

The Patriarchal Encyclical of 1895 - A Reply to the Papal Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII (1895) on Reunion

To the most Sacred and Most Divinely-beloved Brethren in Christ the Metropolitans and Bishops, and their sacred and venerable Clergy, and all the godly and Orthodox Laity of the Most Holy Apostolic and Patriarchal Throne of Constantinople.

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their own conversation: Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. (Heb. xiii. 7, 8).

I

Every godly and orthodox soul, which has a sincere zeal for the glory of God, is deeply afflicted and weighed down with great pain upon seeing that he, who detests that which is good and is a murderer from the beginning, impelled by envy of man's salvation, never ceases continually to sow divers tares in the field of the Lord, in order to sift the wheat. From this source indeed, even from the earliest times, there sprang up in the Church of God heretical tares, which have in many ways made havoc, and do still make havoc, of the salvation of mankind by Christ; which moreover, as bad seeds and corrupted members, are rightly cut off from the sound body of the Orthodox Catholic Church of Christ. But in these last times the evil one has rent from the orthodox Church of Christ even whole nations in the West, having inflated the bishops of Rome with thoughts of excessive arrogance, which has given birth to divers lawless and anti-evangelical innovations. And not only so, but furthermore the Popes of Rome from time to time, pursuing absolutely and without examination modes of union according to their own fancy, strive by every means to reduce to their own errors the catholic Church of Christ, which throughout the world walks unshaken in the orthodoxy of faith transmitted to her by the Fathers.

II

Accordingly, the Most Blessed Pope of Rome, Leo XIII, on the occasion of his episcopal jubilee, published in the month of June of the year of grace 1895 an encyclical letter, addressed to the leaders and peoples of the world, by which he also at the same time invites our Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ to unite with the papal throne, thinking that such union can only be obtained by acknowledging him as supreme pontiff and the highest spiritual and temporal ruler of the universal Church, as the only representative of Christ upon earth and the dispenser of all grace.

III

No doubt every Christian heart ought to be filled with longing for union of the Churches, and especially the whole orthodox world, being inspired by a true spirit of piety, according to the divine purpose of the establishment of the church by the God-man our Saviour Christ, ardently longs for the unity of the Churches in the one rule of faith, and on the foundation of the apostolic doctrine handed down to us through the Fathers, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone.¹ Wherefore she also every day, in her public prayers to the Lord, prays for the gathering together of the scattered and for the return of those who have gone astray to the right way of the truth, which

alone leads to the Life of all, the only-begotten Son and Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ.² Agreeably, therefore, to this sacred longing, our orthodox Church of Christ is always ready to accept any proposal of union, if only the Bishop of Rome would shake off once for all the whole series of the many and divers anti-evangelical novelties that have been privily brought in to his Church, and have provoked the sad division of the Churches of the East and West, and would return to the basis of the seven holy Ecumenical Synods, which, having been assembled in the Holy Spirit, of representatives of all the holy Churches of God, for the determination of the right teaching of the faith against heretics, have a universal and perpetual supremacy in the Church of Christ. And this, both by her writings and encyclical letters, the Orthodox Church has never ceased to intimate to the Papal Church, having clearly and explicitly set forth that so long as the latter perseveres in her innovations, and the orthodox Church adheres to the divine and apostolic traditions of Christianity, during which the Western Churches were of the same mind and were united with the Churches of the East, so long is it a vain and empty thing to talk of union. For which cause we have remained silent until now, and have declined to take into consideration the papal encyclical in question, esteeming it unprofitable to speak to the ears of those who do not hear. Since, however, from a certain period the Papal Church, having abandoned the method of persuasion and discussion, began, to our general astonishment and perplexity, to lay traps for the conscience of the more simple orthodox Christians by means of deceitful workers transformed into apostles of Christ,³ sending into the East clerics with the dress and headcovering of orthodox priests, inventing also divers and other artful means to obtain her proselytizing objects; for this reason, as in sacred duty bound, we issue this patriarchal and synodical encyclical, for a safeguard of the orthodox faith and piety, knowing that the observance of the true canons is a duty for every good man, and much more for those who have been thought worthy by Providence to direct the affairs of others.⁴

IV

The union of the separated Churches with herself in one rule of faith is, as has been said before, a sacred and inward desire of the holy, catholic and orthodox apostolic Church of Christ; but without such unity in the faith, the desired union of the Churches becomes impossible. This being the case, we wonder in truth how the Most Blessed Pope Leo XIII, though he himself also acknowledges this truth, falls into a plain self-contradiction, declaring, on the one hand, that true union lies in the unity of faith, and, on the other hand, that every Church, even after the union, can hold her own dogmatic and canonical definitions, even when they differ from those of the Papal Church, as His Blessedness declares in a previous encyclical, dated November 30, 1894. For there is an evident contradiction when in one and the same Church one believes that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, and another that He proceeds from the Father and the Son; when one sprinkles, and another baptizes (immerses) thrice in the water; one uses leavened bread in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, and another unleavened; one imparts to the people of the chalice as well as of the bread, and the other only of the holy bread; and other things like these. But what this contradiction signifies, whether respect for the evangelical truths of the holy Church of Christ and an indirect concession and acknowledgement of them, or something else, we cannot say.

V

But however that may be, for the practical realization of the pious longing for the union of the Churches, a common principle and basis must be settled first of all; and there can be no such safe common principle and basis other than the teaching of the Gospel and of the seven holy Ecumenical Councils. Reverting, then, to that teaching which was common to the Churches of the East and of the West until the separation, we ought, with a sincere desire to know the truth, to search what the one holy, catholic and orthodox apostolic Church of Christ, being then of the same body, throughout the East and West believed, and to hold this fact, entire, and unaltered. But whatsoever has in later

times been added or taken away, every one has a sacred and indispensable duty, if he sincerely seeks for the glory of God more than for his own glory, that in a spirit of piety he should correct it, considering that by arrogantly continuing in the perversion of the truth he is liable to a heavy account before the impartial judgement-seat of Christ. In saying this we do not at all refer to the differences regarding the ritual of the sacred services and the hymns, or the sacred vestments, and the like, which matters, even though they still vary, as they did of old, do not in the least injure the substance and unity of the faith; but we refer to those essential differences which have reference to the divinely transmitted doctrines of the faith, and the divinely instituted canonical constitution of the administration of the Churches. In cases where the thing disregarded is not the faith (says also the holy Photius),⁵ and is no falling away from any general and catholic decree, different rites and customs being observed among different people, a man who knows how to judge rightly would decide that neither do those who observe them act wrongly, nor do those who have not received them break the law.⁶

VI

And indeed for the holy purpose of union, the Eastern orthodox and catholic Church of Christ is heartily ready to accept all that which both the Eastern and Western Churches unanimously professed before the ninth century, if she has perchance perverted or does not hold it. And if the Westerns prove from the teaching of the holy Fathers and the divinely assembled Ecumenical Councils that the then orthodox Roman Church, which was throughout the West, even before the ninth century read the Creed with the addition, or used unleavened bread, or accepted the doctrine of a purgatorial fire, or sprinkling instead of baptism, or the immaculate conception of the ever-Virgin, or the temporal power, or the infallibility and absolutism of the Bishop of Rome, we have no more to say. But if, on the contrary, it is plainly demonstrated, as those of the Latins themselves, who love the truth, also acknowledge, that the Eastern and orthodox catholic Church of Christ holds fast the anciently transmitted doctrines which were at that time professed in common both in the East and the West, and that the Western Church perverted them by divers innovations, then it is clear, even to children, that the more natural way to union is the return of the Western Church to the ancient doctrinal and administrative condition of things; for the faith does not change in any way with time or circumstances, but remains the same always and everywhere, for there is one body and one Spirit, it is said, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.⁷

VII

So then the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church of the seven Ecumenical Councils believed and taught in accordance with the words of the Gospel, that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father; but in the West, even from the ninth century, the holy Symbol of Faith, which was composed and sanctioned by Ecumenical Councils, began to be falsified, and the idea that the Holy Spirit proceeds also from the Son to be arbitrarily promulgated. And certainly Pope Leo XIII is not ignorant that his orthodox predecessor and namesake, the defender of orthodoxy, Leo III, in the year 809 denounced synodically this anti-evangelical and utterly lawless addition, and from the Son (*Filioque*); and engraved on two silver plates, in Greek and Latin, the holy Symbol of Faith of the first and second Ecumenical Synods, entire and without any addition; having written moreover, These words I, Leo, have set down for love and as a safeguard of the orthodox faith (*Haec Leo posui amore et cautela fidei orthodoxa*).⁸

Likewise he is by no means ignorant that during the tenth century, or at the beginning of the eleventh, this anti-evangelical and lawless addition was with difficulty inserted officially into the holy Symbol of Faith at Rome also, and that consequently the Roman Church, in insisting on her innovations, and not coming back to the dogma of the Ecumenical Synods, renders herself fully

responsible before the one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church of Christ, which holds fast that which has been received from the Fathers, and keeps the deposit of the faith which was delivered to it unadulterated in all things, in obedience to the Apostolic injunction: That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us; avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: which some professing have erred concerning the faith.⁹

VIII

VIII. The one holy, catholic and apostolic Church of the first seven Ecumenical Synods baptized by three immersions in the water, and the Pope Pelagius speaks of the triple immersion as a command of the Lord, and in the thirteenth century baptism by immersions still prevailed in the West; and the sacred fonts themselves, preserved in the more ancient churches in Italy, are eloquent witnesses on this point; but in later times sprinkling or effusion, being privily brought in, came to be accepted by the Papal Church, which still holds fast the innovation, thus also widening the gulf which she has opened; but we Orthodox, remaining faithful to the apostolic tradition and the practice of the seven Ecumenical Synods, stand fast, contending for the common profession, the paternal treasure of the sound faith.¹⁰

IX

The one holy, catholic and apostolic Church of the seven Ecumenical Synods, according to the example of our Saviour, celebrated the divine Eucharist for more than a thousand years throughout the East and West with leavened bread, as the truth-loving papal theologians themselves also bear witness; but the Papal Church from the eleventh century made an innovation also in the sacrament of the divine Eucharist by introducing unleavened bread.

X

The one holy, catholic and apostolic Church of the seven Ecumenical Synods held that the precious gifts are consecrated after the prayer of the invocation of the Holy Spirit by the blessing of the priest, as the ancient rituals of Rome and Gaul testify; nevertheless afterwards the Papal Church made an innovation in this also, by arbitrarily accepting the consecration of the precious gifts as taking place along with the utterance of the Lord's words: Take, eat; this is my body: and Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood.¹¹

XI

The one holy, catholic and apostolic Church of the seven Ecumenical Synods, following the Lord's command, Drink ye all of it,¹² imparted also of the holy chalice to all; but the Papal Church from the ninth century downwards has made an innovation in this rite also, by depriving the laity of the holy chalice, contrary to the Lord's command and the universal practice of the ancient Church, as well as the express prohibition of many ancient orthodox bishops of Rome.

XII

The one holy, catholic and apostolic Church of the seven Ecumenical Synods, walking according to the divinely inspired teaching of the Holy Scripture and the old apostolic tradition, prays and invokes the mercy of God for the forgiveness and rest of those which have fallen asleep in the Lord;¹³ but the Papal Church from the twelfth century downwards has invented and heaped together

in the person of the Pope, as one singularly privileged, a multitude of innovations concerning purgatorial fire, a superabundance of the virtues of the saints, and the distribution of them to those who need them, and the like, setting forth also a full reward for the just before the universal resurrection and judgement.

XIII

The one holy, catholic and apostolic Church of the seven Ecumenical Synods teaches that the supernatural incarnation of the only-begotten Son and Word of God, of the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary, is alone pure and immaculate; but the Papal Church scarcely forty years ago again made an innovation by laying down a novel dogma concerning the immaculate conception of the Mother of God and ever-Virgin Mary, which was unknown to the ancient Church (and strongly opposed at different times even by the more distinguished among the papal theologians).

XIV

Passing over, then, these serious and substantial differences between the two churches respecting the faith, which differences, as has been said before, were created in the West, His Blessedness in his encyclical represents the question of the primacy of the Roman Pontiff as the principal and, so to speak, only cause of the dissension, and sends us to the sources, that we may make diligent search as to what our forefathers believed and what the first age of Christianity delivered to us. But having recourse to the fathers and the Ecumenical Synods of the Church of the first nine centuries, we are fully persuaded that the Bishop of Rome was never considered as the supreme authority and infallible head of the Church, and that every bishop is head and president of his own particular Church, subject only to the synodical ordinances and decisions of the Church universal as being alone infallible, the Bishop of Rome being in no wise excepted from this rule, as Church history shows. Our Lord Jesus Christ alone is the eternal Prince and immortal Head of the Church, for He is the Head of the body, the Church,¹⁴ who said also to His divine disciples and apostles at His ascension into heaven, Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.¹⁵ In the Holy Scripture the Apostle Peter, whom the Papists, relying on apocryphal books of the second century, the pseudo-Clementines, imagine with a purpose to be the founder of the Roman Church and their first bishop, discusses matters as an equal among equals in the apostolic synod of Jerusalem, and at another time is sharply rebuked by the Apostle Paul, as is evident from the Epistle to the Galatians.¹⁶ Moreover, the Papists themselves know well that the very passage of the Gospel to which the Pontiff refers, Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church,¹⁷ is in the first centuries of the Church interpreted quite differently, in a spirit of orthodoxy, both by tradition and by all the divine and sacred Fathers without exception; the fundamental and unshaken rock upon which the Lord has built His own Church, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail, being understood metaphorically of Peter's true confession concerning the Lord, that He is Christ, the Son of the living God.¹⁸ Upon this confession and faith the saving preaching of the Gospel by all the apostles and their successors rests unshaken. Whence also the Apostle Paul, who had been caught up into heaven, evidently interpreting this divine passage, declares the divine inspiration, saying: According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.¹⁹ But it is in another sense that Paul calls all the apostles and prophets together the foundation of the building up in Christ of the faithful; that is to say, the members of the body of Christ, which is the Church;²⁰ when he writes to the Ephesians: Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone.²¹ Such, then, being the divinely inspired teaching of the apostles respecting the

foundation and Prince of the Church of God, of course the sacred Fathers, who held firmly to the apostolic traditions, could not have or conceive any idea of an absolute primacy of the Apostle Peter and the bishops of Rome; nor could they give any other interpretation, totally unknown to the Church, to that passage of the Gospel, but that which was true and right; nor could they arbitrarily and by themselves invent a novel doctrine respecting excessive privileges of the Bishop of Rome as successor, if so be, of Peter; especially whilst the Church of Rome was chiefly founded, not by Peter, whose apostolic action at Rome is totally unknown to history, but by the heaven-caught apostle of the Gentiles, Paul, through his disciples, whose apostolic ministry in Rome is well-known to all.²²

XV

The divine Fathers, honouring the Bishop of Rome only as the bishop of the capital city of the Empire, gave him the honorary prerogative of presidency, considering him simply as the bishop first in order, that is, first among equals; which prerogative they also assigned afterwards to the Bishop of Constantinople, when that city became the capital of the Roman Empire, as the twenty-eighth canon of the fourth Ecumenical Synod of Chalcedon bears witness, saying, among other things, as follows: We do also determine and decree the same things respecting the prerogatives of the most holy Church of the said Constantinople, which is New Rome. For the Fathers have rightly given the prerogative to the throne of the elder Rome, because that was the imperial city. And the hundred and fifty most religious bishops, moved by the same consideration, assigned an equal prerogative to the most holy throne of New Rome. From this canon it is very evident that the Bishop of Rome is equal in honour to the Bishop of the Church of Constantinople and to those other Churches, and there is no hint given in any canon or by any of the Fathers that the Bishop of Rome alone has ever been prince of the universal Church and the infallible judge of the bishops of the other independent and self-governing Churches, or the successor of the Apostle Peter and vicar of Jesus Christ on earth.

XVI

Each particular self-governing Church, both in the East and West, was totally independent and self-administered in the time of the Seven Ecumenical Synods. And just as the bishops of the self-governing Churches of the East, so also those of Africa, Spain, Gaul, Germany and Britain managed the affairs of their own Churches, each by their local synods, the Bishop of Rome having no right to interfere, and he himself also was equally subject and obedient to the decrees of synods. But on important questions which needed the sanction of the universal Church an appeal was made to an Ecumenical Synod, which alone was and is the supreme tribunal in the universal Church. Such was the ancient constitution of the Church; but the bishops were independent of each other and each entirely free within his own bounds, obeying only the synodical decrees, and they sat as equal one to another in synods. Moreover, none of them ever laid claim to monarchical rights over the universal Church; and if sometimes certain ambitious bishops of Rome raised excessive claims to an absolutism unknown to the Church, such were duly reprovved and rebuked. The assertion therefore of Leo XIII, when he says in his Encyclical that before the period of the great Photius the name of the Roman throne was holy among all the peoples of the Christian world, and that the East, like the West, with one accord and without opposition, was subject to the Roman pontiff as lawful successor, so to say, of the Apostle Peter, and consequently vicar of Jesus Christ on earth is proved to be inaccurate and a manifest error.

XVII

During the nine centuries of the Ecumenical Synods the Eastern Orthodox Church never recognized the excessive claims of primacy on the part of the bishops of Rome, nor consequently did she ever

submit herself to them, as Church history plainly bears witness. The independent relation of the East to the West is clearly and manifestly shown also by those few and most significant words of Basil the Great, which he writes in a letter to the holy Eusebius, Bishop of Samosata: For when haughty characters are courted, it is their nature to become still more disdainful. For if the Lord be merciful to us, what other assistance do we need? But if the wrath of God abide on us, what help is there for us from Western superciliousness? Men who neither know the truth nor can bear to learn it, but being prejudiced by false suspicions, they act now as they did before in the case of Marcellus.²³ The celebrated Photius, therefore, the sacred Prelate and luminary of Constantinople, defending this independence of the Church of Constantinople after the middle of the ninth century, and foreseeing the impending perversion of the ecclesiastical constitution in the West, and its defection from the orthodox East, at first endeavored in a peaceful manner to avert the danger; but the Bishop of Rome, Nicholas I, by his uncanonical interference with the East, beyond the bounds of his diocese, and by the attempt which he made to subdue the Church of Constantinople to himself, pushed matters to the verge of the grievous separation of the Churches. The first seeds of these claims of a papal absolutism were scattered abroad in the pseudo-Clementines, and were cultivated, exactly at the epoch of this Nicholas, in the so-called pseudo-Isidorian decrees, which are a farrago of spurious and forged royal decrees and letters of ancient bishops of Rome, by which, contrary to the truth of history and the established constitution of the Church, it was purposely promulgated that, as they said, Christian antiquity assigned to the bishops of Rome an unbounded authority over the universal Church.

XVIII

These facts we recall with sorrow of heart, inasmuch as the Papal Church, though she now acknowledges the spuriousness and forged character of those decrees on which her excessive claims are grounded, not only stubbornly refuses to come back to the canons and decrees of the Ecumenical Synods, but even in the expiring years of the nineteenth century has widened the existing gulf by officially proclaiming, to the astonishment of the Christian world, that the Bishop of Rome is even infallible. The orthodox Eastern and catholic Church of Christ knows no one infallible upon earth, with the exception of the Son and Word of God who was ineffably made man. Even the Apostle Peter himself, whose successor the Pope thinks himself to be, thrice denied the Lord, and was twice rebuked by the Apostle Paul, as not walking uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel.²⁴ Afterwards the Pope Liberius, in the fourth century, subscribed an Arian confession; and likewise Zosimus, in the fifth century, approved an heretical confession, denying the Ancestral Sin. Virgilius, in the sixth century, was condemned for wrong opinions by the fifth Ecumenical Synod; and Honorius, having fallen into the Monothelite heresy, was condemned in the seventh century by the sixth Ecumenical Synod as a heretic, and the popes who succeeded him acknowledged and accepted his condemnation.

XIX

With these and such facts in view, the peoples of the West, becoming gradually civilized by the diffusion of letters, began to protest against innovations, and to demand (as was done in the fifteenth century at the Councils of Constance and Basle) the return to the ecclesiastical constitution of the first centuries, to which, by the grace of God, the orthodox Churches throughout the East and North, which alone now form the one holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ, the pillar and ground of the truth, remain, and will always remain, faithful. The same was done in the seventeenth century by the learned Gallican theologians, and in the eighteenth by the bishops of Germany; and in this present century of science and criticism, the Christian conscience rose up in one body in the year 1870, in the persons of the celebrated clerics and theologians of Germany, on account of the novel dogma of the infallibility of the Popes, issued by the Vatican Council, a consequence of which

rising is seen in the formation of the separate religious communities of the Old Catholics, who, having disowned the papacy, are quite independent of it.

XX

In vain, therefore, does the Bishop of Rome send us to the sources that we may seek diligently for what our forefathers believed and what the first period of Christianity delivered to us. In these sources we, the orthodox, find the old and divinely-transmitted doctrines, to which we carefully hold fast to the present time, and nowhere do we find the innovations which later times of empty-mindedness brought forth in the West, and which the Papal Church having adopted retains till this very day. The orthodox Eastern Church then justly glories in Christ as being the Church of the seven Ecumenical Synods and of the first nine centuries of Christianity, and therefore the one holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ, the pillar and ground of the truth;²⁵ but the present Roman Church is the Church of innovations, of the falsification of the writings of the Church Fathers, and of the misinterpretation of the Holy Scripture and of the decrees of the holy councils, for which she has reasonably and justly been disowned, and is still disowned, so far as she remains in her error. For better is a praiseworthy war than a peace which separates from God as Gregory of Nazianzus also says.

XXI

Such are, briefly, the serious and arbitrary innovations concerning the faith and the administrative constitution of the Church, which the Papal Church has introduced and which, it is evident, the Papal Encyclical purposely passes over in silence. These innovations, which have reference to essential points of the faith and of the administrative system of the Church, and which are manifestly opposed to the ecclesiastical condition of the first nine centuries, make the longed for union of the Churches impossible: and every pious and orthodox heart is filled with inexpressible sorrow on seeing the Papal Church disdainfully persisting in them, and not in the least contributing to the sacred purpose of union by rejecting those heretical innovations and coming back to the ancient condition of the one holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ, of which she also at that time formed a part.

XXII

But what are we to say of all that the Roman Pontiff writes when he addresses the glorious Slavonic nations? No one, indeed, has ever denied that by the virtue and the apostolic toils of Saints Cyril and Methodius the grace of salvation was vouchsafed to not a few of the Slavonic peoples: but history testifies that at the period of the great Photius those Greek apostles to the Slavs and intimate friends of that divine Father, setting out from Thessalonica, were sent to convert the Slavonic tribes not from Rome but from Constantinople, where moreover they had been trained, living as monks in the monastery of St. Polychronius. It is therefore utterly incoherent which is proclaimed in the Roman Pontiff's Encyclical, that, as he says, a kindly relation and mutual sympathy was brought about between the Slavonic tribes and the pontiffs of the Roman Church; for even if the Pope is ignorant of it, history nevertheless explicitly proclaims that these sacred apostles to the Slavs of whom we speak, encountered greater difficulties in their work from the bishops of Rome through their excommunications and opposition, and were more cruelly persecuted by the Frankish papal bishops than by the heathen inhabitants of those countries. Certainly the Pope knows well that the blessed Methodius having departed to the Lord, two hundred of the most distinguished of his disciples, after many struggles against the opposition of the Roman Pontiffs, were driven out of Moravia and led away by military force beyond its boundaries, from whence afterwards they were dispersed into Bulgaria and elsewhere. And he knows also that with the expulsion of the more

erudite Slavonic clergy, the ritual of the East, as well as the Slavonic language then in use, were also driven out, and in process of time all vestige of orthodoxy was effaced from those provinces, and all these things done with the official cooperation of the bishops of Rome in a manner not the least honorable to the holiness of the episcopal dignity. But notwithstanding all this despiteful treatment, the orthodox Slavonic Churches, the beloved daughters of the orthodox East, and especially the great and glorious Church of divinely-preserved Russia, having been preserved harmless by the grace of God, have kept, and will keep till the end of the ages, the orthodox faith, and stand forth conspicuous testimonies of the liberty that is in Christ. In vain, therefore, does the Papal Encyclical promise to the Slavonic Churches prosperity and greatness, because by the goodwill of the most gracious God they already possess these blessings, and such as these, standing firm in the orthodoxy of their fathers and glorifying in it in Christ.

XXIII

These things being so, and being indisputably proved by ecclesiastical history, we, anxious as it is our duty to be, address ourselves to the peoples of the West, who through ignorance of the true and impartial history of ecclesiastical matters, being credulously led away, follow the anti-evangelical and utterly lawless innovations of the papacy, having been separated and continuing far from the one holy, catholic and apostolic orthodox Church of Christ, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth,²⁶ in which also their gracious ancestors and forefathers shone by their piety and orthodoxy of faith, having been faithful and precious members of it during nine whole centuries, obediently following and walking according to the decrees of the divinely assembled Ecumenical Synods.

XXIV

Christ-loving peoples of the glorious countries of the West! We rejoice on the one hand seeing that you have a zeal for Christ, being led by this right persuasion, that without faith in Christ it is impossible to please God;²⁷ but on the other hand it is self-evident to every right-thinking person that the salutary faith in Christ ought by all means to be right in everything, and in agreement with the Holy Scripture and the apostolic traditions, upon which the teaching of the divine Fathers and the seven holy, divinely assembled Ecumenical Synods is based. It is moreover manifest that the universal Church of God, which holds fast in its bosom unique unadulterated and entire this salutary faith as a divine deposit, just as it was of old delivered and unfolded by the God-bearing Fathers moved by the Spirit, and formulated by them during the first nine centuries, is one and the same for ever, and not manifold and varying with the process of time: because the gospel truths are never susceptible to alteration or progress in course of time, like the various philosophical systems; for Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.²⁸ Wherefore also the holy Vincent, who was brought up on the milk of the piety received from the fathers in the monastery of Lerins in Gaul, and flourished about the middle of the fifth century, with great wisdom and orthodoxy characterizes the true catholicity of the faith and of the Church, saying: In the catholic Church we must especially take heed to hold that which has been believed everywhere at all times, and by all. For this is truly and properly catholic, as the very force and meaning of the word signifies, which moreover comprehends almost everything universally. And that we shall do, if we walk following universality, antiquity, and consent.²⁹ But, as has been said before, the Western Church, from the tenth century downwards, has privily brought into herself through the papacy various and strange and heretical doctrines and innovations, and so she has been torn away and removed far from the true and orthodox Church of Christ. How necessary, then, it is for you to come back and return to the ancient and unadulterated doctrines of the Church in order to attain the salvation in Christ after which you press, you can easily understand if you intelligently consider the command of the heaven-ascended Apostle Paul to the Thessalonians, saying: Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and

hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle;³⁰ and also what the same divine apostle writes to the Galatians saying: I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.³¹ But avoid such perverters of the evangelical truth, For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple³² and come back for the future into the bosom of the holy, catholic and apostolic Church of God, which consists of all the particular holy Churches of God, which being divinely planted, like luxuriant vines throughout the orthodox world, are inseparably united to each other in the unity of the one saving faith in Christ, and in the bond of peace and of the Spirit, that you may obtain the highly-to-be-praised and most glorious name of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ, who suffered for the salvation of the world, may be glorified among you also.

XXV

But let us, who by the grace and good will of the most gracious God are precious members of the body of Christ, that is to say of His one holy, catholic and apostolic Church, hold fast to the piety of our fathers, handed down to us from the apostles. Let us all beware of false apostles, who, coming to us in sheep's clothing, attempt to entice the more simple among us by various deceptive promises, regarding all things as lawful and allowing them for the sake of union, provided only that the Pope of Rome be recognized as supreme and infallible ruler and absolute sovereign of the universal Church, and only representative of Christ on earth, and the source of all grace. And especially let us, who by the grace and mercy of God have been appointed bishops, pastors, and teachers of the holy Churches of God, take heed unto ourselves — and to all the flock, over which the Holy Spirit has made us overseers, to feed the Church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood³³ as they that must give account. Wherefore let us comfort ourselves together, and edify one another.³⁴ And the God of all grace, who has called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus ... make us perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle us³⁵ and grant that all those who are without and far away from the one holy, catholic and orthodox fold of His reasonable sheep may be enlightened with the light of His grace and the acknowledging of the truth. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.

Amen.

In the Patriarchal Palace of Constantinople, in the month of August of the year of grace MDCCCXCV.

ANTHIMOS of Constantinople, beloved brother and intercessor in Christ our God.

NICODEMOS of Cyzicos, beloved brother and intercessor in Christ our God.

PHILOTHEOS of Nicomedia, beloved brother and intercessor in Christ our God.

JEROME of Nicea, beloved brother and intercessor in Christ our God.

NATHANAEL of Prusa, beloved brother and intercessor of Christ our God.

BASIL of Smyrna, beloved brother and intercessor in Christ our God.

STEPHEN of Philadelphia, beloved brother and intercessor in Christ our God.

ATHANASIOS of Lemnos, beloved brother and intercessor in Christ our God.

BESSARION of Dyrrachium, beloved brother and intercessor in Christ our God.

DOROTHEOS of Belgrade, beloved brother and intercessor in Christ our God.

NICODEMOS of Elasson, beloved brother and intercessor in Christ our God.

SOPHRONIOS of Carpathos and Cassos, beloved brother and intercessor in Christ our God.

DIONYSIOS of Eleutheropolis, beloved brother and intercessor in Christ our God.

Notes

1. Eph. 2:20.
2. John 14:6.
3. II Cor. 11:13.
4. Phot. *Epist.* iii. §10.
5. Patriarch of Constantinople
6. Phot. *Epist.* iii. §6.
7. Eph. 4:5-6.
8. See life of Leo III by Athanasius, presbyter and librarian at Rome, in his *Lives of the Popes*. The holy Photius also, making mention of this invective of the orthodox Pope of Rome, Leo III, against the holders of the erroneous doctrine, in his renowned letter to the Metropolitan of Acquileia, expresses himself as follows: For (not to mention those who were before him) Leo the elder, prelate of Rome, as well as Leo the younger after him, shew themselves to be of the same mind with the catholic and apostolic Church, with the holy prelates their predecessors, and with the apostolic commands; the one having contributed much to the assembling of the fourth holy Ecumenical Synod, both by the sacred men who were sent to represent him, and by his letter, through which both Nestorius and Eutyches were overthrown; by which letter he moreover, in accordance with previous synodical decrees, declared the Holy Spirit to proceed from the Father, but not also from the Son. And in like manner Leo the younger, his counterpart in faith as well as in name. This latter indeed, who was ardently zealous for true piety, in order that the unspotted pattern of true piety might not in any way whatever be falsified by a barbarous language, published it in Greek, as has already been said in the beginning, to the people of the West, that they might thereby glorify and preach correctly the Holy Trinity. And not only by word and command, but also, having inscribed and exposed it to the sight of all on certain shields specially made, as on certain monuments, he fixed it at the gates of the Church, in order that every person might easily learn the uncontaminated faith, and in order that no chance whatever might be left to secret forgers and innovators of adulterating the piety of us Christians, and of bringing in the Son besides the Father as a second cause of the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father with honour equal to that of the begotten Son. And it was not these two holy men alone, who shone brightly in the West, who preserved the faith free from innovation; for the Church is not in such want as that of Western preachers; but there is also a host of them not easily counted who did likewise. — *Epist.* v. 53.
9. III Tim. 1:14; 1 Tim. 6:20-21.
10. St. Basil the Great, *Ep.* 243, To the Bishops of Italy and Gaul.
11. Matt. 26:26, 28
12. Matt. 26:28.
13. Matt. 26:31; Heb. 11:39-40; II Tim. 4:8; II Macc. 12:45.
14. Col. 1:18.
15. Matt. 28:20.
16. Gal. 2:11.
17. Matt. 16:18.
18. Matt. 16:16.
19. I Cor. 3:10, 11.
20. Col. 1:24.
21. Eph. 2:19, 20. Cp. 1 Pet. 2:4; Rev. 21:14.

22. See Acts of the Apostles 28:15, Rom. 15:15-16; Phil. 1:13.
23. *Epist.* 239.
24. Gal. 2:11.
25. I Tim. 3:15.
26. I Tim. 3:15.
27. Heb. 11:6.
28. Heb. 13:8.
29. *In ipsa item Catholica Ecclesia magnopere curandum est, ut teneamus, quod ubique quod semper ab omnibus creditum est. Hoc est enim vere proprieque Catholicum (quod ipsa vis nominis ratioque declarat), quod omnia fere universaliter comprehendit. Sed hoc fiet si sequimur universalitatem, antiquitatem, consensionem.* (Vincentii Lirinensis *Commonitorium pro Catholicae fidei antiquitate et universalitate* cap. iii, cf. cap. viii and xiv.
30. I Thess. 2:15.
31. Gal. 1:6-7.
32. Rom. 16:18.
33. Acts 20:28.
34. I Thess. 5:11.
35. I Pet. 5:10.

Source: <http://reocities.com/heartland/5654/orthodox/ency1895.html>