

OPEN LETTER ON "UNITY"

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I would like to address two problems in one letter, as I feel I cannot address the one without reference to the other.

The main purpose of this article is to address remarks made by N.M. Gwynne in the January edition of the "Messenger". But the second topic I wish to pursue is actually the root of all problems common to Traditionalists. Mr. Gwynne's comments have further clouded the issue, yet they highlight our main stumbling block: unity. Mr. Gwynne has joined the ranks of a growing group of experts, all self-appointed interpreters of Canon Law. (My husband is fond of saying, concerning these modern-day "experts": "An ex is a has-been; and a spurt, a drip under pressure.") I am sure they mean well, and some may indeed be well-versed in their subjects, but they forget that the code was written in 1917, when laws, especially those of the Church, were written in a clear and understandable manner. Today's laws are so construed that any meaning might be given to them; so modernistic and humanistic in content that ambiguity abounds and clear intent slips away. But Canon Law is not so written, even though those well-trained in explaining humanistic euphemisms and dialogue apply their methods to it. Canon Law is not like the Bible, to be taken either literally or symbolically. In order to be applied and enforced, laws *must* be clearly written and fairly easy to understand. Man was not made for the law, but the law for man. The Church did not intend that only Church officials and Canon lawyers understand Church Law. Canon Law is a compendium of ancient laws written to govern not just the hierarchy, but the laity as well. In order to comply with the law, one must understand it. The Church would hardly expect us to obey a law with many possible interpretations, so written that it could not be understood. I do not attempt to interpret Canon Law here; I only wish to supply the missing pieces of the puzzle because if you don't have *all* the pieces, you'll never get the real picture.

If you would please consult your January issue, I will reply to Mr. Gwynne's letter in its chronological order:

(1) If even an *excommunicated* priest may confer the sacraments if requested to do so by the faithful (Canon 2370), then how can one say a bishop may not perform a similar function? Canon 2205, paragraph 2, informs us that *necessity* and even *grave inconvenience* can excuse *entirely* from crime in ecclesiastic laws, and, according to Canon 2218, what excuses from crimes excuses from penalties, and Canon 2219 states that "In penalties the more benign interpretation should be followed." We must use the faculty of reason God gave us. If all the "hierarchy" of the Church were to be annihilated in a sudden cataclysm, save one elderly bishop and two priests, would we then say, "Oh, woe is me; there is no pope to approve the consecrations of these priests as bishops; therefore, the Catholic Church must fade into obscurity."? You will say, "But that is *true* necessity, and anyway, that is not the case today." Well, why isn't it? The "ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH" is *morally and spiritually dead!* Are you trying to tell me that the physical death of a thing transcends the spiritual? If we believe that, we're as good as dead ourselves! In both Canons 953 and 954, Mr. Gwynne must read farther than the first two paragraphs, or read in between the first and last paragraphs. In paragraph 3 of Canon 953, we find this statement: "Without such a [papal] mandate, he acts unlawfully, *though validly*." And in paragraph 2 of Canon 954, we find this telling sentence: "This law [requiring a papal mandate] *does not affect* the validity of a consecration, but constitutes a *grievous obligation* to employ two co-consecrating bishops." It seems clear to me that if all one had to choose from in the way of bishops were heretics, one would be excused from grievous obligation.

(2) It is true that bad priests are a terrific evil, but what constitutes a "bad priest"? A priest can be worldly and materialistic or a drunkard, but does that make him guilty of heresy or merely a flawed human being like the rest of us? The line needs to be drawn between bad and heretical, or bad and (ipso facto) excommunicated. And besides, who judges these bishops to be bad? Does Mr. Gwynne know them personally? Has he spoken to any of the faithful they serve(d)? They may be exemplary men, for all we know. But what if they do have their faults? Does that cancel their validity? Hardly. God usually sends us the leaders we deserve. Who are we to merit saintly priests and bishops? Traditionalists, were they humble and charitable as they should be, would not now be at each others' throats as they most certainly are. When we ourselves practice the faith we all profess to cherish, then, perhaps, God will see fit to send us saintly men to lead us out of this earthly hell.

(3) Yes, we have no pope. But are we to abandon the Church and leave all those *Novus Ordo* souls to Satan? Or, despite derision and castigation, are we to attempt to rescue the trampled Body of Christ from the heretics

and save as many as we possibly can from eternal hellfire? Saint Ambrose tells us: "The law of courage is put into practice not in inflicting wrong, but in driving out wrong." Dr. Cancio observes that, during similar periods of confusion, chaos, and leaderlessness in the Church "...no orthodox bishop of the time was anointed by Christ or made pope *out of the regular canonical channels*, even if the Church was in a frightful crisis." I would like to point out that the majority of these crises occurred prior to the laws written by Aquinas, Bellarmine, Paul IV and the convening of the Council of Trent, where Pope St. Pius V reaffirmed Pope Paul IV's law "Cum Ex Apostolatus Officio". The codification of Canon Law also indicates in Canon 188 and Canon 20 that 1) we have the right to assume the See is vacant when a pope is guilty of heresy (188); and 2) we then have the right to set up legal machinery to elect a pope (20). The code, compiled in 1915 and signed into law in 1917, combined both the spirit and the letter of many age-old laws by which the Church had governed herself for centuries. If there exists a legal and theological foundation for the valid election of bishops and the subsequent election of a pope, and I think you can see that there does, then this foundation was provided us by the immutable laws of the Roman Catholic Church, indexed and summarized in the official code and compiled by Canon lawyers, the likes of which we may never see again. One does not need to be the holder of illustrious degrees to possess reason, logic and common sense. They are dispensed freely by the Creator if one will only use them. And in any case, all education is interpreted and received differently by each individual. What one will derive from knowledge another will not. Given the state into which most universities and modern thinking has fallen, I would sooner rest my case on Canon Law and the scholars of old than any human counsel available today. Canon Law permits us to remedy *our* situation.

(4) Who can claim to know the spirit of Church Law without the exhaustive study of *all* Church Law? To fail to drive out heresy, especially heresy elevated on a universal scale and represented as Catholic, runs contrary to all Church history and to the spirit of nearly every teaching of the Church. The Church Fathers held heresy in particular horror, and nothing has posed a greater threat in all ages than the proliferation of heresy and resultant wholesale apostasy of the faithful. To say that efforts were not made to rout heresy in past crises of the Church does not necessarily mean that God sanctions inaction. Aquinas (St. Thomas) tells us: "...it is evident that whoever neglects to have or to do what he ought to



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do commits a sin of omission. Therefore, through negligence, ignorance of what one is bound to know *is a sin.*" And St. Felix said: "Not to confound evil men *when we can do it* is no less a sin than to encourage them." Now, without making ourselves visible to the world by formally re-establishing the Church, how *can* we effectively combat this heresy? Its universal nature requires an equal response. There may have been other massive heresies, but none could match this in nature, since half the world was then undiscovered and without the benefit of telecommunications. Comparing apples with oranges is not the way to resolve a situation sensibly. In any case, we cannot presume to know how God may have judged those, in times past, for failing to act on His behalf. I cannot believe that God would fault us for doing what the first commandment declares we must do: defend the faith, unto death if necessary.

(5) Nowhere has the Church denied that necessity did not allow for the valid consecration of bishops. Mr. Gwynne takes it for granted that, because there is no precedent closely resembling the situation in which we find ourselves today, the consecrations are invalid and illicit. Canon Law refutes this.

(6) If you are starving, and all you have to eat is slightly moldy fruit, will you overlook the mold (which, on fruit, is usually superficial) or starve to death? Again, the assumption is made that these bishops are "bad" or unworthy.

(7) When countless souls are led astray, when heresy is presented as truth, when the Papal See is vacant, then *this* is not necessity? Please, God, may I never see the day, then, that necessity presents itself! Mr. Gwynne fails to comprehend the extent of the problem. I repeat, it cannot be said that heresy was spread on such a large-scale basis in the past. By sheer numbers alone, the problem is much worse, not to mention that never before has the Sacrifice of the Mass been tampered with. It is a grave sin, also, against charity, not to do all in our power to rescue souls from the bloodthirsty jaws of Satan's servants disguised as Novus Ordo "priests" and bishops. If we *truly* love our fellow man, we will stop at nothing to save him from himself and God's wrath. And *this* pales into nothingness when we consider that we are to love God and His Son above all things, and yet it is Christ who again endures His crucifixion through the passion of the Church, His Mystical Body. Charity and love of God were immutable laws long before laws were even written down. Surely they take precedence over man-made laws, having been uttered or reiterated by Christ Himself!

(8 & 9) How can Mr. Gwynne assume we will witness the reign of an anti-Christ? Our Lord said, "No one knows the day nor the hour, save my Father in heaven." Church Fathers have thought for 2000 years that theirs was the age of the anti-Christ. Numerous prophecies debunk this theory; Fatima and La Salette both predict that there will be a chastisement followed by a period of peace. Other prophecies predict that there will be a great war, and a great king will come to lead us. This king will lay his crown down at the feet of the anti-Christ at the end of his reign. And what of Malachy's list of popes? Supposedly, we have anywhere from two to five left. Many prophecies mention a *true* pope and an anti-pope. The true pope is said to be in exile from Rome during these times, while the anti-pope rules the Vatican. Both Nostradamus and Anna Katerina Emmerich have made mention of this. St. John Bosco authored a lengthy prophecy, interesting for its reference to a pope and Canon Law. He advises: "If you cannot untie the knots, cut them." We cannot presume to know that the Mass will be taken away in *this* period, or that the advent of this era automatically absolves us from taking action. If God desires to remedy this situation Himself, then all our efforts will come to naught and His will assert themselves. Should our efforts produce a positive effect, if only briefly, then perhaps we have served a purpose within His Divine Plan. By enforced immobility, we will never know.

(10) Again I must cry: "Canon Law does *not* forbid it! Canon Law was given to us by the Church. At that time, we had knowledgeable Church officials to make sense of it. Now we have none, and everyone is an "expert"! A law either says so and so, or it does not. Large areas of gray were not in common use until Vatican II. True; to properly interpret every possible application and become familiar with the spirit of all Church Law, one would require long years of study. But the laws that apply in this case are explicit enough.

Which brings us to the end of this detailed examination of Mr. Gwynne's letter. Were I a world wonder, hundreds of letters like this could be written every month. I try to restrict myself to writing that which I think will do the most good in the best places. These arguments could go on until the end of time itself, with nothing resolved. Traditionalists must face the fact that it is their own disunity which threatens to destroy the Church more than Canon Law, the new bishops or any other single factor. They are divided over every possible issue, and each camp attacks the other regularly. So far, all this has prompted only discussion concerning

the matter, but few solutions have been proffered. Here we have a group of bishops, *validly* consecrated and willing to establish a hierarchy, and they must fight their own. Before now, the problem had been attributed to lack of a hierarchy. Yet even now we prefer to fight among ourselves, which only illustrates where the problem really lies. Some Traditional Catholic leaders contend that we can never attain unity, but again this does not relieve us of the obligation of trying. One plan of action I have in mind would require initiation by a bishop, but I feel it has possibilities. Truly concerned Traditionalists would participate, I'm sure. As for the others, well, we could always say that at least they were invited. What I'm referring to is a Catholic Congress of sorts, with Catholics tentatively willing to be guided by a group of Traditional priests and one or more of the new bishops. The priests (but not the bishops) could be subject to election, but would also be required to submit to the final decision of the bishop(s). This congress would be preceded by state conventions organized along the lines of political (party) conventions, with delegates elected to attend the congress. These conventions could vote on those articles of faith essential to Catholicism, draft the "winners" and forward them to the congress, where further voting and discussion would take place. The final decisions would be in the hands of the priests and bishop(s), who would have the power of absolute veto but who would also be required to prove up their decisions with the catechism of Trent, Canon Law books, and the volume "Enchirideon Symbolorum", all of which have been relied on traditionally to define the faith. It would become possible there and then to ascertain what Traditionalists are bound to believe, and a declaration of those beliefs, along with a resolution on unity and a definition of a "Traditionalist" Catholic, would seem in order. I have spoken and corresponded with all shades of Traditionalists, and two complaints are voiced most frequently: 1) the Church has become too complex to comprehend. They feel lost in the bureaucracy, incapable of relating the faith of little children and the tenets of the New Testament to the tangles of Canon Law, the controversial raging among theologians and the antics of the Novus Ordo; 2) They have no voice in this "new" Traditional Church. Whatever is done is done without them, and this they uneasily equivocate with Vatican II and the introduction of the New Mass. A convention would give them a voice, define what Traditional Catholics *must* believe and may believe, and help regain their confidence and support.

We can put an end to arguments and unite—or we can continue to our detriment. If any other possible solutions have been proposed, I am not aware of them. We have nothing to lose and much could be gained. In this country, where our freedoms ebb daily, we cannot afford to waste time. We may not be facing the end of the world, but a world-wide cataclysm is certainly in order. To restore the Church, we must first strive to be recognized by Her marks: one, holy, Catholic and apostolic. We can help restore all these marks if we put forth a final effort for Christ and His Church. If we succeed, we will know it was His will. If we do not, we will know He has other plans. But try we must. A soldier of Christ never merits R & R until he is discharged from this life. Are you a good soldier? Any suggestions you have would be appreciated.



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