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THE PAPACY

AND

CHRISTIAN UNION.

BY

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[In the autumn of 1886 Cardinal Gibbons, of the United States, wrote an article for the New York Independent, which embodied so much sophistry and arrogance that the editor took the liberty to send a copy of it to Dr. J. A. Wylie, of Edinburgh, Scotland, for a short review. Dr. Wylie's article appeared in The Christian, of London, as follows:]

An American friend, writing to me from Paris, sends a copy of a letter from Cardinal Gibbons, of Baltimore, that lately appeared in the New York Independent. "America," says my correspondent, "is the future battle-
ground of Romanism and Christianity, and our people are alarmingly apathetic and tolerant.” The cardinal writes:

“I have received a letter from the editor of The Independent, asking my views, ‘as a Catholic,’ upon the movement now going on in the Anglican Church, having for its object the ‘reunion of Christendom.’ I have leisure at present to pen but a brief reply. Allow me to say, that I cannot conceive any practical plan for the ecclesiastical union of all who bear the Christian name which does not recognize—

1. Some authority, living and acting, that can definitely say what is or what is not Divine revealed truth, since upon Christ’s revelation his Church must be grounded.

2. The obligation, strict and essential, of receiving in its entirety Christian revelation, since Christ’s work in giving a revelation would be, to say the least, useless if each individual were left free to accept or reject that revelation, or any part of it, as his whim might dictate.
3. That since Christ left a revelation he must have left some authorized interpreter of it, otherwise it would be but a puzzle given to unaided ignorance, something which the 'unlearned and unstable' might 'wrest to their own destruction.'

4. That since the mission of Christ's Church is to 'teach all nations' 'to observe all things whatsoever he has commanded,' there must be some teacher teaching in Christ's name, and 'as one having authority,' to guide his people unerringly in the way of truth.

In the Roman Catholic Church of the sixteenth century, when Luther went out from her, these great requisites of Christian unity were found, and they are found as well in the Roman Catholic Church of to-day; elsewhere I fail to find them.

In separation from the See of Saint Peter, the center of Catholic unity, I can see only discord. In all this broad land there is no one who longs for truly Christian union more than I do, no one who would labor more ear-
nestly to bring about so happy a result. May the Father of mercies grant that those 'other sheep,' for whose sake his divine Son died, that are not yet of his fold, may speedily come home to it, that henceforth there may be 'one fold and one Shepherd.'"

The cardinal professes to be an ardent friend of Christian union; nay, he tells us there is no one on the whole American Continent who more earnestly longs for or would labor more for the union of the Church than himself. It is a grand aim, and we most sincerely sympathize with him in it. What is the cardinal prepared to do for the accomplishment of this supreme and most desirable object? Is he willing that a world-convocation of Christians, or delegates from Christian Churches, should meet, and openly and freely confer touching a matter in which all of them have an equal concern? Is he willing that Christians, taking the Bible for their rule and the Holy Spirit for their guide, should frame a basis of union and a form of Church government?
This would seem but reasonable; nay, it seems the only practical way of attaining the end. It is the way in which all other unions are accomplished. Does Cardinal Gibbons propose that this desired union shall be gone about in this fair and rational way? Will his Church meet the other Churches of Christendom on an equal level, and reason the matter, the word of God being judge? The cardinal will do no such thing. How, then, does he expect ever to be able to affect the re-union of Christendom? It cannot be accomplished, he tells us, but on the following conditions:

1. **Absolute submission to the pope.** The cardinal says that he cannot conceive of a union, unless one in which all Christians “recognize a living and acting authority.” That “living and acting authority” was, he gives us to understand, Leo X. in Luther’s day, and is Leo XIII. in ours.

2. **The renunciation of the Bible.** That “living and acting authority,” says the cardinal, “can definitely say what is and what is not divine-revealed truth.” This “living and
acting authority” has already said that “divine revealed truth” is contained in the creed of Pope Pius IV., as more fully set forth in the Canons of the Council of Trent. These two documents are to be the creed of re-united Christendom. This puts the Bible out of court, and installs in its place the Canons of the Council of Trent, or whatever dogma the “living and acting authority,” now decreed to be infallible, may be pleased to add to the Tridentine Canons, as the rule of faith for all Christians.

3. The third condition is the surrender of conscience and private judgment. For, says Cardinal Gibbons, “since Christ left a revelation, he must have left some authorized interpreter of it, otherwise it would be but a puzzle.” That implies that God could not or has not given a revelation which plain men can understand, and therefore the “Church;” that is, the pope, must come in and explain it. The Church of Rome teaches that laymen cannot discover the sense of Scripture, or interpret a single verse of it, and are bound to
receive whatever sense or interpretation the “Church” puts upon it. This crushes the conscience of the reader of the Bible into the dust.

4. The whole teaching of Rome is to be believed under peril of anathema. “The obligation” to receive “in its entirety the Christian” (Roman) “revelation” is, says the cardinal, “strict and essential,” and no one is to be “left free” to follow his “whim.”

These are the conditions, Cardinal Gibbons tells the American people, on which alone the re-union of Christendom is possible. Cardinal Gibbons does not deceive the American people; let them not deceive themselves. This is not the union of Christendom, but its surrender to Rome. Is America prepared for that, with all its inevitable consequences? Unless she is, it will be well for her to exchange her “apathetic tolerance” for bold and determined protest.

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