, supreme defender of justice. People could obey with security, kings could rule without fear. There was ... a judge between them: right had overthrown force."[35] This state of affairs was the result of Christianity's greatest claim to glory: "that power is of God (Romans, XIII, 1) and that it has for rule the divine law; it explains the right to command, the duty to obey and places between and above them inflexible justice."[36]

Lamennais' Ultraroyalism did not have the absolutist connotations therefore that Janet, Duine, Maréchal, Laski, Vidler, and a score of others have attributed to it.[37] His stand on Ultramontanism was as an advocacy position for an impartial power acting as a judge between two contending parties: the King on the one hand, whose power is legitimized by Papal anointment, and the people on the other. In his first major work in 1817 he had stated that because all men were equal, "no one could command another."[38] As in St. Thomas, the people, for Lamennais, have rights which must be respected and these rights included that of ridding themselves of a bad king.

Lamennais' advocacy of coercion was predicated on the assumption that the king's rule could be made legitimate and thus be

justified in its use of coercion because it was to maintain, or restore, a moral and social order which itself was not coercive.[39] The enforcement of a law by a legally constituted authority is legitimate in the freest of society. The two questions at issue for Lamennais were thus, (1) to legitimize the king's power by making the king subservient to the Pope, who presumably had the knowledge of the rights given by God to all men and, (2) to rid the political system of all interferences by the aristocracy and special interests between the king and the people. The destruction of Gallicanism was imperative to solve the first question. His attacks on the Charter, on aristocratic privileges, and later on, on the Liberals' claims to power, were part of his solution to the second question. Nowhere in his writings is there the slightest doubt expressed that, if ruled according to God's law (i.e., Justice), the people would not have the ability and willingness to defend what was legitimately theirs. Quite to the contrary, Lamennais' faith in "the people" is perhaps the one thing that was never shaken.

In spite of his accent on authority in the late 1810's and in the 1820's, what Lamennais was trying to reconcile was a certain idea of freedom and equality, the two ideals fundamental to a theory of Democracy. Yet Lamennais remained wary of Democracy until the early months of 1830. The change that he underwent during 1829 did not deal with fundamental ideas, but rather with the way political and social changes could be achieved. While he had hopes that monarchy could be reformed,he preferred changes made from the top.

When he lost these hopes, he began to appeal to the Papacy and the clergy to throw their influences behind the masses in order to achieve changes from the bottom. He went from one extreme to the other with barely a pose, thereby illustrating the saying that "les extrèmes se touchent."

Necessarily, such a radical shift involved a broadening of his concept of freedom which, Duine has suggested, was the lesson Lamennais drew from his observation of what was happening in Belgium.[40] There, the alliance begun in 1828 between the Liberals and the Catholics was proving that political changes could be achieved by the people themselves, and Lamennais was well aware that many Belgians considered him their intellectual leader. The liberalization Lamennais underwent at that time was suggested in the preceding chapter where it was noted that he explicitly formulated his new position in L'Avenir late in 1830.[41] But his private correspondence shows that evolution took place between July 1829 and May 1830.

On July 20, 1829 he wrote to Benoît D'Azy "Liberalism is correct, it is freedom that will save the world, not the freedom it prescribes of course, but the freedom it prepares without knowing it."[42] On May 11, 1830 he wrote Vitrolles:

> Society cannot be saved except by the complete development of the principle of liberty. If Liberalism was sincere in its love for her, I would be, in politics, liberal immediately. But, basically, Liberalism is only after power, in any case its chiefs are, because there is good faith only in the masses ... . You are asking me for whom I am? I told you. I am for no one, I am for freedom. When there will be a political party dedicated to look after her truly and entirely, this party will be mine.[43]

A few days later he wrote Vitrolles again:

> There exists in France only two parties, known under the names of liberal and royalist. By their mutual opposition, which necessarily push them to the last consequences of their principles, the latter are leading us to despotism and the former to anarchy ... . As a Catholic, I must wish, I must demand with all my strength freedom, the only guarantee possible against oppression, either royalist or liberal.[44]

These letters are not the only indications that the term Liberal should be applied with caution to Lamennais. Addressing the clergy in 1828 he urges it not to ally itself with Liberalism or Monarchy, and calls Liberalism "the most ardent enemy of the Church and of Christianity."[45] And he comes back to an idea he had expressed twenty years earlier: the Church must be independent of the State in order to be free to teach the truth.[46]

The reason why it is somewhat difficult to call Lamennais a Liberal and, by extension, difficult to see in his works the birth of Liberal Catholicism, is that he assumed that Liberalism was part and parcel of what he called Positivisme. In addition, his belief that men's actions were never, or rather could not be, detached from their philosophical well-spring, led him to assume that Positivism's and Liberalism's fundamental principle, that is Materialism, precluded any possibility of accomodation with his own belief in the primacy of man's spirituality.

Lamennais' understanding of what he called Positivisme is displayed in a series of articles written over several years and published as Mélanges religieux et philosophiques in 1826.[47] He did not see

Positivism as a particular system, St.-Simon and Comte are barely mentioned in it, but rather as a modern trend of thought, equating its method and ideas with "philosophy," the compendium of British and French thought of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries responsible for the social, political, and economic problems the world faced.[48]

The unifying theme of this otherwise heterogenous series of articles is that Positivism is essentially materialistic and as such opposed to any humane view of human nature. Society "being a union of similar beings," and man being "a physical, moral and intelligent being," the laws which regulate society must of necessity be both physical and moral.[49] To look upon man as a purely physical being leads to the conclusion that man's relationship to other men is purely physical. And the union of purely physical beings cannot constitute "a real society."[50] "Intelligent beings are united by a divine law, anterior to all positive institutions, and without which they would live eternally isolated. This universal law constitutes society because alone does it create duties and rights."[51] To deny the existence of man's moral nature and rely exclusively on observations of physical man and physical phenomena as Positivism does, leads to the substitution of physical laws for moral ones as the basis for rights and duties. In other words, rights and laws become the will of those in power and are therefore nothing but force. Hence, his conclusions that "there is a natural alliance between Materialism and Despotism."[52]

The moral conservatism apparent in these articles is highlighted by the radical bent of the criticism. He did not isolate institutions as the root cause of malaise or disturbance. Society itself as evolved in the past two hundred years was sick and produced sickness. The need was thus not for adjustments but for a complete overhaul.

What is being suggested here is that Lamennais' political development did not occur in three stages. He was not first a theocrat, then a Liberal, then a socialist. He passed quite logically from theocracy to democracy, after an understandable period of hesitation. This period lasted from late 1828 to the early spring of 1830, but, as his first confrontation with Rome did not occur until 1832, and as he did not come out forcefully on the side of democracy until early 1834, everyone has assumed that this period lasted much longer. The years from 1828 to 1834 were labelled his "Liberal years" in the 1890's -- not by his contemporaries. It would indeed have been difficult to reconcile such an interpretation with his almost daily attacks on Liberalism and the Liberal policies of such men as Casimir-Périer and Guizot. His vision of how society ought to be organized and ruled remained the same: he adjusted as best he could to the political events, almost always unforeseen, which confronted him. A detailed analysis of his views on Liberalism between 1828 and early 1831 will make this clearer.

If Gallicanism helps in the establishment of despotic government by freeing "the sovereign of all rules of justice <u>externally</u> binding,"[53] Liberalism, rejecting as it does the philosophical

source from which it originally springs,[54] brings about anarchy, from which society escapes by relying on force. Throughout his writings Lamennais made a distinction between Liberalism, which for him is a political doctrine, and Utilitarianism ("la philosophie de l'utile") which he saw as the rationale behind the economic and political practices of the time. He said in 1828 that he would be Liberal if Liberalism remained a highly moral doctrine which at the outset is "but an exact summary of the Catholic doctine on society."[55] But accusing the Liberals of rejecting the religious basis upon which their theory rested, he equated the result in practice with Utilitarianism and rejected both. It is worth quoting him at length to illustrate his attitude.

> Is there a means to strengthen power without sacrificing freedom, and to secure freedom without overthrowing the basis of power? Liberalism has asked this question; it has searched for the means to reconcile these two conditions of a durable society, and nothing indeed deserves a more serious attention than the theory to which it has arrived. According to this theory, there does not exist an absolute and eternally legitimate sovereignty but in God, of whom reason, truth and justice are the laws. Human power, or derived and subordinate sovereignty is only the minister of God and therefore possesses a conditional legitimate right only when it governs according to reason, truth and justice; [it is] without authority as soon as it transgresses these which supposes the existence of an infallible means to know the truth and what is just, that is to say the true law, the divine law, according to which human power, the minister of God, must govern.
>
> Such is the idea that Liberalism has of a perfect society ... . But Liberalism declares at the same time that this beautiful society is impossible to realize, because there cannot exist on earth an infallible authority; from which it concludes that there cannot exist either any sovereignty of right.[56]

By denying "any sovereignty of right," Liberalism, in Lamennais' view, essentially denied the only legitimacy human power has. As

he had stated years earlier, "Power, the general means to order in society, is nothing but living justice."[57] This idea is of course straight out of Thomas Aquinas.[58] Since "sovereignty of right" and "justice" were viewed as synonymous, to deny their existence was to accept power's only other basis, force, and thus prepare the ground for the unlimited and arbitrary power of the State over society.

We can see that for Lamennais Liberalism fails to solve the paradox of freedom by denying the existence of an authority able to keep check on power. In its eagerness to secure freedom it destroys the basis of legitimate power which, for him, is the condition sine qua non of freedom. Thus his conclusion that "the liberal system which destroys power to establish freedom and the Gallican system which destroys freedom to establish power, are equally incompatible with the existence of a regular and stable society.[59]

Lamennais' rejection of Liberalism obviously arose out of an inability to conceive that there might exist first within society a means to evolve a mechanism to adjust the claims of freedom and those of coercion; and second within individuals themselves, a means to regulate their own conduct without constant references to some absolute principle. This static, pessimistic and restricted view of human nature -- which equates healthy pragmatism and adaptation with chaos, was Lamennais' strongest belief, one which set the terms of his views on society, on governments. It explains his appeal to God and revelation between 1814 and 1834 and his appeal to history from 1834 to 1848 -- namely, that man does not and cannot live in the

immediate and the concrete only; that his spiritual needs take precedence over the material ones; and that these spiritual needs in order to be satisfied required the implicit knowledge of a transcendental reality. Far from implying a duality between the temporal and the spiritual, this view of life posits Unity as its point of departure. "Man acts only because he believes."[60] This sentence appears at the very beginning of his first major work. In fact, the purpose of writing five heavy volumes was to show that when man's beliefs are shaken or rejected, the only recourse left to man is to his feelings -- Rousseau's answer. Lamennais forcefully rejected this answer, convinced that it could only lead to a behavior harmful both to man and to society. The belief that there must be a principle or set of principles to determine what is fundamental and what is not is an important point,[61] and ought not to be dismissed as contemptuously as Charles Renouvier dismissed it.[62]

At the root of Lamennais' criticism seems to be the feeling that the prevailing doctrines fostered isolation, cut man from his roots, set him adrift by rejecting all absolute norms against which to measure his behavior, and thus, ultimately, created a vacuum that would be filled by a power itself without norms and hence dangerous.[63]

A few months after the revolution of July 1830, L'Avenir, whose masthead read "Dieu et la Liberté," began to appear. In most of the articles Lamennais wrote for it, he emphasized the idea that

religion and freedom, far from being antithetical, were in fact intimately linked. His appeal was very clear: those who were fighting oppression everywhere did not have to fear religion and vice versa. That what Lamennais meant by freedom was somewhat different from what the French Liberals of the period meant by it was overlooked. His earlier attacks on Liberalism were forgotten at least by most writers in the last three generations. And what he meant by religion was, to say the least, somewhat different from what most Catholics of the period meant by it. Had the concepts he advanced then been clear to him, or if not the concepts, at least their implications, Lamennais would have to be seen, not as the precursor of what came to be called French Liberal Catholicism in the 1850's, but as the precursor of the left-wing Christians of the 1960's. When he clarified his position on both freedom and religion in 1834, Liberals and Catholics alike ceased to call him their friend.

An analysis of the program he advanced in L'Avenir, as distinquished from the philosophy L'Avenir movement stood for, will make these distinctions even more evident. The famous four freedoms that he demanded, freedom of conscience, education, association, and press, appeared to make an impeccable Liberal out of him. Looked at more closely, however, some serious doubts begin to arise. First, there were not four demands but six.[64] The first demand, freedom of conscience, included equal protection by the government of all religions,[65] but was not as in Locke, a demand for the separation

of religion and politics. Quite the contrary, Lamennais' proposal to separate the Church from the State was designed to free the Church, to purify it in order that she might bring morality back into politics. The apparent confusion of religion and morality was no confusion at all. Religion for Lamennais was morality, to which both the Church and politics must return. This demand for freedom of conscience was therefore a demand designed ultimately to subordinate the State to religion.[66] As for the protection afforded to other religions, Lamennais was utterly convinced that in the ensuing free contest Catholicism, with its claim that Justice was God's law, would be seen by all to be the religion holding the greatest claim to men's allegience: reason would prevail and the truth emerge triumphant.[67]

It was thus logical that the second demand was for freedom of education.[68] Man must be free because he has a duty to develop his intelligence -- to learn to know the truth in order to act rightly. Thus education was seen as a powerful means to make men see the truth and thus change their ways. But primary education was at that time almost exclusively in the hands of the Church. It would therefore appear that for Lamennais education really meant the propagation of religious beliefs.[69] Thirteen years earlier and at the very beginning of Volume I of his first major work he had stated that "man acts only because he believes; and men <u>en masse</u> act always in accordance with their beliefs."[70] The first two demands, freedom of conscience and freedom of education, are thus intimately

related and both depend on Christian morality. Freedom of conscience is really freedom to return to Christian beliefs and freedom of education is really freedom to proselytize. There is no indication in his writings at that time that this freedom could be used to reject Christianity. He seems to have been completely convinced that the moral principles he propagandized for as Catholicism would receive universal assent as soon as they were made clear to all.

The third demand was freedom of the press because, in his view, the press is nothing "but the extension of speech," which is itself a gift of God to man, "a powerful universal means of communication between men and the most useful tool given to man to hasten the progress of collective intelligence."[71] Those in possession of the truth, in the way that Lamennais perceived himself,[72] must be left free to proselytize and thus reach those who do not attend school.

Freedom of association, the fourth demand, is more clearly a political demand. In his words "no defense is possible to men, if the law keeps them isolated and does not allow them to join for a common action." Such a common action appears clearly necessary "for there always is, even in the most just and most moderate power, a tendency to increase, and freedom is preserved only by a perpetual struggle."[73] This fourth demand is then a means to protecting the first three.

Now, there was a fifth demand, usually ignored by those who see Lamennais as a Liberal during this period. It was a demand for universal suffrage[74] -- a demand not included in the Liberal program of the time. This demand was a reflection of Lamennais' total disenchantment with existing political institutions. If truth could not be imposed from above in a theocratic system because of the corruption of the upper classes, it could be imposed from below once freedom of conscience, education, press, and association were realities.

The sixth demand was for the decentralization of functions and administration. He attacked as an unmitigated evil the administrative centralization begun, in his opinion, in 1789 and continued and strengthened by the various governments between 1815 and 1830.[75] Provinces and communes should be left free to administer what was properly theirs, thus keeping the State from interfering with matters outside its limited jurisdiction.

It can be seen that the demands form an integrated whole. Although some of the demands may be used to support a Liberal view, the entire program was far from the Liberal spirit. His second, third, fourth and sixth demands would have been approved by both Locke and J.S. Mill. There is enough ambiguity in the first to make it doubtful that the reason behind the demand would have wholeheartedly been approved by either the English or French Liberals of the period. As for the fifth demand the history of both French and British Liberalism until well into the nineteenth

century demonstrates that it would have met substantial opposition. If there are questions about Lamennais' Liberalism there are just as many as far as his radical democratic bent is concerned. In the radical democratic tradition, the ambiguity of his first demand notwithstanding, neither the fourth nor the sixth would have been approved. "Membership in any special kind of association" was looked upon with suspicion,[76] and, according to Prof. Sabine, the sharp limits set by the sixth demand to the authority of the State would not have been approved.[77]

Specific contrasts between the positions advocated by the Liberals and Lamennais may not, however, be the best or clearest way to show the gap between them. The extraordinary optimism and hope Lamennais had in men's ability to fashion a society that would in time transform them into the ideal men God himself had posited suffuses all of his works, particularly when he addressed the masses as in Paroles d'un croyant. This attitude is probably what distinguishes most sharply Lamennais from the Liberals. It has been said that the "roots of the divergence between the Liberal and the radical democratic traditions lie in their contrasting faith concerning the ability of the human mind to fathom reality and to translate the results into practical actions." The first tradition was symbolized in Locke's remark that "our minds are not made as large as truth nor suited to the whole extent of things," the second by Holbach's definition of truth as "the conformity of our ideas with the nature of things."[78]

It would thus appear that Lamennais was much closer in spirit to the radical democratic tradition, which has been identified as primarily French in origin, than to the Liberal tradition.[79] But as both traditions slowly merged during the nineteenth century, each assimilating concepts from the other, identifying Lamennais precisely with one or the other would not only be difficult but fruitless.

For Lamennais, man required freedom in many areas so as to be able to develop and improve -- whole areas of freedom above human legislation and tampering. Rightly or wrongly, he equated these areas with religion or moral rights. The State as the legal arm of society was, in his opinion, moral and its power legitimate if it respected these rights. This respect, however, could not be left for man to determine; it must be the result of "rules of justice externally binding."[80] He believed that Liberalism denied the possibility that these rights could be absolutely determined, and saw the confirmation of his belief in the attitude of the French Liberals in the early 1830's. He accused them of having consented to a drastic abridgment of freedom in return for safety and comfort.[81]

Another part of the Liberals' political program particularly aroused his anger and confirmed his worst opinion of Liberalism. This was the franchise, the system whereby the right to vote was predicated on the amount of tax paid. In an article published in L'Avenir on March 9, 1831, he argued that there did not exist an intelligent,

human, dignified way of separating those who ought from those who ought not to vote. To have chosen taxation to determine the right of suffrage was for him particularly ignoble. "Can anything baser be imagined than a people which has chosen to found its government, its legislation, its future, on this tariff as ignoble as it is senseless."[82] That money should be the criterion of the suffrage was for him a measure of the degradation of French society.

In 1836, in the Preface to Volume X of his collected works, he said that in 1828 he had expressed some sympathy for Liberalism as a political doctrine.[83] And this may indeed be sufficient to say that for a brief period he can be considered a Liberal. The spirit, however, which imbues all of his works, is profoundly anti-Liberal. His search for "the" truth; for the one principle which will allow for the perfect explanation of everything; in other words, his dogmatism, which could not comprehend, much less accept, inherent contradictions and ambiguities; his refusal ever to accept the possibility that there may be problems whose solutions will forever escape man's understanding -- this, in this writer's opinion, is far from the disposition that can properly be called Liberal.

The problem may very well be with the definition one chooses to give to Liberalism. If by Liberalism is meant the specific doctrine which arose at the end of the eighteenth century and dominated the first seventy-five years of the nineteenth century, then to call Lamennais a Liberal is unhistorical. If, however, one means by it a commitment to the rule of law, a high regard for the

worth and dignity of man, a generosity of spirit, a love of freedom, and an aversion to authoritarianism, then Lamennais certainly became more liberal after 1829. But these views are not confined to any party or any century.

The preceding discussion of Lamennais' connection with Liberalism is not meant to suggest that Liberalism and Liberal Catholicism were, in 1830, one and the same thing. Montalembert, the leading French Liberal Catholic during the late 1850's and 1860's, did not think more highly of Guizot, for example, than Lamennais did in the 1830's. What is being suggested, however, is that it is probably erroneous to portray Lamennais as the founder of French Liberal Catholicism. Lamennais was never concerned with the Church as a specifically religious institution, and he was never concerned with religion as other than as a means to impose an ethical standard on political behavior. When this became clear in 1833, both Döllinger and Montalembert severed all their connections with him.

As stated earlier, Lamennais gained his reputation as the founder of French Liberal Catholicism in the 1890's. This period saw an outpouring of works devoted to him, written mainly by clerics. The gates were opened with the election of Pope Leo XIII in 1878 and the issuance of his encyclical, Rerum Novarum, in 1891. This encyclical, followed a few months later by another -- Inter innumeras (Feb. 1892) -- were attempts at infusing a new spirit into Church and State relations. Both encyclicals had a special meaning for France because of the consolidation of the Republic and the politization of the masses.

The first encyclical deals with the conditions of the workers, the second with the legitimacy of the French Republic. Both were attempts to show that Rome was becoming less hostile to liberal usage, and that French Catholics should support the Republic. Both encyclicals would probably have been warmly applauded by Lamennais had they been issued sixty years earlier. But neither dealt with the problem Lamennais was most concerned about, that is what he perceived as the unchecked growth of the power of the State over society. The political careers in the 1850's and 1860's of prominent Catholics who called themselves Liberals, such as Benoît D'Azy, D'Haussonville, and Montalembert, all former close friends of Lamennais, do not suggest that they shared Lamennais' concern on this subject. As suggested earlier, the roots of French Liberal Catholicism probably lie in the activities of such men as Montalembert and Royer-Collard. But the political and religious climate in France prevented these activities from becoming more than an attitude restricted to a few intellectuals until well into the 1850's. This is not, however, to deny the profound influence that Lamennais' probing questions had outside of France, particularly in Belgium and Germany. If E. Beau de Lomenie's suggestion, that Liberal Catholicism is a contradiction in terms, cannot be taken seriously, his assertion that this term signifies nothing in France before 1855 is probably correct.[84]

Anti-Capitalism and Anti-Collectivism

What Lamennais perceived in Liberalism was the tendency to divorce facts from values, to free individuals and institutions from the restraints imposed by ethical judgments. And he did not see as beneficial the very wide freedom of choice individuals would enjoy under such a doctrine. The greatest gap between Lamennais' and the Liberals' thinking, centers on their evaluations of men's needs and satisfactions: whereas Lamennais believed in the absolute necessity for man to have a religious or ethical guide in all his actions, Liberalism left man to his own devices. Such freedom can, however, be used to do good as well as evil. Lamennais thought that man's satisfaction arose from doing as he ought to do, whereas Liberals viewed man's satisfaction in more earthly terms. According to him, the roots of Utilitarianism are to be found in Protestantism. Protestantism, by subordinating the supernatural order to individual reason, in fact destroyed the universal notions of duty and right, leaving man at the mercy of the only laws science can discover: laws based on observable physical phenomenon which logically can only give rise to materialistic theories. Protestantism thus shifted the focus of men's inquiry from what is just and good to what is useful, and thereby resolved itself in the selfish doctrine of utility.[85]

To destroy the human personality is the essence of slavery,[86] because once made skeptical of the spiritual primacy of his nature man will search for happiness and satisfaction in material things.

And the idea of material happiness leads to an endless search for enjoyments which can only lead to disgust and thus to a behavior less than human.[87] Quoting Epictetus Lamennais observed: "'Whoever submits to man has already submitted himself to things.' It is by this means that freedom everywhere perishes."[88] La philosophie de l'utile describes the rationale for just such a process. It places the individual at the center of its speculations, thereby disregarding what makes man humane -- that is, the relationships he has with other men, with the past and with God. Taking the individual as the measure of all things fosters what Lamennais calls "materialistic individualism," which is on the one hand the exclusive concern with what can be seen, touched, observed, enjoyed and the exclusive concern with the self on the other. Concern with universal values vanishes, to be replaced by a concern for what is merely useful. Men begin to look for happiness in material things; the belief spreads that the chances to be happy will increase as the possession of things becomes greater. This endless search ends in virtual slavery for when men have become the slaves of things, those who possess the most can impose their wills on those who possess nothing.

As early as 1817 Lamennais warned about the nefarious effects of a doctrine based on self-interests. "Do you want to divide men, to excite them to hatred, to exalt selfishness, cupidity, and all the passions? -- bring self-interest into play!"[89] What he is attacking here is the idea of competition. This idea with all its disruptive connotations contrasts sharply with his constant appeals

for cooperation and charity. Men must control their passions, restrain themselves, look to what unites them to other men; only this can produce, or restore, order and stability in society. A doctrine based on self-interest can only tear the social fabric to pieces by pitting man against man, group against group.

Lamennais believed that Utilitarianism had given rise to two theories: Capitalism,wherein a few individuals own everything,and Socialism, which called for the abolition of private property in favor of the exclusive ownership by the State.[90] For him, both doctrines ultimately fostered the same ends: loss of individual identity which he called "modern slavery" and despotism. It is from 1834 that he began systematically to attack Capitalism and "Collectivism" which was the word he used to mean both Socialism and Communism.[91] He saw neither as essentially economic doctrines and made a point to emphasize the differences existing between him and all the other reformers.[92] His interests were purely to expose the political results of these doctrines.[93]

Briefly stated, Lamennais held the following view of history: before the opening of the Christian era, the history of Greece and Rome was characterized by a continual war between the people and "an aristocracy in possession of power and wealth." It is this continual war which brought about "the progressive emancipation of the oppressed masses."[94] But it is with the advent of Christianity, whose principles were "equality, fraternity and liberty,"[95] that the people began to acquire rights in principle which were

slowly granted to them in fact. What Capitalism had done was to exacerbate the division of society into two classes -- a division that had always existed. He wrote in 1841:

> Society is divided into two distinct classes, one invested of rights obstinately refused to the other, one dominating and the other dominated, one generally wealthy and the other generally poor, and this last has received the name of "the people" ... it is in this sense that we employ this term in this writing. This term designates the class dominated in opposition to the dominating class, the class politically slave in opposition to the class politically free.[96]

This effective slavery of one class was a relatively recent phenomenon and represented a degradation. "The people" form the vast majority in every society and "the history of the people is therefore the history of mankind; the state of the people represents the true state of mankind, this state is in any era the real measure of progress."[97] An attentive study of the past showed that until the sixteenth century the general condition of mankind had steadily improved.[98] This development which he called "the historical development of the notion of Right" was the actualization of "the absolute and eternal law,"[99] and as such represented the development of what he called "the Spiritual."[100] Paralleling this development of the Spiritual, science slowly emancipated man from his dependency on nature. This was, in the material world, the counterpart of what was taking place in the spiritual world.[101]

The Reformation, however, put a stop to this progress in the spiritual world and gave rise to the materialistic doctrines which had caused the recent degradation in the state of the people.

The doctrine of Bentham, which, with variations, was in Lamennais' opinion, that of Fourier and Saint-Simon, had turned the foundations of society upside down "by rejecting all principles but utility and all morality but interest."[102] The doctrine now in force in France and England is that of "the ownership of property by a few." The Capitalists hold the people in bondage, economically through the wage system, politically and juridically through their monopoly of power. The Capitalists are in fact the new slave owners who have turned the law to their exclusive advantage.[103] The proletariat denotes men who live from their work and who could not live without work. Hence, wages "is the corresponding term" to that of proletariat.[104] Wages are the retribution granted by the Capitalist in exchange for work. The necessity of working thus makes the proletariat dependent upon the Capitalist; "because the life of the former is in the wallet of the latter."[105]

In addition, the law is turned in favor of the rich and those in power and against the proletariat.[106] The system of justice is made too expensive to be used effectively by the poor.[107] Taxation on inheritance, paid easily by the rich, takes everything from the savings of the poor.[108] There are other laws specifically designed against the poor, such as the law against vagrancy. What can the poor man who cannot afford a bed do? Under such a law Christ would have gone to jail![109]

Thus the economic and juridical dependency of the people is total; and there is no means for them to try to gain their independence. Under these conditions they try to forget their miseries

in the enjoyment of material goods and what pleasures these provide, "the only ones which, in such a society," seem to be worth anything.[110] "The search for this type of goods establishes between men with the same desires, a permanent antagonism, a veiled type of war which, born of selfishness, feeds on it and exacerbates it, thus overturning the very foundations of society."[111] Taking England as the epitome of the societies gripped by this system, he describes her greed and destructiveness, at home and abroad, showing that Capitalism does not merely foster war between men or classes but also between nations.[112]

Adolphe Thiers was, for Lamennais, the perfect type of this "race of infamous men who, continually in pursuit of power with money and of money with power, occupies the highest positions, and to maintain itself sacrifices everything, the fortune of the nation, honor, glory, buying and selling of justice."[113] Thiers was the man "whose only principle [was] to have none, and as such the man of his time."[114]

Lamennais may have been ignorant of economics but he understood the consequences of a theory which took as its departure man's unlimited desires and wants and limited goods to satisfy them. He feared that despotism had to be the inevitable result of a society thus organized.[115]

Lamennais' fears about the dehumanizing tendencies implicit in the emergence of the new world of the nineteenth century, as well as his fears of the totalitarianism that this new world made

possible, are perhaps no better illustrated than in his criticism of Socialism. It is a measure of his insight that he did not recognize Socialism as a moral reaction to emerging Industrialism. He saw it as a reaction not eradicating the evil and injustice of Capitalism but rather as one carrying the underlying causes of Capitalism to their furthest and most logical conclusions. In other words the cure proposed was worse than the disease, because the socialist views of man and of society were the very same as those of the Capitalists. Yet "Socialism was first an offspring of Christianity,"[116] and the differences between Lamennais and the enemies of Socialism may be more important than his differences with the Socialists.

Around 1840 Socialism was not yet all things to all men and the debate between Socialists and non-Socialists centered on one point, private property. Fourier, Cabet, Ruge, Leroux were all for the abolition of private property, while their opponents were for its retention. If this be taken as the criterion, Lamennais was emphatically not socialist. He fought against the idea for years and was for this reason the target of Fourier, Cabet, Proudhon, and Ruge's attacks.[117]

Lamennais, moreover, was not above attacking some of the absurdities of the various utopian theories that were put forward.[118] The nature of his criticisms as well as his political realism contrasts with Cabet's utopianism in a pamphlet Cabet wrote in 1843 in reply to some of these attacks.[119] In effect Cabet accused

Lamennais of contradicting himself. By his attacks on Collectivism in Amschaspands et Darvands and Du passé et de l'avenir du peuple, he was, according to Cabet, refuting the doctrine he put forward in Paroles d'un croyant, De l'esclavage moderne, and Le pays et le gouvernement.[120] It is a strange accusation because all five works have essentially the same subject -- Lamennais was not above repeating himself either. The subject was that "la philosophie de l'utile" was bad because it underlied materialistic doctrines and practices by which he meant both Capitalism and Collectivism. The miseries of the people and the injustice of the political system were results of this philosophy and he repeatedly warned that replacing Capitalism with Collectivism would certainly be no improvement. If anything, a study of these five works shows a shift in emphasis. Until 1840 Lamennais attacked the political system of the July Monarchy, and after 1840 he was concerned in addition to show that the new doctrines of Cabet's and Fourier's followers would have just as nefarious an effect on men and society.

Lamennais focused his attacks on one point. By making the State the owner of all property, Collectivism would create a monster which would have the power "to determine the positions that workers will have per force to occupy."[121] Cabet's utopianism, as well as his authoritarianism, showed in the answer to this charge: "You are twisting everything, Monsieur de Lamennais, and this is not nice! In the Icarian Theory, nothing is imposed by force, professions are generally chosen or obtained through competition; all

the citizens are in any case so well educated and all work is made so easy by machines that the workers are attracted to it. And then, how would you do in your system if all workers wanted to do the same works and rejected others?"[122]

Lamennais was not opposed per se to a socialistic organization of society, but he did not think that it could ever be realized. So as to do away with the worst inequalities of the social and economic system, he proposed certain necessary reforms. He outlined a national credit system, he repeatedly asked for the imposition of a progressive income tax, and he proposed a reform of the judicial system in order to equalize opportunities and incomes.[123] But these items were unquestionably of secondary interest to him. He did not see himself as a political reformer but as a thinker whose ideas, if implemented, would absolish injustice and inequality.

His opposition to the abolition of private property was based primarily on the fear of the awesome power that the State would acquire if all property were nationalized,[124] and on the belief that private property was one way to make each man materially independent of the others.[125] The State, he warned, was an abstract concept which as such could not be the owner of anything. To make the State the owner of property was in fact to make those in power at the time "master of all, they will have the means, as long as they keep power, to rule absolutely."[126] And he further asked:

> Can anyone believe that any man, in possession of such a power, a power which puts into their hands everything, persons and things, will use it justly, that forgetting themselves they will think only to the good of others? That more powerful than any sovereign ever was among the most servile of all peoples, their power will be a guarantee against the abuses of their very power? That they will not turn it to their personal advantage, will not want to secure it into their own hands and perpetuate it into their own race? That, of masters they will consent to be slaves in turn? Really it would be having a high estimate of their virtue and that experience justifies marvellously! Dreamers! How can you not see that you are going straight to the establishment of the caste system?[127]

He singled out Cabet as a madman,[128] and Leroux as a maniac,[129] but he was opposed to all of their systems. What he was trying to show was that the dreams of the collectivists were dangerous dreams. "Thus to realize this universal happiness, they begin by robbing man of his free will, and his freedom, and then reduce him regardless of his intelligence, activity, resourcefulnesses, to a salary determined by the social power according to some, or to a monk's allowance according to others."[130]

For Lamennais then, the abolition of private property was not a means to reorganize society but was rather the first step in "the inauguration of the rule of force."[131] His hostility to the abolition of private property and to Capitalism had the very same basis. Both systems dehumanize man, deprive him of what makes him a man and thus leave him defenseless against the power of the State.

Private property was for him "the physical quality of right,"[132] and as such was a necessary condition of freedom. Necessity and dependence make a slave of a man, for under these conditions he cannot fully realize himself.[133] Hence spiritual independence and

property are the two sides of the same coin; they allow man to become what he fully can become and at the same time give him the tools necessary to prevent concentration of power in the State.[134] As this shows, Lamennais was thinking in terms of an artisanal and agricultural economy; he was totally unaware of the transformations Capitalism would bring about.

But if spiritual independence and property are the "spiritual" and the "physical" qualities of right, "Right is naturally, radically subordinated to duty, of the same manner and in the same degree that the individual is himself subordinated to society of which he is a simple element, but a necessary element."[135] The context in which this statement appears is supposed to imply that sharp limits are to be placed on the amount of property any one individual can acquire.[136]

As was pointed out earlier, the sharp dichotomy between society and the State is always present in Lamennais' writings. To make the individual free and allow him to become fully himself and to organize society in multiple centers of self-administered power are specifically intended to allow society to run itself with as little interference from the State as possible. This does not mean, however, as it does in Marx with whom he has been compared,[137] that politics would eventually disappear. In a letter to Ballanche he stated: "I do not share your opinion on the advantages that would result if politics was put to silence."[138]

The fear of the despotic power of the State, recognizing no limit, treating man as an object without an autonomy of his own, is the great link which bound Lamennais' entire work.

This fear of the State underlies Lamennais' negative response to Monarchy, Theocracy, Liberalism, Capitalism, and Socialism -- all the prevailing ideas and practices of his time, because all, under one form or another, depended on force to secure the obedience needed to maintain order. It underlies as well his appeal for the restoration of a system acknowledging moral laws as the foundation for legitimate authority.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER III

1. His Discussions critiques in fact contains attacks on De Maistre and De Bonald, 151-153 and 181.

2. He even came to share the eighteenth-century's disdain for Aristotle, Politique, II, 110.

3. Oeuvres Complètes, VIII, 319.

4. Ibid., 317.

5. Ibid., 317.

6. See above, 54-55.

7. Oeuvres complètes, IX, 30.

8. Ibid., 337.

9. Ibid., VII, 150-151.

10. Ibid., 150-151.

11. Ibid., 150-156.

12. Janet, 44-45; Jacques Droz concurs: "What was Gallicanism, originally, if not the affirmation of the secularization of the State, of its independence from Rome, of its right to be uncontested master in its own domain?" Histoire des doctrines politiques en France (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1969), 11.

13. Oeuvres complètes, VII, 294.

14. G. H. Sabine, A History of Political Theory (3rd ed. rev.; New York, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1961), 405.

15. Oeuvres complètes, IX, 63-64.

16. Ibid., 331 ff; and X, xxxiii ff.

17. Cf. Duine, 108 and Janet, 92.

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18. Laski, 221-222.

19. Oeuvres complètes, VII, 5.

20. Vidler, 58-59.

21. See above chapter I, note 106; for a good description of his struggle throughout the 1820's, see Emile Bourgeois, La liberté d'enseignement, histoire et doctrine (Paris, Cornely, 1902), Chapter I.

22. Vidler, 60.

23. Oeuvres complètes, VIII, 233.

24. Maréchal, in fact, published several works on Lamennais -- see bibliography --, all flawed by the fact that he uses Lamennais as a stick to beat up Rousseau.

25. See above, 105.

26. Oeuvres complètes, VII, 9 ff., 151 ff.

27. Ibid., X, xix.

28. Vitrolles, Letter of Feb. 12, 1820, 36

29. Oeuvres complètes, VI, 380.

30. Ibid., I, 43, quoted by Duine, 271.

31. Ibid., I, 40 ff.

32. Duine, 52-53.

33. Janet, 57; Duine, 52-53.

34. Oeuvres complètes, I, 34 ff.; also VII, 9, where he states: "There is no nobility in France for it is not the title which makes someone noble but the functions he performs." This again suggests the idea of a natural aristocracy noted earlier, 84.

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35. Ibid., VII, 294; Lamennais' vision is here clearly outlined: there is the State (pouvoir) as the legal institution, and Society (sujets) as the community and, between and above them an arbiter, Justice.

36. Ibid., IX, 10; this last statement was written several years after the one immediately preceding, and it demonstrates Lamennais' consistency. It is, however, easy to perceive that if Rome should show itself unworthy of being the spiritual embodiment of justice, another institution -- in this instance a High Court of carefully selected judges, could replace it. See articles 150-155 of his Constitution of 1848.

37. In fact Lamennais' preference for Monarchy until 1828 resembles closely that of Montesquieu in De l'esprit des Lois, Vol. 2, Livre V, Chap. 10 and 11.

38. Oeuvres complètes, I, 350-356.

39. This is the ground upon which Locke defended the use of coercion, G. Sabine, "The Two Democratic Traditions," The Philosophical Review, LXI (1952), 458.

40. Duine, 134.

41. See above, 83.

42. Benoît D'Azy, 237.

43. Vitrolles, 199, my emphasis

44. Ibid., 202-203, letter of May 30, 1830.

45. Oeuvres complètes, IX, 180.

46. Ibid., 181-189, cf., his Réflexions sur l'état de l'Eglise en France, written in 1808,

47. This volume forms volume VIII of his Oeuvres complètes.

48. Ibid., passim but specifically 66-68.

49. Ibid., 412-413.

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FOOTNOTES - continued

50. Ibid., 412.

51. Ibid., 417.

52. Ibid., 69-71.

53. Ibid., IX, 337, his italics.

54. Ibid., 336-337.

55. Ibid., 339.

56. Ibid., 338-339, his italics.

57. Ibid., VI, 380.

58. Ernest Barker, Principles of Social and Political Theory (Oxford, Clarendon, 1951), 103.

59. Oeuvres complètes, IX, 337.

60. Ibid., I, 2.

61. Janet, 26.

62. Charles Renouvier, Philosophie analytique de l'histoire (Paris, Leroux, 1897), IV, 89-103.

63. It is interesting to note that Le Play and Durkheim's warnings about the dangers for the individual inherent in "progress," voiced 50 years later, were not heeded either. See Elton Mayo, The Social Problems of an Industrial Civilization (Boston, Harvard, 1945), 9.

64. Oeuvres complètes, X, 199-204.

65. Ibid., 199-200.

66. Ibid., xxxvii, because every act basically has a moral implication, temporal power must be subordinate, or at least made to follow the moral law. This is a major tenet of Classical political philosophy; see Leo Strauss, "What is Political Philosophy?", Journal of Politics, XIX, No. 3 (August 1957), 343-368.

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67. Ibid., xli-lvi; if anything his beliefs in the ability of reason to discern the truth and when confronted with it, assent to it, shows an eighteenth-century turn of mind which was probably the result of his early education; see C. Maréchal, La jeunesse de Lamennais (Paris, Perrin, 1913).

68. Ibid., 200.

69. Cf., Bourgeois, 106.

70. Oeuvres complètes, I, 2.

71. Ibid., X, 202.

72. Ibid., IX, vii.

73. Ibid., X, 203.

74. Ibid., 203.

75. Ibid., 203-204; see also Des progrès de la révolution, passim.

76. Sabine, "The Two Democratic Traditions," 462.

77. Ibid., 463-464.

78. Sheldon Wolin, Politics and Vision (Boston, Little, Brown, 1960), 297.

79. Sabine, 452.

80. Oeuvres complètes, IX, 337, his italics.

81. Ibid., X, lxxii; Politique, I, 65-66. His criticism finds an echo more than a century later in Jean Touchard who observes the continuing lack of "an ideology which does not sacrifice freedom to the exercise of government" in French Liberalism. Histoire des idées politiques (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1959), II, 519.

82. Oeuvres complètes, X, 277-278.

83. Ibid., X, lxii.

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FOOTNOTES - continued

84. E. Beau de Loménie, Les responsabilités des dynasties bourgeoises, de Bonaparte à Mac-Mahon (Paris, Denoël, 1943), 195-199.

85. Du passé, 58, 70.

86. De l'esclavage moderne (3rd ed.; Paris, Pagnerre, 1840), 43.

87. Du passé, 5.

88. Discussions critiques, 232.

89. Oeuvres complètes, I, 381.

90. Du passé, 93.

91. Discussions critiques, 176-179.

92. Le pays et le gouvernement, iv.

93. Ibid.

94. Ibid., 36-39.

95. Ibid., 67.

96. Du passé, 11.

97. Ibid., 12.

98. Ibid., 13.

99. Ibid., 82.

100. Ibid., 74; I have not found any evidence that Lamennais had ever read Hegel; although he travelled to Germany in 1832 and read and spoke German.

101. Ibid., 74; "La loi du progrès, déduite de l'histoire peut être ainsi exprimée et définie: l'évolution du genre humain dans la liberté, par le développement simultané de l'intelligence et de l'amour." (his italics)

102. Ibid., 81-82 his italics. This passage makes it quite obvious that Lamennais misread both St.-Simon and Fourier.

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103. De l'esclavage moderne, passim but specifically 63-72.

104. Ibid., 48

105. Ibid., 48.

106. Ibid., 63-65.

107. Ibid., 65-67.

108. Ibid., 67-68.

109. Ibid., 69-71.

110. Amschaspands et Darvands (Paris, Pagnerre, 1843), 59.

111. Ibid.

112. Ibid., 59-63.

113. Discussions critiques, 245.

114. Le pays et le gouvernement, 28; in this connection, we can remark that Lamennais, although more violent, did not differ in his opinion of the French ruling class and of the political system during the July Monarchy from Balzac (Le Député d'Arcy) or Stendhal (Lucien Leuwen).

115. Lamennais described the effects of "the permanent attempt to acquire things," in De l'esclavage moderne, Amschaspands et Darvands, and several newspaper articles in L'Almanac Populaire of 1843.

116. H. Desroches, "Communisme et Religion," Europe, 32nd année, No. 98-99 (1954), 119.

117. Ibid., 118-119. Lamennais himself saw this as the major difference between him and "them," see Du passé et de l'avenir, 91-98.

118. See as an example "Conséquence d'une théorie," L'Almanac Populaire, 1843, 112-114.

119. Etienne Cabet, Inconséquences de M. de Lamennais, (Paris, Bureau du Populaire, 1843).

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120. Ibid., 3-7.

121. L'Almanac Populaire, 1843, 112.

122. Cabet, Inconséquences, 12.

123. Du passé et de l'avenir du peuple, 107 ff.; De l'esclavage moderne, 90, ff.; Politique à l'usage du Peuple, II, 119 ff.

124. To establish a system in which everything is owned by the State would be "to constitute the base of universal slavery." Du passé et de l'avenir du peuple, 93.

125. Private property is "a natural right, identical to the right to live." De la famille et de la propriété, 23.

126. Du passé, 94.

127. Ibid., 94-95.

128. Vitrolles, letter of 25 April, 1841, 338.

129. Ibid., letter of 11 Sept. 1841, 368.

130. Discussions critiques, 177.

131. "Le droit du plus fort," L'Almanac Populaire, 1843, 48.

132. De la famille, 29.

133. Du passé, 74.

134. De la famille, 29-30.

135. Ibid., 30.

136. He closes his writing on property by stating that this question will be analyzed in greater detail, specially as it relates to the laws, in the Third Part of his Esquisse d'une philosophie. He unfortunately never completed this work. De la famille et de la propriété, 31.

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FOOTNOTES - continued

137. Adrien Dansette, Histoire religieuse de la France contemporaine (Paris, Flammarion, 1948) I, 227.

138. Letter to Ballanches dated December 6, 1835, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. fr. N.A. 14092.

Chapter IV : LAMENNAIS AND THE THEORY OF NATURAL LAW

Introduction

From what has been said in the preceding chapters, the nature of Lamennais' intellectual quest should be clear. Steeped in the belief that the Classical political philosophy as interpreted by Aquinas could provide the answers society needed to achieve order and freedom, he loaded onto the shoulders of the descriptive or Hobbesian political philosophy everything that was wrong with the society of his time in order to discredit it.

The central issue was: shall Justice determine the laws or shall the laws determine Justice? If Justice be above the law, it must stand for something, the commonweal, the Good, which the law is designed to bring about or at least bring society closer to. If the law determines Justice, it can become merely another tool in the hands of those in power to impose their will. "Justice under law" presupposes the necessity of a government possessing a monopoly on force: man's destiny is what he makes it, hope for everlasting harmony vanishes. Now, Justice under law is merely another way of saying that man can know what is good for himself and is able to set up a political structure that will provide this good in return for something else. The man who obeys the law is the just man, the man who breaks it is the unjust man and is punished for it.

This theory takes as its departure man as he is and does not attempt to change him for his own good. By 1820 not all the subtleties of Hobbes and Rousseau had been appreciated. What Lamennais thought common to both of them was the assumption by the State of unlimited power over society. The immediate corollary of this was to make the State, or rather the law, the fountainhead of ethics. The idea that political theory should guide man towards what he ought to be was dismissed, replaced by the theory taking as its departure man as he was perceived to be. Both Aristotle and Hobbes, however, saw man as rational enough to be able to evolve a viable political philosophy. The difference between them on this point was that Aristotle, as well as Plato, saw some men as more rational than others, whereas Hobbes did not make such a distinction. We will explore later what this difference meant in terms of the concept of equality for Lamennais. What must be brought out here is the modification Christian thinkers made in the Aristotelian philosophy.

Whereas reason is taken by Aristotle to be the sufficient means to evolve a theory and put it into practice, the Christian thinkers, undoubtedly because of their belief in the fall of man, did not see reason as a sufficient means and added revelation as the additional means man needed to be guided towards his destiny. Lamennais unquestioningly accepted the Christian doctrine until 1834. He had previously made use of history as a type of practical knowledge which could appeal to the common sense of mankind. After 1834 he began deemphasizing revelation and in 1840 he began to blame

Catholicism for the course history had taken because of its over-emphasis on revelation which had led, according to him, to spiritual escapism.[1] This important shift in thought, however, did not lead him to adopt Aristotle as his authority. Quite the contrary, he dismissed Aristotle, stating that the lapse in time had made him irrelevant.[2] But remaining within the Classical tradition, he tried to adapt it to the demands of his time.

Lamennais was a humanist whose faith in the inherent dignity of man coexisted somewhat uneasily with a deep distrust of man's ability to conduct himself rationally. He had a clear vision of what man ought to be and could become. But this vision was marred by his acute awareness of facts bearing out his belief in man's inability to change without outside guidance. With the exception of L'Esquisse d'une philosophie, in which he assumes the detached stand befitting a philosopher, all of his writings give expression to this conflict between what was and what ought to be.

One incident which seems to have had a great impact on Lamennais' mind occurred at the end of 1831 on his way to Rome. With Lacordaire and Montalembert he left Paris on November 21,1831. They stopped at Lyon "which had fallen at the hands of the poor workers ... . The people had vanquished, and order, freedom, security prevailed."[3] He described with bitter irony how Maréchal Soult refused to treat with those he termed "brigands." And in a postscript to this story he said: "These memories must be preserved: they do not form the least instructive part of history."[4] At a crucial time

in his life, his highest hopes and his worst fears were confirmed. He was appealing to the Papacy for support of the working classes because of the hostility of the new French ruling class to his ideas. The achievement of the Lyon workers seemed to be proof of the legitimacy of his position which, he still hoped, the Papacy could hardly fail to support. However, his worst fears about the upper classes were confirmed as the government bloodily crushed the workers. This, as well as the prolonged hostility of the French Catholic hierarchy, was enough to bring him closer to the contemporary view that social institutions were in large part responsible for the conditions of life.

He simply refused to believe the notion that force could legitimately be the mainstay of order. This notion seemed to him to fly in the face of all morality. But never seeing institutions as other than works of man, ruled by men, he refused to believe in the possibility that order could be achieved without the rigid application of an external standard of justice. Implicitly believing that power corrupts, he could not advocate a transfer of power from one group or one class to another: poor workers might be virtuous, but they were also corruptible and, therefore, to give power to the people would not, in his mind, have solved any problem. No man, therefore, or group of men, could possibly be entrusted with defining justice, much less enforcing it. Yet the idea of a world from which God is absent or relegated to a subordinated position was the idea that had taken hold. His fear was that such an idea made of

a notion like justice just another rationalization for less easily avowable motives. This is why, even after his break with the Church, even after his denial of Christ's divinity, he held onto the idea that God, and only God, could provide the standard men needed to be guided towards the destiny that was properly theirs.

Natural Law as a Theory of Law

The theory of natural law is, according to Hobbes, a theory of rights. In his Leviathan he made a distinction which clearly points to the nature of the difference between the modern, secular theory and the older, Catholic one.

> For though they that speak of this subject use to confound jus and lex, right and law, yet they ought to be distinguished; because Right consists in liberty to do or to forbear, whereas Law determines and limits to one of them; so that Law and Right differ as much as Obligation and Liberty, which in one and the same matter are inconsistent. And because the condition of man, as has been declared in the precedent chapter, is a condition of war of every one against every one -- in which case everyone is governed by his own reason and there is nothing he can make use of that may not be a help unto him in preserving his life against his enemies -- it follows that in such a condition every man has a right to everything, even to one another's body.[5]

Hobbes' conception that "naturally every man has a right to everything," was based on his perception that "the condition of man ... is a condition of war of every one against every one." This view of man and the resulting view of the laws of nature was at the opposite pole from that of St. Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas' definition of the theory of natural law read thus:

> Supposing the world to be governed by divine Providence ... it is clear that the whole community of the universe is governed by the divine reason. This rational guidance of created things on the part of God ... we can call the Eternal law.
>
> [Now] since all things which are subject to divine Providence are measured and regulated by the Eternal law ... it is clear that all things participate to some degree in the Eternal law, in so far as they derive from it certain inclinations to those actions and aims which are proper to them. But, of all others, rational creatures are subject

> to divine Providence in a very special way; being themselves made participators in Providence itself, in that they control their own actions and the actions of others. So they have a certain share in the divine reason itself, deriving therefrom a natural inclination to such actions and ends as are fitting. This participation in the Eternal law by rational creatures is called the Natural Law ... . As though the light of natural reason, by which we discern good from evil, and which is the Natural Law, were nothing else than the impression of the divine light in us. So it is clear that the Natural Law is nothing else than the participation of the Eternal law in rational creatures.[6]

Whereas, then, the Hobbesian theory is secular, individualistic, and radical, the Thomistic theory is a system of laws of universal validity and thus is religious, traditionalist and communitarian.[7] The contrast between these two theories is set in the starkest of terms in order to show as clearly as possible to what tradition Lamennais belonged. A modification must, however, be introduced if for no other reason than to lay to rest the myth that Lamennais simply became one of Rousseau's followers after 1834. Rousseau stated in his Social Contract: "The passage from the state of nature to the civil state produces a truly remarkable change in the individual. It substitutes justice for instinct in his behavior, and gives to his actions a moral basis which formerly was lacking."[8] Here is set in unmistakable terms the theory according to which the law, as the expression of the "general will," is the real source of ethics. The main point here is not so much that Rousseau was thus breaking away from the notion of natural law -- in Ernest Barker's words, "he felt in his bones that the nation made law and not law the nation."[9] Rather, by failing to draw a

distinction between society and the State, Rousseau made of the contract of society the creator of moral man out of "a limited and stupid animal."[10] This effectively does away with the notion of universal obligation, limiting duty in its largest sense to "the sovereign people."[11]

As stated in the quote above, and prior to the establishment of any contract, the idea of natural law in Aquinas is the ultimate measure of right and wrong. For both Hobbes and Rousseau, however, the idea of natural law, prior to the establishment of the contract, is devoid of moral content.

For Aquinas, the idea of natural law is a theory of law which governs society; the contract brings into being a state designed first to enforce this law and only after to protect rights -- rights as such exist only as a result of obedience to the law. For Hobbes and Rousseau, the idea of natural law is a theory of rights which gives rise to the contract because rights cannot be maintained without it. These rights are either partly (Rousseau) or entirely (Hobbes) surrendered upon the establishment of the contract, thus creating obligations. Therefore, the contract for Hobbes and Rousseau creates society, and thus obligations, natural rights being preexistent to both; the contract for Aquinas creates a government -- God himself creates society by making man a social being -- whose function it is to see that obligations are fulfilled so that rights can exist.

For Lamennais, the notion of obligations -- or in his word devoirs -- came and always remained before that of rights, which was subordinate and relative to the former. Several of the quotations given in Chapters II and III unmistakably bear this out.[12] This was one of his constant themes, and was, in his own opinion, the major difference between his thinking and that of "modern" thinkers. In addition, as has already been shown,[13] his opposition to "modern philosophy," beginning with Hobbes, was based specifically on his understanding that it robbed the individual of his spiritual autonomy and thus created a potentially despotic State. In other words, Lamennais was a strict Thomist at a time when Thomism was very unfashionable, and it is no accident that the revival of interest in Lamennais' works in the 1880's coincided with the revival of Thomism in Catholic circles.[14]

Lamennais followed Aquinas in his rejection of St. Augustine's notion that the State or political authority "existed primarily because fallen human beings stand in need of a coercive power to restrain their evil tendencies and to punish crime."[15] In 1828 he stated that "no government, no police, no order, would be possible if men were not originally united by bonds which constitute them into a society -- bonds which are common beliefs conceived as duties -- ; and this spiritual society is basically the only true society for without it, no other could be established or survive."[16] And a few pages later he said that "kings and princes are under the obligation to govern according to God's law ... losing all right to command as soon as they violate this law."[17]

Except for Hegel, the idea that the State should actively engaged in moral leadership to promote a better life for all, was an anachronism until well into the 1840's.[18] Although the restrictions placed on the activities of the State were close to the liberal view of the limited functions that the State should perform, the nature of the functions to be performed was radically different. Both Aquinas and Lamennais believed that "the task of the State is actively to produce the conditions under which a full human life can be lived."[19] If this was far from the policy of laissez-faire advocated by the French Liberals at the time, it was equally far from the position of those who advocated the absolute rights of the State over its citizens.

In advocating a return to Thomistic thought, Lamennais was two generations ahead of his time. His major audience in the 1830's and 1840's was the lower classes, the people least likely to have heard, much less understood St. Thomas. Since Rome had placed all of Lamennais' works on the Index, those most likely to understand him did not therefore read him or take him seriously. This may explain why what he considered his major philosophical statement, L'Esquisse d'une philosophie, simply did not sell.

The Essence of the Law

If the theory of natural law is a theory of law, as distinct from a theory of rights, we must still ascertain what for Lamennais was the essence of the law. Law may either be a command which proceeds from the will and finds its justification in force, or it may be a command which proceeds from reason, in which case its justification will be either religious or ethical. It has been said that the notion of natural law stands or falls on this very question. "There can be little room left for old-fashioned discussions about the nature of justice and the essence of the law when human will is made the supreme arbiter of all human values."[20] Although the decisive step in this direction was taken by Rousseau, the shift from Reason or God's law to human will, however formulated, as the essence of the law, has a history stretching back to the Middle Ages.[21]

As we have already seen, this is, perhaps not quite properly, a shift Lamennais recognized, fought against, accusing Protestantism of being responsible for it. He quite properly recognized that the trend towards secularization in politics robbed the law of its religious, and hence, restraining quality. He feared that once law had become the expression of human will, that it would become just as arbitrary and capricious as he perceived human will to be.[22] It can thus be seen that what Lamennais was fighting for was a reestablishment not only of natural law thinking, but of the older natural law thinking, that which prevailed, although frequently challenged, before the rise of the School of Natural Law in the seventeenth century.

For Lamennais, natural law is the imprint in man of God's law, of the divine law. This is for him, Christianity's greatest claim to glory and greatest claim to men's loyalty. Describing the change Christianity brought into the Roman world, he stated in 1817, that "the law no longer is the expression of the will of the strongest, its object no longer is to protect special interests, its object now is to establish justice, everyone's supreme interest."[23] And, following Aquinas,[24] he goes on to describe justice as the order willed by God and law as the expression of His will.

To describe, or believe, that the essence of law is the expression of divine reason is only part of the problem. Promulgation is an integral part of law, for, indeed "promulgation is necessary for the law to obtain its force."[25]

As was stated above, Lamennais accepted the Christian doctrine until 1834, whereby the promulgation of God's law was revelation as contained in the Scriptures. In his Essai he tried to prove that "the precepts and dogmas [of Christianity] are but the assemblage and manifestation of all the truths necessary to man."[26] His lengthy attacks on Descartes, his followers and the various schools that followed him, had only one object -- namely, to show the impossibility of proving that truth can be established by human reason alone and that, therefore, no matter how one tried, honesty and love of truth would always throw one back on the precepts found in the Scriptures.[27] But obviously wanting to bolster his own argument by an appeal to man's common sense he introduced then his famous doctrinedu sens commun whereby the history of men showed, for anyone

who cared to look at it closely, not only what the nature of man was, but also the progressive actualization and triumph of the Scriptural precepts.[28] It was in this connection that he used arguments put forward by Plato, Aristotle, Pascal, Bossuet, and Diderot to show the falsity of Rousseau's ideas.[29]

Lamennais' doctrine du sens commun shows the increasing faith he placed in a science of history as a means to bring to light universal laws about man and his behavior. It would, however, be an error to think that Lamennais was a fellow-traveler of the growing historical school. The relativism that this school helped foster, the denial of the existence of universal norms that it stands for, or, more precisely, its denial of man's ability to transcend the merely actual and arrive at absolute knowledge, was utterly foreign to Lamennais. When he used Gibbon, Blackstone, or Voltaire,[30] it was only to show that these historians made remarks which supported the truth he had already stated. His use of St. Augustine, Plato, St. Basil, Aristotle, and Cicero was similar: they were his authorities, "the expression" of ancient wisdom, the carriers of "the universal tradition of mankind," that religion was the source of the law, the principle regulating society.[31] In other words, absolute knowledge was attainable by man because this knowledge had been made available to him. God had revealed His plans and had given man the means to recognize them. But in order not to fall into the trap he accused Descartes of having fallen into -- namely, the circular argument by which Descartes proved the existence of God by showing

the truth of his perceptions which was itself a result of God's existence[32] -- he refused to acknowledge man's ability to recognize the truth by himself.

Individual reason, by itself, could not differentiate between what was true knowledge, the True Law, from the vast knowledge that mankind had progressively accumulated, which was always increasing, but which was of secondary importance to man's existence. Did this mean that man would forever remain unsure, forever doubting, of the law which justifies his existence in the first place? Certainly not. Absolute skepticism and absolute certitude were two extremes which human intelligence for its own well-being, had to avoid.[33] But throughout history, men everywhere have shown an attraction for certain principles, the very same principles enunciated in the Scriptures, which told something both about man's nature and about the purpose of his existence. This universal agreement, this sensus communis, was "the seal of the truth" of these principles.[34]

It should not be thought that because Lamennais eventually rejected Catholicism and Christ's divinity, that he shifted from his original position that the essense of the law was divine reason. In fact, he began his last major work by saying that "religion, higher law of free, intelligent man, comprises both the precepts which regulate his will and his acts in the ethical realm, and the justification of these precepts."[35] But conscious that his break with Rome damaged the credibility of revealed religion as the repository of God's law, he began after 1832 to deemphasize the religious nature of the law and to emphasize its moral nature.

The object of man's search for knowledge was not, as has been shown, the salvation of his soul. It was, for Lamennais, to enable man to live a better life by bringing into concordance human laws with divine law. The radical break that was introduced in his thought was not due to his break with Rome but to his break with theocracy. As long as the law was promulgated in revelation, the Church or the priesthood was its repository and interpreter. Hence his advocacy of a political system in which the Church or the priesthood would form a shield between the human power, or the State, and the subjects or citizens, Society. But in a democracy, where the power to decide what was law belonged to all equally, there no longer could be a body to dictate what the law was. In other words, unless extreme caution was observed, the shift from theocracy to democracy could mean a shift in the essence of law from divine reason to human will. And in spite of his being one of the most vociferous prophets of democracy from 1830, Lamennais always denied that law proceeded from human will. Had he accepted this, he would have to be seen as simply one of Rousseau's followers. But he never did. Instead, he shifted from religious to ethical standards as the source of the law, never, however, abandoning the former for the latter.

But moral standards do not have, of course, the objective validity that can be attributed to religious ones. Religious standards as spelled out in revelation, i.e., the truth, regulate both internal motives and external acts on a universal scale and

can thus be brought into conformity with law which is "a uniform rule of action binding in all men alike."[36] Moral standards are also concerned with internal motives and external acts, but are essentially based on choice and hence purely individual. What appears moral to one man under certain circumstances, or at a certain time, may not appear moral to another unaware of the circumstances that determined the choice. How can the law, a uniform rule which cannot and must not be tailored to individual needs, be brought into conformity with moral standards?

Lamennais went to great lengths to try to show that the religious precepts contained in revelation were not only God's law as perceived by human reason throughout the ages, but were in fact similar to certain moral standards which had become objectified, and hence had the character of law because they had been universally recognized, declared and enforced. The four volumes of his Esquisse are an exercise in logical deduction designed to show that God's law, or the general notion of justice, was an ensemble of moral or religious laws, the difference between the two being obliterated, whose purpose was to maintain and develop the notion of Being.

The subject of volumes I and II of the Esquisse was to show that the role of "true philosophy" was to understand the fundamental laws of the Creation, of the Universe and of men, so as to offer a guide for their realization. "True philosophy" must begin with the notion of "the absolute Being," embracing both the finite and the

infinite.[37] The first error philosophy had to avoid was to take as its point of departure human reason, which was "finite and consequently fallible."[38] This was his way of dismissing Cartesianism, and this brief comment rejoined the criticisms of Descartes and his followers he had written twenty years before. The other error philosophy had to avoid, was to take as its point of departure either God or the Universe. To relegate philosophy, as many had done, to the realm of pure thought produced a radical break in the harmony and unity of the Creation and hence also in the harmony and unity of Science.[39] This was the path Christian thought had taken, resulting in the untenable position of having to deal with a teleological view of man and a nonteleological view of science. Hence the impossibility of reconciling the political, civil, and economic laws with their true sources -- namely, religious and moral laws. "True philosophy" had to achieve this reconciliation.[40] In addition, the Christian concept of grace destroyed the notion of freedom, whereas the notion of freedom, from a theological point of view, destroyed the concept of grace. Yet true theology had to admit of both grace and freedom.[41]

He then went on to state his conclusions. "For all beings, the laws of life are nothing but the laws of their nature, laws whose essentials are always instinctively known by them."[42] And, in case there were any remaining doubts about his purpose, he asked what was religious belief? It was "the general adherence to a conception of God or of the first cause, from which flows the entire

system of beings and of their laws," and he added, "it is therefore evident that all social doctrines must have their principle, their reason, in a religious doctrine; because society rationally conceived is nothing but the organization of humanity according to man's natural law."[43]

If it is clear that this logical sequence is a matter of faith, it is no less clear that Lamennais was avoiding a major philosophical problem. And that was the problem of epistemology. How was the knowledge of man's natural law to be learned? In addition, how was "the general adherence to a conception of God or of the first cause," to be achieved? Were "true philosophers" in possession of "this mysterious intuition which characterizes the relationship of mankind with truth" to be the ideal legislators?[44] And even if they were granted this power, how were they first to be selected, and second to enact practical and enforceable laws which would not only be in accordance with "man's natural law" but which would also achieve the purpose of this law?

Lamennais did not finish the third part of his Esquisse where these questions logically would have been treated. But we can glimpse his solution in the Constitution he wrote in 1848. In it, he proposed a system of government which was composed of two parallel structures, one legislative and executive, the other judicial. Both of these structures were based on universal suffrage and culminated, first in a National Assembly, whose vote was never secret,[45] and whose power over the executive was total,[46] and second, in a National High Court which could only be called into session by the National Assembly,[47] and whose function was to judge the actions

of all legislative and executive members.[48] However, there was also what he called a Supreme Court elected not by universal suffrage, but by all the judges of the nation for a period of three years.[49] This court was charged with "the safeguard of the constitution, the interpretation of the laws and of their uniform application."[50] In other words, a selected number of men had final power of judgment over all the laws. And although the constitution had to be voted on by all citizens over the age of 21,[51] the power granted to this Supreme Court was a check over an otherwise democratic system. In addition, all citizens not having received the proper level of education were deprived of their political rights.[52]

This constitution suggests that Lamennais, when forced to reconcile theory and practice, drew back from his democratic pronouncements, refusing in part to make the will of the people the source of law.[53] The wisdom of a selected few, as well as the power of education, seemed to embody Reason, as the necessary check over a democratic scheme which was bound to issue in a radical denial of the theory that law was other than what man willed it to be.

In other words, Lamennais trusted in the wisdom of the majority to adopt a constitution, drawn up by him and embodying his conception of what divine reason had declared law to be.[54] But refusing to concede absolute power to enact human laws to the representatives elected by the "educated" members of society, he devised a scheme to rule on the constitutionality of the laws, essentially the function reserved to the Church or the priesthood in a theocracy.

Types of Laws

In 1848 Lamennais stated that "there are rights and duties anterior and superior to all positive laws and independent of them."[55] Thus, Lamennais, even then, still followed St. Thomas who had propounded three laws. The first was eternal law, the law which was the dictate of divine reason. The second was natural law, the imprint in nature of eternal law. The third was positive law, the law made by man which had to accord to natural law to be legitimate.

It is evident that these were not three separate laws, three independent rules of action, but rather one law progressively made concrete. It was a sequence according to which positive law, to be morally binding, had to be rooted in divine reason. If Lamennais did not mention the two-fold division of the divine law, the old law and the new law respectively corresponding to the Old and the New Testament,[56] he did mention a fourth law, the law of evil, to explain the deviation from reasonable behavior on the part of men which produced evil.[57] But by and large, what he was concerned to show was the logical sequence of eternal to natural to positive law.

The acknowledgement and recognition of the existence of eternal law in Lamennais' work was the foundation of his whole philosophical and political edifice. The very proof of the existence of this law was life itself. He stated in the introduction to the first volume of his Essai that "in whatever sense one considers it, truth is life, unique cause of man's and society's existences."[58] Aware that the attempt to prove the existence of truth was a hopeless undertaking, he tried instead to show that unbelief was harmful and

absurd.[59] He was thus hoping to convince his readers not so much of the existence of truth, or of eternal law -- terms that he used interchangeably -- but of the necessity to believe in it. More than twenty years later, in the introduction to the first volume of his Esquisse, he stated the same principles in clearer terms: "There exist truths whose existence is not to be proven, that cannot logically be proven, yet whose existence is unquestionable, because it is through their existence that the certainty of all other truths is established."[60]

The eternal law was Being, or more precisely the idea of Being.[61] It was neither essence nor existence. It was both. The idea of Being "is what is of itself and by itself, or more simply what is."[62] It was an idea which man could not comprehend; it, in fact, set the limits of human intelligence.[63] To ask what came first, essence or existence, was absurd for man could never find the answer. Therefore, man had to accept the idea of Being as including both, existence or nature and essence which was God.

For Lamennais the idea of Being was "in an absolute and general sense ... something radical and primitive, conceived as the necessary foundation of all that exists and all that can exist anteriorly to all specifications, either infinite in God, or finite in created beings."[64] Such an idea could not be denied, for, to deny it would be like denying one's own existence which was clearly absurd.[65] Although written in the late 1830's, this idea recalled another he had expressed twenty years before. And this was that suicide was

"the sad effect of the extinction of faith."[66] One could not, short of killing one's self, deny the fact of one's existence.

That God, "the one who is ... , and by nature not demonstrable,"[67] should be placed somewhat below the idea of Being, on a par with Creation, was a radical departure from traditional Christian doctrine. It was an attempt to formulate a cosmology which, while not breaking entirely free from Christian postulates, took modern scientific achievements into account. The Biblical account of the Creation had to be refuted,[68] and the mystery of man's origin accepted.[69] And, although this was written after his break with the Church, it was not such a radical departure for Lamennais. He never had exhibited the hostility to the things of this world that was traditional in Catholicism. It was always the well-being of society that preoccupied him and not the state of man's soul.

The idea of Being, as the eternal law, dictated certain terms, the first of which was faith. It goes without saying that if Being was the term to which everything tended, belief would be a powerful psychological means to overcome everything that tended towards non-being, that is, disorder, destructive behavior, ignorance, and hatred. In fact, indifference, the theme of his first five volumes, was seen as the antithesis to faith, as the root of all existing evils.

The second term dictated by the idea of Being was love. Love, in fact, was "the principle of production and conservation,"[70] that which "tends to realize externally its object, that is the

good, or truth."[71] Faith and love were the two terms of the existence and continued development of Creation. Indifference and hatred were their respective antithesis, that which led to destruction, death, non-being. But the continued existence and development of the Creation affirmed that indifference and hatred did not and could not for any length of time hold sway. Faith and love were thus the terms of that law which was eternal, the unfathomable principle from which everything flowed.[72]

Lamennais' universe was not a static order of things. It was "the actualization of the idea of Being,"[73] a process of becoming, merging the "organic order" to the "intelligent order."[74] In other words, both matter and spirit were constantly evolving into a unity called Being.[75] Reverting back to a medieval type of allegorical thinking, he suggested that the development of the universe, as well as the development of mankind, were similar to the development of the individual.[76] As man physically grew, so did his intelligence, his awareness. Man, being part of an evolving universe, had therefore to know and to obey the law according to which this development proceeded. This was necessary not only so that he might himself develop, but also in order not to disturb the development of the universe itself. Man, at that point in time, was mid-way between the "organic order" and the "intelligent order." But being on a microcosmic scale what God and the universe were on a macrocosmic scale, he knew that he was not what he could be.[77] Trapped between two orders of things, neither of which he could escape, he felt "boredom, disgust, anguish,"[78] and often

violated the law designed to actualize the idea of Being. Evil, which was the result of a behavior contrary to that dictated by the end assigned to the Creation, was therefore "in essence, purely individual."[79] But clearly uncomfortable about the origin of evil, he preferred, leaving such things as pestilence or the Lisbon earthquake aside, to paraphrase Voltaire: "Mystère effrayant, le mal est dans le monde."[80]

Natural law, for Lamennais, had the same self-evident character as eternal law. "Nothing is unless it is not alone."[81] From this statement he went on to show that the preservation and development of life in nature was the result of an equilibrium reached because of the multiplicity of functions, the multiplicity of limits, constantly interacting to preserve, in seeming chaos, the existence of the whole.[82] In the vast organism of nature, numerous beings (organic and inorganic) form as many specific organisms whose functions must harmonize; each developing according to the measure of its functions and never beyond, in order not to become, instead of an instrument of life, a cause of perturbation and of death.[83] And excluding man for a moment from his speculations, he concluded: "Thus it is that every being, without the disappearance of any species, meets everywhere laws that are superior to theirs, obstacles to its excessive and chaotic development."[84]

But as always, Lamennais had stated his real conclusion before he argued its validity.

> In order to understand human society, we must establish what the principle of society in general is. Because if society is conceived of as an infinity of forms and modifications, each dependent upon the nature of the associated beings, there is a general cause recognizable in all the particulars, from which proceeds everything they have in common. Now, from this point of view, society embraces all beings universally and its principle must be found in one of the prime necessities of their existence. 'They (all beings) exist only by virtue of the relations that mutually link them to the whole ... . The Universe is therefore but one great society, in which each being, united to all others, exercises ... its proper functions, necessary to the integral conservation and development of the whole.'[85]

Unity was therefore the fundamental principle of life in the universe, reflecting the unity of the idea of Being.

Two implications of this fundamental principle were clear: first, man could not be considered in isolation, but only as an integral part of society;[86] and second, the principle imposed on everyone equally a fundamental duty: that of contributing to the preservation and development of the life of the whole.[87]

But society, by its very nature, meant multiplicity -- "to be united, several things must exist."[88] And the very duty each was imposed with gave it rights which were distinct for each species of beings.[89]

From this point, one distinction had to be made. There were inorganic and organic beings, the latter of which man was a part. But at a point in time man, alone of all other organic beings, had "a vision of absolute Being and of [his] relative Being."[90] This moment marked the beginning of intelligence, setting apart man from all other beings. Inorganic and organic beings were preserved by

their instincts which were but the laws of their respective natures. If duty could not be said to be imposed on them, for they could not have a consciousness of it, their preservation as species suggested that it was nevertheless imprinted in their behavior.[91] However, they did have rights, which were nothing but one of man's duties towards them.[92] And in a tirade more reminiscent of 1970's ecologists than of philosophers of the 1830's, he pleaded, quoting from two naturalists' studies, for respect for this mysterious equilibrium between all forms of life.[93]

Duty, "the conservative principle of the whole," and right, "the conservative principle of the individual" were thus "inseparably linked and conceived only by their union, represented the primary, absolute conditions of all existence."[94]

This long disquisition, however, was merely to set the analysis of natural law as it applied to human society within context. For human society was what interested Lamennais.[95]

Human society, as a physical species, had both duties and rights. But by its awareness of the eternal Being and its awareness of self, it was also a spiritual entity. This is what Lamennais meant when he said that man was mid-way between the organic and the intelligent order.[96] As a spiritual entity human society also had duties and rights. Because, however, what made man human, i.e., other and above the animal world, was partaking of divine intelligence, or divine reason, the spiritual rights and duties took precedence over the rights and duties binding him to the physical universe.

The conjunction of duty and right in the intelligent order, or the equilibrium that duty and right represented was what Lamennais called Justice, the Moral Law, or Religion, "that which binds."[97] Justice and religion were thus one and the same thing. They were both the apex and the entire body of a structure which bound mankind for it was "the expression of the nature of men and of the principle of their conservation ... . /It was/ identified as human conscience or as the unconsidered consciousness of good and evil in /men's/ relationships to free acts."[98] This position was not a radical departure or a contradiction from the principle he had always affirmed that "authority was the necessary basis of social and religious faith."[99] There existed one truth and justice, or religion, was the law which dictated how this truth would be realized.

That this law was identified as human conscience did not give the individual the right to determine what his beliefs were to be, much less the right to impose them on others. The shift of emphasis from outside authority to human conscience as the necessary basis of faith was dictated by Lamennais' political evolution. In the 1820's he was strongly anti-democratic,[100] and thus "an infallible authority /was/ absolutely necessary to guarantee that the law would be respected by all, and specially by those in positions of power."[101] This infallible authority was the Pope and the Church was its instrument. It formed a barrier between God and men designed to assure that the latter follow the former's law. And to keep within the Catholic tradition this spiritual power had jurisdiction over the temporal power whose primary duty it was to enforce its decrees.

Lamennais was then responsible for resurrecting the old medieval controversy over the supremacy of the two powers.[102] But his advocacy position of resurrecting the equality, or even the superiority, of the spiritual power with the temporal power was essentially unstable. Lamennais did not ignore that the time he lived in was somewhat different from that of the thirteenth century. Also, and he may not at first have been aware of it, the controversy of the supremacy of the two powers had been a controversy only because one party to this controversy, the Church, believed that saving souls was its ultimate objective and duty.[103] Not in the least concerned with this subject, Lamennais was bound sooner or later to realize the unreal nature of the matter he had raised and concentrate instead on what concerned him, that is the nature of legitimate political authority.

This is what he did in Des progrès de la révolution, whose purpose it was to "compare the frightening confusion of doctrines ... with the only social theory which appears correct."[104] As he expected, this book was the first shot in the battle that ended more than five years later with the issuance of the encyclical Singulari Nos of June 25, 1834.[105] Lamennais did not expect to lose this battle; he was anticipating, and his book was designed to help bring about, a political revolution which would bring France's political system in harmony with what he believed Papal policy ought to be. Speaking of the catastrophe that was fast approaching, he told Benoît D'Azy, "I fear it the less, the more it

appears to me inevitable. I see in it the carrying out of the indestructible laws which rule the social world, and I cannot conceive of the possibility of a veritable regeneration without further upheavals."[106] This revolution was made necessary because "there can be peace and order only under the rule, equal for all, of justice and right."[107] And he did not believe that either Royalists or Liberals could bring about such a rule.[108] He counted on "the masses" to effect the necessary changes, one of which was to sweep out the resistance of the French bishops,[109] and the success of his book everywhere, in spite of the obstacles of "la diplomatie européenne," confirmed him in his opinions.[110] Henceforth democracy was to be the goal as well as the means of social regeneration.

How could democracy accommodate itself to a social organization which allowed a distinct group, the priesthood, to arrogate to itself a power over and above that which each man by nature equally possessed? Such a social organization condones inequality and thus "destroys right."[111] Since it is incompatible with the rule of justice, religion, in the sense employed by Christianity, cannot form an order outside that prescribed by nature and its laws.[112] Worship is simply the obedience to the moral law;[113] no intervention, however justified, can be accepted between God and man -- "the priesthood is ... essentially individual."[114] In other words, democracy as the means to establish peace and order places a burden on each man's shoulders, that of knowing and obeying the moral law and rejecting the idea of institutionalized religions.

To know and obey the moral law is duty, but it is duty freely performed. Man must rationally, voluntarily submit to laws which he cannot escape and freely perform the actions dictated by these laws, for it is the freedom with which these actions are performed that validates their moral contents.[115]

If man's duty is obedience, his right is freedom. Rhetoric aside, this is the scheme he had proposed more than thirty years earlier in the introduction to his Essai.[116] Man, he had then said, is free "not to err, but to revolt; not to refuse to see, but to deny what he sees."[117] Man therefore possesses the ability to discern what is right from what is wrong and the freedom to choose between them.[118] This ability to discern is his direct link to God; it is what proves, for Aquinas as well as for Lamennais, that man partakes directly of divine reason. It is on this very point, -- that is, the relationship between divine reason and natural reason -- that Lamennais argues against the validity of Liberalism in 1829 in his First Letter to the Archbishop of Paris.[119]

It is obvious that if natural reason is dependent on divine reason, right will be radically dependent on duty.[120] Hence freedom, which is the first and most natural right, will be radically dependent upon what constitutes duty, that is obedience to a legal framework embodying, and designed to achieve, justice. This is the essential thought behind the masthead of L'Avenir -- "Dieu et la liberté." And if this was perceived as a revolutionary slogan by Metternich, Czar Nicholas, the French Catholic hierarchy and

eventually by Rome,[121] it was perceived correctly, even perhaps more correctly than Lamennais intended. It is doubtful whether Lamennais fully realized that the meaning he was giving to the word religion was in fact revolutionary. All of his articles in L'Avenir have only one goal: denouncing the lack of social justice; with the implication that it is the role of religion to fight for social justice. It was a radical departure from what religion was supposed to be, as Cardinal Paul-Thérèse D'Astros clearly perceived.[122]

Some years later, in a pithy epigram, Lamennais gave expression to what he thought religion had become. "What is history? it is the long record of the agony of humanity. The authorities hold the ax [over its neck], while the priest urges it to be patient."[123] This view ran counter to what he had ever believed, that religion was "the eternal legislation of all beings and mankind in particular,"[124] as well as the means to implement this legislation. Hence the absolute conviction that religion and politics are one and the same thing, which made him first the initiator and then the leader of Ultramontanism, which was but a political means to impose a universal and moral principle on all governments.

Lamennais published the outline of a theory of knowledge in 1829.[125] In the 1830's he thought it necessary to elaborate on this theory and presented a further sketch in 1834 modifying some of the concepts he had discussed five years earlier.[126] He kept working on what he thought was a full-fledged theory of knowledge

whose ostensible purpose was to demonstrate how men, without the intervention of the Scriptures or self-appointed interpreters, could know what the true law was.[127]

It would be tiresome and not altogether to the point to follow through all of the refinements that he brought on to his theory of knowledge, if such a scheme can really be dignified with such a label. Volume III of his Esquisse is a compendium of endless speculations and details purporting to show mankind's progression from Industry, whose term is utility, to Art, whose term is beauty, to Science, whose term is truth. The confusing nature of his work is probably what led most of it to be disregarded by later generations.

True knowledge, he argued, was no longer a matter of theology and, although he did not spell it out, those in possession of this knowledge, those who establish what universal laws are and dictate that positive law must reflect these laws, are not priests but scientists and philosophers.[128] In addition, the history of man's past is no longer a sacred record but a secular one which must be thoroughly examined. Was he aware that such an endeavor would subvert the whole foundations of Christian historiography? Probably not. He probably believed that fundamental Christian teachings would be confirmed as correct by this process. He was not the first to turn back towards ancient sources to find confirmation of his beliefs and find his beliefs undermined thereby.

Although he did not, as compared to Bossuet, accept the Bible as a correct historical record, he continued to explain the unknown by the known and thus partly deserves to be called a latter-day

Scholastic. Lamennais' greatest failing, however, was his superficial and thoroughly dated treatment of evil. Evil, for him, was not real; it was simply the result of deviation from established laws. Although he knew how to paint poignant pictures of working-class life, he did not appreciate man's capacity for suffering and the inherent dignity that comes with it. The tragic sense of life would have been a meaningless concept for him. He followed Aquinas too closely and failed to realize that many of Aquinas' ideas had been questioned. He accepted Aquinas' belief "that the problems of political science could be subsumed in the broader framework of philosophical and theological world-views,"[129] yet he had neither Aquinas' grasp of philosophical problems nor his training. He strained to find the rationale of political authority in social needs and forces, yet refused to get acquainted with what the new science of economics had to say.

Lamennais' shortcomings have to be mentioned so that we may understand his failure to complete the work which by his own admission was most needed. His Esquisse d'une philosophie was supposed to have three parts, the first dealing with God and the universe, the second treating of man, and the third comprising Lamennais' thought on society.[130] The first part was published in 1840 along with a portion of the second. The remaining portion of the second was published in 1846. In 1848 he published the first half of Part Three under the title De la société première et de ses lois, ou de la religion. As the title indicates, in this work he was not

concerned with the society of his day. This topic would have constituted Lamennais' Politics, and although he lived for another six years, he did not work on it in spite of the fact that it was supposed to be the culmination of his life's work. Some fragments of it, that Lamennais did not publish, were recovered and published by Christian Maréchal in 1897, but they add little to our knowledge of Lamennais' thought on the subject. Yet it was in this work that positive law would have been treated in detail and that the relationship of natural law to positive law would have been exposed.[131]

Various explanations have been given for Lamennais' failure to complete his work; lack of money, ill health, disappointment with the results of the December, 1848 presidential elections. None of these is very satisfactory. Lamennais often lacked money and had to edit newspapers to make a living; this never prevented him from working on his assigned task. He was always ill, or rather, he always complained about his health; yet until late 1853 he worked both as a newspaper editor and attended to his duties asan elected representative to the National Assembly. This last seems to take care of the theory according to which he was disappointed by the arrival of Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte on the French political scene. Rather, a case can be made for Lamennais' disappointment with his own abilities to undertake such a task. So long as what he wrote remained in the realm of theory, he could go on endlessly. But confronted with facts, political facts, which had to be reconciled with his theories, he realized that the entire context of his thoughts led to an insuperable dilemma.

The question which must have troubled him first was, how to achieve what he had always considered a prime necessity -- that is unity. When inner unity is lacking, as the May and June days obviously showed, unity must be imposed. But how compatible was this with his democratic ideal? Further, certitude and faith always remained for him the very conditions of man's existence. How could this be reconciled with the latest behavior of the French upper classes in 1848? And how could Society, which was the creation of God, based as it was on man's most fundamental, most "natural" instinct, that of sociability, justify the use of compulsion? Yet facing the conditions of 1848, some form of compulsion had to be integrated into the legal framework of the country. More important perhaps was his repeated objection to man's assumption of the attribute of sovereignty. Who or what could be the translator of God's law into human law? If constitution-making was such a process, the people who voted for or against this constitution still had the last word. Did this mean that God's law was simply what the majority wanted it to be? In this case, how were the differences between majority rule and equal, "God-given," liberties to be reconciled? Would this last dilemma not lead to Rousseau's answer -- an answer he had opposed for forty years?

These were some of the questions which faced Lamennais the politician and law-maker in 1848. There are scattered evidences in his works that he was aware of these problems, but that further study and further work would lead to a solution. The only thing

he did, however, was to try to embody in his projet de constitution ideas about freedom he had advocated for twenty years. No solution to the other problem was apparent and, confronted with the brutal truth of his own shortcomings, he simply stopped working on his Esquisse and went on instead to translate Dante's Divine Comedy.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER IV

1. Du passé, 48-53.
2. Politique, II, 110.
3. Oeuvres complètes, XII, 7
4. Ibid.
5. Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan (New York, Bobbs-Merrill, 1958), Part I, XIV, 109-110.
6. Summa Theologica, 1 a, 2 ae, 91, art. 1 and 2. (Dawson's translation)
7. A. P. D'Entrèves, Natural Law (London, Hutchinson, 1951), III.
8. "The Social Contract," in Social Contract, Sir E. Barker, ed. (New York, Oxford U. Press, 1962), I, VIII, 185, the emphasis is mine.
9. Introduction to Social Contract, ibid., xxix-xxx.
10. Social Contract, I, VIII.
11. Ibid., I, VII.
12. Specifically, II, n. 145, above.
13. See above 65.
14. F. C. Copleston, Aquinas (Baltimore, Penguin Books, 1955), 246-247.
15. Ibid., 237.
16. Oeuvres complètes, IX, 1-2.
17. Ibid., 15; Cf., Summa Theologica, 1 a, 2 ae, 96, art. 1 and 4.
18. Cf., Copleston, 238-239.
19. Ibid., 239.
20. D'Entrèves, 75.

FOOTNOTES
CHAPTER IV (continued)

21. Ibid., IV.

22. Several years after having broken with Catholicism, he stated: "But Religion is not only Right and the reason for Right, it is also Duty and the reason for Duty; because without Duty, which amounts to mutual devotion, self-sacrifice, fraternity, Right, which amounts to freedom, would itself become a principle of tyranny. Deprived of all rule, Right would become greed and force -- in other words, a principle of dissolution, because men, utterly isolated would take refuge in pure individualism which is nothing but absolute selfishness." Du passé, 102-103.

23. Oeuvres complètes, I, 365.

24. Summa Theologica, 1 a, 2 ae, 90, art. 2 and 91, art 1.

25. Ibid., 1 a, 2 ae, 90, art. 4.

26. Oeuvres complètes, I, xiii-xiv.

27. Ibid., II and V.

28. Ibid., II, 21 ff.

29. Ibid., 150-185.

30. Ibid., VII, 3-12.

31. Ibid., vi-vii and 1-2.

32. Ibid., V, 28-29.

33. Ibid., II, 19-20.

34. Ibid., 21.

35. De la société, v-vi.

36. Ernest Barker, Principles of Social and Political Theory (Oxford, Clarendon, 1951), 118.

37. Esquisse, I, x-xi.

38. Ibid., iii-iv.

FOOTNOTES
CHAPTER IV (continued)

39. Ibid., vi.

40. Ibid., xxii.

41. Ibid., ix; Lamennais does not elaborate on this point, which, stated as briefly as it is, is far from clear.

42. Ibid., xxvii.

43. Ibid., xxx.

44. Ibid., xxv.

45. Constitution, art. 73.

46. Ibid., arts. 75 to 154.

47. Ibid., art. 161.

48. Ibid., art. 159.

49. Ibid., art. 156.

50. Ibid., art. 155.

51. Ibid., art. 40.

52. Ibid., art. 11.

53. Cf. Jean Bruhat, "Lamennais et le mouvement ouvrier français," Europe, 32e annee, No. 98-99 (Feb. Mars, 1954), 76-98; this article illustrates very clearly Lamennais' refusal to take a stand, through appropriate actions, on the very issues that he had advocated.

54. The preamble of his constitution read thus: "In the name of God: in the presence of humanity in which all nations are solidarily united, like the members of a same body; the French People declares that it recognizes that there are rights and duties anterior and superior to all positive laws and independent of them. These rights and duties, directly emanating from God, are resumed in the triple dogmas expressed by the sacred words: Equality, Liberty, Fraternity."

FOOTNOTES
CHAPTER IV (continued)

55. Ibid.

56. Summa Theologica, 1 a, 2 ae, 91, art. 5.

57. Oeuvres complètes, I, vi ff and 29-30; Esquisse, II, 12-17; Cf. Summa Theologica, 1 a, 2 ae, 91, art. 6.

58. Oeuvres complètes, I, v.

59. Ibid., xxxvii.

60. Esquisse, I, v.

61. Ibid., 40-44.

62. Ibid., 41.

63. Ibid., 43.

64. Ibid., 40-41.

65. Ibid., 46.

66. Oeuvres complètes, VIII, 187.

67. Esquisse, I, 45.

68. Ibid., 99-113.

69. Ibid., IV, 415-416; "On ne saurait, en effet, accepter comme une solution la réponse de ceux qui attribuent à l'action immediate de Dieu la primitive formation de chaque espèce."

70. Oeuvres complètes, I, xii.

71. Ibid., 228.

72. Esquisse, I, 114 ff; II, 4; the question of evil ought not, logically, have been mentioned here. It is a metaphysical or theological question; but Lamennais includes it in his cosmology, perhaps, following St. Augustine, to emphasize his belief that, physically evil is not real, that it is essentially moral, essentially human, and thus foreign to God or the idea of Being.

73. Ibid., II, 10.

FOOTNOTES
CHAPTER IV (continued)

74. Ibid.

75. Ibid., IV, 10.

76. De la société, 2-3.

77. Esquisse, II, 10-11.

78. Ibid., 11.

79. De la société, 23.

80. Esquisse, II, 11.

81. De la société, 32.

82. Ibid., 28-34.

83. Ibid., 33.

84. Ibid., 34.

85. Ibid., 2-3.

86. Esquisse, IV, 453-454.

87. De la société, 6-7.

88. Ibid., 3.

89. Ibid., 37.

90. Esquisse, IV, 8.

91. De la société, 55-56.

92. Ibid., 46.

93. Ibid., 46-49.

94. Ibid., 49-50.

95. Ibid., 7-8; by long disquisition, Lamennais does not merely refer to the forty and so pages that he spends analyzing the nature of the universe. Included in it are "all of the questions treated in the Esquisse," four heavy volumes comprising an ontology, a cosmology, an anthropology, an esthetic, and a philosophy of science.

FOOTNOTES
CHAPTER IV (continued)

96. Above, note 74.

97. De la société ..., 58; Lamennais uses all three terms, Justice, Moral Law, Religion, indiscriminately. His etymology of the word religion, "ce qui relie," is similar to that of the Latin word Jus, "what is fitting," "what is binding," from which our modern word justice is derived. E. Barker, Principles of Social and Political Theory (Oxford, Clarendon, 1951), 94.

98. Ibid., 58.

99. Oeuvres complètes, I, 7.

100. See specifically, Ibid, VII, 17.

101. Ibid., IX, 337.

102. Janet, 47.

103. Oeuvres complètes, I, 35.

104. Ibid., IX, vi-vii, my emphasis.

105. Vitrolles, letter of 15 Oct. 1828, and Vitrolles' answer of 15 Nov. 1828; 175-182.

106. Benoît D'Azy, letter of 8 Jan. 1829, 228-229.

107. Oeuvres complètes, IX, xiv.

108. Ibid., 63-64.

109. Benoît D'Azy, letter of 9 August, 1829, 238.

110. Ibid.

111. De la société, 206.

112. Ibid., 201.

113. Ibid.

114. Ibid., 203.

115. Ibid., 6-8.

FOOTNOTES
CHAPTER IV (continued)

116. Oeuvres complètes, I, iii-xxi.

117. Ibid., xxi.

118. Cf. Summa Theologica, 1 a, 2 ae, 91, art. 2.

119. Oeuvres complètes, IX, 331-371.

120. De la famille, 30.

121. Jean-René Dérré, Metternich et Lamennais, d'après les documents conservés aux archives de Vienne (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1963).

122. Cardinal Paul-Thérèse D'Astros, Censure de cinquante-six propositions extraites de divers écrits de M. de la Mennais et de ses disciples, par plusieurs évêques de France, et lettre des mêmes évêques au Souverain Pontife Grégoire XVI, avec notice historique de cette censure et des pièces justificatives (Toulouse, J.M. Douladoure, 1835).

123. Discussions critiques, 183; the context makes it clear that for Lamennais "humanity" means "the people" or the lower classes.

124. Ibid., 13-14.

125. "Sommaire d'un système des connaissances humaines," published with Des progrès de la révolution et de la guerre contre l'église (Paris, Belin-Mandar et Devaux, 1829), 359-386; reproduced in Oeuvres complètes, IX, 301-326; references below are taken from the latter reproduction.

126. In his Preface to volume X of his Oeuvres complètes, published in 1835-1837; i-cxxii.

127. In volume III (1840) and volume IV (1846) of his Esquisse.

128. See his introduction to volume I of the Esquisse.

129. V. P. Varma, Political Philosophy (Agra, Lakshmi Narain Agarwal, 1970), 531.

FOOTNOTES
CHAPTER IV (continued)

130. Esquisse, I, xii; De la société, 7-8.

131. F. Lamennais, "Un fragment inédit de l'Esquisse d'une philosophie," Revue de métaphysique et de morale (Paris, No. 6, Nov. 1898, 704-725, and No. 1, Jan. 1899, 39-67); De la famille et de la propriété was supposed to be one chapter of Part III which Lamennais published separately in 1848.

Chapter V: LAMENNAIS, LAW AND MORALITY

Is Law to be Equated with Morals?

In spite of a modest revival in the last thirty years, the doctrine of natural law has a subordinate role in contemporary jurisprudence.[1] In Professor John Rawls' view, although modern legal systems depend on a moral consensus, it is eventually the knowledge of the coercive powers of governments which allegedly maintains compliance with the rule of law and makes possible the existence of freedom.[2] Force therefore takes precedence over morality as the agency closest to law in providing and protecting freedom.

This is what Lamennais specifically rejected. His concept of freedom was intimately connected with a certain relation between law and morality, which is, according to A.P. D'Entrèves, "the crux of all natural law theory."[3] In fact, natural law's oldest maxim : to do good and avoid evil, was the basis upon which Lamennais tried to build his elaborate legal structure,[4] and as such, he was concerned exclusively with human behavior.

Since the connection between law and morals is the decisive point of natural law theory, Lamennais' explanation of this point, as well as the inferences he drew from it, must be analyzed. Here again we find Lamennais staying close to Aquinas' interpretation rather than to the modern secular interpretation. If there was any shift of position on his part, and this is far from clear, it would seem that he drew closer to the Stoic interpretation as he went along, without, however, breaking away entirely from Thomism.

The crux of the matter is the meaning given to the word reason. To the Romans, reason meant essentially experience, whereas in Aquinas, reason is a gift of God, and for the eighteenth century reason simply is something which stands on its own.[5] The difference between Aquinas and the eighteenth-century interpretations amounts to a secularization of the concept of natural law -- a step which, in spite of difficulties, Lamennais never took, as will be shown.

The content, as distinguished from the form of natural law, must be a moral one, if it is to serve as a standard for judging actions as well as institutions. For Aquinas "the first precept of law /is/ that <u>good is to be done and ensured, and evil is to be avoided</u>."[6] For Lamennais, "of the precept to love one's fellow-being as one's self because of God, derive all the laws of morals and of society."[7] To do good or to love was the application of the maxim: do as you would be done by, which summarized the two basic duties of natural law, duty to God and duty to others. The imposition of these duties had as its objective to bring about justice which was nothing but "the order willed by God. And the law ... /is/ the expression of this will."[8]

But in order to do anything, one must be free to do it. The morality of freedom had therefore to be established if justice was to ensue. Freedom for Lamennais was, and always remained, the ability to choose. No action can be considered moral if it was not freely performed. "Take away freedom, the power to choose or the power to break the law, and the society of intelligent beings would not differ from that of animals."[9] This statement was made in 1848;

but thirty years earlier he had said the same thing. "The mind is free when it obeys legitimate authority, or God, who alone has the right to prescribe beliefs. The heart is free when it obeys the laws of order, or obeys God, who alone has the right to prescribe duties. The mind and the heart are slaves when they obey man."[10] Or again a few years later, "Two things constitute freedom: the legitimacy of power, and the conformity of its action with immutable justice."[11]

As these three statements show, freedom of choice for Lamennais meant something quite different, for example, from the freedom of choice J. S. Mill propounded in On Liberty. For Lamennais the options were restricted to two: a good one which was God's law, and a bad one, that which was contrary, or which went against that law. This is what was meant by the following statement made after his break with the Church: "Christianity and freedom, inseparably united in their common root, are each other's necessary condition."[12] In other words, man's ability to choose was restricted by the choice that was presented. Unrestricted choice could not result in freedom because the notion of unlimited options to choose was illusory. This difference went to the root of his difference with Liberalism: "When Liberalism demands freedom, it demands order; it demands what no one has the right to refuse to men, what God himself commands them to want and to love. But this freedom that Liberalism prays for is rejected by its doctrine, and whatever it does, its doctrine leads the masses to an inevitable servitude."[13]

Both Lamennais and the Liberals believed that freedom resulted from the rule of law. But, as should be clear by now, what Lamennais meant by rule of law wasquite distinct from what Liberalism meant by it. Otherwise, how could the sharp attack Lamennais made against Louis-Philippe be justified when the King stated that "la liberté ne consiste que dans le règnedes lois."[14]

As stated above, the crux of the matter was the meaning given to the word reason. If the concept of reason was allowed to stand on its own, the options perceived were unlimited and the choice made uninhibited. But if reason were seen as God's gift to man, the options had to be limited between what God wanted and what he did not want, between what was good and what was evil. In the former case, as could be seen in Hobbes, positive law determined what freedom was. In the latter case, since freedom preceded all political association, positive law could not have this power. The various claims to freedom Lamennais made in L'Avenir were perfectly consistent with the latter position, as well as his arguments on the nature of sovereignty.

The juncture between morality and freedom therefore resided in man's nature. Since reason was a gift of God, to be free man had to know what freedom was and he had to will this freedom. "Now will implies two conditions, the knowledge of its object and the love of this object, o. a motive and an attraction."[15] Lamennais was here speaking of the will of a free individual. "In regard to man's superior laws, [first] there is knowledge, from

which motive is born ... [and] there is love, ... and [second] there is the act, or the term of the will, which properly is called worship. Worship has two relations, one to the infinite being, the other to all finite beings; it is also called morality."[16] Free will thus denoted knowledge, love, and action consistent with both. Actions which resulted from will without knowledge and love marked an individual as unfree.

Freedom, for Lamennais, was thus wholly dependent on knowledge. Whoever did not possess knowledge could not be free, and, as unfree men could not be left to determine what free men would do, those without this knowledge were to be deprived of civil and political rights.[17] Who or what determined what knowledge consists of is in his writings unclear,[18] but there were some "natural elements" which, for him, were self-evident. Taking a page out of Plato, he argued that the individual was not a complete unit. "The natural element of society ... is the family, because this element must perpetuate itself as does society: the individual dies, the family is immortal ... . It follows that marriage, without which the family is not possible, is the basis of society."[19] Although never specifically mentioned, no doubt is left of Lamennais' belief that positive law had to have an entirely free hand in regard to morals, especially in the case of sexual morality. There is not one trace of evidence that he was aware that by granting complete power of legislation over all moral issues he was undermining his own case in favor of individual freedom. He violently attacked the Crémieux law making

divorce possible in certain cases,[20] and snide remarks about vices and perversions are scattered throughout his works. This attests to a morally conservative disposition, and raises doubts of Lamennais' understanding of the problems he had undertaken to solve.

There is, however, nothing inconsistent about such a view of the relationship between law, freedom, and morality, when the purpose of freedom is to serve a higher goal. Freedom, after all, is nothing but the means to make man morally responsible; and few, if any, in Lamennais' time would have argued that law had nothing to do with morality. But then, his constant clamoring about freedom was bound to lead to misunderstandings, as it eventually did. For if freedom is "a necessity," indeed a "dogmatic law," without which no man can be held responsible for his actions,[21] one may legitimately ask who or what will have the power to decide how this law is to be defined and enforced? But on this point the political reformer withdrew behind the theologian who, by definition, was concerned with the ends and not with the means, and declared that faith was the answer. Yet the end, the rule of justice, would never come to pass until man was morally responsible, or free.

Since justice was the end to be achieved, its morality was easily established by identifying it with "the moral law" or "religion." But theology had its limits, particularly when misguided academicians continued to argue that Rousseau made a lot of sense when he equated justice with the general will. One of these men, François de Corcelles, wrote a book in 1831 whose purpose was to

reproach Lamennais for having misunderstood the Social Contract on this very point. Corcelles' argument was that the doctrine contained in the Social Contract was not really complete; that Rousseau had nowhere said that the general will created justice; but that the general will was simply the manifestation of justice as perceived collectively by the people. What was there in this faithful account, he asked, that was "in contradiction with the divine law of justice promulgated by the conscience of mankind?"[22] Indeed, if each man's conscience had been made subject to natural laws "the same for all, without exceptions as to time, place or race," these laws were not to be looked for outside of ourselves, and the free expression of all was bound to be a true reflection of these laws. Men had thus neither to look for them nor to learn them from someone else. The only thing required for their true expression was that men be free, i.e., that no arbitrary or tyrannical will be imposed on them.

Lamennais, obviously confronted with an argument which, using his own terms, was similar to the one he put forward in his theory of Sens Commun beginning in 1820, again appealed to morality to save himself from this embarrassing attack. First, he said, Rousseau nowhere in the Social Contract spoke of a law binding all people together. In Rousseau's other writings, he mentioned that reason, then conscience, were subject to a law, but this law was always independent of any external authority. Did this mean that, for Rousseau, justice had its foundations in either thought or feeling? "Now, I am asking you, is not this doctrine in direct

contradiction with the notion of a perpetual and common justice?"[23] Then, coming back to a point he had repeatedly stressed, Lamennais insisted that justice -- a divine, immutable, universal law -- was a moral bond existing regardless of the fact that it was or was not perceived or felt.

But then, Lamennais said, there is an even better proof that Rousseau's doctrine is erroneous. Did he not state that if the people want to harm themselves, no one can prevent them from doing so? Is this not similar to Jurieu's claim that the people need no reason to validate their acts? This clearly proves, for Lamennais, that justice cannot be equated with will; for right reason cannot countenance the notion that someone might want deliberately to harm himself: such a notion makes nonsense of reason itself. Since this is untenable, the general will cannot morally be binding and thus cannot either create, or be the true expression of, justice.

Having triumphed through his use of logic, Lamennais magnanimously asked Corcelles to recognize his error in thinking that Rousseau's doctrine was similar to his and to recognize the superiority of equating justice with right, as embodied in "a revelation traditionally handed down."[24]

Although this battle of wits took place in the middle of 1831, Lamennais dogmatically refused to reconsider his position once he had himself shown that revelation was less than the sacred text the Church claimed it to be. In 1848 he was still blind to his own contradiction of placing absolute sovereignty in the hands of the

French people in Article III of his constitution, while limiting it in the preamble to this constitution by "rights and duties anterior and superior to all positive laws."

Morality and the State

We have seen that Lamennais considered man a social being by nature. But man, by nature also, had the freedom to violate God's laws. If society was to survive, there had to be a mechanism, devised by society itself, to enforce these laws. The State was such a mechanism; it was "the general means to order in society," and as such "it [was] living justice."[25] The connection between morality and the State could not have been more clearly established: the State's only function was to enforce the moral law.

Lamennais, on this point, relied on the authority of both Aquinas[26] and Montesquieu.[27] Admittedly, if the State arrogated to itself powers beyond those which properly belonged to it, resistance to its command was legitimate.[28] The claim Lamennais repeatedly made was that legitimate power -- that which enforced duty and protected right, as he defined these -- could not be considered coercive. The belief that without laws anarchy would prevail underlay this claim and legitimatized power.

This was another way of saying, as he repeatedly did after 1828, that coercion was opposed to morality. His famous apostrophe to the clergy in 1828 to the effect that coercion was mad and useless and should be replaced by persuasion played a large part in divesting him of his reputation as a harsh theocrat.[29] Yet what he had advocated before was merely obedience to laws. To be sure, what he meant by laws then were decrees protecting, and even helping, the Catholic Church at a time when this idea was none too popular.[30]

But there is not the shift in attitude that many have seen in it. What he wanted then were laws, decreed by the king under the guidance of Rome, designed to enforce the necessary religious principles. What he called for afterwards were laws issued from a democratic government to enforce the moral law. All the arguments over what constituted a "legitimate" government confused the issues. Who would not have agreed with the following declaration: "The government, simple executor of the law made by all, or by the delegates of all, only watches that no one goes beyond his prescribed right, and injures the right or freedom of anyone else."[31] As a rhetorical device, such a statement marked Lamennais as a moderate, rational man. But it was unfortunately meaningless until the word right was defined. In 1834, he defined what were the rights guaranteed by the political association. The basic principle of the political and civil association was the same as that of the religious association: the absolute equality of all men before the law. This original equality excluded all power of man over man and was the justification for the innate freedom each man possessed. The first right that had to be guaranteed by law, therefore, was this very freedom.[32]

In concrete terms, this freedom consisted first of spiritual rights, and second of material rights. The spiritual rights were freedoms of thought and of conscience, but as they were in the province of God only, these rights could not be the subject of legislation by men. The political association's only duty towards them was to prevent any attack, or other acts, which would alter them. The

State had the specific duty to punish these acts.[33] However, "all men are under the obligation to obey them freely."[34] What appeared to be a contradiction in terms was not so for Lamennais: his belief in the reasonableness of man had an early eighteenth-century flavor which was at variance with his unwillingness to trust in human reason in other areas.

The material rights were those related to the conservation of human life. They were freedom of persons and property. Freedom of persons did not mean individual freedom which was clearly illusory in the material world.[35] What Lamennais meant by freedom of persons was freedom of the family, the natural unit of society. No law could be enacted which interfered with this unit -- it was a sacred institution by its nature -- , and therefore, the right to divorce or the exclusive right of the State to educate children were clearly excluded.[36] Freedom of property was just as essential for property made for material independence from man to man. Property, linked as it was as a right with the family, was hereditary. No law could be enacted which touched in any way this right, except for taxation purposes and in this case, only if the owner expressly consented to it.[37] It was only several years later that Lamennais made the suggestion that, for the sake of equality and freedom, some limit ought to be placed over the amount of property one was allowed to own.[38]

These were the rights that man possessed and that had to be unconditionally guaranteed by the State. So long as the State protected these, the State was moral.

From this brief description, it can be seen that, for Lamennais, the word coercion did not have a meaning that would make for universal assent. To take advantage of one's position to further one's interest was coercive. To arrogate to one's self powers beyond those prescribed by the moral law was coercive. To pass and enforce laws regulating education was coercive. But to pass laws regulating morals was not.[39]

Now, if the main thrust of Lamennais' argument was in the direction of "the morality of power," then the necessity of a moral law which would serve as a standard against which the legitimacy of the State could be judged was clearly important. So long as Lamennais remained within the fold of the Church, this did not present a problem. The moral law was simply his interpretation of what the Roman Catholic religion ought to be. After 1834, however, he clearly faced a problem for whose solution his unorthodox ideas offered him a way out.

To say, as he did in 1834, that "la justice triomphera, parce que la justice c'est Dieu,"[40] was obviously not to say very much. Such a statement may have had an appeal for those who either uncritically accepted whatever Lamennais said, or were so desperately anxious to believe as to grab at anything that gave them hope. But the flood of attacks Lamennais was subjected to after his break with the Church, probably reduced his appeal in this public.[41] He, therefore, had to work out a solution, the first step of which was his linking religion, justice, and the moral law, as one and the

same concept. This was all the more simple in that he had never linked religion with the values of the ideal life. If "the works of God" were something very concrete for him, it was never meant as a goal for which souls had to be prepared. Religion meant the laws of God that man had to obey in order to achieve a certain state in this life, not in the next. To be just, or to be moral, therefore, was quite similar, in this context, to being religious, so long as God, or the idea of a prime cause, was believed to be the fountainhead of certain rules of conduct.[42]

He then followed up with a type of philosophy of history consonant with the ideas he had expressed in his Sommaire d'un système des connaissances humaines in 1829, and which is reminiscent of that of Hegel. He began by distinguishing between duty and right. Duty was "a religion," it was something which dictated to human will what it had to want. It imposed itself with the power "of God's commandment." It was "the law of life, the law according to which the intelligent being conserve/d/ itself, develop/ed/ itself, and reach/ed/ its goal."[43] This duty, however, was constantly violated by those who believed that brute force determined what constituted duty. Certain periods in history saw a deepening of the rule of force -- slavery extended itself more widely and more relentlessly. It was during these periods that, arising from the very excesses of arbitrary rule, came a new awareness of the chasm between what was and what ought to have been. At that point, a new right was born in the collective reason of men. From then on, a new phase in the perpetual struggle

between the rulers and the ruled opened. "This contradiction between fact and right, which tends to transform the former to bring it into harmony with the latter, and the fact which resists this transformation, is the real cause of the malaise, of the trouble, of the anxiety, of the intestine war, which agitates the world today."[44] Right, thus, was the awareness among the ruled of something new that they had grown to be responsible for. The amount of rights increased as man developed through time, and was the counterpart, or the payment for, the duty assumed. Everyone, regardless of behavior, always knew what duty was. The same was not true for right, which was "revealed" in proportion to the conformity of duty to fact.

This was why political reform was always necessary to adjust existing conditions both to greater conformity with duty on the part of the ruler(s) and to greater conformity with right on the part of the ruled. There did not seem to be any doubt that if the ruler(s) conformed to duty, and made the necessary adjustments as men developed, that the issue of right would not be a political problem. What made it a political problem, and when warranted "legitimatized" a revolution, was the fact that political power did not conform to duty.[45]

Besides repeating that, in an absolute sense power, to be legitimate, must conform to duty, or justice, Lamennais did not give any universal prescription. He suggested, however, two reforms that France in the 1830's had to accommodate herself to, for these were dictated by the stage reached by reason. The first was that all

workingmen had to have "a just part of the [economic] advantages of the common association ... . The poor must cease ... to simply be an exploitable matter."[46] Reforms which would not result in this fundamental change "would be vain and absurd."[47]

The second reform, upon which the actualization of the first depended, was the extension to all of the power "to modify the law." By this, Lamennais did not simply call for universal suffrage, for he suggested that everyone had to have the right, as he already had theoretically the duty, to modify the law, "direct its exercises, stop its abuses, ... and take part in its making."[48] This last point recalled his advocacy in 1830-1831 of the decentralization of government, whereby the political entity ought to have been divided in units small enough to be largely self-governing.

This scheme, as well as the indispensable freedoms enunciated in L'Avenir, he embodied in his draft constitution of 1848. Such as it was, Lamennais thought that it would, in time, make of the State the instrument evolved by society to maintain order, a moral state.

The Need for Two Separate Laws

Morality has often been viewed as a subjective category. The moral criterion enters into consideration in case of conflicts between two or more possible courses of action an individual has to choose from. It helps in determining the choice that will leave the individual's conscience at peace with itself. Law has a similar function, but instead of applying to conflicts within the individual, it applies to conflicts between individuals. It helps in determining choices that will promote coordination, and supposedly harmony, between men. As such it is essentially objective.

The difference between morals and law is further evidenced by the character of each: morals is "individual" and "internal," whereas law is "social" and "external." How then, and why, did Lamennais equate law with morals? In doing so, he followed the line established by medieval thinkers centuries before. Morals is robbed of its individual character by being exposed as an ability -- a God-given ability possessed by all men equally -- to distinguish between right and wrong. It is further stripped of its internal character by having its original source placed outside of man. The moral experience is no longer a matter for the individual; it is given the character of law, social and external, by being set up as the imprint in men of the eternal law.

Law, whose function is to make life in society possible, presupposes society. Morals, logically, do not. Not so according to Lamennais, however. "Society has been established, and has been

able to preserve itself, only with the help of religious beliefs."[49] And, giving of course no explanation or proofs for such an assertion, he continued:

> Society is the natural state, the necessary state of man: outside of society, he can neither reproduce nor preserve himself. Therefore religion, without which society could not possibly exist, is as necessary as society itself: it cannot be a human invention.[50]

But it is two pages later that the consequence of this position emerges. Compared to the surprising and admirable uniformity of religious beliefs, human laws "vary almost to infinity," and cannot but be a human invention.[51] The obvious conclusion to be drawn is that law is subordinated to morals.

This subordination of law to morals is one of the chief reasons for the rejection of the natural law theory in modern times. Although it has been suggested that this rejection was the result of a misunderstanding, there is no denying "the close association of morals and law" as "the distinguishing mark of natural law theory throughout its long history."[52]

It might be objected that the point here being made -- namely, that Lamennais was advocating a return to a legal position that was being rejected by legal experts in his time -- is based on words taken from his early works. Yet the quotations to the same effect abound in all his writings and, if anything, they become more precise and better defined in the 1840's. One such quotation taken from his last work in 1848 will suffice to establish this.

> If the religious legislation determines the spiritual character of society, from which all the rest flows, the organic [i.e., read "human"] legislation presides over the formation of the social body, sees to its conservation and evolution, and refers to two orders: the political order and the economic order. The former order comprises the ensemble of the coordinated means to guarantee right by the accomplishment of duty, and direct the common action for the greatest good for all. The latter is this same common action organized in view of utility.[53]

There is no doubt that the context in which these sentences appear dictates that "religious legislation" provides the framework within which "organic legislation" must be enacted.

Law, however, has a coercive character: its very existence is predicated on the observation that men do not at all times know what to do and do not at all times behave the way they ought to for society to be stable and orderly. As such, law is opposed to morals whose character is opposed to coercion. By linking law and morals as closely as he did, Lamennais therefore faced a dilemma: either morals is coercive or the law is not. He tried to solve this problem by reviving the theory of the two laws.

He tried to draw as sharp a distinction as he could make between human law, which aims at securing a peaceful living together of men, and natural law, as a moral precept which aims at promoting virtue. Essentially, this was what the medieval schoolmen, including St. Thomas, had done.[54] But Lamennais faced a problem that the schoolmen had not had to face, and that was the enormous growth of the State and of its power over society. So long as one man was the State, it could be hoped that his rule could be made subservient to the spiritual power with the result that virtue would imbue all

his decrees. This is one of the advantages of monarchy which had not been lost on the ancients: natural law and positive law could be reconciled in the person of the monarch.

Even after Lamennais' faith in monarchy had disappeared, there remained the spiritual power of Rome which could be enforceable. The psychological blow must have been all the greater for him when he realized in early 1832 that Rome was not about to play her assigned role. The entire structure on which he depended had collapsed. There remained two alternatives opened to him: either give up the struggle, submit and give in to despair, or try to devise a new solution to fit the conditions that confronted him. He chose the latter course.[55]

The theory of the two laws necessitates the existence of two powers. Human power properly embodies the human law with all the coercive character that it has. This coercion, however, is justified, for the human law is the handmaiden of the spiritual power which embodies the moral law. The revival of this theory was not the work of Lamennais alone. Although not explicitly stated, it suffuses of works of Saint-Simon and Fourier and underlies their calls for a moral transformation of mankind as the only solution to the crisis of the times. It is also present in Alexander's scheme of the Holy Alliance. The revolution of 1830 on the one hand, and Lamennais' break with the Monarchy on the other, mark the end of the reactionary period during which such theories supposedly could arise. The following period witnessed the triumph of historical jurisprudence and utilitarian legal theory and was more open. Yet the very

same theory was still being advocated and undoubtedly accounted for Lamennais' growing popularity in secular circles.[56] It underlaid the criticisms in Paroles d'un croyant, Le livre du peuple, and Procès d'avril et de la République, a work seemingly ignored by everyone in spite of the fact that it showed Lamennais at his best as a radical propagandist.

It is, however, in the hundred and twenty-page introduction to volume X of his collected works, published in 1836, which Spuller considered one of Lamennais' most valuable works,[57] that he stated the basis of his system. The value of this work resides more in the systematic nature of the presentation than in the novelty of the ideas. Every one of these had been enunciated somewhere in his earlier works.

Human society was an organic unity which required organization in two distinct orders for its preservation. Each of these two orders proceeded from a law which was enforced by an authority. Revelation and deduction from the historical record of mankind was the basis of the first order. Obedience by all was the character of this order which was embodied in a spiritual authority. This order was designed to preserve the unity of mankind and comprised duty, the category which included all of the specific duties men had to submit to.[58] Reason was the basis of the second order. Equal freedom for all was the character of this order which had to be maintained by the civil power -- jurisdiction from which the spiritual authority was excluded. This order was designed to

preserve both the individual and the general development of men, and comprised right, the category which included all of the specific rights men were entitled to.[59]

These two orders were distinct and independent: their interdependence would destory them both because "in whatever degree, to make obedience depend on freedom and freedom depend on obedience would destroy both of them. For whatever the act, one does not obey when one has the freedom not to obey, and one is not free when one is under the obligation to obey."[60] Because, however, the nature of the spiritual power was to be devoid of coercion, its jurisdiction was limited to spreading the knowledge of what duties and rights were. It was the function of the temporal power to enforce duties and protect rights.[61] But each power constantly infringed upon the jurisdiction of the other. There had, therefore, to exist an impartial judge to adjudicate their respective claims so as to preserve the order and independence of both powers. Neither power could be judge to the conflict for it would automatically subordinate one to the other and destroy them both eventually.[62]

After this exposition, which, superficially at least made a lot of sense,Lamennais stopped. He neither took up the question of the relationship between the two powers, nor did he elaborate on the nature of the "impartial judge." A few months later, in 1837, he became the director of the newspaper Le Monde. His articles, most of which he published later in two volumes as Politique a l'usage du peuple, fall into two categories. The more numerous

are devoted to systematic attacks against the July Monarchy and the politics of the day. All the others repeat with minor variations the scheme that has been sketched above. There was no further elaboration except for the idea which was to be fully outlined in his Projet de constitution in 1848 about the role of the judiciary. It is never clear if le corps judiciaire is to be the spiritual power or the impartial judge or both.[63] It is to be a body of men specially trained in the knowledge of an "antecedent justice," chosen by "popular election,"[64] who will assure the distribution, for the benefit of all, of justice, "the reason and will" of God.[65]

Nowhere in his later works are we told who will train the judiciary and what kind of training it will receive. There are vague indications in the preface to L'Esquisse that this work was designed for this purpose, and his further sketch of a theory of knowledge seems to be designed to articulate the method to be followed. But he never actually said so.

The bitter criticisms, not always unjustified, of the July Monarchy in his articles of Le Monde emphasized his concerns about the threats posed by the growing power of the State. But this vision seems to have been blocked by his earlier training. Only another power, equal or superior to it, could check the threats posed by the modern State. A slight evolution towards a system of checks and balances is suggested, but the secularity of such a system prevented him from adopting it. It is all the more regrettable that

it was his reputation as a political thinker that won him his election on the Committee to draw up the constitution of the Second Republic. Had he evolved farther than he did, and had he been willing to cooperate in its drafting, he and de Tocqueville might have drawn a document which might have changed the history of the Second Republic.

As it was, the scheme that he proposed was better suited as a covenant for a Puritan town in the New England of the seventeenth century than for the French Republic of 1848.

The Need for Religion

Although a solution is not provided, the problem raised by Lamennais is not one to be summarily dismissed. In an article he published in Le Monde in early 1837 he questioned the validity of the theory of majority rule on certain specific issues.[66] He readily conceded that this form of decision-making was the best possible for all material questions not involving ethical judgments.[67] He was trying to differentiate between purely legal and purely moral questions without, however, being able to deal with it in detail. It can almost be felt that his adoption of majority rule as a political device was being forced upon him as a consequence of his democratic faith.

The idea of a purely individual morality was repugnant to him and in this he was quite consistent with the theory of natural law. In addition, since men's needs are, for Lamennais, fundamentally the same everywhere, it is evident that there are laws outside the State. Years earlier he had stressed the necessity of obeying the laws of one's country, whether the country be France, Turkey or Rome. But quoting from the Scriptures he had warned of the limits of this obedience; "I recognize the head of the empire as my sovereign, so long as he does not pretend that I shall recognize him as my God; for in this case, I am free."[68]

These two points, that morality is not individual and that there are laws above and outside the State show the weakness of

trying to make a distinction between human law and morals. And the point of the article under review was just this: a decision of the majority on any subject involving the moral law could not be but invalid and was also necessarily dangerous. Questions of right and wrong were not to be decided by public opinion however organized.[69] Specifically, he named freedom of conscience and of thought, freedom of the press, freedom of education, and freedom of association as rights which had to be raised above positive law and placed totally out of reach of men in general and legislators in particular.[70]

To be sure, freedoms of press, education, and association were integral parts of the moral law simply because Lamennais believed that they were extensions of freedom of conscience and freedom of thought. It could be argued that freedoms of press, education, and association have nothing to do with the moral law and therefore are legitimate subjects of human law. In other words, including them under moral law is simply a matter of opinion. But when it comes to freedom of conscience and freedom of thought the case is much clearer. If law is subordinated to morals, freedom of conscience and freedom of thought are clearly supposed to be outside the realm of politics. But if morals is subordinated to law, both can readily be transformed into a political program and justify the most restrictive legislation.

This is what Lamennais recognized and, in his repetitious, dogmatic, and confused way, tried to prevent. When he described the slow unfolding of religion (no longer at this point speaking

of the Roman Catholic religion but speaking of the general movement of the human spirit), he was speaking of the growing awareness of the dignity of man, of the conditions of his intellectual and moral life.[71] And he warned against dismissing Catholicism lock, stock, and barrel. Catholicism "contains under profound symbolisms some truths which, better developed and conceived more clearly, still are and always will be, the object of an imperishable faith."[72]

He argued against, however, the authority the Roman Catholic Church had arrogated to herself to interpret dogmatically the words of Christ and of the Apostles. And his argument shows the corrosive effect of his readings in textual analysis. Neither the early Fathers of the Church, nor Christ, nor Moses, ever pretended to reveal any dogmas, did he assert. All of them spoke within a definite historical tradition, stating clearly only a limited number of points. They believed in God, in the distinction between good and evil, and a future state of being. In other words, they simply argued for "the indispensable conditions of social and intellectual life, the natural conditions of the existence of mankind."[73] Nowhere, did he state, are they found to assert that their teachings must be the content of a faith rigorously defined and applied. Each tried to express his particular philosophy, which often was difficult to reconcile with one another.[74]

The underlying thought of this argument was less to show that the authority claimed by Rome was invalid than to show the eternal validity of certain simple precepts which had to be constantly

reinterpreted in the light of the existing conditions. Primitive societies were unable to discover the causes of many things and assigned them a supernatural origin. But "the progress of the human spirit" was traceable through the series of explanations which had shed light on the causes of these heretofore supernatural happenings. "The immense circle of revelations has shrunk ... . Soon it will be closed," and what would remain would be those few laws, eternal and immutable, that form what properly was religion.[75]

By 1840 Lamennais' thought had become completely secular. He remained with a few essentials totally stripped of theological content. The belief he said he shared with the ancients about a "future state of being"[76] was not a belief in an after-life but a belief in the continued development and improvement of life on earth. He further believed in the essential distinction between right and wrong, good and evil, undoubtedly because of his observations, which made up the bulk of his criticisms in the 1830's and 1840's, that there were beneficial acts which improve both one's life and society's, while there were evil acts which had a destructive impact. There is no doubt that Lamennais was and remained convinced of his ability to make the distinction no matter what the case. And then, there was his belief in God.

For those who, like Daniel W. Rossides, think that "the political thought of Lamennais is understandable only in the context of his concern with theological and religious questions,"[77] this simple belief in God appears meager and justifies all of their scorn.

Indeed, unless Lamennais' purpose -- endlessly stated and repeated for thirty years -- is not kept in mind, the conclusion that his evolution ended in a vague deism reminiscent of Rousseau's is inescapable. The growth of the modern State had transformed the existing relations between morality and law. The impact of the developments that had occurred since the sixteenth century had been to undermine the foundations of traditional morality. Unless something was done to stop this process and to secure new foundations, morality would fall under the total sway of law. This, as exemplified in the rules of Napoleon, Charles X, and Louis-Philippe, had in fact already occurred, and was resulting in a debasement of human nature. His depiction of the animal-like quality of life of the working-class, his attacks on the heartlessness of the ruling classes at the sight of such miseries, and his fears of the growing nationalism which was fostering hatred among groups of people[79] -- all testified, in his opinion, to the need for a moral regeneration which would obviate reliance on greater and greater force to keep the order society needed to survive.

He failed to appreciate many things: the developments of industrialism, the importance of the new science of economics, and the unending capacity of men to muddle through. But his conviction that justice, in order to be more than a word, needed universally acknowledged and respected principles cannot easily be dismissed.[80] His claim that men need to believe in something good so that their actions be not destructive of themselves, would be

hard to disprove.[81] And his condemnation of politics devoid of moral content would be as valid today as it was one hundred and fifty years ago.[82]

His fear of the abyss, ever present at his side, recalls Pascal, but the feeling would be foreign to neither Sartre nor Camus. And if his solution for salvation -- to believe in God and in an inherent distinction between right and wrong -- appears superficial and naive, it is because he failed to give these beliefs any firm and significant content.

Lamennais' failure to solve the problem that he set out to solve may be less important than the fact that he recognized that there was a problem in the first place. The first part of his career exhibits an authoritarian cast which reflects the dominant historical pattern of the period. The second part exhibits a democratic cast which also reflects a pattern which evolved in opposition to the first. His growing secularism after 1830 seems to accord with the secularism which marked French romanticism as a whole.[83] But the more important aspect of Lamennais' work may very well be that he gave expression to the "need for and fear of authority," the antinomy which is, according to Stanley Hoffmann, such a prominent feature of the French political experience.[84]

His stand on issues during the early part of his career was not as monolithic as it has often been portrayed. It was, in fact, shot through with ambiguities, and its complexity may be a reflection of the divergent influences to which he was subjected. He was

a product of the eighteenth century who, like so many, rebelled against it. In the confusion that ensued he received, rather late in life, a religious training which went directly against the training he had received at the hands of his very rationalist uncle fifteen years earlier.[85]

In spite of his change of name in 1837, from the aristocratic de La Mennais to the more common Lamennais, he never lost an aristocratic cast of mind. The inner conflicts that this change produced when he became a loud proponent of the democratic faith can be glimpsed from his reluctance ever to trust entirely an authority issued from the democratic process. In fact, his constant appeals to a higher authority to adjudicate, his refusal to trust in reason, are symptoms of a mind more concerned to impose its views than to try to understand what conflicts with them. The constant search for the reason behind everything blocks out any willingness to observe what is and learn from it. But in spite of this, he perceived earlier than most the role that "the people" rightly ought to play in shaping their own destiny.

Lamennais' entire work appears then as a reflection of deep conflicting trends within French society, and his failure to offer a viable alternative to the two extremes of authoritarianism and radical democracy lies in his inability to transcend the influences he so powerfully felt. But in this also, his work reflects the inability of a society to achieve a community of values and objectives.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER V

1. Mark H. Waddicor, Montesquieu and the Philosophy of Natural Law (International Archives of the History of Ideas, No. 37; The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), ix.
2. John Rawls, A Theory of Justice (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1972), 235ff.
3. D'Entrèves, 80.
4. "Qui respecte le droit d'autrui, qui ne fait à personne ce qu'il ne voudrait pas qui lui fut fait, celui-là est juste." De la société, 197.
5. D'Entrèves, 18-52.
6. Summa Theologica, 1 a, 2 ae, 94, art. 2, his emphasis.
7. Oeuvres complètes, I, 443, "Du précepte d'aimer le prochain comme soi-même à cause de Dieu, découlent toutes les lois de la morale et de la société."
8. Ibid., 365.
9. De la société, 58.
10. Oeuvres complètes, VI, 376.
11. Ibid., IX, 25.
12. Ibid., X, lxiii.
13. Ibid., IX, 25.
14. L'Avenir, 23 May 1831.
15. De la société, 94.
16. Ibid.
17. Article 11 of his Projet de constitution.
18. Above, chapter III.
19. Oeuvres complètes, XI, 169-170.

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20. De la famille, 12-19.

21. De la société, 150-153.

22. Oeuvres complètes, X, 361-362.

23. Ibid., 363-364.

24. Ibid., 364-365.

25. Ibid., VI, 380.

26. Summa Theologica, 1 a, 2 ae, 95, art. 1.

27. De l'esprit des lois, Part I, book I, ch. I.

28. Oeuvres complètes, X, 303-305; XI, 165 ff; Cf. Summa Theologica, 1 a, 2 ae, 96, art. 4.

29. Ibid., IX, 68.

30. Ibid., I, 15.

31. Ibid., XI, 171.

32. Ibid., 168.

33. Ibid., 169.

34. Ibid., 168.

35. Misquoting Pindar, Lamennais says: "the individual ... is but a shadow's dream." De la famille, 5.

36. Oeuvres complètes, XI, 170; De la famille, 12-19.

37. Ibid., 170-171.

38. De la famille, 31.

39. See Le pays et le gouvernment, for which he spent a year in prison.

40. Oeuvres complètes, X, cxxii.

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41 L'Ami de la religion, a weekly review which addressed itself to the clergy and devout laymen, launched a barrage of attacks against Lamennais that lasted for several years without letup.

42. In propounding such an idea, Lamennais was not being very original. The Saint-Simonians, at the same period, were doing something quite similar for similar reasons. Cf. F. E. Manuel, The Prophets of Paris, 175 ff.

43. De l'esclave moderne, 114-117.

44. Ibid., 121.

45. Ibid., 53 ff.

46. Ibid., 90.

47. Ibid., 91.

48. Ibid., 95.

49. Oeuvres complètes, I, 44.

50. Ibid., 45.

51. Ibid., 47.

52. D'Entrèves, 80-85; the quoted sentence is on page 80.

53. De la société, 73-74.

54. D'Entrèves, 85-86.

55. There has been considerable speculation as to the reasons why Lamennais remained in Rome from March to July 1832. On March 15 Lacordaire left Rome, finally convinced that their common appeal had no chance to be accepted. Lamennais remained there until July 9, seemingly out of stubbornness. This is the most common explanation for an otherwise unexplainable stay of almost four months which could not but be quite humiliating. I submit that this explanation is both superficial and out of character for Lamennais. He realized the extent of the blow he had received and the dilemma it produced. He had spent fifteen

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years fighting for what he believed, sometimes taking considerable risks. The fact that he appeared stubborn, and that he was humiliating himself by staying, must have appeared much less important than the fact that his whole life was in ruins around him, and that he needed time, no matter what the place, in order to pick up the pieces.

56. With the exception of Duine, most writers portray Lamennais' life after his break with the Church as friendless and out of touch with reality. (See specifically the works of Villerabel, Mourre and Gurian). This is not supported by the numerous letters and documents found in unedited collections of papers such as Renduel (Ms. fr. N.A. 13229), Nadar (Ms. fr. N.A. 24275), Lamennais (Ms. fr. N.A. 15555), Ollivier (Ms. fr. N.A. 25180-7), Recamier (Ms. fr. N.A. 14092), all at B.N., and the papers of Eckstein at L'Arsenal, Ms. 6898-6933. Although few of these papers contain anything of interest on Lamennais' works, they would be indispensable for a biography.

57. S. E. Spuller, La Mennais, étude d'histoire politique et religieuse (Paris, 1892), 261.

58. Oeuvres complètes, X, xlii - xliii.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid., xliii.

61. Ibid., xlix.

62. Ibid., li.

63. Politique, II, 119-121.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid., 119.

66. Ibid., 110-118.

67. Ibid., 115-116.

68. Oeuvres complètes, vii, v-vi.

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69. Politique, II, 114-115.

70. Ibid., 117-118.

71. Discussions critiques, 14-17.

72. Ibid., 48.

73. Ibid., 49.

74. Ibid., 49-50.

75. Ibid., 51-52.

76. Ibid., 49.

77. Daniel W. Rossides, The Political Thought of Hugues - Félicité Lamennais: A Study in the Apologetics and Politics of Liberal Catholicism (New York, Columbia University, Ph.D. dissertation, unpublished, 1958). See also Roger Paul Quilty, The Influence of Hugues Félicité de Lamennais' Epistemology on his theory of Democracy (Washington, The Catholic University of America, Ph. D. dissertation, unpublished, 1954). This study, bitterly anti-Lamennais, divides Lamennais' works in two: pre- and post-condemnation, and suggests an ecstatic vision of the miracles that Christian Democracy could perform.

78. See his Amschaspands et Darvands, 28 ff.

79. Politique, I, 6 ff.

80. Oeuvres complètes, VIII, 319; specifically, but this conviction of his can be found enunciated under various forms in every one of his works.

81. Du passé, 8 ff; Discussions critiques, 262.

82. Politique, I, 61 ff.

83. Schenk, 202 ff.

84. Stanley Hoffmann, "Paradoxes of the French Political Community," in In Search of France (New York, Harper and Row, 1965), 9.

85. For the influence of Robert des Saudrais on the young Lamennais see Christian Maréchal's La Jeunesse de Lamennais.

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