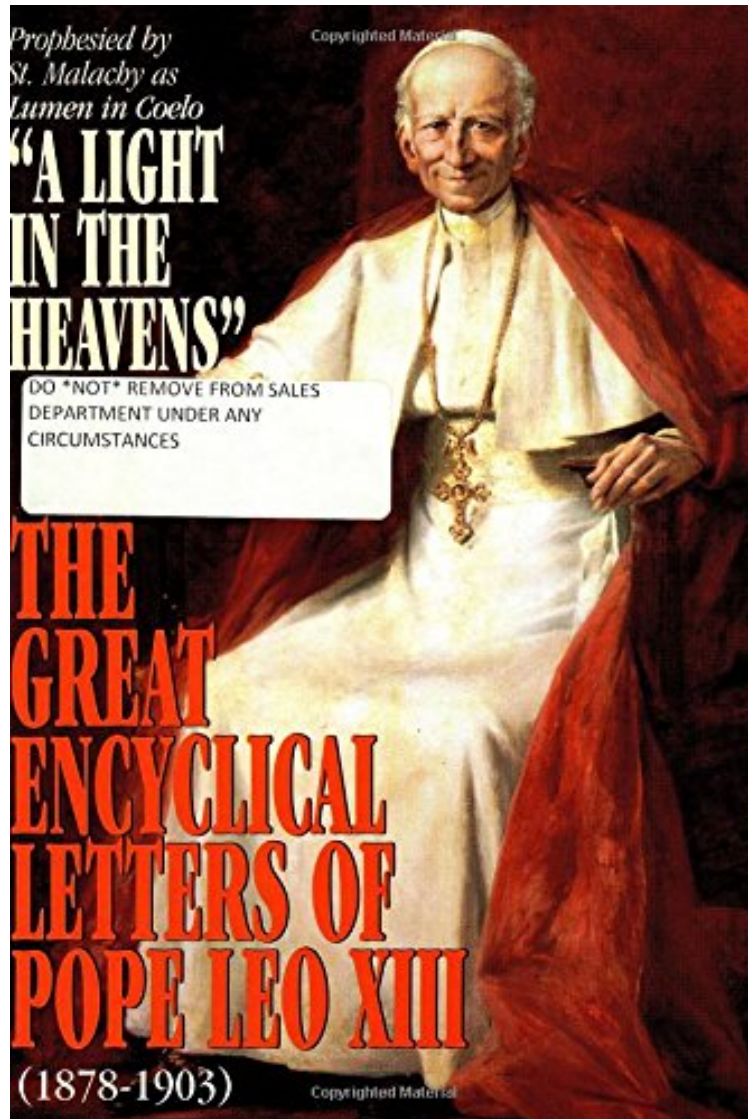


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Pope Leo XIII

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Francois Virey There is nothing so hurtful to Christian wisdom as that it should not be known. - Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter **Sapientiae Christianae** (1890) I have a personal debt to Pope Leo XIII. In 1879, a year after his inauguration, he issued an encyclical- a circular letter in Latin addressed to all high Church officials- in which he urged his Venerable Brethren, in all earnestness, to restore the golden wisdom of St. Thomas, and to spread it far and wide for the defence and beauty of the Catholic faith, for the good of society and for the advantage of all the sciences (**Aeterni Patris**.) Out of this encyclical, and other efforts of the Pope such as the preparation of a new edition of the works of St. Thomas in the 1880s or the foundation in 1891 of the Institute of Philosophy of Louvain, came the great neoscholastic revival of the late 19th century, one of whose fruits was the publication of a book which finally convinced me of the existence of God. **Aeterni Patris** is only one of the documents reproduced in this thick, 580-page volume, which offers a selection of Leo XIII's epoch-making encyclicals, as well as a few apostolic letters and personal letters, arranged chronologically. According to the **Catholic Encyclopedia**, the function of encyclicals is to condemn some prevalent form of error, point out dangers which threaten faith or morals, exhort the faithful to constancy, or prescribe remedies for evils foreseen or already existent. Potential readers of this book should therefore be warned that encyclicals are not merely presentations of Church doctrine, but that they are also composed to a large extent of orders, exhortations, advice, prayers, congratulations, condemnations and other non-argumentative passages. Among the most important encyclicals collected here are those dealing with the social doctrine of the Church, from the repeated, unequivocal condemnations of socialism, communism and anarchism, to a strong criticism of the separation of Church and state or a defense of the sanctity of Christian marriage against the encroachments of the state. Conservatives and classical liberals might wish to have the following words engraved in gold letters on their mantelpiece: The first and most fundamental principle if one would undertake to alleviate the condition of the masses, must be the inviolability of private property (**Rerum Novarum**, 1891.) Of great relevance to modern discussions of civil rights is the Apostolic Constitution **Officiorum ac Munerum**, which briefly summarizes the history of Church control of the press and contains the text of the General decrees concerning the prohibition and censorship of books, spelling out the general rules to be observed by Church officials and the faithful generally concerning various sorts of potentially dangerous publications. As for the principle behind these rules, it is best summarized by a short sentence in the Pope's 1908 **Review of his Pontificate** : the rights of truth [...] are superior to the demands of liberty, an unpopular position in our relativistic age, which often explicitly rejects certainty for fear of its political consequences. Other historical landmarks include an apostolic letter on the Anglican Orders (1896), which declared absolutely and for all eternity that Ordinations carried out according to the Anglican rite have been and are absolutely null and utterly void; and the Apostolic Letter *Vigilantiae*, which established the Biblical Commission, based on the principle that God has not delivered the Scriptures to the private judgment of the learned, but has confided the interpretation of them to the teaching of the Church. **A Light in the Heavens** is a collection of documents that deserve to be read by all Catholics. Those documents, however, are widely available on the net, and apart from its rather cursory four-page preface and the fact that it is bound, the present book offers no single advantage over a homemade printout. There is no index, no introduction to the various documents (one of which is not even dated) and no elucidation of obscure references and technical terms (such as subreption and obreption.) It is also difficult to know just how complete the documents are. For instance, according to the **Catholic Encyclopedia**, one of the purposes of the encyclical **Au Milieu des Sollicitudes** was to guard against the dangers of the new style of apologetics founded on Kantism and now known as Modernism . However, the present text merely deals with relations between Church and state in France. Readers interested in more systematic (and indexed) treatments of the social doctrine of the Church based on the teachings of Leo XIII might be directed to Rev. E. Cahill's **The Framework of a Christian State** and Rev. Denis Fahey's several volumes on the Mystical Body of Christ, both of which contain copious extracts from the encyclicals featured in the present volume. 14 of 15 people found the following review helpful. Review from the Publisher By A Customer Prophesied by St. Malachy as "A light in the heavens," he truly was, as these great Encyclicals more than prove. Sheds the light of Faith on virtually all major problems of the world--problems we still face. Written 100 years ago, they read like written today. Modern man founders in a sea of problems of his own making. Like a becan light, these great encyclicas show the solutions. All his famous letters: **Freemasonry** **Angilican Ordes** **Working Classes** **Americanism**, etc. We today witness the extremity of the errors Leo addressed. Says that the Catholic Faith is the answer. A book every adult Catholic should read. 14 of 15 people found the following review helpful. 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About the AuthorPope Leo XIII, whose birth name was Vincenzo Pecci, was born in 1810 to an Italian comital family. He was ordained a priest on December 31, 1837, and shortly thereafter appointed as legate of Benevento by Pope Gregory XVI. He later became a cardinal and was elected pope on the third ballot of the conclave of 1878. Besides defending the papacy prior to his election, Pope Leo subsequently strived in earnest to provide understanding between the Church and the modern world, and maintained that unconditional freedom was both immoral and unnatural. His *Humanum Genus* (On Freemasonry) was given on April 20, 1884, and printed in the form of a pamphlet by TAN in 2010. Pope Leo XIII died in 1903 at the age of ninety-three.