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ENCYCLICAL LETTER

OF POPE LEO XIII ON THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH.

[CONCLUDED.]

THE ROMAN PONTIFFS POSSESS SUPREME POWER IN THE CHURCH JURE DIVINO.

13. It was necessary that a government of this kind, since it belongs to the constitution and formation of the Church, as its principal element—that is, as the principle of unity and the foundation of lasting stability—should in no wise come to an end with St. Peter, but should pass to his successors from one to another. "There remains, therefore, the ordinance of truth, and St. Peter persevering in the strength of the rock which he had received, hath not abandoned the government of the Church which had been confided to him" (S. Leo M., sermo iii., cap. 3). For this reason the Pontiffs who succeeded Peter in the Roman Episcopate receive the supreme power in the Church, JURE DIVINO. "We define" (declare the Fathers of the Council of Florence) "that the Holy and Apostolic See and the Roman Pontiff holds the primacy of the Church throughout the whole world: and that the same Roman Pontiff is the successor of St. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, and the true Vicar of Christ, the head of the whole Church, and the father and teacher of all Christians; and that full power was given to him, in Blessed Peter, by our Lord Jesus Christ to feed, to rule and to govern the universal Church, as is also contained in the acts of oecumenical councils and in the sacred canons" (CONC. FLORENTINUM). Similarly the Fourth council of Lateran declares: "The Roman Church, as the mother and mistress of all the faithful, by the will of Christ obtains primacy of jurisdiction over all other Churches." These declarations were preceded by the consent of antiquity which ever acknowledged, without the slightest doubt or hesitation, the Bishops of Rome, and revered them, as the legitimate successors of St. Peter.

Who is unaware of the many and evident testimonies of the holy Fathers which exists to this effect? Most remarkable is that of St. Irenaeus who, referring to the Roman Church, says: "With this Church, on account of its pre-eminent authority, it is necessary that every Church should be in accord" (Contra Haeresees, lib. iii., cap. 3, n. 2); and St. Cyprian also says of the Roman Church, that "it is the root and mother of the Catholic Church, the chair of Peter, and the principal Church whence sacerdotal unity has its source" (Ep. xviii., ad Cornelium, n. 3, and Ep. lix., ad eundem, n. 14). He calls it THE CHAIR OF PETER because it is occupied by the successor of Peter: he calls it the PRINCIPAL CHURCH, on account of the primacy conferred on Peter himself and his legitimate successors; and THE SOURCE OF UNITY, because the Roman Church is the efficient cause of unity in the Christian commonwealth. For this reason Jerome addresses Damasus thus: "My words are spoken to the successor of the Fisherman, to the disciple of the Cross..... I communicate with none save your Blessedness, that is with the chair of Peter. For this I know is the rock on which the Church is built" (Ep. xv., ad Damasum, n. 2). Union with the Roman See of Peter is to him always the public criterion of a Catholic "I acknowledge every one who is united with the See of Peter" (Ep. xvi., and Damasum n. 2). And for a like reason St. Augustine publicly attests that, "the primacy of the Apostolic chair always existed in the Roman Church" (Ep. xliii., n. 7); and he denies that any one who dissents from the Roman faith can be a Catholic. "You are not to be looked upon as holding the true Catholic faith if you do not teach that the faith of Rome is to be held" (Sermo cxx., n. 13). So, too, St. Cyprian: "To be in communion with Cornelius is to be in communion with the Catholic Church" (Ep. lv., n. 1). In the same way Maximus the Abbott teaches that obedience to the Roman Pontiff is the proof of the true faith and of legitimate communion. Therefore if a man does not want to be, or to be called, a heretic, let him not strive to please this or that man.....but let him hasten before all things to be in communion

with the Roman See. If he be in communion with it, he should be acknowledged by all and everywhere as faithful and orthodox. He speaks in vain who tries to persuade me of the orthodoxy of those who, like himself, refuse obedience to His Holiness the Pope of the most holy Church of Rome: that is to the Apostolic See." The reason and motive of this he explains to be that "the Apostolic See has received and hath government, authority, and power of binding and loosing from the Incarnate Word Himself; and, according to all holy synods, sacred canons and decrees, in all things and through all things, in respect of all the holy churches of God throughout the whole world, since the Word in Heaven who rules the Heavenly powers binds and loosens there" (Defloratio ex Epistola ad Petrum illustrem).

Wherefore, what was observed and acknowledged as Christian faith, not by one nation only or in one age, but by the East and by the West, and through all ages, this Philip, the priest, the Pontifical legate at the council of Ephesus, no voice being raised in dissent, recalls: "No one can doubt, yea, it is known unto all ages, that St. Peter the Prince of the Apostles, the pillar of the faith and the ground of the Catholic Church, received the keys of the kingdom from our Lord Jesus Christ. That is: the power of forgiving and retaining sins was given to him who, up to the present time, lives and exercises judgment in the persons of his successors" (Actio iii.). The pronouncement of the Council of Chalcedon on the same matter is present to the mind of all: "Peter has spoken through Leo" (Actio i.) to which the voice of the Third Council of Constantinople responds as an echo: "The Chief Prince of the Apostles was fighting on our side: for we have had as our ally his follower and the successor to his see: and the paper and the ink were seen, and Peter spoke through Agatho (xviii.).

In the formula of Catholic faith drawn up and proposed by Hormistas, which was subscribed at the beginning of the sixth century in the great Eighth Council by the Emperor Justinian, by Epiphanius, John and Menna, the Patriarchs, this same is declared with great weight and solemnity. "For the pronouncement of our Lord Jesus Christ saying: 'THOU ART PETER AND UPON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH,' &c., cannot be passed over. What is said is proved by the result, because Catholic faith has always been preserved without stain in the Apostolic See" (Post Epistolam, xxvii., ad omnes Episc. Hispan., n. 4). We have no wish to quote every available declaration; but it is well to recall the formula of faith which Michael Paleologus professed in the second Council of Lyons: "The same holy Roman Church possesses the sovereign and plenary primacy and authority over the whole Catholic Church, which, truly and humbly, it acknowledges to have received together with the plenitude of power from the Lord Himself, in the person of St. Peter, the Prince or head of the Apostles, of whom the Roman Pontiff is the successor. And as it is bound to defend the truth of faith beyond all others, so also if any question should arise concerning the faith it must be determined by its judgment" (Actio iv.).

BISHOPS BELONG TO THE ESSENTIAL CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH.

14. But if the authority of St. Peter and his successor is plenary and supreme, it is not to be regarded as the sole authority. For He who made Peter the foundation of the Church also "chose twelve, whom He called apostles" (Luke vi., 13); and just as it is necessary that the authority of Peter should be perpetuated in the Roman Pontiff, so, by the fact that the bishops succeed the apostles, they inherit their ordinary power, and thus the episcopal order necessarily belongs to the essential constitution of the Church. Although they do not receive plenary, or universal, or supreme authority, they are not to be looked upon as vicars of the Roman Pontiff; because they exercise a power really their own, and are most truly called the ORDINARY pastors of the people over whom they rule.

But since the successor of Peter is one, and those of the apostles are many, it is necessary to examine into the relations

which exist between him and them according to the divine constitution of the Church. Above all things the need of union between the bishops and the successors of Peter is clear and undeniable. This bond once broken, Christians would be separated and scattered, and would in no wise form one body and one flock. "The safety of the Church depends on the dignity of the chief priest, to whom if an extraordinary and supreme power is not given, there are as many schisms to be expected in the Church as there are priests" (S. Hieronymus, Dialog. contra Luciferianos, n. 9). It is necessary, therefore, to bear all this in mind, viz., that nothing was conferred on the apostles apart from Peter, but that several things were conferred upon Peter apart from the apostles. St. John Chrysostom in explaining the words of Christ asks: "Why, passing over the others, does He speak to Peter about these things?" And he replies unhesitatingly and at once, "Because he was pre-eminent among the apostles, the mouthpiece of the disciples, and the head of the college" (Hom. lxxxviii. in Joan., n. 1). He alone was designated as the foundation of the Church. To him He gave the power of BINDING and LOOSING; to him alone was given the power of FEEDING. On the other hand, whatever authority and office the Apostles received, they received in conjunction with Peter. "If the divine benignity willed anything to be in common between him and the other princes, whatever He did not deny to the others He gave only through him. So that whereas Peter alone received many things, He conferred nothing on any of the rest without Peter participating in it" (S. Leo M. sermo iv., cap. 2).

BISHOPS SEPARATED FROM PETER AND HIS SUCCESSOR LOSE ALL JURISDICTION.

15. From this it must be clearly understood that Bishops are deprived of the right and power of ruling, if they deliberately secede from Peter and his successors; because, by this secession they are separated from the foundation on which the whole edifice must rest. They are therefore outside the edifice itself; and for this very reason they are separated from the ROLD, whose leader is the Chief Pastor; they are exiled from the KINGDOM, the keys of which were given by Christ to Peter alone.

These things help us to see the heavenly ideal, and the divine exemplar, of the constitution of the Christian commonwealth, namely: When the Divine Founder decreed that the Church should be one in faith, in government, and in communion, He chose Peter and his successors as the principle and centre, as it were, of this unity. Wherefore St. Cyprian says: "The following is a short and easy proof of the faith. The Lord said to Peter: 'I say to thee thou art Peter'; on him alone He buildeth His Church; and although after His resurrection He gives a similar power to all the Apostles and says: 'As the Father hath sent Me,' &c., still in order to make the necessary unity clear, by His own authority He laid down the source of that unity as beginning from one" (De Unit. Eccl. n. 4). And Optatus of Milevis says: "You cannot deny that you know that in the city of Rome the Episcopal chair was first conferred on Peter. In this Peter, the head of all the Apostles (hence his name Cephas), has sat; in which chair alone unity was to be preserved for all, lest any of the other apostles should claim anything as exclusively his own. So much so, that he who would place another chair against that one chair, would be a schismatic and a sinner" (De Schism. Donat., lib. ii). Hence the teaching of Cyprian, that heresy and schism arise and are begotten from the fact that due obedience is refused to the supreme authority. "Heresies and Schisms have no other origin than that obedience is refused to the priest of God, and that men lose sight of the fact that there is one judge in the place of Christ in this world" (Epist. xii. ad Cornelium, n. 5). No one, therefore, unless in communion with Peter can share in his authority, since it is absurd to imagine that he who is outside can command in the Church. Wherefore, Optatus of Milevis blamed the Donatists for this reason: "Against which gates (of hell) we read that Peter received the saving keys, that is to say, our prince, to whom it was said by Christ: 'To thee will I give the keys of the Kingdom of

Heaven, and the gates of Hell shall not conquer them.' Whence is it, therefore, that you strive to obtain for yourselves the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven—you who fight against the chair of Peter?" (Lib. ii., n. 4-5.)

But the Episcopal order is rightly judged to be in communion with Peter as Christ commanded, if it be subject to and obeys Peter; otherwise it becomes a lawless and disorderly crowd. It is not sufficient for the due preservation of the unity of the faith that the head should merely have been charged with the office of superintendent, or should have been invested solely with a power of direction. But it is absolutely necessary that he should have received real and sovereign authority which the whole community is bound to obey. What had the Son of God in view when he promised the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven to Peter ALONE? BIBLICAL USAGE and the unanimous teachings of the Fathers clearly show that supreme authority is designated in the passage by the word KEYS. Nor is it lawful to interpret in a different sense what was given to Peter alone, and what was given to the other Apostles conjointly with him. If the power of binding, loosing and feeding confers upon each and every one of the Bishops the successors of the Apostles a real authority to rule the people committed to him, certainly the same power must have the same effect in his case to whom the duty of feeding the lambs and the sheep has been assigned by God. "Christ constituted [Peter] not only pastor but pastor of pastors; Peter therefore feeds the lambs and feeds the sheep, feeds the children and feeds the mothers, governs the subjects and rules the prelates, because the lambs and the sheep form the whole of the Church" (S. Brunonis Episcopi Signiensis Comment. in Joan., part. iii., cap. 21, n. 55). Hence those remarkable expressions of the ancients concerning St. Peter, which most clearly set forth the fact that he was placed in the highest degree of dignity and authority. They frequently call him "the Prince of the College of the Disciples; the Prince of the holy Apostles; the ruler of the whole world; the first of the Apostles; the safeguard of the Church." In this sense St. Bernard writes as follows to Pope Eugenius: "Who art thou? The great priest—the high priest. Thou art the Prince of Bishops and the heir of the Apostles..... Thou art he to whom the keys were given. There are, it is true, other gatekeepers of heaven and other pastors of flocks, but thou art so much the more glorious as thou hast inherited a different and more glorious name than all the rest. They have flocks consigned to them, one to each; to thee all the flocks are confined as one flock to one shepherd, and not alone the sheep, but the shepherds. You ask how I prove this? From the words of the Lord. To which—I do not say—of the Bishops, but even of the Apostles have the sheep been so absolutely and unreservedly committed? If thou lovest me, Peter, feed My sheep. Which sheep? Of this or that people, of this city, or country, or kingdom? My sheep, He says: to whom therefore is it not evident that He does not designate some, but all? We can make no exception where no distinction is made" (De Consideratione, lib. ii., cap. 8).

But it is opposed to the truth, and in evident contradiction with the divine constitution of the Church, to hold that while each Bishop is INDIVIDUALLY bound to obey the authority of the Roman Pontiff, taken COLLECTIVELY the Bishops are not so bound. For it is the nature and object of a foundation to support the unity of the whole edifice and to give stability to it, rather than to EACH COMPONENT PART; and in the present case this is much more applicable, since Christ the Lord wished that by the strength and solidity of the foundation the gates of hell should be prevented from prevailing against the Church. All are agreed that the divine promise must be understood of the Church as a whole, and not of any certain portions of it. These can indeed be overcome by the assaults of the powers of hell, as in point of fact has befallen some of them. Moreover, he who is set over the whole flock must have authority, not only over the sheep dispersed throughout the Church, but also

when they are assembled together. Do the sheep when they are all assembled together rule and guide the shepherd? Do the successors of the Apostles assembled together constitute the foundation on which the successor of St. Peter rests in order to derive therefrom strength and stability? Surely jurisdiction and authority belong to him in whose power have been placed the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, not alone in all provinces taken singly, but in all taken collectively. And as the Bishops, each in his own district, command with real power not only individuals but the whole community, so the Roman Pontiff, whose jurisdiction extends to the whole Christian commonwealth, must have all its parts, even taken collectively, subject and obedient to their authority. Christ the Lord, as we have quite sufficiently shown, made Peter and his successors HIS VICARS, to exercise for ever in the Church the power which He exercised during His mortal life. Can the Apostolic College be said to have been above its master in authority?

This power over the Episcopal College to which we refer, and which is clearly set forth in Holy Writ, has even been acknowledged and attested by the Church, as is clear from the teaching of General Councils. "We read that the Roman Pontiff has pronounced judgments on the prelates of all the churches; we do not read that anybody has pronounced sentence on him" (Hadrianus ii., Allocutione iii., ad Synodum Romanam n. 869, Cf. Actionem vii., Conc. Constantinopolitani iv.). The reason for which is stated thus: "there is no authority greater than that of the Apostolic See" (Nicolaus in Epist. lxxxvi. ad Michael. Imperat.).* Wherefore Galasius on the decrees of Councils says: "That which the First See has not approved of cannot stand; but what it has thought well to decree has been received by the whole Church" (Epist. xxvi., ad Episcopos Dardaniæ, n. 5). It has ever been unquestionably the office of the Roman Pontiffs to ratify or to reject the decrees of Councils. Leo the Great rescinded the acts of the Conciliabulum of Ephesus. Damasus rejected those of Rimini, and Hadrian I. those of Constantinople. The 28th Canon of the Council of Chalcedon, by the very fact that it lacks the assent and approval of the Apostolic See, is admitted by all to be worthless. Rightly, therefore, has Leo X. laid down in the 5th Council of Lateran "that the Roman Pontiff alone, as having authority over all Councils, has full jurisdiction and power to summon, to transfer, to dissolve Councils, as is clear, not only from the testimony of Holy Writ, from the teaching of the Fathers and of the Roman Pontiffs, and from the decrees of the sacred canons, but from the teaching of the very Councils themselves." Indeed, Holy Writ attests that the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven were given to Peter alone, and that the power of binding and loosing was granted to the Apostles and to Peter; but there is nothing to show that the Apostles received supreme power WITHOUT PETER and AGAINST PETER. Such power they certainly did not receive from Jesus Christ. Wherefore, in the decree of the Vatican Council as to the nature and authority of the primacy of the Roman Pontiff, no newly conceived opinion is set forth, but the venerable and constant belief of every age (Sess. iv., cap. 3).

Nor does it beget any confusion in the administration that Christians are bound to obey a twofold authority. We are prohibited in the first place by Divine Wisdom from entertaining any such thought, since this form of government was constituted by the counsel of God Himself. In the second place we must note that the due order of things and their mutual relations are disturbed if there be a twofold magistracy of the same rank set over a people, neither of which is amenable to the other. But the authority of the Roman Pontiff is supreme, universal, independent; that of the bishops limited and dependent. "It is not congruous that two superiors with equal authority should be placed over the same flock; but that two, one of whom is higher than the other, should be placed over the same

* "It is evident that the judgment of the Apostolic See, than which there is no authority greater, may be rejected by no one, nor is it lawful for anyone to pass judgment on its judgment."

(Continued on page 8.)