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ENCYCLICAL LETTER

OF POPE LEO XIII ON THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH.

[CONTINUED.]

EVERY REVEALED TRUTH, WITHOUT EXCEPTION, MUST BE ACCEPTED.

9. The Church, founded on these principles and mindful of her office, has done nothing with greater zeal and endeavour than she has displayed in guarding the integrity of the faith. Hence she regarded as rebels and expelled from the ranks of her children all who held beliefs on any point of doctrine different from her own. The Arians, the Montanists, the Novatians, the Quartodecimans, the Eutyrians, did not certainly reject all Catholic doctrine: they abandoned only a certain portion of it. Still who does not know that they were declared heretics and banished from the bosom of the Church? In like manner were condemned all authors of heretical tenets who followed them in subsequent ages. "There can be nothing more dangerous than those heretics who admit nearly the whole cycle of doctrine, and yet by one word, as with a drop of poison, infect the real and simple faith taught by our Lord and handed down by Apostolic tradition" (Auctor. Tract. de Fide Orthodoxa contra Arianos).

The practice of the Church has always been the same, as is shown by the unanimous teaching of the Fathers, who were wont to hold as outside Catholic communion, and alien to the Church, whoever would recede in the least degree from any point of doctrine proposed by her authoritative magisterium. Epiphanius, Augustine, Theodoret, drew up a long list of the heresies of their times. St. Augustine notes that other heresies may spring up, to a single one of which, should any one give his assent, he is by the very fact cut off from Catholic unity. "No one who merely disbelieves in all (these heresies) can for that reason regard himself as a Catholic or call himself one. For there may be or may arise some other heresies, which are not set out in this work of ours, and, if any one holds to a single one of these he is not a Catholic" (S. Augustine, De Haeresibus, n. 88).

The need of this divinely instituted means for the preservation of unity, about which we speak, is urged by St. Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians. In this he first admonishes them to preserve with every care concord of minds: "Solicitous to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. iv., 3, et seq.). And as souls cannot be perfectly united in charity unless minds agree in faith, he wishes all to hold the same faith: "One Lord, one faith," and this so perfectly one as to prevent all danger of error: "that henceforth we be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the wickedness of men, by cunning craftiness, by which they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph. iv., 14): and this he teaches, is to be observed, not for a time only—"but until we all meet in the unity of faith . . . unto the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ" (13). But, in what has Christ placed the primary principle, and the means of preserving this unity? In that—"He gave some apostles—and other some pastors and doctors, for the perfection of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edification of the body of Christ" (11-12).

Wherefore, from the very earliest times the fathers and doctors of the Church have been accustomed to follow and, with one accord to defend this rule. Origen writes: "As often as the heretics allege the possession of the canonical scriptures, to which all Christians give unanimous assent, they seem to say: 'Behold the word of truth is in the houses.' But we should believe them not and abandon not the primary and ecclesiastical tradition. We should believe not otherwise than has been handed down by the tradition of the Church of God" (Vetus Interpretatio Commentariorum in Matt. n. 46). Irenaeus too says: "The doctrine of the Apostles is the true faith . . . which is known to us through the Episcopal succession . . . which has reached even unto our age by the very

fact that the Scriptures have been zealously guarded and fully interpreted" (Contra Haereses, lib. iv., cap. 33, n. 8). And Tertullian: "It is therefore clear that all doctrine which agrees with that of the Apostolic Churches—the matrices and original centres of the faith, must be looked upon as the truth, holding without hesitation that the Church received it from the Apostles, the Apostles from Christ and Christ from God . . . We are in communion with the Apostolic churches, and by the very fact that they agree amongst themselves we have a testimony of the truth" (De Praescrip., cap. xxxi). And so Hilary: "Christ teaching from the ship signifies that those who are outside the Church can never grasp the divine teaching; for the ship typifies the Church where the word of life is deposited and preached. Those who are outside are like sterile and worthless sand: they cannot comprehend" (Comment. in Matt. xiii., n. 1). Rufinus praises Gregory of Nazianzum and Basil because "they studied the text of Holy Scripture alone, and took the interpretation of its meaning not from their own inner consciousness, but from the writings and on the authority of the ancients, who in their turn, as it is clear, took their rule for understanding the meaning from the Apostolic succession" (Hist. Eccl. lib. ii., cap. 9).

Wherefore, as appears from what has been said, Christ instituted in the Church a LIVING AUTHORITATIVE and PERMANENT MAGISTERIUM, which by His own power He strengthened, by the spirit of truth He taught, and by miracles confirmed. He willed and ordered, under the gravest penalties, that its teachings should be received as if it were His own. As often, therefore as it is declared on the authority of this teaching that this or that is contained in the deposit of divine revelation, it must be believed by every one as true. If it could in any way be false, an evident contradiction follows; for then God Himself would be the author of error in man. "Lord, if we be in error, we are being deceived by thee" (Richardus de S. Victore, De Trin., lib. i., cap. 2). In this wise, all cause for doubting being removed, can it be lawful for any one to reject any one of those truths without by the very fact falling into heresy?—without separating himself from the Church?—without repudiating in one sweeping act the whole of Christian teaching? For such is the nature of faith that nothing can be more absurd than to accept some things and reject others. Faith, as the Church teaches, is "that supernatural virtue by which, through the help of God and through the assistance of His grace, we believe what He has revealed to be true, not on account of the intrinsic truth perceived by the natural light of reason, but because of the authority of God Himself, the Revealer, who can neither deceive nor be deceived" (Conc. Vat., Sess. iii., cap. 3). If then it be certain that anything is revealed by God, and this is not believed, then nothing whatever is believed by divine Faith: For what the Apostle St. James judges to be the effect of a moral delinquency, the same is to be said of an erroneous opinion in the matter of faith. "Whoever shall offend in one point, is become guilty of all" (Ep. James ii., 10). Nay, it applies with greater force to an erroneous opinion. For it can be said with less truth that every law is violated by one who commits a single sin, since it may be that he only virtually despises the majesty of God the Legislator. But he who dissents even in one point from divinely revealed truth absolutely rejects all faith, since he thereby refuses to honor God as the supreme truth and the FORMAL MOTIVE OF FAITH. "In many things they are with me, in a few things not with me; but in those few things in which they are not with me the many things in which they are will not profit them" (S. Augustinus in Psal. liv., n. 19). And this indeed most deservedly; for they, who take from Christian doctrine what they please, lean on their own judgment, not on faith; and not "bringing into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. x., 5), they more truly obey themselves than God. "You, who believe what you like of the gospels and believe not what you like, believe yourselves rather than the gospel" (S. Augustinus, lib. xvii., Contra Faustum Manichaeum, cap. 3).

For this reason the Fathers of the Vatican Council laid down nothing new, but followed divine revelation and the acknowledged and invariable teaching of the Church as to the very nature of faith, when they decreed as follows: "All those things are to be believed by divine and Catholic faith which are contained in the written or unwritten word of God, and which are proposed by the Church as divinely revealed, either by a solemn definition or in the exercise of its ordinary and universal Magisterium" (Sess. iii., cap. 3). Hence, as it is clear that God absolutely willed "that there should be unity in His Church, and as it is evident what kind of unity He willed, and by means of what principle he ordained that this principle should be maintained, we may address the following words of St. Augustine to all who have not deliberately closed their minds to the truth: "When we see the great help of God, such manifest progress and such abundant fruit, shall we refuse to take refuge in the bosom of that Church, which, as is evident to all, possesses the supreme authority of the Apostolic See through the Episcopal succession? In vain do heretics rage round it; they are condemned partly by the judgment of the people themselves, partly by the weight of councils, partly by the splendid evidence of miracles. To refuse to the Church the primacy is most impious, and above measure arrogant. And if all learning, no matter how easy and common it may be, in order to be fully understood requires a teacher and a master, what can be greater evidence of pride and rashness than to be unwilling to learn about the books of the divine mysteries from the proper interpreter, and to wish to condemn them unknown?" (De Unitate Credendi, cap. xvii., n. 35).

It is then undoubtedly the office of the Church to guard Christian doctrine and to propagate it in its integrity and purity. But this is not all: the object for which the Church has been instituted is not wholly attained by the performance of this duty. For, since Jesus Christ delivered himself up for the salvation of the human race, and to this end directed all His teachings and commandments, so He ordered the Church to strive, by the truth of its doctrine, to sanctify and to save mankind. But faith alone cannot compass so great, excellent, and important an end. There must needs be also the fitting and devout worship of God, which is to be found chiefly in the divine Sacrifice and in the dispensation of the Sacraments, as well as salutary laws and discipline. All these must be found in the Church, since it continues the mission of our Saviour for ever. The Church alone offers to the human race that religion—that state of absolute perfection—which He wished, as it were, to be INCORPORATED in it. And it alone supplies those means of salvation which accord with the ordinary counsels of Providence.

THE CHURCH A DIVINE SOCIETY.

10. But as this heavenly doctrine was never left to the arbitrary judgment of private individuals, but, in the beginning delivered by Jesus Christ, was afterwards committed by Him exclusively to the Magisterium already named, so the power of performing and administering the divine mysteries, together with the authority of ruling and governing, was not bestowed by God on all Christians indiscriminately, but on certain chosen persons. For to the Apostles and their legitimate successors alone these words have reference: "Going into the world, preach the Gospel." "Baptizing them." "Do this in commemoration of Me." "Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them." And in like manner He ordered the Apostles only and those who should lawfully succeed them to FEED—that is to govern with authority—all Christian souls. Whence it also follows that it is necessarily the duty of Christians to be subject and to obey. And these duties of the apostolic office are, in general, all included in the words of St. Paul: "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. iv., 1).

Wherefore, Jesus Christ bade all men, present and future, follow Him as their leader and Saviour; and this, not merely as individuals, but as forming a society, organized and united in mind. In this way a duly constituted society

should exist, formed out of the divided multitude of peoples, one in faith, on in end, one in the participation of the means adapted to the attainment of the end, and one as subject to one and the same authority. To this end He established in the Church all those principles which necessarily tend to make organized human societies, and through which they attain the perfection proper to each. That is, in it (the Church), all who wished to be the sons of God by adoption might attain to the perfection demanded by their high calling, and might obtain salvation. The Church, therefore, as we have said, is man's guide to whatever pertains to Heaven. This is the office appointed unto it by God: that it may watch over and may order all that concerns religion, and may, without let or hindrance, exercise according to its judgment, its charge over Christianity. Wherefore they who pretend that the Church has any wish to interfere in civil matters, or to infringe upon the rights of the State, know it not, or wickedly calumniate it.

God indeed even made the Church a society far more perfect than any other. For the end for which the Church exists is as much higher than the end of other societies as divine grace is above nature, as immortal blessings are above the transitory things on earth. Therefore the Church is a society DIVINE in its origin, SUPERNATURAL in its end and in the means proximately adapted to the attainment of that end; but it is a HUMAN community inasmuch as it is composed of men. For this reason we find it called in Holy Writ by names indicating a perfect society. It is spoken of as THE HOUSE OF GOD, THE CITY PLACED UPON THE MOUNTAIN to which all nations must come. But it is also the FOLD presided over by one Shepherd, and into which all Christ's sheep must betake themselves. Yea, it is called THE KINGDOM WHICH GOD HAS RAISED UP and which WILL STAND FOR EVER. Finally it is the BODY OF CHRIST—that is, of course, His mystical body, but a body living and duly organized and composed of many members; members indeed which have not all the same functions, but which, united one to the other, are kept bound together by the guidance and authority of the head.

Indeed no true and perfect human society can be conceived which is not governed by some supreme authority. Christ, therefore, must have given to His Church a supreme authority to which all Christians must render obedience. For this reason, as the unity of the faith is necessarily required for the unity of the Church, inasmuch as it is the BODY OF THE FAITHFUL, so also for this same unity, inasmuch as the Church is a divinely constituted society, unity of government which effects, and involves UNITY OF COMMUNION, is necessary JURE DIVINO: "The unity of the Church is manifested in the mutual connection or communion of its members, and likewise in the relation of all the members of the Church to one head" (St. Thomas, 2a 2ae, q. xxxix., a. 1).

From this it is easy to see that men can fall away from the unity of the Church by schism, as well as by heresy. "We think that this difference exists between heresy and schism" (writes St. Jerome): "heresy has no perfect dogmatic teaching, whereas schism, through some Episcopal dissent, also separates from the Church" (S. Hieronymus, Comment. in Epist. ad Titum, cap. iii., v. 10-11). In which judgment St. John Chrysostom concurs: "I say and protest (he writes) that it is as wrong to divide the Church as to fall into heresy" (Hom. xi., in Epist. ad Ephes., n. 5). Wherefore as no heresy can ever be justifiable, so in like manner there can be no justification for schism . . . there can be no just necessity for destroying the unity of the Church" (S. Augustinus, Contra Epistolam Parmeniani, lib. ii., cap. ii., n. 25).

THE SUPREME AUTHORITY FOUNDED BY CHRIST.

11. The nature of this supreme authority which all Christians are bound to obey, can be ascertained only by finding out what was the evident and positive will of Christ. Certainly Christ is a King for ever; and though invisible, He continues unto the end of time to govern and guard His Church from Heaven. But since He willed that His kingdom should be visible He was obliged, when He as-

cended into Heaven, to designate a vicergerent on earth. "Should any one say that Christ is the one head and the one shepherd, the ones pious of the one Church, he does not give an adequate reply. It is clear indeed that Christ is the author of grace in the Sacraments of the Church; it is Christ Himself who baptizes; it is He who forgives sins; it is He who is the true priest who hath offered Himself upon the altar of the cross, and it is by His power that His body is daily consecrated upon the altar; and still, because He was not to be visibly presented to all the faithful, He made choice of ministers through whom the aforesaid Sacraments should be dispensed to the faithful, as said above" (cap. 74). "For the same reason, therefore, because He was about to withdraw His visible presence from the Church, it was necessary that He should appoint some person in His place, to have the charge of the Universal Church. Hence before His ascension He said to Peter: 'Feed my sheep'" (St. Thomas, Contra Gentiles, lib. iv., cap. 76).

Jesus Christ, therefore, appointed St. Peter to be the head of the Church; and He also determined that the authority instituted in perpetuity for the salvation of all should be inherited by His successors, in whom the same permanent authority of Peter himself should continue. And so He made that remarkable promise to Peter and to no one else: "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build My Church" (Matt. xvi., 18). "To Peter the Lord spoke: to one, therefore, that He might establish unity upon one" (S. Pacianus ad Sempronium, Ep. iii., n. 11). "Without any prelude He mentions St. Peter's name and that of his father (Blessed art thou Simon, son of John) and He does not wish Him to be called any more Simon; claiming him for Himself according to His divine authority. He aptly names him Peter, from PETRA the rock, since upon him He was about to found His Church" (S. Cyrillus Alexandrinus, In Evang. Joan., lib. ii., in cap. i., v. 42).

THE UNIVERSAL JURISDICTION OF ST. PETER.

12. From this text it is clear that by the will and command of God the Church rests upon St. Peter, just as a building rests on its foundation. Now the proper nature of a foundation is to be a principle of cohesion for the various parts of the building. It must be the necessary condition of stability and strength. Remove it and the whole building falls. It is consequently the office of St. Peter to support the Church, and to guard it in all its strength and indestructible unity. How could he fulfil this office without the power of commanding; forbidding, and judging, which is properly called JURISDICTION? It is only by this power of jurisdiction that nations and commonwealths are held together. A primacy of honour and the shadowy right of giving advice and admonition, which is called DIRECTION, could never secure to any society of men unity or strength. The words—AND THE GATES OF HELL SHALL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT—proclaim and establish the authority of which we speak. "What is the IT?" (writes Origen). "Is it the rock upon which Christ builds the Church or the Church? The expression indeed is ambiguous, as if the rock and the Church were one and the same. I indeed think that this is so, and that neither against the rock upon which Christ builds His Church nor against the Church shall the gates of hell prevail" (Origenes, Comment. in Matt., tom. xii., n. ii). The meaning of this divine utterance is, that, notwithstanding, the wiles and intrigues which they bring to bear against the Church, it can never be that the Church committed to the care of St. Peter shall succumb or in any wise fall. "For the Church, as the edifice of Christ who has wisely built His house upon a rock, cannot be conquered by the gates of hell, which may prevail over any man who may be off the rock and outside the Church, but shall be powerless against it" (Ibid). Therefore God confided His Church to Peter so that he might safely guard it with his unconquerable power. He invested him, therefore, with the needful authority; since the right to rule is absolutely required by him who has to guard human society really and effectively. This, furthermore, Christ

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