

**PUBLICATIONS OF
THE CATHOLIC TRUTH
SOCIETY; VOL. XXIII**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649162543

Publications of the Catholic Truth Society; Vol. XXIII by Various

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VARIOUS

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Publications
of the
Catholic Truth Society.

VOL. XXIII.



CATHOLIC TRUTH SOCIETY
OFFICE: 18 WEST SQUARE, LONDON, S.E.
DEPÔTS: 21 WESTMINSTER BRIDGE ROAD, S.E.;
245 BROMPTON ROAD, S.W.; 22 PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

1894.

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THE REUNION OF CHRISTENDOM.

POPE LEO XIII.

TO THE

RULERS AND NATIONS OF THE WORLD:

Health and Peace in the Lord.

The splendid tokens of public rejoicing which have come to us from all sides in the whole course of last year, to commemorate our Episcopal Jubilee, and which were lately crowned by the remarkable devotion of the Spanish nation, have afforded us special joy, inasmuch as the unity of the Church and the admirable adhesion of her members to the Sovereign Pontiff have shone forth in this perfect agreement of concurring sentiments. During those days it seemed as if the Catholic world, forgetful of everything else, had centred its gaze and all its thoughts upon the Vatican.

The Pope's Jubilee, and Unity amongst Catholics.

The special missions sent by kings and princes, the many pilgrimages, the letters we received so full of affectionate feeling, the sacred services—everything clearly brought out the fact that all Catholics are of one mind and of one heart in their veneration for the Apostolic See. And this was all the more pleasing and agreeable to us, that it is entirely in conformity with our intent and with our endeavours. For, indeed, well acquainted with our times, and mindful of the duties of our ministry, we have constantly sought during the whole course of our Pontificate, and striven, as far as it was possible, by teaching and action,

to bind every nation and people more closely to us, and make manifest everywhere the salutary influence of the See of Rome. Therefore, do we most earnestly offer thanks in the first place to the goodness of God, by Whose help and bounty we have been preserved to attain our great age; and then, next, to all the princes and rulers, to the Bishops and clergy, and to as many as have co-operated by such repeated tokens of piety and reverence, to honour our character and office, while affording us personally such seasonable consolation.

A great multitude outside Catholic Unity.

A great deal, however, has been wanting to the entire fulness of that consolation. Amidst these very manifestations of public joy and reverence our thoughts went out towards the immense multitude of those who were strangers to the gladness that filled all Catholic hearts: some because they lie in absolute ignorance of the Gospel; others because they dissent from the Catholic belief, though they bear the name of Christians.

This thought has been, and is, a source of deep concern to us; for it is impossible to think of such a large portion of mankind, deviating, as it were, from the right path, as they move away from us, and not experience a sentiment of innermost grief.

The Holy Father's concern for those outside Catholic Unity.

But since we hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty, Who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth, and now that our advanced age and the bitterness of anxious cares urge us on towards the end common to every mortal, we feel drawn to follow the example of our Redeemer and Master Jesus Christ, Who, when about to return to

Heaven, implored of God, His Father, in earnest prayer, that His disciples and followers should be of one mind and of one heart: "I pray . . . that they all may be one, as Thou Father in Me, and I in Thee: that they also may be one in us." And as this Divine prayer and supplication does not include only the souls who then believed in Jesus Christ, but also every one of those who were henceforth to believe in Him, this prayer holds out to us no indifferent reason for confidently expressing our hopes, and for making all possible endeavours, in order that the men of every race and clime should be called and moved to embrace the unity of Divine faith.

The most unfortunate of all Nations.

Pressed on to our intent by charity, that hastens fastest there where the need is greatest, we direct our first thoughts to those most unfortunate of all nations who have never received the light of the Gospel, or who, after having possessed it, have lost it through neglect or the vicissitudes of time: hence do they ignore God, and live in the depths of error. Now, as all salvation comes from Jesus Christ—"for there is no other name under Heaven given to men whereby we must be saved"—our ardent desire is that the most holy Name of Jesus should rapidly pervade and fill every land.

And here, indeed, is a duty which the Church, faithful to the Divine mission entrusted to her, has never neglected. What has been the object of her labours for more than nineteen centuries? Is there any other work she has undertaken with greater zeal and constancy, than that of bringing the nations of the earth to the truth and principles of Christianity? To-day, as ever, by our authority, the heralds of the Gospel constantly cross the seas to reach the farthest corners of the earth; and we pray God daily that in His goodness He may deign to increase the number of His ministers who are really worthy of this Apostolate, and who are ready to sacrifice their convenience

their health, and their very life, if need be, in order to extend the frontiers of the kingdom of Christ.

Ah, but Thou, above all, Saviour and Father of mankind, Christ Jesus, hasten and do not delay to bring about what Thou didst once promise to do—that when lifted up from the earth Thou wouldst draw all things to Thyself. Come, then at last, and manifest Thyself to the immense multitude of souls who have not felt, as yet, the ineffable blessings which Thou hast earned for men with Thy blood; rouse those who are sitting in darkness, and in the shadow of death, that, enlightened by the rays of Thy wisdom and virtue, in Thee and by Thee “they may be made perfect in one.”

Former Unity amongst civilised Nations.

As we consider the mystery of this unity we see before us all the countries which have long since passed, by the mercy of God, from timeworn error to the wisdom of the Gospel. Nor could we, indeed, recall anything more pleasing or better calculated to extol the work of Divine Providence, than the memory of the days of yore, when the Faith that had come down from Heaven was looked upon as the common inheritance of one and all; when civilised nations, separated by distance, character, and habits, in spite of frequent disagreements and warfare on other points, were united by Christian faith in all that concerned religion. The recollection of that time causes us to regret all the more deeply that, as the ages rolled by, the waves of suspicion and hatred arose, and great and flourishing nations were dragged away, in an evil hour, from the bosom of the Roman Church. In spite of that, however, we trust in the mercy of God's Almighty power, in Him Who alone can fix the hour of His benefits and Who has power to incline man's will as He pleases; and we turn to those same nations, exhorting and beseeching them with fatherly love to put an end to their dissensions and return again to unity.

The Eastern Churches.

First of all, then, we cast an affectionate look upon the East, from whence in the beginning came forth the salvation of the world. Yes, and the yearning desire of our heart bids us conceive the hope that the day is not far distant, when the Eastern Churches, so illustrious in their ancient faith and glorious past will return to the fold they have abandoned. We hope it, all the more, that the distance separating them from us is not so great: nay, with some few exceptions, we agree so entirely on other heads that, in defence of the Catholic faith, we often have recourse to reasons and testimony borrowed from the teaching, the rites, and customs of the East.

The principal subject of contention is the primacy of the Roman Pontiff. But let them look back to the early years of their existence, let them consider the sentiments entertained by their forefathers, and examine what the oldest traditions testify, and it will, indeed, become evident to them that Christ's Divine utterance, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church," has undoubtedly been realised in the Roman Pontiffs. Many of these latter, in the first ages of the Church were chosen from the East, and foremost among them, Anacletus, Evaristus, Anicetus, Eleutherius, Zosimus, and Agatho; and of these a great number, after governing the Church in wisdom and sanctity, consecrated their ministry with the shedding of their blood. The time, the reasons, the promoters of the unfortunate division, are well known. Before the day when man separated what God had joined together, the name of the Apostolic See was held in reverence by all the nations of the Christian world; and the East, like the West, agreed without hesitation in its obedience to the Pontiff of Rome, as the legitimate successor of St. Peter, and, therefore, the Vicar of Christ here on earth.

And, accordingly, if we refer to the beginning of the dissension, we shall see that Photius himself was