

THE ROMAN DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH AND MINISTRY.

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IN the New Testament we look in vain for a formal ruling about the polity of the Church. We see there the Church, living, acknowledged, gloried in. It is a fact of profound significance that only once—and that in a single Gospel—did Christ mention His Church. In all His teaching as recorded there is no direct announcement regarding its organization or administration. It is plain that His followers were a flock, a society, attached to Him by discipleship, love, obedience, adoration; united with Him by the closest life-giving union, as branches with the vine, partakers through Him of the Divine life. "I in them and Thou in Me." Membership in His Church meant the life of love that could only be lived through the communication of Him Who was the Bread of Life. The supremely spiritual basis of the membership is emphatically shown in the Final Discourses in the Upper Room—chapters which, as Dr. Hort well says, are "on the whole the weightiest and most pregnant body of teaching on the Ecclesia to be found anywhere in the Bible."¹

In the Acts and Epistles the Church is displayed growing, being adapted to meet the new conditions as they arose, developing its ordered functions. It is the community of the disciples who naturally formed a definite society in each place. Its essence is the Christ-honouring life, the Spirit-sustained existence. Its communal expression is the continuing in the Apostles' teaching and fellowship in the breaking of bread and the prayers—the fourfold bond of belief, community, sacraments, and devotions. As occasion demanded, officers were appointed, but there is no trace of any Divine command as to the form of the organization, nor is there any apostolic ordinance about the permanent constitution of the Church as a whole. Attention is concentrated on quite other issues—the Gospel of Christ in all its relations to human life—the problems of thought and conduct—the working out in daily life of the Christian ideal. The Church is the local group of the baptized faithful followers of Christ. It is, in familiar words, "a congregation of faithful men in the which the pure word of God is preached and the sacraments be duly ministered" (Article XIX).

There is another, a universal, sense in which St. Paul uses the word Church as the Body of Christ. This is the conception of the ideal Church composed not of the visible local churches but of the true individual members of every congregation who, by their mystical union with the Head, Christ, form a sanctified, glorious

¹ *The Christian Ecclesia*, chap. xiii.

Church, not having spot or wrinkle. It is a spiritual transcendental view of the Church as revealing the universal presence of Christ, the Head, from whom all the body through every joint of the supply maketh increase. This is the sense which our Church expresses in the words, "The mystical body of Thy Son which is the blessed company of all faithful people." The unity is progressive, and its centre is the unseen Divine Head of the Church triumphant as well as militant.¹ Any idea of a fixed authoritative system of Church government involving an earthly head of the Church is utterly and grotesquely foreign to the New Testament. It is a delusion so baseless, so inconsistent with the teaching of our Lord and His Apostles, as also with that of the Fathers, that its acceptance by any well-informed people might be thought incredible ("Neither be ye called Masters: for one is your Master, even the Christ"—St. Matt. xxiii. 10).

Yet we have it asserted by the Church of Rome as a fundamental doctrine that the Catholic Church must be subject to the Bishop of an Italian city! Cardinal Bourne, in his last Lenten Pastoral, proclaims that the belief that the gift of infallibility has been granted to the Church of Rome, both in its episcopal hierarchy as a whole and in its visible head personally, is "the fundamental doctrine of the Catholic Church." He adds what to us sounds dangerously akin to blasphemy, that "no man can be a Catholic until, guided and enlightened by the Holy Ghost, he is able to accept it."

In a recent pamphlet by the Rev. P. H. Malden—"Anglo-Catholics: Have they Grasped the Point?" (published by the Catholic Truth Society)—it is taught that Romanists "hold the Pope's supremacy and infallibility as *articles of faith* as vital as

¹ The unity of which visible body and Church of Christ consisteth in that uniformity which all several persons thereunto belonging have by reason of that one Lord, whose servants they all profess themselves, that one Faith which they all acknowledge, that one Baptism wherewith they are all initiated."—Hooker, *Ecc. Polit.*, Bk. iii., 1, 3.

"Primarily then the Church is the spirit-bearing body, and what makes her one in heaven and paradise and earth is not an outward but an inward fact—the indwelling of the spirit which brings with it the indwelling of Christ and makes the Church the great 'Christ-bearer,' the body of Christ. . . . She is one as the branches are one with the vine: that is because the sap of Christ's life is derived into her, and to be in connection with Christ the source of life is therefore the condition of being in the unity of the Church."—Gore, *Roman Catholic Claims*, chap. ii.

"The unity of the Universal Ecclesia . . . is a truth of theology and religion, not a fact of what we call ecclesiastical politics."—Hort, *Christian Ecclesia*, chap. x.

"That the Church as the Body of Christ is one is a postulate of Christian belief. But as this oneness is conditioned by the presence of the Holy Spirit, it would seem that wherever there were the fruits of the Spirit, the oneness in question was in some measure satisfied. Not a word is said about uniformity of outward organization, and the great passage in which the Lord Himself speaks most directly of the oneness of His followers is not a command having reference to the present, but a prayer pointing to a distant future."—Sanday, *The Conception of Priesthood*, p. 17.

the Trinity or the Incarnation," and that their "whole doctrine of the nature of the Church and the Divine scheme of redemption is intimately and indissolubly bound up with the necessity of unconditional submission to Rome in matters of faith." It is repeatedly asserted that "the Catholic Church is essentially and by Divine institution Papal in its nature," that "the only possible right reason for becoming a Catholic is because of the conviction that 'the Church of Christ' means 'the Church over which the Pope rules.'" Such a wild corruption of the faith once delivered is not the less ludicrous because so many blindly swallow it. This monstrous perversion of Christianity, this foisting of an offensive fiction into the fundamentals of belief, and making it of equal importance with the Incarnation, can claim the highest authority of the Roman Church. Pope Pius X authorized a compendium called "The Catholic Faith," which asserts that the Roman Pontiff represents Christ upon earth and takes His place in the government of the Church. The Vatican Decrees of 1870 lay it down that "by the appointment of our Lord the Roman Church possesses a sovereignty of ordinary power over all other Churches, and that this power of jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff, which is truly episcopal, is immediate; to which all of whatever rite and dignity, both pastors and faithful, both individually and collectively, are bound by their duty of hierarchical subordination and true obedience to submit not only in matters which belong to faith and morals but also in those that appertain to the discipline and government of the Church throughout the world."¹ Anyone who will not admit the Pope to have full and supreme power of jurisdiction over the universal Church ("plenam et supremam potestatem jurisdictionis in universam ecclesiam") is anathematized.

These insanely arrogant pretensions go back to the famous Bull "Unam Sanctam" of Pope Boniface VIII (1303): "We declare, affirm, define and pronounce that it is absolutely necessary to salvation that every human creature should be subject to the Roman Pontiff." The position is summed up in a Jesuit Professor's (Gretser) dictum: "When we speak of the Church we mean the Pope." To such vain boastings the Anglican may reply in the words spoken to Falstaff: "It is not a confident brow nor the throng of words that come with such more than impudent sauciness from you can thrust me from a level consideration." Or as Dr. Dollinger put it: "Only when a universal conflagration of libraries had destroyed all historical documents, when Easterns and Westerns knew no more of their own early history than the Maoris of New Zealand

¹ "We further teach and declare that he is the supreme judge of the faithful, and that in all cases, the decision of which belongs to the Church, recourse may be had to his tribunal; but that none may reopen the judgment of the Apostolic See, than whose authority there is none greater, nor can any lawfully review its judgment. Wherefore they err from the right path of truth who assert that it is lawful to appeal from the judgments of the Roman Pontiffs to an Œcumenical Council as to an authority higher than that of the Roman Pontiff."—*Pastor Æternus*, chap. iii.

know of theirs now, and when by a miracle great nations had abjured their whole intellectual character and habits of thought—then, and not till then, would such a submission be possible" (*The Pope and the Council*, xxvii).

The Roman doctrine of the Church is not only flagrantly without warrant from Holy Scripture, or from the writings or practices of the primitive Church, but it is also confuted by them in nearly every way that a falsification can be exposed. How intolerable is it to assert as a fundamental doctrine of the faith something that is alien to the whole spirit of the teaching of Christ and His Apostles. The Acts and Apostolic writings overthrow every plea by which this bogus claim is bolstered up. St. Peter himself is seen writing and acting in irreconcilable inconsistency with his alleged monarchical prerogatives. He is subordinate, opposed, mistaken, censured. The teaching of the sacred writers not only omits this cardinal doctrine—one which from its nature must have been, were it known, put in the forefront, as it is in modern Roman treatises, and appealed to in the emergencies and controversies that confronted the Apostolic and sub-Apostolic Church. The Church developed then without the least knowledge that it had within itself a vicar of Christ, "a visible head of the whole Church militant" (*Æternus Pastor*, cap. i.). The whole New Testament cancels such a theory. The Roman claim is to be put in the category of those instances of absurd megalomania to which belong the pretension of Joseph Smith that an angel gave to him the gold plates on which the Book of Mormon was written and a pair of supernatural spectacles to decipher the characters; or the claim of Joanna Southcott that she was the woman of the Apocalypse.

Ecclesiastical history presents innumerable, express, smashing proofs of the falsity of the imposture. We ask in vain for valid evidence that St. Peter was ever Bishop of Rome. We see the earlier Bishops of Rome, from Clement on, showing a blank ignorance of their supposed privileges. "For the first thousand years," writes Dr. Dollinger, "no Pope ever issued a doctrinal decision intended for and addressed to the whole Church." If the Popes were not aware of their "total plenitude of supreme power," it was scarcely to be expected that other Church leaders would know of it. So down the centuries we find the most learned and renowned saints of the Church disregarding any such vital prerogatives—ignoring the "fundamental doctrine of the Catholic Church." They were faced with heresies and conflicts that devastated the fold, but they never thought of refuge and settlement by resorting to him who was the divinely appointed "supreme judge of the faithful," the "Father and Teacher of all Christians." They did more than ignore, they scouted the idea, that recourse in disputes could be had to his tribunal. They employed the laborious and hazardous method of deciding controversies by the holding of local and general councils when they might have learned the Divine Will from him who was commissioned "to rule, feed, and govern the

universal Church." The very calling an Œcumenical Council to define a doctrine is an outrage against the fundamental doctrine of the Roman Church. Therefore all the illustrious Bishops who countenanced that mode of legislating are in peril of the anathema against those who hold the Roman Pontiff is not possessed of the power of infallibly defining doctrine. This is one striking instance of how the acceptance of the Roman claim means the turning of history upside down. The Popes who took part in these councils as participators, not as Supreme Teachers, or who recognized their collective authority, are in a similar danger. Yet Gregory the Great avowed: "I confess that I receive and venerate the four councils as I receive and venerate the four books of the Gospels" (P. L. lxxvii., 478, quoted by Puller, *The Primitive Saints and the See of Rome*, p. 350, 3rd ed.). These Four General Councils were not, except in one case, presided over by Popes or their representatives; none of them were summoned by Popes (Pope Leo resisted the calling of the Council of Chalcedon). They were not only grossly intruding on and dishonouring the office of the Vicar of Christ, but they passed laws which cut at the root of his divine authority. Thus the Council of Nicea, in its fifth canon, provides for an appeal from a Bishop to a Synod, without a word about the supreme tribunal at which all causes could be decided. In its sixth canon it did refer to Rome, but only to cite the metropolitan rights of bishops there as a reason—a parallel case—for endowing the Bishop of Alexandria with similar rights in Egypt. The phraseology absolutely excludes any knowledge of the modern claims of Rome. The Council of Constantinople was presided over by a Bishop, St. Meletius, who was not even in communion with Rome (any more than the Archbishop of Canterbury is now), and whose rival in the See of Antioch the Pope supported. Yet St. Meletius was peculiarly venerated in the Catholic Church, and is a canonized saint in the East and West. This Council, by its second canon, strictly prohibited the interference of bishops outside their own dioceses, without any recognition of "a sovereignty of ordinary power over all other Churches" residing in Rome. By its famous third canon it forcibly testified to the absence of any *jure divino* authority in the See of Rome by elevating the Bishop of Constantinople to the second place, on the ground that "Constantinople is the new Rome." The Council of Chalcedon, with fullness of detail, endorsed this, attributing the privileges "the Fathers naturally assigned" to the See of Elder Rome to the fact that it was the Imperial city; and explaining that Constantinople, as the seat of sovereignty, "should also in ecclesiastical matters be magnified as she is." This Council ratified laws about appeals that ignore the crazy pretensions of the vatican decrees. It makes no mention of the Roman Pontiff in fixing tribunals for aggrieved ecclesiastics to appeal to. The General Councils were careful to defend the self-governing rights of National Churches.

When the Bishops of Rome entered into controversy with other bishops, they were treated as prelates who had no superior

jurisdiction. Their hostile acts were withstood, and they themselves sharply rebuked at times by the most eminent leaders of the Church. No one in the time when Pope Victor severed communion with the Asiatics, or when Pope Stephen did the same with St. Cyprian and the African and other Churches, dreamt that the Pope was the Sovereign-Head of the Church. Cyprian can oppose Stephen's action as "proud," "impertinent," "inconsistent," and can assure a council at Carthage: "No one of us sets himself up to be a bishop of bishops, or by tyrannical terror compels his colleagues to the necessity of obedience"—words which won St. Augustine's eulogy for their moderation! The eighty-five bishops at this Council unanimously repudiated the Papal decision without any consciousness that they were rebelling against the Father and Teacher of all Christians. St. Firmilian, who was also excommunicated then, can comment on the "open and manifest folly," the "fury of contumacious discord" of Stephen, and tells him "how great a sin hast thou heaped up against thyself when thou didst cut thyself off from so many flocks." We find a similar freedom to admonish or oppose the Roman prelates through several centuries. St. Basil is not conscious of impropriety when he complains of the "Western superciliousness" of Pope Damasus, who neither knows the truth of the matters in dispute nor will accept the way to learn it; and so is a supporter of heresy. St. Augustine and the Council of Carthage (A.D. 419) could remonstrate with Pope Boniface against the "unendurable," "arrogant" treatment they received from a Bishop of Rome. The Church of North Africa did not dream of permitting appeals to Rome. In its celebrated letter, "Optaremus," sent by the plenary Council of Carthage (A.D. 426), St. Aurelius presiding, to Pope Celestine, it explicitly denies any right, inherent or assigned, in the Pope to hear appeals from thence, "unless it can be imagined by anyone that our God can inspire a single individual with justice and refuse it to an innumerable multitude of bishops assembled in Council." The Council requests Celestine to refrain from sending any more of his clerks as executors of his orders; "lest it would seem like introducing the smoky arrogance of the world into the Church of Christ."

St. Hilary of Arles, in his bitter dispute with Pope Leo when excluded from the Papal communion, was not by the Church of Gaul regarded as cut off from the "one Rock under one Supreme Pastor." Many illustrious saints like Basil and Chrysostom and Flavian; when remaining outside the communion of Rome, were wholly in ignorance that the bishop of that see had "full and supreme power of jurisdiction over the universal Church." Both St. Cyprian and St. Augustine wrote treatises on the unity of the Church without one word in them about the Pope being the centre of unity. The utmost point of absurdity is reached when the Sixth, Seventh and Eighth General Councils condemned and anathematized Pope Honorius as a heretic. For some centuries all Popes professed

their assent to this condemnation. We find another Pope, Vigilius, so little conscious of his Divinely bestowed prerogatives that when he had solemnly, "by the authority of the Apostolic See," defended certain men and doctrines, and when the Fifth General Council, in flagrant opposition to his authority, proceeded to condemn and anathematize them; and when it went on to discard himself, then he surrendered, and in abject fashion acknowledged his error and joined obediently in anathematizing what previously he had ex-cathedra whitewashed.

The supreme authority in the Church of a General Council was accepted even in the Middle Ages. The Council of Pisa (1409) deposed two Popes. The Council of Constance a few years later deposed three rival Popes, and decreed that a General Council "has power immediately from Christ which anyone; of whatever rank or dignity, even Papal (*etiamsi papalis*), is bound to obey in those things which pertain to the faith and the extirpation of the aforesaid schism and the general reformation of the Church of God in its head and in its members (*in capite et in membris*)."¹ The Council of Basle (1433) published anew, as articles of faith, the decrees of the Council of Constance, and Pope Eugenius IV approved of its findings in a Bull, and declared the sincerity of his devotion to "the holy œcumenical Council of Basle."

It follows logically from the Papal theory of the Church that all officials therein are dependent on the Pope, and derive their authority from him. Gradually as the Papal usurpation extended by encroachment, by secular power, by forgery and fraud and terrorism, bishops and other clergy lost their primitive rights. The bishops, instead of being regarded as the representatives of the Apostles in their sees, having an independent *magisterium*, recognizing only the jurisdiction of their own provincial metropolitans and Patriarchs, possessing together in Councils the supreme legislative authority in the Church, were depressed to be, in effect, vicars and vassals of the Pope. Papal legates tyrannized over them. Their authority was made dependant on the reception of the Papal *pallium*. They had, and have, to take a humiliating oath of fealty to the Pope. Through the influence of the Isidorian fabrications the bishops became the mere assistants of the Pope, functioning only through his delegated authority. The Pope has the appointment of bishops, and he can depose them; he is the universal bishop. In *The Catholic Faith*, a manual prescribed by the Pope, it is taught the bishops officiate "in dependence upon the Bishop of Rome." From the eleventh century the formula-Bishop "by the grace of God and of the Apostolic See" became common. In the Ancient Church the Bishops signed conciliar decrees with the words "*Ego definiens Subscripsi*." Their degradation is witnessed by the superscription to the Vatican decrees, "*Sacro approbante concilio*." The Pope, by the Vatican decree, is the "ordinary" over all Churches; his jurisdiction everywhere

¹ Gieseler, *Ecc. Hist.*, iv., 296.

is "truly episcopal" and "immediate." The sacrilegious despoiling of the privileges inherent in the Episcopate was brazenly proclaimed by Innocent III when he declared that the Pope had called bishops and other ministers "into a share of the charge, so that the weight of so great an office may be the more easily borne by means of the acts of those who are assistants" (cf. Denny; *Papalism*; 1085).¹

We have only to recall how the Ancient Church regarded the office of a bishop to see the frantic arrogance and imposture of such pretensions. Irenæus held bishops to be those "to whom the Apostles delivered the Churches," committing to them their own place of *magisterium*. Cyprian and Jerome style bishops "successors of the Apostles." Cyprian is emphatic in declaring the equality of all bishops. "The Episcopate is one a part of which is held by each *in solidum*" (cf. Puller, p. 6). "The Church is settled upon the bishops, and every act of the Church is controlled by these same rulers." Writing to Pope Stephen he proclaims, "Every bishop hath the government of the Church in his own choice and freewill, hereafter to give an account of his conduct to the Lord." Cyprian saw in the concord of bishops the external unity of the Church, "the Church which is Catholic, and one is not separated nor divided, but is in truth connected and joined together by the cement of the bishops mutually cleaving to each other" (*Ep. Ad Florentium*). St. Augustine tells Pope Boniface, "To sit on our watch-towers and guard the flock belongs in common to all of us who have episcopal functions, although the hill on which you stand is more conspicuous than the rest." With what horror would the Fathers have regarded the imposition of an oath upon all bishops to maintain, defend, increase and advance the rights, honours, privileges and authority of their lord the Pope, or the addition of an article to the Creed promising and swearing true obedience to the Roman Pontiff. It comes to this—the Roman system requires bishops and priests to abandon the commission of Christ in virtue of which they discharge their holy functions, and to become the dependant assistants of an Alexander Borgia or a Belthasar Cossa. Could the impious mind of man concoct a

¹ It is characteristic of Roman tactics that the Vatican decree, when attempting to show that Papal claims did not prejudice episcopal rights, quotes some sentences of Gregory the Great: "My honour is the honour of the whole Church, etc." The context of these sentences and the whole argument of the letter are a powerful refutation of the claims they are with gross unfairness used to endorse. In the sentence preceding, Gregory, repudiating "the haughty appellation" of Universal Pope, writes: "Nor do I consider that an honour by which I acknowledge that my brethren lose their own." The sentences immediately following are: "For if your holiness [i.e. the Patriarch of Alexandria] calls me Universal Pope, you deny that you yourself are what you admit me to be—universal. But this God forbid! Away with words which inflate vanity and wound charity." Even in 1870, an ex-cathedra Papal pronouncement is guilty of flagrant misrepresentation in quoting authorities.

more shocking perversion of Catholic order—a more blasphemous invasion of the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free?

In the whole miserable history of human deceits we cannot find any system so elaborately and imposingly fabricated, of such appalling effrontery, as the Roman doctrine of the Church of Christ being the dominion of the Pope. To rank this blasphemous aggression with the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation is to defile and endanger the basis of Christianity. Its acceptance would mean that there is no imposition too absurd, no superstition too revolting to become a dogma of the Catholic Church. It would mean the emblazoning of a glaring falsehood on the Church's banner, the substitution of a stifling tyrannical usurpation for the Church's freedom.

A convert from Judaism, a scholar of no mean reputation, and an expositor with a strong confidence in the unity and integrity of Holy Scripture, Mr. David Baron has, after eighteen years, brought out a third and revised edition of *Types, Psalms and Prophecies* (Morgan and Scott, 6s. net), a work which has already proved itself to be of real value to Bible students. It consists of a series of selected types, psalms and prophecies, and the object is to show the ultimate fulfilment of the unalterable promises of God to His ancient and covenant people—the Jewish nation—and also to show that all prophetic Scripture is fulfilled in Him Who is the subject of Old Testament prophecy, Jesus Christ.

Time was when, like *Pilgrim's Progress*, Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* was much read; but this is no longer the case. But it is good for us to be reminded of the price that was paid for Reformation principles and religious liberty. The pages of Church history in the sixteenth century are stained by blood and tears shed by valiant souls, "of whom the world was not worthy." Mr. G. Anderson Miller is living and working in Kent, which produced "in the brave days of old" a goodly number of witnesses, and in *Noble Martyrs of Kent* (Morgan and Scott, 3s. net) he has compiled an account of their sufferings. Pastor Tydeman Chilvers, of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, contributes a Foreword in which he reminds us of Rome's boast—that she is *semper eadem*; and he laments that pre-Reformation doctrines and practices are being surreptitiously introduced into the Church of England, a fact of which our readers are well aware. Anything that emphasizes the fundamentals or shows how Rome has violated "the truth as it is in Jesus" is useful. The circulation of this sad little volume with its record of, for the most part, humble lives gladly laid down for the truth, is bound to be useful. Its widespread circulation will no doubt contribute to that end.