

CATHOLIC UNITY AND THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION



CONFRATERNITY OF UNITY

POST OFFICE BOX 1693

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

1943

There can be no fulfilment of the Divine purpose in any scheme of reunion which does not ultimately include the great Latin Church of the West.

(Lambeth Conference, 1930)

The Confraternity of Unity is composed of members of the Anglican Communion who believe that the See of Rome is the center of unity for all Churches. This Confraternity, therefore, seeks through corporate action within the Anglican Communion a basis of reunion with the Holy See which will not be prejudicial to the facts of her sacramental life.

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CATHOLIC UNITY

STHOMAS AQUINAS defines schism as a sin against charity¹ and conversely we may say that a restoration of unity among Christians can only be brought about by a cultivation of this greatest of Christian virtues, the very bond of peace and of all virtues. This is indeed the teaching of our Lord himself: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."² The problem of Christian unity presents many difficulties but even the greatest will be overcome when they are faced and studied in the spirit of charity.

Now it is one of the encouraging signs of the time in which we live that Christians throughout the world are praying and working for unity. The American Church has played a large part in this movement and it is due to her initiative that the Conference on Faith and Order was first projected, with the result that disciples of our Lord came together from all parts of the world to grapple with this problem of Christian unity. Moreover, within our own Communion societies of all sorts have been formed to study the reunion problem in its various phases and bring about a better understanding among the separated Churches. The Anglican and Eastern Association, for example, has as its object the restoration of communion between ourselves and the Orthodox East. There are also societies for reunion with Roman Catholics and with the Protestant bodies. Other ages may be described as ages of schism but that in which we live may in a very real sense be called the age of unity.

Of these various phases of the reunion question, there is one in particular that the Confraternity of Unity was designed to emphasize; namely, the restoration of communion between ourselves and the Churches in union with the See of Rome. The importance of this phase of the problem has already been recognized by the bishops of the Anglican Church. At Lambeth in 1908 and in 1920, and again in 1930, they clearly asserted, "There can be no fulfilment of the Divine Purpose in any scheme of reunion which does not ultimately include the great Latin Church of the West."³ Certainly we are not acting rashly or unadvisedly in following their counsel and by stressing this special side of the reunion question. The unity of the Christian world demands that Rome should be considered in all schemes for the reunion of the Churches.

¹ Summa 2a 2ae, q. 39, Art. 1.

² S. John xiii, 35.

³ Lambeth Conference 1908, p. 171; 1920, p. 144; 1930, p. 131.

Then too, as Anglicans, we are naturally drawn toward "the great Latin Church of the West with which," to continue the above quotation, "our history has been so closely associated in the past, and to which we are still bound by many ties of common faith and tradition." The Roman Catholic Church, like ourselves holds the faith of the ancient Creeds. She uses the Nicene Creed at the Holy Eucharist and the Apostles' Creed in her daily offices much as we do.

Her teaching in regard to the great Catholic dogmas of the Blessed Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection, and so forth is identical with our own. The seven Sacraments, forms for the administration of which are provided in our Book of Common Prayer, are by her held sacred and faithfully used. Reunion with Rome would involve on our part no sacrifice in regard to these things which we have always held essential. Questions of compromise that are always raised when union with non-Catholics is discussed are not raised in this case.

There is, however, one question that is invariably raised whenever the possibility of reunion with Rome is discussed. It is treated by some as insuperable. What is to be our attitude as loyal Anglicans toward the Papal claims? The difficulties raised by some Anglicans are often due to a misunderstanding of the actual teaching of Rome on this subject and to a faulty or one-sided reading of history. When, however, fairly considered in the light of history and of the actual *de fide* teaching of the Roman Church, we believe that the claims of the Roman See, far from proving to be an obstacle that blocks the way, will rather act as an incentive to encourage our labors for reunion; and that, in addition, we shall find that its acceptance is in accord with a loyal attitude toward our own Church and the Faith which she professed from the beginning.

The Church of England, during the greater part of her history, acknowledged the supremacy of Rome,⁴ as did the Celtic Churches⁵ before her, which she ultimately absorbed.

The English primarily owed their conversion to Pope S. Gregory and the mission of S. Augustine, so that even in her origin the Church in England was papal and so remained until the Reformation. There were quarrels with Rome, for wherever an authority exists this is inevitable. These quarrels, however, far from proving that no such authority existed,

⁴ See "*What Does the Anglo-Saxon Church Say?*"

And "*What Did the Church of England Say?*" by Rev. J. G. Morton Howard, M.A., to be obtained from Mr. R. L. Elderton, Egdean, Fittleworth, Sussex, England.

⁵ See "*What Do the Celtic Churches Say?*" by Rev. Silas Harris, M.A., to be obtained from Mr. R. L. Elderton, Egdean, Fittleworth, Sussex, England.

And "*The Celtic Church and the See of Peter*," by Rev. John Campbell MacNaught, B.D. (Presbyterian), Basil Blackwell, Oxford.

are rather a proof that it did exist and was acknowledged in principle. Moreover, we never find throughout the history of the English Church anything that can be construed as a denial of her belief in the Divine origin of the Primacy of Rome and the spiritual jurisdiction of the successor of St. Peter at Rome. To consider, therefore, the papal claims as opposed to the Anglican position, as some do, is to deny the continuity of our Church to-day with the pre-Reformation Church of England.

Still some may ask did not the Church of England change her position at the Reformation and set aside her ancient belief in the Primacy of Rome? To answer this we must turn to the official statements of the post-Reformation Church. Here we find her appeal is to the Holy Scriptures and to the Oecumenical or General Councils that are recognized by both the East and the West. Let us examine some of these statements, confining ourselves to those of an official nature. At the ordination of bishops, priests, and deacons, the candidate is asked, "Are you persuaded that the Holy Scriptures contain all Doctrine required as necessary for eternal Salvation through faith in Jesus Christ?" To this he must reply, "I am so persuaded." In the case of the two higher orders he is further questioned, "And are you determined out of the said Holy Scriptures to instruct the people committed to your charge; and to teach or maintain nothing, as necessary to eternal salvation, but that which you shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scripture?"⁶ The same teaching is given in number six of the Articles of Religion.

In the consecration of a Bishop in both the English and the American editions of the Book of Common Prayer, "The Holy Scripture and the Ancient Canons" are appealed to.⁷ The reference is undoubtedly to the canons of the Oecumenical Councils. The Church of England makes the teaching of Holy Scripture and the first four Councils a test for heresy in the Statute of Elizabeth of 1558, Cap. I, No. 36, wherein it is stated, "That judges ecclesiastical appointed under the king's commission shall not adjudge for heresy anything but that which heretofore hath been so adjudged by the authority of the canonical Scriptures, or by the first four General Councils . . ." In the second part of the "Homily against the Peril of Idolatry," reference is made to "those six councils, which were allowed and received of all men." In the "Homily on Fasting" "the Chalcedon Council, one of the four general Councils" is appealed to as an authoritative statement of primitive teaching. These Homilies acquire a certain official character from the reference made to them in number

⁶ *Book of Common Prayer*, American Book, p. 533, 542, 554. In the ordination of Bishops, there are some slight variations.

⁷ American Book, p. 554.

XXXV of the Articles of Religion wherein it is stated that they "contain a godly and wholesome Doctrine." The note added to this Article in the American Book of Common Prayer confirms this. It reads: "This Article is received in this Church, so far as it declares the Book of Homilies to be an explication of Christian doctrine . . ." The two Houses of Convocation in the Church of England passed synodically on June 16th, 1871, a resolution that contained the following: ". . . the Church of England desires to maintain firmly the Catholic Faith as set forth by the Oecumenical Councils of the Universal Church and to be united upon the principle of doctrine and discipline in the bond of brotherly love with other churches of Christendom."⁸

The Anglican Church in the Province of South Africa states in its Constitution of 1870 that it accepts the decisions of the undisputed General Councils.

The whole Anglican Episcopate, moreover, assembled at Lambeth, has more than once appealed to the Oecumenical Councils.

At the first Lambeth Conference in 1867, the bishops in the Formal Resolutions of September 24th to 27th conclude their remarks on Church unity as follows: "Lastly, we do here solemnly record our conviction that unity will be most effectually promoted by maintaining the Faith in its purity and integrity, as taught in the Holy Scripture, held by the Primitive Church, summed up in the Creeds, and affirmed by the General Councils . . ."⁹

At the Lambeth Conference of 1888 the bishops reaffirm the teaching of the earlier Conferences in their Encyclical Letters: "In conformity with the practice of former Conferences we declare that we are united under our Divine Head in the fellowship of the one Catholic and Apostolic Church, holding the one Faith revealed in Holy Writ, defined in the Creeds, maintained by the primitive Church, and affirmed by the undisputed Oecumenical Councils . . ."¹⁰

In the report of the committee on "Authoritative Standards" the same statement is repeated¹¹ with the following addition: "With regard to the authority of the Oecumenical Councils our Communion has always recognized the decisions of the first four Councils on matters of faith, nor is there any point of dogma in which it disagrees with the fifth and sixth."¹²

Let us take the bishops at their word and, using the method that they

⁸ Acts of the Church, Whitaker, London, 1886.

⁹ *The Five Lambeth Conferences*, Compiled under the direction of the Most Reverend Randall T. Davidson, D.D., S.P.C.K., p. 53.

¹⁰ *Lambeth Conference*, 1888, p. 18.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 108.

commend to us, apply it to the matter under consideration and see if we can discover whether or not the Papacy formed part of the Catholic Faith as witnessed to by Holy Scripture and the Oecumenical Councils to which they appeal. In the New Testament we shall look for evidence of the primacy of S. Peter and in the Councils for a recognition of that primacy and its continuation in the Bishops of Rome as his successors.

To quote all the texts in the New Testament relating to S. Peter and to comment thereon would require more space than is at our disposal. The New Testament is in everyone's hands and all are free to examine it at will. We believe that scholars of all schools are now ready to admit S. Peter's primacy. In illustration of this we shall confine ourselves to a few quotations from some of the recognized scholars of our own Communion. Bishop Lightfoot of Durham in his *Apostolic Fathers* writes: "Even a cursory glance at the history of the Apostles, so far as it appears in the Gospel records, reveals a certain primacy of S. Peter among the Twelve. He holds the first place in all lists; he has a precedence of responsibility and temptation; he sets the example of moral courage and of moral lapse. Above all he receives special pastoral charges."¹³ Bishop Westcott in his *Gospel according to S. John*, writes: "The representative official precedence of S. Peter thus really underlies the whole narrative of the fourth Gospel."¹⁴ Bishop Headlam of Gloucester referring to S. Matthew xvi, 17-19 in his book, *Jesus Christ in History and Faith*, writes: "And the promise to Peter, which makes him what he is, described early in the New Testament as 'the First', harmonizes exactly with the actual facts. Peter was the Leader of the Apostles in our Lord's lifetime, and was the leader of the primitive Christian community. Is it not natural that he should owe his position to the appointment of his Master?"¹⁵ Professor Foakes-Jackson in his *Peter, Prince of the Apostles* asserts his belief in the early authority of this passage; ". . . in addition," he tells us, "to the fact that no MS. or version has any important variation, the passage must have been of very early date, before there could be any reason to assert a primacy of Peter, which he had not hitherto enjoyed."¹⁶

Professor C. H. Turner in two articles on *S. Peter in the New Testament* which appeared in the August and October numbers of *Theology*, 1926, also commenting on this same passage, writes, "But there remains, of course, still to consider the most striking passage of all (Matthew xvi,

¹³ *Apostolic Fathers*, Clem. Rom. II, 481.

¹⁴ P. XXIII.

¹⁵ Pp. 221-222.

¹⁶ Pp. 66-67.

17-19) ‘. . . and I myself say to thee that thou art Rock, and on this Rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. . . .’ No words could be more startling than these. In the Palestinian surroundings, where the First Gospel was first put into shape, no sort of doubt could have existed as to the unique position conferred by Christ on His chief Apostle; and if for Palestinian we substitute ‘Syrian’ or ‘Antiochene’, we must ascribe the belief to Gentile, as well as to Jewish Christians. Even if the belief were not based on fact, it was quite definitely held within the first fifty years of the life of the Christian Society.”¹⁷ Summing up the testimony of the fourth Gospel, he continues: “As the story draws to its close, S. Peter comes more and more to the front; and at the close itself the same note is intensified. Before Jesus leaves His disciples, He abolishes by a thrice-repeated appeal to Peter’s affection the triple denial, and charges the Apostle solemnly to feed (βόσκει) His lambs and to rule (πολιμαίνει) and feed His little sheep” (xxi, 15-17).¹⁸

In justice to these writers, it must be said that some at least believed that this primacy came to an end with the death of S. Peter. For evidence that it was a permanent office inherited by the Bishops of Rome as his successors, we must turn to the tradition of the Church, which we find embodied in the writings of the Fathers and in the decrees and acts of Councils. This is no less true of the Apostolic office in general which was inherited by the bishops and priests of the Church, than it is of the special prerogatives of S. Peter. The commission of our Lord, for example, to teach and to baptize (S. Matthew xxviii, 18-20), to celebrate the Eucharist, “This do in remembrance of me” (S. Luke xxii, 19; I Corinthians xi, 24) and to absolve (S. John xx, 21-23), was given to the Apostles alone, but no one doubts that the bishops and priests as their successors inherit this commission, though there be no Scripture to that effect but only the constant tradition of the Church. Let us, therefore, turn to this tradition period. For the sake of brevity and because our own Church and Episcopate have especially appealed to them, we shall confine ourselves to the first four Oecumenical Councils. The first two contain little that pertains to the subject we are considering and we shall, therefore, pass them in brief review.

The first Council met at Nicea in 325. Hosius, a Western Bishop, appears to have presided. The Acts of the Council are lost. But let us note in passing that Hosius and the two legates of the Roman See, Vitus

¹⁷ P. 70. Reprinted in *Catholic and Apostolic*, by C. H. Turner, Mowbray & Co., Ltd., London & Oxford & Morehouse Publishing Co., Milwaukee, U. S. A., p. 189.

¹⁸ P. 75. In reprint, p. 199.

and Vincent, although the latter were mere priests, signed the decrees before all the other great bishops, even before Alexander of Alexandria and Eustathius of Antioch, who ranked respectively second and third, after Rome.

The Second Council met at Constantinople in 381. The acts of this Council, also, are lost. Of the Canons the third alone is of interest as bearing on our subject. It runs as follows: “The Bishop of Constantinople, however, shall have the prerogative of honour (τὰ πρεσβεία τῆς τιμῆς), after the Bishop of Rome; because Constantinople is New Rome.”¹⁹ This canon was for a long time rejected by Rome; not, however, as some have thought, because it failed to recognize the unique position of the Roman See, for this it indirectly did. “The very words ‘because Constantinople is New Rome’ show the supreme and unique position of Old Rome.”²⁰ It was rejected because it set aside Alexandria and Antioch, which anciently ranked second and third, in favor of the new See of Constantinople. In a word, Rome refused to recognize a change in the old ecclesiastical order of these Sees.

Let us now turn to a more detailed examination of the next two Councils. They are the first of which the acts have come down to us, and so more fully reveal the teaching of the ancient Fathers in regard to S. Peter and the Roman See.

The third Council met at Ephesus in 431. The decree in the first session which condemns Nestorius contains the following words that clearly recognize the authority of the Roman Bishop: “Compelled thereto by the canons and by the letter of our most holy father and fellow-servant Coelestine, the Roman bishop, we have come with many tears to this sorrowful sentence against him (Nestorius) . . .”²¹ This sentence, moreover, was drawn up before the arrival of the papal legates, so that it cannot be claimed that they influenced the fathers or caused them to insert this reference to papal authority.²² In the third session after the arrival of the legates, Philip, the presbyter, one of these legates, speaks: “There is no doubt, and in fact it is known in all ages, that the holy and most blessed Peter, Prince and Head of the Apostles, pillar of the faith, and foundation of the Catholic Church, received the keys of the kingdom from our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Redeemer of the human race, and that to him was given the power of loosing and binding sins:

¹⁹ *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. XIV, p. 178.

²⁰ *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy*, by Rev. S. Herbert Scott, D.Phil., B.Litt. (Oxon), F.R.H.S., Sheed & Ward, London and New York, p. 139.

²¹ *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. XIV, p. 218, *Mansi*, IV, 1212.

²² *General Councils and Anglican Claims*, by Rev. S. Herbert Scott, p. 39.

who down even to today and forever both lives and judges in his successors. The holy and most blessed Pope Coelestine, according to due order, is his successor and holds his place, and us he sent to supply his place in this holy synod. . . ."²³ In the second session Firmus, the Bishop of Caesarea, in Cappadocia, speaks: "The Apostolic and Holy See of the most holy Bishop Coelestine, hath previously given a decision and decree (τύπον) in this matter. . . . This we have also followed. . . ."²⁴ Juvenal of Jerusalem in the fourth session uses even stronger language in reference to John, the Patriarch of Antioch, who was holding a synod in the same city in defence of Nestorius. "John of Antioch," he says, "ought to render honour and obedience to the Apostolic See of great Rome, by which custom and Apostolic tradition will that the See of Antioch itself should be directed and judged."²⁵ Other passages will occur to the mind of anyone familiar with the acts of this Council, but these will suffice to illustrate our position.

Turning to the Fourth Council, which met at Chalcedon in 451, we open at session one and there at the very beginning of the acts we read: "Paschasinus, the most reverend bishop and legate of the Apostolic See, stood up in the midst with his most reverend colleagues and said: 'We received directions at the hands of the most blessed and Apostolic Bishop of the Roman city, which is the Head of all the Churches. . . .'"²⁶ In the second session after the reading of The Tome of Pope Leo, the bishops cried out, "This is the faith of the fathers, this is the faith of the Apostles. So we all believe, thus the orthodox believe. Anathema to him who does not thus believe. Peter has spoken thus through Leo."²⁷ In this same session occurs the condemnation of Dioscorus, which was pronounced by the papal legates. It concludes as follows: "Wherefore the most holy and blessed Leo, archbishop of the great and elder Rome, through us, and through the present most holy synod together with the thrice blessed and all-glorious Peter the Apostle, who is the rock and foundation of the Catholic Church, and the foundation of the orthodox faith, hath stripped him of the episcopate, and hath alienated from him all hieratic worthiness."²⁸ At the conclusion of its sessions, the Council sent a copy of its Acts to Leo, accompanied by a letter. One brief quotation from this letter will further illustrate the attitude of the Council

to the Pope. "For if 'where two or three are gathered together in His name,' He has said that 'there He is in the midst of them,' must He not have been much more particularly present with 520 priests, who preferred the spread of knowledge concerning Him to their country and their ease? Of whom you were chief, as the head to the members, (ὡν σὺ μέν, ὡς κεφαλὴ μελῶν ἡγεμόνευες) showing your goodwill in the person of those who represented you."²⁹

These few citations from the Councils must suffice us, but they are enough to make clear what the primitive Church believed and taught in regard to the supremacy of S. Peter and his successors at Rome, and the witness of these Councils is the more remarkable as they were held in the East and almost entirely composed of Eastern bishops. The claims of the papal legates are received without protest and the Eastern Prelates themselves use language equally strong in regard to the Petrine See. If the Primacy of Rome was not recognized as *jure Divino*, how can we account for their language and the influence of "these obscure Latins" who, in the words of Gibbon, in regard to the sixth Council, equally applicable here, "had neither arms to compel, nor treasures to bribe nor language to persuade."³⁰

A belief in the supremacy of Rome is, therefore, not only a part of the Faith that the Church of England held prior to the Reformation, and which, moreover, she held for many centuries in common with both East and West; but is also involved in her present appeal, and that of her daughter Churches, to Holy Scripture and the Oecumenical Councils.

The primacy of Rome is not an obstacle in the way of reunion, as some do vainly teach, but the primary reason why we must seek it. So we, in the words of that first Lambeth Conference, "do here solemnly record our conviction that unity will be most effectually promoted by maintaining the Faith in its purity and integrity, as taught in the Holy Scripture, held by the Primitive Church, summed up in the Creeds, and affirmed by the General Councils —"³¹ And, as we have demonstrated, the Papacy forms part of that Faith.

Now the most pressing phase of the reunion problem is not that the separated Churches should seek to unite with one another, but rather, that they should, one and all, first seek union with what we have shown

²³ *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. XIV, p. 223. *Mansi* IV, 1296.

²⁴ *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. XIV, p. 222. *Mansi*, IV, 1288.

²⁵ *General Councils and Anglican Claims*, p. 43. *Mansi* IV, 1312.

²⁶ *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. XIV, p. 247. *Mansi* VI, 645.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 259. *Mansi* VI, 972.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 259. *Mansi* VI, 1048. *Bulletin* IX, pp. 10 and 11.

²⁹ Letter from The Synod of Chalcedon to Leo, *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, second Series, Vol. XII, p. 72. Greek text: Denzinger's *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, p. 67.

³⁰ Gibbon's *Rome*, Vol. IV, N. Y. 1822, p. 423.

³¹ See Note 9 above.

to be the Central See of Christendom. Churches out of communion with the Apostolic See of Rome are in an anomalous position, however much they may accomplish by union with one another; while if each individually seeks union with the Holy See, they will all automatically be in communion with each other. *Even the restoration of the Catholic Faith among the separated Churches, without ultimately realizing Catholic unity, is again an anomaly in which no devout Christian can acquiesce; and the See of Peter is the living symbol of that unity.*

In conclusion, we must say a word as to methods; namely, how reunion is to be accomplished. First let us make clear that it is reunion of Churches that we are considering, not the secession of individuals from one Communion to another, and that for us this reunion should be a corporate reunion. As a body, we Anglicans were separated at the Reformation from the other Catholic Churches of the West, and from the See of Peter, and as a corporate body, under our own hierarchy, we should return, and take our place with the Catholic Churches of the West. This does not necessarily involve an identity with Roman liturgy and Canon Law. The Eastern Churches in union with Rome have preserved their own. Even the vexed question of Anglican Orders could, it is believed, be solved in a manner satisfactory to both Churches. It does not involve the absorption of one body by another, but it does involve the unity of them all in the Faith of the Catholic Church under the leadership of the Apostolic See.

How this can be accomplished we must leave entirely in the hands of God, who in His own time will, we believe, bring it about. However, it is not for us to remain idle. God works through human agencies. We ourselves were not, it is true, responsible for the schism, but we are responsible for its continuance. We must, therefore, make a beginning of this work of reunion, the healing of the wounds in the Mystical Body of Christ. The Confraternity of Unity calls upon you to make such a beginning by approaching the throne of grace in prayer, that our Lord will send forth His Holy Spirit to lead us and to guide us into all truth, and to join your prayers as priests and laymen alike to His high priestly prayer, "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." (S. John xvii, 21.)