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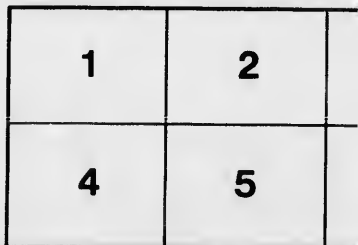
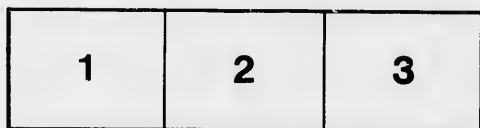
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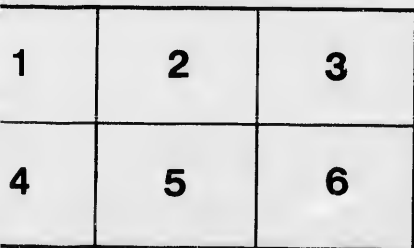
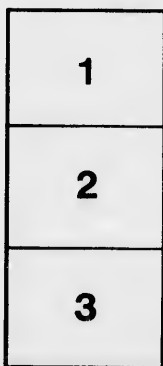
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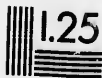
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TRACTS BY CANADIAN LAYMEN.

NO. 3.

CATHOLIC UNITY.

"I believe in the Holy Catholic Church,"—"One Catholic and Apostolic Church." Every Sunday, at least, we repeat these solemn words of the ancient creed; they express our belief in the continued existence of CHRIST'S Church, Holy, Apostolic, Universal, and United, even in these days of dissension and schism.

In the fullest sense of the words, we can only apply them to the band of faithful or baptized followers of our LORD, who are Christians not merely in name, but in heart and life. They are scattered abroad throughout the visible Church; they hold the faith in all its apostolic fullness; and they are united in CHRIST, renewing that union whenever they approach His Altar.

But is there any wider meaning in which the description, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic, and United, can be applied to the Church as it is? Or may these words express an ideal, in part obscured, to the resuscitation of which we may look forward with confidence? It is here proposed to answer this question, so far as the qualifications of Unity and Catholicity are concerned.

It is important at the outset to remember that even in Apostolic times the word "church" had two distinct meanings, as referring to any single congregation of Christians, or as embracing the whole body of the faithful everywhere; while by "the visible Church" is plainly signified the entire body of those who have been regenerated by the HOLY SPIRIT through the Sacrament of Baptism; and that is the Church of the creeds. In this broad and Catholic definition, we possess an essential element of unity, by Baptism into one Body; while this unity is perpetuated by the constant participation of the Bread which came down from Heaven, inasmuch as we, though many, are declared by S. Paul to be one on this very account.

And here may be noted that they who make light of schism, are consistent in ignoring the operation of the major sacraments, and in denying the existence of the minor, and in applying to

the words both of Bible and Prayerbook a fictitious meaning. But though the Unity of the Church is plainly taught by those teachers from whom we profess to receive instruction, nevertheless many a sincere Catholic may well ask, on reviewing the present divisions of Christendom, Is it possible that this unity of the Church upon earth can ever again be visible?

In His last great Agony, our Saviour prayed, "That they all may be ONE, as thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be ONE in Us: *that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.*" Here we have a distinct supplication for visible unity, such as unbelievers might see; and there is an equally distinct implication that only by such unity can the heathen be brought to accept the Gospel. For these two reasons then: first, that our Saviour prayed for it, and second, that it is necessary for the salvation of the world, we believe that the Church will, by God's grace, regain that Catholic unity which marked its first days.

The sources of difficulty in the accomplishment of this unity among those who profess to hold the faith in its entirety are mainly these: the enunciation of new dogmatic teaching, unknown to the primitive Church, and not essential; unnecessary definition of doctrine concerning the Mysteries of the Faith; difference of practice, such as involves absolute discrepancy in ritual and discipline; and a habit of dispute concerning the meaning of words which are more or less elastic; besides the baneful effects of prejudice on this side and of ignorance on that.

During the period of our own memory we have seen the promulgation by the Church of Rome of the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Infallibility of the Pope as articles of faith; and long before this the Protestant sects had discovered that it is a necessary part of Christianity to practise the Sabbatarianism of the Mosaic law, that good works are a hindrance to salvation (a blasphemy eagerly adopted by the recreant Luther), and that God has predestinated the bulk of mankind to everlasting damnation; while we are now told,—most recent development of all,—that state aid to Christianity is destructive of true religion.

Among unnecessary definitions the most signal and the most unfortunate is that of the Council of Trent, which imposed on the Latin Church the dogma of Transubstantiation as the only tenable explanation of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, which apostles and martyrs had been content simply to adore. This

definition has unquestionably induced, as a general fact, a far grosser view of the Blessed Sacrament than it was intended to convey, and has thereby widened the gulf between Rome and England no less than between the orthodox Greek Church and the Roman obedience.

Local differences of ritual, and, in some measure, of discipline, have existed from the first. To the reasonable mind they afford no excuse even for the thought of schism. If any Christian Church retains in its pastorate that succession from the Apostles without which the greater number of the Sacraments are invalid, none of its members has a just cause for leaving it. The ancient canons distinctly forbid the setting up of altar against altar; and we cannot but view with repugnance the propagation of the infamous Sabrevois Mission, to which occasional offertories are devoted by ignorant or mischievous Canadian parsons. This vaunted scheme compasses sea and land to make but half a proselyte, and has caused some, that would have made devout Romanists if left alone, to emerge so fully into the glorious liberty of pure Protestantism, that they have now become little better than infidels. It is to be hoped that all Catholic churchmen will be on their guard against the voluble advocates of this most pernicious organization. The differences between the Catholic Church and the sects are clearly marked, and centre in the acceptance or denial of the doctrine of sacramental grace. The differences between the various branches of the one Church are trifling, compared with the grand principles on which they are all agreed. The Anglican, Greek, and Roman communions alike hold every essential of the faith, though in details it may be partially obscured in each by human infirmity or pride. Each alike is Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic, in its origin and in its teaching; and the Visible Oneness for which our Lord prayed will surely come. In the meantime, the Curia may rage against all who would oppose its arrogant lordship over the heritage of God; and a semi-Presbyterian Archbishop may drag the robe of S. Augustine for a time in the mire; but we are sure that the Primate of Rome will yet abandon his lofty claims, and that the Chair of Canterbury will be purified from the stain of a Cranmer and a Tait, and resume its pristine splendour; while the awakened orthodox Church, with its subordinate branches will joyfully complete the long lost unity of Christendom.

But what of the millions that belong to the Protestant sects,

who claim to be of the Christian family, and yet for the most part repudiate the existence of the visible Church? Few, if any, of these bodies have avoided a denial, in whole or in part, of that which the Church has from the first declared essential to salvation; yet, remembering those who shall come from the east and from the west and from the north and from the south, even to the exclusion of children of the Kingdom, we dare not pass judgment on any who through invincible ignorance hold aloof from the Church of God. It remains our duty to raise the standard of Catholic truth against all organizations which oppose it, and resolutely to denounce their claims to a position of spiritual authority; while for individual Protestants, anxious only to find out the true pathway of salvation, we should feel nothing but sympathy, and display nothing but kindness. In many ways doubtless,

— “ the feeble hands and helpless,
Groping blindly in the darkness,
Touch God’s right hand in that darkness,
And are lifted up and strengthened.”

And we, who believe the prayers of CHRIST cannot be vain, and that the earnest longing of the Spouse of CHRIST must be the will and purpose of God, should humble ourselves before Him, resolved that the sin of schism shall not lie at our gates, and watching for the dawn of that day when He, to Whom all things are possible, shall restore to the Catholic Church her long-lost visible unity.

“ Jerusalem, que edificatur ut civitas: ejus participatio ejus in idipsum Rogate quæ ad pacem sunt Jerusalem: et abundantia diligentibus te.”

*Price, two cents, or \$1.25 per hundred. To be had from MESSRS.
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Tracts 1 and 2, on ‘The Dark Ages’ and ‘Protestant Simplicity,’ still in print.
“VOX DEI AUT VOX POPULI” by a Canadian Layman, is just issued;
every Protestant should have a copy of this Pamphlet: price Fifty Cents.

NOTE.—The series of “Tracts by Canadian Laymen,” of which this is the third, will henceforth be published under the auspices of the Catholic Laymen’s Guild. There will be an issue each month on those subjects of which notice has been given in previous Tracts, and also on such other subjects as shall be approved of by the Guild. No. 4 will be on the Ornaments Rubric. We solicit and earnestly invite the support and co-operation of all Catholic Laymen.



