

## Gather Together the Fragments

In Germany, Austria, and Switzerland reaction amongst faithful Catholics to the new Vatican decrees were swift. Entire parish communities refused to accept the new decrees and joined together in common councils to reaffirm their faith in the Scriptures and the authentic Catholic Tradition of the Church and to decide on their future course.

Under brilliant leadership the movement rose to meet the challenge of persecution and intimidation which its larger erring sister church of Rome now leveled at it. Priests were cut off from their pensions unless they subscribed to the new dogma of Papal Infallibility which soon became known amongst them as the "hunger dogma." Boycott and social ostracism and even the arm of the state were employed by the infuriated ultramontanists in their attempts to force the submission of the recalcitrant Catholic population to their wishes. Against all this the conscientious faith of thousands of earnest Christians stood firm.

Though these Catholics preserved the faith as they had always believed it, the question that was not fearfully evident to the bishopless flock was how to continue the succession of this faith for unborn generations. It was necessary with the establishment of the Old Catholic Church order and its independent government that a bishop be chosen. But how could a legitimate bishop be obtained, since according to Catholic conception, such a one could be consecrated only by another legitimate bishop?

Here the River of History, which now and again flows wide only to break off into different channels, now flowed together again. The Catholic Church of Holland came to the aid of the Old Catholic Movement. From the time when the pope and the Jesuits had first attempted to subjugate it, the Church of Holland had withstood her trials through the years, firm in its position and preserving its sacred badge of Apostleship in the legitimate Catholic succession of her bishops.

The Dutch Archbishop, Loos, in 1872, had helped the German Old Catholics with confirmation and was willing to consecrate their bishop, but it was necessary first for the movement to have the recognition of the state. Dr. von Schulte applied to the Prussian Government and received Royal recognition, as a Catholic, for the bishop to be elected, as well as a grant of 48,000 marks for the expenses of the bishop and his administration. Old Catholicism, without this recognition of the state, would have been, in the eyes of many European peoples, a sect, and it would have meant a renunciation on the part of the Old Catholic movement of its legal standing and its right to the same support which the Roman Church enjoyed if it had not sought this recognition. With this accomplished the delegates of the German congregations, both clerical and lay, in the manner of the ancient Church in the chapel of the City Hall of Cologne June 4th, 1873, unanimously elected Professor D. Reinkens, of Bonn, as their future Bishop. As Archbishop Loos had just died, Bishop Heykamp of Deventer, consecrated the first Old Catholic Bishop for Germany.

In Switzerland in 1876 Bishop Herzog was consecrated Bishop of the Old Catholic Movement there. Thus the scattered fragments of Christ's Church were gathered together. In time the movement developed sufficiently in other parts of the world to warrant the necessity of Episcopal supervision and gradually the jealously guarded Catholic Episcopate came to bless these faithful children of the Catholic Church of Christ in increasing numbers everywhere.

In Austria, Czechoslovakia, Italy, Switzerland, France, Yugoslavia and Poland the movement grew and took root and Bishops were consecrated at Utrecht, Holland, for almost all these countries.

Out of the hard struggles of countless intrepid little bands of Catholic priests and laymen all the elements within the Church that rebelled against the corruption of its faith and realized the original Christian Ideal of the one Flock of Christ, were drawn together and, if at first in the shape of a small model only, assumed the form of the ancient Church again.

But the greater works of this small church were only now to begin even if its martyrs and saints, the progenitors in small numbers through the ages, lay in eternal sleep. A new spiritual impetus, an evangelical Catholic spirit was to be borne on the first winds of the twentieth century as they swept, first across Poland, then through England, France, the Balkans, and thence to America, to bring a new sense of spiritual freedom with the old and unchanging truths of Christianity--born to set the souls of all people free.