

"I believe one Catholic and Apostolic Church, as ensuing necessarily upon a sound and unreserved belief in the doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity, and as the divinely ordered agency whereby alone (so far as God's will stands revealed), the mercy of God in Christ Jesus can be appropriated by any of us, whether the forgiveness of sins, or the resurrection of the body, or, the crowning gift of all, the life everlasting.

If it be asked, "Is this unity attainable?" we answer, absolutely, perhaps, not. Without doubt, not universally. But how far is honesty attainable, or truth or purity? None of us would wish the Sermon on the mount lowered to match our actual attainments in holiness. Why then attempt to explain away the Divine precepts concerning Christian unity, out of compliance with the miserably divided condition of modern Christendom? Still, if any do really doubt the practicability of St. Paul's teaching, the two following remarks may not seem irrelevant: one, that, as a matter of fact, strong convictions and consistent conduct are always far less likely to irritate and lead to quarrels than hollow friendships. The other, that probably every laborious pastor, who has had faith enough to pray for it and strive after it, has witnessed the growth of Christian Unity among the members of his own flock in sufficient measure to convince him that more abundant faith in the same direction would certainly ensue in larger results. We have seen—all of us most likely who are engaged in the ministry—in the course of our pastoral work, how wonderfully common prayer, frequent receptions together of Holy Communion, the constant interchange of holy sympathies, a growing interest in a common work, all springing out of the profession of one faith, has recently knitted together into a fellowship as real as any thing under heaven is real, characters naturally the most uncongenial and diverse, a fellowship not based on a concerted banishment of forbidden subjects, but so loving and so true that there no longer seemed any subjects to forbid. And no doubt many and many a pastor who has experienced this unspeakably sweet reward of his poor toils has been constrained to say within himself, when contemplating his little band of brethren and sisters in Christ,—“This is Christianity,—this is that Communion of Saints gathered by means of the Church out of the world, which time cannot weaken, nor seas divide, nor death itself rupture, and has accepted the fact as perhaps the clearest evidence ever vouchsafed to him of the reality of his pastoral commission, and the certainty of the truths entrusted to his keeping.

II. But the text does more than teach us that living, loving union with one another in Christ Jesus is the end for which the Gospel was commanded to be published, is itself the cure and contradictory of sin, and the true rehearsal of the imperturbable love of Heaven. It further proclaims in the most distinct and unqualified terms, the human agency by means of which it is the Divine pleasure to work out this spiritual transmutation. Indeed, nothing is more remarkable in the use which St. Paul here makes of the sixty-eighth Psalm, than the boldness with which he identifies the human agents with the spiritual gifts themselves. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. . . . And he gave some, apostles, and some, prophets, and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." Nor can it be pretended that we have here a mere haphazard, accumulative recital of various terms, not really representing different offices, but, rather, collectively expressing the collective function of the entire church, as intended to be exercised not more through the ministry properly so

called, than through the priesthood of each individual Christian. For elsewhere,* it will be remembered, the same Apostle enforces order, and a due regard to the partition and subordination of ecclesiastical functions, by enumerating these same offices, and insisting most pointedly on the distinctions intended to be made between them. But time forbids us to dwell now on this portion of our subject. Suffice it to say that, while we confess both the priesthood and the royalty of every baptized person, we none the less believe ourselves forbidden by numberless passages of Holy Writ, but by none more positively than by the one before us, to doubt either the Divine origin of the ministerial order as distinct from the mass of the Christian body, or the Divine authority of their peculiar commission, or that it is our Lord's will to employ this ministry, until He come again, not only as the ambassadors of His truth, but as the vehicles, however unworthy, of His grace.

And now it only remains that I endeavour to collect all that I have, at least, wished to say into a few sentences of special comfort for him whom the sacred service of this day is about to elevate to the highest office in Christ's Church. And what, I would ask, should more comfort and sustain a Bishop in any region of the earth, than to know, be thoroughly assured, that his office is most literally one of God's Pentecostal gifts to men, and an integral part of our Lord's own plan for the perfecting of His disciples? Every true man works better in a true position than in a false or doubtful one. Short only of direct communion with Christ Himself, what should cheer or nerve a Bishop more than a steady conviction that he is sent to do work which the Church on earth can never cease to require, and such as none but a lawful Bishop can lawfully undertake to do?

We are all familiar with the popular objections to this teaching, or, rather, less to the teaching itself, than to the unwelcome inferences which it is thought to necessitate. I would anticipate such objections in this instance with the general remark, that nothing that has been said has been intended even to imply a judgment upon any who may treat either Episcopacy in particular, or Holy Orders altogether, with contempt or unbelief. Confidence in Catholic truth is quite consistent with kindly helpfulness for those who in any thing have renounced, or perhaps have never been taught it, and with the most sensitive shrinking from every appearance of a claim to usurp the office of judge over them, further than the wholesome discipline of our own particular branch of the Church may demand it. Thousands of nominal Christians may, and do, deny the Godhead of our Lord, the personality of His Holy Spirit, the reality of His promised presence with His Church, the vitality of His Sacraments. Still larger, perhaps, is the proportion of nominal Christians, and even occasional church-goers, who lead immoral lives, are profane, unclean, untruthful, dishonest, or only conventionally honest, or in some other like way flagrantly disobedient. And even larger still, probably, is the number of those, who leading thoroughly respectable lives, and passing for good Christians, habitually neglect private prayer and Holy Communion, and have no sense of their obligation as Christians to be merciful, or self-denying, or placable towards those who wrong them. And, such being the facts, marvellous would it be if there were not crowds of church-goers and professed disciples, who would seem to have no other conception of unity than as of a universal toleration of universal disagreement; and crowds and crowds again,

who, under various influences, from the miserable taint of Socialism to the coarsest sensuality, avow themselves (and no doubt quite truly) incapable of perceiving any thing in Holy Orders to justify the solemn language of the ordinal, or to warrant the imputation to the ministerial office of any indelible sacredness, or, for example, to account for this day's proceedings—the sending forth a Bishop to a little island such as St. Helena. But do we affect to judge these? We judge none of them, as pretending to pronounce how far their several degrees of aberration from the truth are imperilling their eternal safety. We do know what Christ hath forbidden and enjoined, and we do know what sins Scripture pronounces to be deadly, whether it be unbelief or covetousness, or any other. But we do not affect to anticipate the judgment of the great day. Each class of cases alike runs at last into a difficulty expressed by the old question, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" And every such question can only be met safely by the memorable allwise answer, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." But we decline to pacify the world by surrendering any title of what we are assured is Catholic truth, or is necessary to Catholic order. And so long as we have the Acts of the Apostles, and the Pastoral Epistles, and the laws and monuments and universal customs of the earlier centuries, to guide us, our path of duty never surely needs be other than plain. And so judging—but not condemning—we can have no scruple in asserting that Christian unity, grounded in oneness of faith, is essential to the life in Christ, that orders are essential to unity, and episcopacy necessary to both, necessary to convey orders, and to maintain that paternal government and loving discipline, without which true, hearty, well-compacted brotherhood in Christ there cannot be. What better wish can we wish our brother (if "brother") I may yet be permitted to call him, than that this conception of the high office he is about to receive may fasten on him year by year with ever tighter hold, and be making ever deeper marks upon his whole life and spirit!

So long as the *Sacra Privata* shall continue to be a text-book with us, who can forget that we have had island-bishops before St. Helena because an episcopal see, whose lot was far from the great highways of the world, whose revenues were scanty, whose flock was mostly poor and scattered, and whose only abiding sense of dignity must have proceeded from the profound conviction that the bishop is a chief office-bearer and delegate of Christ. But men's works live after them. And so long as the fragrant memory of the great and holy Bishop Wilson shall survive, our brother, now about to be made a bishop, will scarcely need any more convincing or more refreshing testimony, that the profoundest sense of the necessity and the dignity of the office, is the surest guarantee for a worthy estimate of its dangers, and for a meek and thankful and patient and withal brave perseverance in its saintly labours, until the Chief Shepherd shall see fit to end them, and crown them, as we humbly trust, with the incorruptible reward.

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