

# The Catholic Church and Christian Unity

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THE *desire for Christian unity*, so widely manifested at the present time, is a welcome symptom to all who have the welfare of the Christian religion at heart. The divisions of Christianity have not advanced the kingdom of Christ on earth. Quite the contrary. In the words of Bishop Anderson, "Our many church labels are proving to be libels against Christianity, and many religions are not increasing religion." Indeed, the *divisions of Christendom*, the multiplicity of sects, and their uncharitable attitude toward each other, furnishes to the unbeliever his strongest argument. Even the non-churchgoing Christian refers sneeringly to a churchianity as opposed to Christianity.

*And the forces of unbelief* are growing stronger and bolder every day. A godless Socialism is loudly proclaiming the futility of all revealed religion. Christianity, we are told, is an outworn superstition; the religion of the future will dispense with creed and dogma and insist on social service alone. A heavenly paradise is declared a snare and a delusion; an earthly paradise is the only goal worth striving for. And the forces arrayed against the Church are well organized. Whatever their differences in economic or social doctrines, when it comes to opposing and uprooting religion they are one.

And they are untiring in their propaganda. Through the press and the lecture platform thousands are being converted to the new gospel of materialism, and are induced to forsake the faith of their fathers. And a godless system of education, it is hoped, will presently bring about the complete triumph of the modern paganism.

Truly, if ever there was *need of a militant Church*, it is to-day. The forces hostile to religion are militant—aggressively militant. The Church must meet them in the same spirit. No half-hearted measures will avail. But how can a battle be fought with any hope of success when there is *no supreme command* to which all render obedience? How can there be victory without organization, without union? The modern era, more than any other, is an era of organization. Economic conditions demand it. The Church cannot hope to be exempt from the general law, for its work must be carried on by human agency. To quote Bishop Anderson once more, “Hard facts are demonstrating that Christ’s doctrine of unity is the only workable doctrine in this practical workaday world. It is being proved up to the hilt that the churches cannot do the work of the Church.”

And the *missionary situation* urgently calls for unity, if Christianity is to spread to heathen lands. How can a divided and discordant Christianity hope to make an impression on a non-Christian world? As a matter of fact, it is not making any great impression. In the Moslem world the Christian religion is practically at a standstill, if not receding. In the eleventh century Omar Khayyam, the agnostic Persian philosopher, could sneer at the seventy-two sects of Mohammedanism; what would he think of the hundreds of sects and sectlets in the Christian world to-day?

On every side the desirability of unity is being acknowledged, especially in the English-speaking countries. Only isolated voices of dissent are heard. The question is: How is this unity to be brought about? And on this question the attitude of the Catholic Church, the largest body in Christendom, is of supreme importance, nay decisive.

*Reunion movements* are by no means new. They are as old as schism itself. Repeatedly attempts were made to reunite the Eastern and Western Churches, but without lasting success. In the seventeenth century, when religious wars were deluging the soil of Europe with blood, the great German philosopher, Leibnitz, and the great French divine, Bossuet, were busy with schemes to reunite Protestant and Catholic. To-day a number of societies exist, all working for a partial or complete restoration of the Christian world to unity. Some of these societies, like the Evangelical Alliance, merely aimed to unite the Protestant Churches; others, like the Eastern Church Association, looked for a union of the Anglican and Eastern Churches. Some, like the Association for Promoting the Unity of Christendom, have a more comprehensive vision, and wish to include the Roman Church.

Reunion movements have also occupied the attention of the Pan-Anglican Conferences, held decennially. Unfortunately, in the beginning these conferences showed small sympathy for Rome, but recently a change of attitude was manifested, the last of the conferences, that of 1908, recording it as their conviction "that no projects of union can ever be regarded as satisfactory which deliberately leave out the Churches of the great Latin communion." To this every candid observer must agree. Even if all the Protestant Churches would unite, and

even if such a united Protestant Church could be united with the Eastern Churches, only half of Christendom, or but little more, would be included. This would still be a long ways off from Christian unity. When it comes to the question of unity, Rome certainly cannot be ignored.

*In speaking for the Catholic Church*, I am speaking for a Church which has always possessed and successfully maintained unity. In fact, it has ever had a passionate desire for unity. Again and again it has made efforts to reunite Christendom. But the Catholic Church has never desired unity at any price. It has never offered to compromise on essentials of faith or doctrine. It will not now or at any future time make such a compromise. The Catholic Church has always claimed that it possesses the divine truth by an unbroken historical tradition. As the divinely-appointed custodian of this truth, it is not at liberty to make any concession in regard to it, either by addition or subtraction or substitution. If such concession be regarded as indispensable to the success of a movement for reunion, the Catholic Church will stand aloof. *Therefore, the best contribution that I can make* to a discussion of this kind, is to explain why the Catholic Church feels justified in the adoption of an attitude so rigid, so unbending, and, as it will seem to many, so illiberal and intolerant.

*Unity* has always been one of the characteristic marks of the true Church. The prayer of Christ was that they *should* all be *one*. Christ and the Apostles knew only of *a* Church, not of Churches. The Nicene Creed insists on *one* Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. Schism was abhorred in the early Church. St. Paul warns the Galatians that if anyone should preach to them any other



Gospel than that which he had preached, even it be an angel from heaven, "let him be anathema" (Gal. i. 8). Fathers and councils were unsparing in their denunciation of heresy. In the Middle Ages, when State and Church were united, heresy was considered a heinous crime and cruelly punished. The Reformation did not at all break with this view. The reformed Churches were just as intolerant of "heresy" as the great united Church of the Middle Ages had ever been. And now, when there were any number of Churches, the situation was very complex. What was orthodox in one land was punished as heterodox in another. And as there was no acknowledged supreme authority to decide for the Protestant world, it was generally a case of orthodoxy is my doxy and heterodoxy is your doxy.

Of course, we have completely gotten away from the theory that the State is the guardian of orthodoxy, and we are profoundly grateful for that. Freedom of worship and belief is to-day enjoyed by all members of civilized communities. Difference of opinion in religious matters is viewed with complacency, and many believe that it really does not matter what religion a man professes; all religions, at least all Christian forms, are equally good, or, from the unbeliever's point of view, equally bad. *Diversity of religions* is considered a sign of progress, and progress of course is regarded as desirable in religion as in everything else. The Catholic Church, which does not regard religion from this purely human point of view, which confidently maintains its claim to be *one* true Church, which refuses to abandon its ancient doctrines or to revise them in accordance with modern ideas, is branded as mediæval, reactionary, unprogressive, outworn, obscurantist, and what

not. It is good only for the ignorant and superstitious. Nor are the Eastern Churches any better. And these reproaches are made not only by unbelievers, but by pious Protestants, who are but little troubled by the fact that the people denounced as ignorant and superstitious constitute the great majority of Christendom.

Now, we submit that it does take some self-confidence for a minority to regard itself as undoubtedly right, and the majority as undoubtedly wrong. All the more so, when that minority cannot agree on a single point of their creed, not even on the divinity of Christ. And sublime indeed is the self-confidence of some single sect numbering only a few millions to regard itself as possessing the true faith, and a Church of two hundred and fifty millions as steeped in error.

*It may be objected that numbers* are no proof of truth, and if the Church were merely a system of philosophic or scientific formulas, this objection would be unanswerable. *But the Church claims to be more than that:* she is the voice of the living God, the expounder of His law, the teacher of moral truth. Man is to regulate his conduct, his whole life, in accordance with the divine precepts which she proclaims, and his salvation is contingent on his acceptance of God's law. The Church is no metaphysical abstraction, but a very practical reality. It is, therefore, of the utmost moment whether her doctrines and precepts reach mankind. And these precepts are for all mankind. A Church that can command the allegiance of only an insignificant fraction of the human race, may be a success from an abstract point of view—as a practical organization for doing God's work among men it is a failure. Now, if it were true that the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church are perverted and

erroneous, or as is asserted of many of them in a Presbyterian theological manual, "absurd and blasphemous," then Christianity, with more than half of its members professing these doctrines, would be in a desperate state indeed.

To one who believes neither in God nor a future life, the Church is a mere human institution, useful perhaps as a sort of moral police. This was the view of Napoleon when he said, "I regard religion not as the mystery of the Incarnation, but as the secret of social order." In all other respects the Church is useless. And this is but logical. For, if there be no God, the Church is worse than useless: it is an arrogant pretender appealing to ignorance and superstition to maintain its authority, and grotesquely out of place in a modern "enlightened" world. To one who holds these opinions a lecture on Christian unity is meaningless. But if the Church is really divine in origin, founded by God Himself, it is fatuous to treat it and view it as a mere human institution; to ask that it shall conform to every modern shifting theory; to talk about progress and evolution and revision as if you were talking about some system of law or government, created of man and subject to his will. If God be perfect and unchangeable, so is His truth. The truth that Christ proclaimed two thousand years ago must be the truth to-day. It cannot be brought up-to-date by continually revising it. It need not progress. What should progress is our understanding of it.

*Furthermore, this truth is utterly independent of science.* Science can tell us nothing about the supernatural. As Macaulay strikingly has demonstrated in his well-known essay on von Ranke, "divinity, properly so-called, is not a progressive science." No discovery

in physics will ever invalidate the decalogue, or explain Christian mysteries like the Trinity or Incarnation. To deny the existence of the supernatural because we cannot realize it by our senses, is tantamount to limiting human knowledge to sense-experience, and that were rash indeed. No Christian will accept it. And to argue about the *reasonableness or absurdity* of Christian dogmas is futile. These dogmas do not appeal to sense-experience, nor are they the result of rationalistic processes. They are revealed.

*It is also perfectly useless for Protestants to object to Catholic dogmas, like transubstantiation, on the ground of unreasonableness. Is the dogma of transubstantiation any more unreasonable than that of the Trinity? Is it any more comprehensible or more wonderful than the Incarnation? Is it logical to regard these two dogmas as reasonable and worthy of belief, and to reject the other as absurd? The Catholic does not believe in transubstantiation because it is reasonable, but because it is revealed; he accepts it on the authority of his Church, and in this authority he has implicit confidence. For this confidence he has good reasons, as we shall see.*

The doctrines of Christianity do not rest on scientific proof, but on revelation. Faith is the essence of the Christian religion, and faith is above reason, but not against reason. The proofs for the divine origin of this religion are not scientific or philosophical, but historical.

*The Christian religion—but where is it? There is a bewildering multiplicity of Churches calling themselves Christian, but teaching different doctrines and following different forms of worship. No matter how much we attempt to minimize these differences, they are distress-*

singly evident. They are so great as to amount to absolute contradiction—and this in matters so vital as, for instance, the manner of man's salvation. Is man saved by faith alone, or are good works also essential? Are the sacraments absolutely needed, or is their reception optional?

Now every Christian Church claims to have Christ's doctrines pure and unchanged. The Catholic Church certainly makes this claim and makes it absolutely. But so does every Protestant Church. The reformers of the sixteenth century all claimed to have restored the Church to its primitive purity, to have stripped it of the errors which Rome had imposed upon it. And among these errors are dogmas held as fundamental by the Roman Catholic Church then, as well as to-day: the doctrine of the Real Presence and the sacrifice of the Mass, seven sacraments instead of two, the invocation of the saints and others.

Now, before the year 1517 these doctrines were held by all Christendom, Eastern as well as Western. They are still held to-day by the Roman Catholic as well as the Eastern Orthodox Churches; that is, by the overwhelming majority of Christians. Yet they are pronounced by Protestants to be errors. Furthermore, in spite of the protests of isolated heresiarchs, these doctrines were held by all Christians throughout the whole period of the Middle Ages, or, even if the claim that primitive Christianity did not hold them were conceded for the sake of argument, these doctrines prevailed in all Christendom for many centuries. During all that long period, therefore, the whole Christian Church was steeped in error; in other words, there was for a long time no true Church of Christ on earth.

If this be so, what guarantee is there that there is a true Church of Christ to-day? It certainly takes a sublime assurance on the part of some single sect limited in membership, and confined to a small geographical area to assert that, after centuries of error, it and *it* alone has recovered the true form of Christianity. And what are we to think of Christians speaking about the divinity and truth of their Church, the necessity of bringing this Church and its truth to the heathen, of "evangelizing" the world, and yet asserting that the whole Church at one time had lapsed into error? And what are we to think of the minority still claiming that the majority are in error, especially when this minority cannot agree among themselves what the true doctrines of Christianity really are? When, in fact, the only point on which they can agree is to disagree with the majority.

This is certainly a peculiar situation for a Church that claims divine origin! And it is a strange spectacle for the unbeliever. No wonder that thousands are turning their back on all Churches, and becoming infidel or indifferent. Hopelessly at sea where to find the true Church which Christ founded, they take refuge in indifferentism, which virtually means that all Churches are more or less in error, that it does not matter what a man's religious convictions are, so long as he lives up to them, and that a man is free to believe what he pleases. In most cases the indifferent man settles the question by believing practically nothing, and by ignoring the Church entirely.

If there exists no true Church to-day, or if it is impossible to ascertain which it is and where it is, then we must admit that Christ's mission was a failure, and that a new Messiah is needed to do the work in which He failed. But this assumption would nullify the promise of Christ

Himself, when He said that He would abide with His Church to the end of time, and that the gates of hell should not prevail against her. *The Catholic trusts in Christ's promise*, and is convinced that the Church never lost the great truths that He taught. Whatever her faults in any period, her teachings did not go astray, or Christ's promise would have come to naught. And there was no doctrine accepted during the Middle Ages throughout Western Christendom except that of Rome. So the Catholic stands firmly on historical ground; he rejects the claim of the reformers that the mediæval Church had lost the truth. If His Church was true then, it is true now. Her doctrines have not changed, whatever controversialists may say. This is often flung as a reproach against the Church. But the Catholic is proud of his consistency. Let others revise their creeds to bring them up to date; that is, to obliterate them. He clings to the faith as it has been transmitted from Christ through the Apostles.

*I said, Roman Catholic doctrines have not changed.* Nor have new ones been added by the Popes, as is so often asserted. No Pope can alter doctrine in any way. But he can explicitly define what has been implicit in the faith. Thus the much maligned dogma of infallibility is not new. The Church has always held that as a teaching body, she is infallible. And no Catholic claims that the Pope is infallible in the sense that infallibility is inherent in his person. He is infallible only when he speaks *ex cathedra*; that is, as supreme teacher of the Universal Church. As a private theologian, preacher or author, as judge or ruler, he is liable to err like every human being. And no Catholic has ever put up the absurd claim that the Pope is impeccable; that is simply a Protestant

legend, and one that no intelligent Protestant ever took seriously.

*The doctrine of infallibility* cannot seem absurd to those who believe that the Church is really God's institution, the visible agency for carrying on His work. On the contrary, it is a perfectly reasonable doctrine. For, if God be infallible, and if He has founded the Church, how can He let the Church flounder in doubt and error? When a German theologian boasts, "We Protestants do not claim infallibility" (Hunzinger, *Das Christentum im Weltausauungskampf der Gegenwart*), nobody will dispute his claim. How could it be maintained in view of the actual divisions in Protestant Christendom! And because it cannot be maintained, thousands are in doubt whether the Churches can give them the truth, and, as a consequence, they are leaving the Churches to seek guidance elsewhere.

The cause of these divisions is well known: it is the doctrine of private judgment. To this the Catholic opposes the claim of authority. *Authority is the rock of Catholic unity*, and this unity is the one thing which the Roman Catholic Church possesses, which even her bitterest opponents concede to her, and which the Protestant envies. *Submission to authority* is the indispensable prerequisite of any real unity. This, of course, is wholly contrary to the spirit of unbridled individualism that has been in evidence ever since the Reformation, and that is so rampant to-day. Submission to authority in religious belief is indignantly rejected by many as unworthy of a modern enlightened man. It is denounced as intellectual bondage and degrading slavery. If blind submission to an authority without credentials were demanded by the Church, this attitude would be the only correct possible



one for a thinking human being. But the Church presents ample proofs for her claims to authority. The words of Christ to the Apostles are unmistakably clear. He gives them power to teach all nations in His name, and commands men to hear them (Mark xvi. 15, 16). He expressly condemns those who will not hearken: "And if he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican" (Matt. xviii. 17). And He promises to send the Holy Ghost, the spirit of truth, that He may abide with this Church forever (John xiv. 16, 17, *et passim*). Is not this clear proof that He established a living magisterium, divinely guarded, to safeguard the transmission of His truth? And this also ought to dispose of the popular theory that a man can have religion without belonging to a Church. If religion were mere sentiment that might be possible. But religion must show itself in action. Christ evidently had no use for religion without a visible Church. Furthermore, He does not leave it optional with man to heed or ignore that Church. "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican." More than half of the population of these United States seems to come under this description, for they are unchurched. And for this, denominationalism is directly responsible.

And where is this authority? The Roman Catholic answers, "In Rome," because Rome is the See of St. Peter, whom Christ appointed as His successor on earth. It is impossible for me to discuss the question of Roman primacy. It is also unnecessary. The arguments are accessible to anyone who takes the trouble to search for them. The Catholic side is fully presented to the English reader in the great *Catholic Encyclopedia* just published. Suffice it to point out that it is a historic fact that the primacy

of Rome was conceded by the whole of Western Christendom in the period preceding the Reformation by England and Germany, as well as by Italy and Spain. And before the great Eastern schism, the East also acknowledged this supremacy; Eastern Churches in their disputes repeatedly appealed to Rome. And this primacy is clearly attested as early as the second century by St. Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons, when controverting the heresy that threatened even at so early a time to disrupt the unity of the Church. He directs these heretics to the greatest and most ancient Church founded at Rome by the Apostles Peter and Paul, and distinctly refers to this Church as the standard of true apostolic doctrine, to which every Church must conform. So well established is the fact of Rome's primacy in the early centuries of the Christian Church, that controversialists in their efforts to make it appear as a usurpation have even tried to deny that St. Peter ever was in Rome. Lipsius spent a lifetime in this task; yet his arguments have failed to convince even Protestant scholars. And the charge of imposture based on the False Decretals has been hopelessly exploded. The Pope, as the visible head of the early Christian Church, is an indisputable historic fact, explain it as you will.

*The term Roman Catholic* does not imply by any means that the Church is only or chiefly for Rome. It is not in any sense a national Church. If St. Peter had taken his seat in Canterbury, then Canterbury would be what Rome is now: the seat of the successor of St. Peter, the Chief See of Christendom. The term *Anglican Catholic* would then have the same universal meaning that *Roman Catholic* has now. The *Universal Church* must ever be opposed to the principle of *national Churches*. Christ did not es-

tablish one Church for one nationality, and another for another. Christianity was meant to be a universal religion. "Teach ye all nations." *The spirit of nationality* in religion does not make for unity; quite the reverse. It is the most potent factor in every schism. The separation of the Eastern Churches from Rome was largely caused by the unfortunate antipathy between East and West. The Reformation was furthered by the appeal to the Germanic spirit against the Latin spirit. To-day appeals are constantly made to American, English, German or Scandinavian patriotism against the Roman Church as a foreign Church, an Italian Church, representing a Latin Christianity. The fact that *Rome is in Italy* and *Latin* the official language of the Church, are stock arguments of those who try to stir up national prejudice against the Catholic Church. As if Rome and the Latin language were not inevitable historical phenomena! The connection of the Papacy with Rome is historic. So is the use of Latin. If the Pope should reside in the South Sea Islands, he would still be the Sovereign Pontiff, because he is the successor of St. Peter. And if the Mass were said in Chinese, it would still remain the central act of Catholic worship. In the East Mass is actually said in the vernacular. By keeping the venerable language of early Western Christendom, the Catholic Church secures uniformity of worship. And why should not a Universal Church use a universal language? And which language has a better claim to be considered universal than Latin.

No, *the great Church of Rome can never be a mere national Church.* The Papacy can never be identified with any one nationality. Whenever it was recreant to its exalted trust and too much entangled in local interests, as in the days of Avignon, the Papacy was weakest. To-

day it is absolutely without temporal power, but never was it stronger spiritually. Throughout the whole wide world, Catholics of every nationality acknowledge the Holy Father as their spiritual ruler.

*No mere State Church* can have the strength, the power, the majesty of the Church Universal. This was impressively demonstrated by the Counter-Reformation. In the words of Macaulay (Essay on Ranke): As the Catholics in zeal and union had a great advantage over the Protestants, so they had also an infinitely superior organization. In truth, Protestantism, for aggressive purposes, had no organization at all. The Reformed Churches were mere national Churches. The Church of England existed for England alone. It was an institution as purely local as the Court of Common Pleas, and was utterly without any machinery for foreign operations. The Church of Scotland, in the same manner existed for Scotland alone. The operations of the Catholic Church, on the other hand, took in the whole world. Then he pays it the tribute by calling it "the very masterpiece of human wisdom." This in view of its success. But the Catholic sees in these successes more than human wisdom: he remembers the promises of Christ.

An established national Church that depends on the State for support, is bound to be servile. It is too apt to become a mere tool in the hands of worldly government. It loses the love and confidence of the people. The alliance between Church and State in the long run costs the former dearly. Certainly the Church of Rome has not profited thereby; witness the situation in France and Portugal. And the alliance between Church and State in Prussia is one of the best assets of German Socialism. *But subserviency has never been a mark of the Roman*

*Church.* She has never hesitated to defy States and princes when principle was at stake. She defied the Eastern emperors in the early days; she refused to yield her prerogative of investiture to the German emperor, Henry IV.; she opposed the proud Hohenstauffens in the heyday of their power; she refused to surrender to the iniquitous demands of Henry VIII. of England; she resisted the encroachments of the insolent Louis XIV., the great French monarch; she defied Napoleon at the height of his power, and two Popes suffered exile and imprisonment rather than surrender their sacred trust. And the great Napoleon has passed away; his triumphs are only a memory. But the Pope still rules. In our day we have seen the Church unhesitatingly bid defiance to the greatest statesman of the day, Bismarck, backed by the might of the victorious German Empire; and though the Papacy could not muster a single soldier, it emerged victor from the struggle. And even now Rome has suffered the loss of her possessions in France, but she will never surrender her principles at the bidding of a godless anti-Christian government. The Roman Catholic Church does not depend on the support of any State; she thrives in an atmosphere of religious freedom. To one who reads history aright this is not surprising. The Roman Catholic Church has ever been the staunchest defender of religious freedom against the pretensions of the despotic State. In the words of Barry, "So long as the Vatican endures, Cæsarism will not have won the day" (Barry, *The Papacy and Modern Times*, Preface).

To be sure, the Church *has its human side. While founded by God, its work must be carried on by men, and men are not perfect.* Abuses and corruptions crept in. Repeatedly were reforms instituted in discipline and

practise. But no matter how great the abuses have been—and Catholic historians do not palliate or excuse them—they constitute no argument against the Church and her teaching. A system is not condemned because it is administered by corrupt officials. A Church is not to be regarded as having fallen from grace because one of its ministers, even if he be a leader, has gone wrong. Even the Apostles had their Judas. No single religion has a corner on virtue, nor a monopoly of vice. The national Churches have by no means a clean record. The Reformation has its seamy side, which impartial historians are exposing with great candor. The reformers themselves were not at all saints. Moreover, the ancient Church, not even in its darkest days, was ever wholly corrupt, as is sometimes loosely stated. There were always hosts of men and women distinguished for piety and devotion, who led exemplary Christian lives. In fact, the great mass was never corrupt. That there were bad Popes, that many of the highest members of the hierarchy led un-Christian, worldly lives, that many clergymen were remiss in the performance of duty—all this will not be disputed. A reformation that would have confined itself to the correction of these abuses, that would have reformed practise only, would have been an unmixed blessing. And this was all that Luther originally intended. But unfortunately neither he nor his fellow-reformers would stop here. *They changed doctrines.* And no Catholic will ever admit that they had any commission from God to do this. No man, not even the Pope, can change the doctrines of the Church. The tradition of the ancient Church, continuous and unbroken, ought to weigh more than the opinions of mere men. And it is significant that from the very beginning these self-constituted

reformers could not agree in their opinions on dogma. And from all this the position of the Catholic Church on the question before us may be inferred.

*A Church which regards itself not as the creator, but as the guardian of God's truth, divinely revealed and specially entrusted to her, cannot make any compromise where this truth is involved. She cannot give away what is not her own. She cannot omit or alter her sacred dogmas to bring in outsiders. In the words of Pope Leo XIII., in an encyclical on *True and False Americanism* (1899), "Let them return; indeed, nothing is nearer to our heart. Let all those who are wandering far from the sheepfold of Christ return; but let it not be by any other road than that which Christ has pointed out."*

But if the Church cannot concede essentials, she can make, and in the past has made, concessions in matters of practise, for instance, as regards the language and form of the liturgy, the celibacy of the clergy, the residence of the head of the Church in Rome, the method of his election, matters of Church government; in fact, all that affects the rule of life.

*Projects of reunion* broached at the present time can never win the adherence of Roman Catholics as long as they fall *short of aiming at the only unity that is real and worth while—unity of belief*. Mere corporate reunion, each Church coming in with its organization intact, would be a monstrosity. It could only be on an undogmatic basis, and the Catholic Church has no place in such a scheme. Nor will the formula, "Comprehension, not compromise," solve the difficulty. It would result not in a "synthesis of distinctions," but, as Father Smith (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, under "Union," vol. xv., p. 151) points out, in a synthesis of contradictions.

But Catholics *will have the warmest sympathy for every movement* that makes for a better mutual understanding of different Christian bodies, and thus help to pave the way for ultimate reunion. Above all, it is necessary that misunderstandings be removed. Ages of sectarian life and strife have created misunderstandings that are hard to remove, prejudices that are so hardened that they will not dissolve. Terms of abuse, like Popery, Popish, Romish and Romanism, are often employed as if they were arguments. What is needed is not controversy, but calm and dispassionate explanation and a willingness to learn. And in this respect the United States, with a free Church in a free State, can teach a lesson to many an older country, *e. g.*, Germany, with its State Churches and bitter religious divisions. There a book has just now appeared, with a number of essays, one of which is entitled, *The Protest Against the Roman Perversion of Christianity, a Duty of Christian Piety*. The title sounds familiar to students of sixteenth century theological literature. In any century such an essay would be an act of impertinence; in the twentieth century it is an anachronism. Its only effect can be to promote bigotry.

After all, *Christians should cultivate a feeling of solidarity*. Instead of emphasizing the differences, emphasize what there is in common. After all, Christ is our common Redeemer, and we are united in one hope of heaven. And when it comes to works of charity, to deeds of mercy, to social service, there should be neither Catholics nor Protestants—only Christians.

Above all, let us realize that, whether unity be realized or not, Christians should stand together against the assaults of an infidel world, that hates the very name of God. When one Church weakens another the Christian



cause suffers. Especially is this the case when Catholicism loses; for seldom does Protestantism gain thereby. The man who forsakes Catholicism as a rule turns infidel. This was already noticed by Macaulay in 1840 (Essay on Ranke); it is still true to-day. The losses which the Catholic Church sustains in Latin Europe are losses to Christianity. These defections simply swell the ranks of unbelief. The growing pressure of infidelity seems bound some day to bring the Churches nearer together. Even that cloud has its silver lining.

Yes, Christian unity is a consummation devoutly to be wished; but the prospects of its achievement are not of the rosiest. If history is to point the way, then that way lies through Rome. For one thousand five hundred years Western Christendom was united with Rome. To-day union without Rome is impossible. Such union at best would only be partial.

If the attitude of the Roman Church seems to be to many not conciliatory enough, let it not be ascribed to lack of charity. Only because she has such an exalted regard for the sacred trust committed to her by Christ, her divine Founder, does the Church refuse to compromise on essentials of faith. I hope I have made that clear. For the rest, in the spirit of Christian charity, she welcomes all to unite with her. To quote the words of Pope Leo XIII., in his encyclical on *The Reunion of Christendom* (June 20, 1894): "Let us all meet in the unity of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God. Suffer that we may invite you to the unity which has ever existed in the Catholic Church and can never fail; suffer that we should lovingly hold out our hand to you. The Church, as the common Mother of all, has long been calling you back to her. The Catholics of the world

await you with brotherly love, that you may render holy worship to God together with us, united in perfect charity by the profession of one Gospel, one faith, and one hope."

In conclusion let me cite the verses with which Sadi, the Persian poet, ends his *Gulistan*, or *Rose Garden*: "I have given counsel as was befitting my position; if it fall not on pleased ears, it is the duty of the messenger to speak his message and no more."

[The above article is an address delivered by Dr. Remy at the Mt. Morris Baptist Church, New York City. Dr. Remy spoke in answer to an invitation from that Church, requesting him to give the Catholic view of Christian Unity.—EDITOR.]



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