

This church, we are told, is a reproach to Christendom. Perhaps it is. Every Christian must be shocked by the scars of scaffolding and decay which disfigure it. But it is dangerously easy to allow a sophisticated taste to be outraged by the decoration and elaboration of its chapels. It may be harder, but it is more proper, to remember the loyalty and devotion which inspired them. The criteria of good taste are not enough. And those who have attended Mass in the Aedicule, the shrine which covers the Sepulchre, will remember with gratitude and joy the picture of the priest and his server, kneeling in the candle-light, framed by the tiny arch which leads to the Tomb of our Lord. In spite of its scars and its blemishes, in spite of the dispute which makes it hard to heal them, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was for us the scene of the most touching, the deepest, the most cherished experiences of this journey.

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### ROSMINI AND PIUS IX, 1848-49<sup>1</sup>

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**A**NTONIO ROSMINI, who died a hundred years ago, has a distinguished but rather singular place in Catholic history. Revered by many as a saint in all but name, founder of the Institute of Charity, a priest *corde et animo*, he was also, in the judgment of the relatively few who have studied his writings, a very great Christian intellect; while for students of Italian history he has an honourable if somewhat isolated place in the complex national revival known as the Risorgimento. Evidently a many-sided person and yet, just because of this, not one to be easily identified with any particular group or trend in Church or State. And this isolation, so to call it, is reflected in the fortunes of those voluminous philosophical writings which Rosmini himself considered his main life-work, along with the

<sup>1</sup> My chief authorities are Vol. X of Rosmini's complete *Epistolario* (Monferrato, 1892) and Vol. II of the standard *Vita di Antonio Rosmini*, by 'un sacerdote dell'Istituto della Carità' (Turin, 1897). Of recent works D. Massé's able apologia for Pius IX has been useful: *Pio IX e il gran tradimento del '48* (Alba 1948). Mr E. E. Y. Hales's *Pio Nono* (1954) has too little, I think, about Rosmini. A new biography of Rosmini, to mark the centenary, is expected from the Rev. C. R. Leatham, Inst. Ch.

founding of the Institute. Among Catholics they are still shadowed, though less than formerly, by a suspicion of unorthodoxy; while anti-clericalism has hindered, until recently, their influence with lay academic circles especially in Italy. Moreover Rosmini's literary style, though clear and dignified, entirely lacks the ease and grace and sting which so helped Croce, for example, to win the attention of his countrymen and hold it for nearly half a century. However there are now signs of a change; and in post-war Italy Rosmini's influence is probably stronger, if still less widely diffused, than Croce's.

But I am not here concerned with the speculative philosophy of Rosmini, still less with its compatibility, at all points, with the Catholic faith: I am concerned with his thought only as it touches on the political issue in which Rosmini found himself involved, in the mid-nineteenth century, by his double devotion to Italy and to the Holy See, by his patriotism and his Catholicism.

He is one of the great Italian patriots of the last century, though this fact has been a little obscured by the anti-clerical, indeed anti-Christian, turn which the Risorgimento took after 1849, and which Rosmini himself foresaw perhaps more clearly than any other actor in that drama, and strove to avert with perhaps a clearer understanding of the issues involved. For in no other Italian of that age, not even in Manzoni, did patriotism and political liberalism combine with so warm a devotion to the Church. In what sense Rosmini was a liberal will be suggested later, but it is worth remarking at once that up to the mid-century the Risorgimento was not what it was to become later, an anti-Catholic movement; it was a largely Catholic movement, in the sense that its light and leading came largely from Catholics. And in Rosmini, a better Catholic than Gioberti, a more active patriot than Manzoni, and a far deeper intellect than Balbo or Tommaseo, the spirit of that hopeful half-century is most fully represented; and this despite his sacerdotal shrinking from the limelight and the brevity of his actual intervention in politics—beginning in August 1848 and virtually over early in '49. But this intervention came at the critical moment and brought Rosmini face to face with the one man on whom, in this sphere, all his hopes depended, Pius IX. Indeed the encounter of these two men has a dramatic and symbolic quality which makes it one of the great moments in the public history of the Church.

In 1815, with the close of the Napoleonic interlude, the Italian people—apart from the Lombards and Venetians, now subjected to Austria—found themselves divided into a number of small states, all in effect absolute monarchies and all, except Piedmont, more or less overshadowed politically by Austria. Consequently what is called the Risorgimento was a national effort to achieve three ends: political unity, independence of the foreigner, and a measure of constitutional self-government. And these three ends were approved and pursued, with varying emphasis, by an energetic minority of educated Italian Catholics including, in the first two years of his pontificate (1846-48), Pius IX himself. Rosmini, a north-east Italian and so by birth a subject of Austria, could not avoid the issue—even had he wished to—and by 1846 his mind was made up on certain fundamental points touching the independence and unity of Italy and the political liberties of Italians. As to independence, he was prepared to support a war against Austria to liberate Lombardy and Venetia; as to unity, he desired a national federation under the presidency of the Pope, who would retain his temporal dominions in central Italy; and as to liberty, he hoped for the adoption of reasonably liberal constitutions by all the Italian States, including the States of the Church. Much of this programme was common to all the Catholic liberals: Rosmini's position had two features of special interest. First, Rosmini, though a political liberal was, like his friend Manzoni, extremely distrustful of democracy. A hundred years ago this word, as a recent writer has pointed out,<sup>2</sup> as often as not meant 'mob-rule'; and it certainly implied that to Rosmini. His constitutional theory, to which he had given much thought, admitted Bracton's principle, *quod omnes tangit ab omnibus adprobetur*, but rejected the democratic principle of one man one vote in favour of a representation in proportion to property.<sup>3</sup> He was distressed in 1848 by the hasty concession by the Italian rulers (including Pius IX) of excessively democratic constitutions (as Rosmini thought them) on the French model; and in the event his forebodings were justified, particularly in the Papal States where reform led swiftly to revolution, and this of course to reaction. Secondly, Rosmini—and here he differed from Manzoni—upheld the Temporal Power of the Pope, though he saw clearly that the only conceivable way to preserve

2 A. L. Kennedy, *Salisbury, 1830-1903. Portrait of a Statesman*, p. 35.

3 Cf. L. Bulferetti, *Antonio Rosmini nella Restaurazione* (Florence 1942), ch. 8.

this in a united Italy was by a national federation; the failure of which in 1848 led directly to the unification of Italy under the House of Savoy and the abolition of the Temporal Power by *force majeure*.<sup>4</sup>

When in March 1848 Milan and Venice rose against the Austrians and Piedmont declared war, Rosmini, though wholeheartedly in favour of the war, had no intention of leaving his solitude by Lake Maggiore to play a part on the political stage. He was compelled to do so by the ever-increasing tension between Rome and Turin. The great question was, what would the Pope do? Pius IX, though deeply sympathetic with the Italian cause, had naturally more reason than any other Italian ruler to hesitate before committing his little kingdom to war against a Catholic power. Since his accession in June 1846 the warm-hearted, unworldly, *simpaticissimo* pontiff had been the most popular man in Italy and the great hope of all patriots, apart from the extreme anti-clericals. And Pius had met these hopes more than half way, working in particular for a league of the Italian States as a basis for national unity. Austria watched him with growing suspicion. Unfortunately his efforts had not been welcomed where agreement was most necessary, at Turin, and by the spring of 1848 the matter was still undecided. Piedmont was unwilling to prejudice the dominant position she hoped to win in the peninsula by a successful war against Austria; and in the meantime demanded military support, immediate and unconditional, from the rest of Italy; while experimenting with anti-clerical measures at home which were sure to offend the Pope. The latter's scruples—which Rosmini was later to explain very clearly to the Turin government—eventually got the better of his sentiments, and in the celebrated Allocation of April 29 Pius declared that he could not permit his subjects to fight against Austria, while at the same time admitting, with embarrassing ingenuousness, that he could not prevent them doing so. This situation Rosmini frankly called 'anarchia',<sup>5</sup> and it was not improved when the Pope said that his words had been misunderstood. At one blow he lost half his popularity. Meanwhile the war began to go badly for the Italians: Austria, now sure of victory, snubbed the Pope's efforts to mediate

4 See the two letters to Cardinal Castracane of May 17 and 25, *Epist.* X, 312 and 323; *ibid.*, 363-4; *Vita* II, 164.

5 *Epistolario* X, 313.

and drove the Piedmontese out of Lombardy. A new government at Turin, deciding at last that it had to do something to win the Pope's co-operation, invited Rosmini to go to Rome on its behalf, and there negotiate both an all-Italian confederation and a concordat with the Holy See. It is astonishing that within two weeks of giving Rosmini this commission, the same government at Turin should have expelled the Jesuits from Piedmont (August 25, 1848). Rosmini could hardly have been more embarrassed by those whom he was supposed to represent at Rome, and whom he had strongly rebuked for their anti-clericalism immediately before leaving. But he was very cordially received by Pius IX.

Rosmini was now fifty-one—five years younger than the Pope, who was to outlive him by more than twenty years. They were not already acquainted, but they seem to have liked one another from the start. It is tempting to speculate on what might have happened had Pius in fact made more use of so great a servant. But it may be questioned whether, even had the two men collaborated for the comparatively brief space of time that remained to Rosmini, the course of history would have been greatly altered. Rosmini could not by himself have halted the anti-clerical advance in Italy and so prevented its inevitable clash with the Papacy. Nor is it conceivable that constitutional liberalism could have been made to work for long in the States of the Church; the conditions there were necessarily so unfavourable to it. Moreover, that federal union which alone would have made possible the survival of the Temporal Power in a united Italy, was never more than a paper theory; and even had it been tried one may doubt whether it would have satisfied the requirements of political unity or held in check either the ambitions of the Piedmontese monarchy or the revolutionary violence of the radicals. In fact the Temporal Power, in its old form, was doomed once the Italians, or the energetic minority of them, had resolved on making their country politically one. If it did survive precariously until 1870, that is only because there were French bayonets available to protect it, for the time being, against the rest of Italy. If Rosmini's dream of a United States of Italy had come true, it might have survived as long without foreign aid; but hardly less precariously. It had, humanly speaking, no other means of survival. It is now but a fading memory. All that Rosmini's integrity and intelligence might have effected (had the chance been given him) was a miti-

gation of the conflict, a rendering of the division between Church and nation (or the articulate part of the nation), between religion and patriotism, the faith and liberal sentiment, less bitter than in fact it became.

Yet even to a clear-sighted observer of the situation between Rosmini's arrival in Rome on August 15, 1848, and the outbreak of the revolution in the city three months later, a happier solution of the problem might still have seemed possible, though perhaps hardly probable. Rosmini got to work at once with the Tuscan and Piedmontese ambassadors drafting a project of an Italian confederation, which Pius IX provisionally approved. Meanwhile Rosmini was told that at the next Consistory he would be made a Cardinal; and hints were dropped that he was to be the next Secretary of State. He was named a Consultor of the Holy Office. His chief anxiety so far was the unco-operative attitude of the Piedmontese government, which eventually compelled him to resign his commission (October 11) though he stayed on in Rome. The rock however on which his hopes were definitely shattered was the murderous folly of the Roman revolution which began on November 15. This entirely disgraceful affair turned the Pope, more effectively than any abstract arguments could have done, against all 'liberal' forms of government. On November 24 Pius IX left Rome in disguise for Gaeta in the kingdom of Naples. Rosmini followed him, but Antonelli had accompanied him; and Antonelli's was now the rising star. And with every increase in Antonelli's influence, that of Rosmini declined.

All that now remained to him, through that unhappy winter on the Neapolitan coast, was to fight a desperate battle on two fronts: a fight (which he lost) to keep the Pope from snapping every link with the liberal, as distinct from the Mazzinian 'democratic' element in Rome; and a fight (which he seemed to lose) to vindicate his own Catholic orthodoxy. On November 27 Pius IX, following Antonelli's advice and against Rosmini's, nominated a committee to govern Rome in his absence. This move Rosmini deplored because it was in fact unconstitutional, as Pius IX had not yet revoked the Constitution which he had formally sanctioned; and because in any case the committee could not possibly meet in Rome. The only effect of the nomination was to exasperate the very insecure liberal government in the city, which had still a claim to be regarded as technically legal and was under heavy

pressure from the Left. It was exasperated still more when Pius IX refused to receive the deputation sent to invite him to return to the city. Rosmini's last efforts to mediate between his master and the more moderate liberal elements broke down in December, and though Pius IX could still assure the French ambassador that he never would revoke the Constitution, the situation at Rome where Mazzini and the extremists gained control at the end of January, drove him inevitably towards reaction. On June 9 took place the celebrated interview<sup>6</sup> at which the Pope finally spoke his mind to Rosmini on the subject. 'My dear *abate*', said Pius IX, as soon as Rosmini came into the room, 'we are no longer constitutionalist.' 'Holy Father', replied Rosmini, 'it is a serious matter entirely to alter the direction on which you once set out, and thus to break your pontificate into two parts. I too am persuaded that the Constitution (*lo Statuto*) cannot be given effect at present, nor for a long time to come; but if your Holiness would but leave your subjects with some hope of its restoration, this would, I think, do good: history is witness that such complete reversals of policy are dangerous.' On the Pope replying that he would rather be cut in pieces than restore constitutional government, Rosmini then warned him of the difficulty of preserving the Papal States in a world in which such governments were the normal thing. But the Pope's answer—a characteristically unworldly one—was that when a thing is intrinsically evil it cannot be done, whatever the consequences. It was the answer he was to go on repeating until he died, shorn of all temporal dominion, nearly thirty years later.

What Pius IX did not tell Rosmini was that a few days before, on May 30, two of his books had been put on the Index: the *Cinque Piaghe della Santa Chiesa*<sup>7</sup> and *La Costituzione secondo la Giustizia Sociale*. Rosmini first heard of this fact two months later on his way back to the north. His submission was prompt and entire. It was the climax (for the time being) of a campaign against his good name which had been going on for months, but of which he had been permitted to have only fitful and partial, though not

<sup>6</sup> *Vita* II, 245-6. This account is based on Rosmini's own detailed memorandum, *Della Missione a Roma di Antonio Rosmini negli anni 1848 e 1849*. The author of the *Vita* says that he had access to the MS of this work, which contained some details lacking in the printed edition of 1881.

<sup>7</sup> *The Five Wounds of Holy Church*: written in 1832-3, but first published at Lugano in 1848. The *Costituzione*, a less important and much shorter work, came out in Milan in the same year, with an Appendix 'On the Unity of Italy'.

the less harassing, glimpses. He reached Stresa on November 2; and his religious brethren noticed that in little more than a year his hair had turned white. Nothing more was heard of the cardinalate. Five and a half years later Rosmini died with his brethren around him and the blessing of Pius IX. Tommaseo was there, and Manzoni, who kissed his feet. It was the end of an epoch.

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## ART AND THE IMAGINATION

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THE pleasures of literature may be classified as arising either from form or from content or else—and it is a classification which cuts across the first scheme—from the intellectual or architectonic element on the one hand, or the sensuous or harmonious on the other. By the pleasures of form one means the qualities of structure in novel or play, the satisfaction of speech sound in poetry produced by all the devices of the art—examples, widely different, are Spenser or Fray Luis de Leon, Swinburne or José Asuncion Silva, and T. S. Eliot or Luis Cernuda. By the pleasures of content one means either the incident-interest, the captivation of the attention that makes it impossible to ignore the command: ‘Now read on’, or the philosophical content, by which is meant the extent—if any—to which an author’s content and form contain any understanding of experience, any interpretation: here the pleasure that is exclusively literary is derived from the skill with which the interpretative element is presented or conveyed. The pleasure of rightness of interpretation is, of course, of a non-literary order. But the architectonic pleasure may arise from the form and the content taken together: it is the pleasure that is given by a wide sweep of subject matched by form on a grand scale. The *Divina Commedia*, the *Faery Queen*, Shakespeare’s tragedies—all procure us an aesthetic pleasure drawn from a power within the artist’s mind which sees and conveys an apprehension of life on a grand scale, and is not dependent on either subject-matter or form taken by themselves. We may be out of sympathy with the subject, and the form, in cases like these,