

THE POPE'S LETTER TO THE ENGLISH PEOPLE

A DECLARATION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CHURCH ASSOCIATION

Church Association Tract 216

Pope Leo XIII. has addressed a letter to the people of England inviting them to pray to the Saints for unity with himself as the "Supreme Shepherd" of the Church of Christ, the Council of the Church Association, speaking for thousands of loyal Members of the English Church, hereby declare that honest adherence to the fundamental constitution and express principles of their own Church forbids them to entertain, even for a moment, the suggestion of corporate union with the apostate Romish system.

They hold that their ministers are bound, by ordination vow, to "banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's Word," and nowhere is there such a combination of those doctrines as within the Roman Communion.

They heartily assent to the thirty-nine Articles of Religion, and would put in the very forefront the VIth of those Articles, which appeals to the sole authority of Holy Scripture in matters of faith and morals, as opposed to the adulterated traditions of the Italian or any other so-called Church.

They reiterate the statement of Article XXXVII., that "the Bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in this Realm of England," and, as loyal British citizens, they utterly refuse to recognize him as their Shepherd or Ruler.

They proclaim, with Article XIX., that "the Church of Rome hath erred not only in living and manner of ceremonies, but also in matters of faith," and they decline to dishonour God by having fellowship with error.

They assert, in the very words of Article XXII., that "the Romish doctrine concerning Purgatory, Pardons, Worshipping and Adoration as well of images, as of reliques, and also Invocation of saints, is a fond thing, vainly invented, grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God;" and they, therefore, brand the Pope's invitation humbly to call upon St. Gregory, Augustine his disciple, St. Peter, St. George, and "Mary the Holy Mother of God," together with his assumed power to grant "Indulgences" and his concluding prayer to the Virgin Mary, as rank blasphemy against our Lord Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and man; further, they reject with horror the heresy which designates the creature as mother of the Creator, and ventures to invest her with attributes which can be possessed and exercised by Deity alone. They cannot forget that our noble Reformers, Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, Hooper and many others, strove even unto the death against the awful doctrine of "the sacrifices of Masses in the which it was commonly said that the Priest did offer Christ for the quick and the dead"; and, with Article XXXI., they pronounce them to be "blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits"; and they absolutely refuse to be partakers with Rome in the blood of the martyrs of Jesus, or to join with her in that "idolatry which is to be abhorred of all faithful Christians."

They furthermore concur with the Homily for Whitsunday (second part) that "the popes and prelates of Rome" are "worthily accounted among the number of false Prophets and false Christs which deceived the world a long while. The Lord of heaven and earth defend us from their tyranny and pride that they never enter into His vineyard again. And may He of His great mercy so work in

all men's hearts by the mighty power of the Holy Ghost that the comfortable Gospel of His Son Christ may be truly preached, truly received, and truly followed in all places, to the beating down of sin, death, the Pope, the devil, and all the kingdom of Antichrist."

They still further repudiate the false assertion of the Letter that in the sixteenth century England "received a grievous wound" and was bereft of the holy faith; and, on the contrary, they most heartily thank God for the glorious Reformation by which their civil and religious liberties were won; and which (the Pope himself being witness) made this great nation the most Bible-respecting, Sabbath-keeping, truth-loving, moral and prosperous people in the whole of professing Christendom. And here they lay the charge of schism, separation, and strife at the door of the proud imposer of unscriptural conditions of communion.

They remember how the occupants of the self-styled "Apostolic and Holy See" "made every *prudent* (?) effort to put an end" to the work of the Reformers. And while the memory of the Saints of Jesus who suffered by shameful plots, by bloody massacres, in the horrible Inquisition and at the cruel stake remains, they will have no dishonourable peace with Rome.

They denounce before Almighty God and their countrymen the treacherous action of persons calling themselves Members of the English Church, especially those holding official appointments in the same, who have unfaithfully introduced Romish practices into our Protestant Communion, and by coquetting with her whom Scripture designates "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS," have induced the Pope to propose this unhallowed union with himself. And finally, they call upon all God-fearing and self-respecting Britons, at this serious crisis in the history of the Church and nation, to be true to their glorious past, and to secure for their children an equally glorious future, saying to them in the inspired words of the great Apostle, "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."