

## ON THE CAUSAL UNITY OF THE CHURCH

In Christ, we find our unity. And yet, on Earth, we find nothing but disunity. Let us correct this predicament. The unity of the Church is an important matter. The Great Schism, the Reformation and the foundation of Victorian Protestant sects continues to separate the Church into further and further disunity. It is an issue which affects the entire world, and has done so for some time now. This division of faith has led to wars, murders and malcontents for centuries. And this, simply over petty ideological differences. Drawing on the natural law, it will become visible that Church unity is essential for the growth and preservation of the Church. Without it, we submit faith and life to a slavery in poverty, ignorance and conformity. Therefore, let the churches unite following the four means of causation. A unity in form, matter, efficiency and finality. Let us begin with form.

In form, unity is most palpable and most in need of preservation. By formal cause, we mean the substance, rather than the accidental features, which bring unity across the Church. The sphere of the bronze orb; the soul encapsulated by the flesh; the template on which the materials are built. For the Church, there are certain material and rational facts which all denominations have alike. For matter, the Bible, the death and resurrection of Christ, the history of the Jews and the existence of the Church. For reason, the prime movement of God and his nature as the manifestation of all causes and effects. These reported examples in our earthly histories, and the supremacy of first principles, are what unite all denominations in common union with one another. These facts, regardless of further assumptions and limitations of the denominations, are universal. In light of this, the faith has grounds, very strong grounds, of unity. By remembering this unity of faith, the Church will achieve the principle of unity: the first step towards material unity.

After adducing formal unity, the next — and by far the most difficult cause — is the unity of material cause. By material cause, we mean the material part of faith. The accident to the substance. The cogs which make the clock. For sure, a clock is universally recognisable. But some clocks have more cogs than others. Some are wrist clocks; others wall clocks. Some analogue; others digital. The faith is analogous to this. Various denominations have various material differences which invite conflict throughout the Church. For instance, modern Roman Catholics place emphasis on the Roman Missal. For Baptists, Baptism in later life. For Anglicans, the supremacy of the Crown and justification by faith alone. Evidently, a textual pattern. It is these material differences which cause violence in body and soul across the Church. Not objectively, but by the sophistry of equating these material differences with formal ones. So far, the Catholic and Orthodox rites have done much to bring about a unity of form; despite the material differences in ecclesiastical architecture, language of preaching and style of vestments. The other denominations must learn to do the same. To recognise that these differences in practice are simply ones of taste and matter, and will never trump the unity of the Church in facts and reason. Whether one is induced to resolve in conscience, scripture, reason or precedent, we are still one Church. And so, by accepting that our differences are material, like the Roman Empire — and the true dream of the European Union — we are one in form. In this context, the Church will restore its unity and maintain its splendid diversity for future growth and preservation.

Sailing on from formal and material cause, efficient cause is the next cause to unite the Church. In particular, its comprehension and application. By efficient cause, we speak of the origin of faith. For

the Church, Christ to the apostles initially; ultimately, from God. It is by the subsequent chain of cause and effect from God to Christ, and from Christ to the present, that we are one in unity of faith by origin; this a universal feature of our faith. Here, we see the unity of cause and effect playing with factual reality; actions leading to consequences whether it is the death of Christ, the election of Pope Alexander VI or the Russo-Ukrainian war. This indisputable principle of faith is what keeps it together. By appreciating this fact more, we may better yet consolidate our faith and bring about a unity of body with our unity of spirit. In wisdom, we grow the faith; in talking with others, we grow our Church.

Having now examined causes formal, material and efficient, the most important element of the quadruplet for Church unity is the final cause. In short, what is the Church for? What purpose does it serve? Accidentally, to alleviate poverty, teach the ignorant and fight against conformity. In the end, to worship God. But what is worship and what is God? To worship is voluntarily to submit to a power; God, the sum totality of reason (theoretically and its operation). By dragging this to the centre of our minds, the factions within the Church, and the factions within the factions, will free themselves from this wretched turmoil and instead bring about the holy unity that God expects of us. In sharing our vision for the future, we shall transform God's tribes into God's empire.

To survive, the Church must unite. Under the optional plagues of individualism, materialism and utilitarianism, the Church has fallen into a petty rabble of soothsayers. Of course, the glimmer of truth continues to shine from the Curia to the parish meeting hall. But if we are to survive, unity is our only option. We must remember in form, efficiency and finality, our religion is one and the same: universal. In matter, this is a question of taste, and never the essence of our faith. Like the common law, its principles are universal, but apply to the particular needs and circumstances of the individual. In reading and growing our knowledge, we may act wiser in our world. Without this, we rip our loose threads entirely apart until there is nothing left to bring us together. So learn your faith, stand your ground and grow your Church.