

## CHURCH UNION.

### III.

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**S**PEAKING of a depositary of traditions of faith, there could be a choice between two depositaries—a collegiate one and a single individual.

During the middle ages, and especially at the Council of Basle and in the Pragmatic Sanction of France, there was no doubt whatever that this depositary was the Catholic Church, but opinions differed as to the body in whom the authority was vested to declare a doctrine as founded in tradition, and hence to be believed by all. Some maintained that it was vested in the Pope only, others granted it to Pope and Oecumenic Council conjointly, whilst Basle and France asserted the superiority of an Oecumenic Council over the Pope and saw only in the teaching of the Church assembled in council an infallible witness of tradition.

The latter two opinions were held by minorities and were either expressly condemned or silently repudiated by adverse ruling. Now, and particularly since the Vatican Council dogmatised the infallibility of the Pope, there is not, and cannot be a doubt in a Catholic that the Pope individually is the depositary of faith, and that his decisions in matters of faith are the only ones commanding faithful submission and undoubted faith.

But, is this teaching correct? It is consonant with the bible and sustained through the ages by history.

If these questions be answered in the affirmative, Church-union is no longer a question. It becomes an absolute postulate of conscience, and union in this case means nothing else but submission to the teaching of the Apostolic See.

Now it can easily be shown that the Church founded by God is a theocracy, and that God vested the power of governing and teaching in a succession of individuals, each of whom inherited the full power from

his predecessor, and by this became not merely the director of a temporary organization, but the representative of God Himself, and hence the bearer of the divine commission to teach all nations, and teach them to observe all things.

From the very cradle of mankind God consecrated the power of ruling and teaching in the person of the Patriarch, who before his death transferred the powers thus received to one of his sons. It was an absolute postulate of unity, which cannot be preserved by any other means.

This system was more fully developed in the Mosaic law, where Aaron and his descendants were declared the representatives of Jehovah and the spiritual rulers of His chosen people. But their rule was not to be an arbitrary one. They had to consult God in the Holy of Holies and learn His will by the Urim et Thummim, which contained engraved upon precious stones the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. Thus the twelve different tribes were under the guidance of the High Priest as their centre of religious unity, and he in turn depended upon divine inspiration in his ruling.

As Christ declared that He had come not to abolish the law, but to fulfill it, we must expect to find in the new law an analogous institution, and this the more since the Christian Church is not a building raised upon entirely new foundations, but the final development of the religious shadowy types and figures contained in the old law.

Now Christ very often compares His Church to a plant. "I am the vine, you are the branches. The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed." How many seeds are wanted for a plant? How many main roots has a plant? There may be a large number of side roots, but they all communicate with the main root, and though they gather up from the ground whatever may be conducive to the growth and fertility of the plant, they can do so only as long as they are united to the main