Pole’s Defense of the Unity of the Church
REGINALD POLE

Portrait by Sebastiano del Piombo (c. 1538). Used with permission of Longmans, Green and Co., London. The original of this portrait is in the Hermitage, Leningrad.
POLE'S DEFENSE OF THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

Translated with Introduction by

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Lift Up Thy Voice Like a Trumpet
(Is. 58.1)
Reginald Pole’s *On the Unity of the Church*, in the context of its 1536 setting, is a personal appeal for the spiritual salvation of his dear friend, Henry VIII, and a strong defense of papal supremacy. The fame of the monarch to whom the appeal was directed, and the character of the man addressing the appeal, mark this work with intrinsic and extrinsic relevancy both for any contemporary aggiornamento, and the insight it provides for an almost forgotten page of Tudor history.

An intelligent study of forces causing division among leading Christian bodies must include dispassionate examination of pertinent historical evidence on the origin of these divisive forces. In the milieu of Vatican Council II and world-wide expanding interest in the ecumenical movement among Christians, however, few would want to stir up smoldering controversies or revive bitter, ancient arguments, with resultant animosities and misunderstandings. Omission or distortion of the true but unpalatable can be as misleading as stating patent falsehoods. Religious controversial literature of the past four centuries has not always avoided these erroneous extremes. Historians, theologians and other authors representative of varied religious persuasions now tend toward restraint and reflective moderation when exploring controversial issues. During the past two decades few areas of the western tradition have shared the extensive research and scholarship that have been devoted to the political crises of the Tudors and the origins of the English Reformation. Nor is the rate of acceleration for these studies diminishing.

Although Pole’s confrontation of Henry VIII may not be a very
popular model for contemporary ecumenical dialogue, his message is vital and essential for a realistic interpretation of the political-religious complexities of the early Tudor period. This document in defense of the papacy should take its place with such sixteenth century records as the Augsburg Confession (1530), the Thirty-nine Articles (1571), and On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church (1520). In its vigorous overtones, Pole’s message also suggests startling parallels to problems of Church and State in the late twentieth century, and to the disintegrating forces of political expediency and state absolutism.

Henry VIII was the second Tudor King of England. Reginald Pole was Henry’s cousin, and as a Plantagenet he held a legitimate claim to the throne of England almost stronger than Henry’s. During the greater part of his life, Reginald Pole was a layman. Created cardinal in 1536, he was finally ordained a priest and consecrated Archbishop of Canterbury in the fifty-sixth year of his life. As a layman residing in Italy, he wrote On the Unity of the Church for the sole perusal of his royal cousin, Henry. The political exigencies of the sixteenth century world did not prevent Pole from remaining a man of strong principles. As a leading protagonist in the Tudor drama, he was recognized as a spokesman for tolerance, sympathetic understanding, kindness and leniency—notably in his conciliatory attitude toward Martin Luther and many of his followers. A reading of this work will reveal Pole’s unique position among renowned ecclesiastics, among his contemporaries in England, and among Renaissance men of learning.

In the Introduction, the translator has endeavored to present adequate material on Pole the man, and the age in which he lived, to afford the general reader and students of sixteenth century history background for informed comprehension of On the Unity of the Church. Essential information on the original Latin text, sources consulted in the preparation of the translation, and the translator’s indebtedness to others—all have been relegated to the notes in Acknowledgments and the Bibliography, at the end of the volume. Quotations from Holy Scripture are based on the Old Testament, first published by the English College at Douay, 1609, and the New Testament, first published by the English College at Rheims, 1582. All other translations are original, in the first complete English translation of Reginald Pole’s Pro Ecclesiasticae Unitatis Defensione.
Mindful of Einhard’s concern about Cicero’s admonition to write with order, clarity and charm, the translator shares Einhard’s inhibitions. With a certain humble modesty as the only basis for similarity, Einhard’s words might be paraphrased at the conclusion of this preface: the translator would have been restrained from writing, had he not decided he might better risk the opinions of the world by putting his slight talent for writing to the test, rather than—for the sake of sparing himself—ignore the memory of a man of the stature of Reginald Pole.

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Contents

PREFACE

INTRODUCTION

Reginald Pole and Henry VIII, xiii; Pole's Reply to Henry VIII, xv; Pole's Literary Style, xvii; Pole's Political Philosophy, xxii; Reactions to "On the Unity of the Church," xxiv; Pole's Later Career, xxvi; Pole's Legacy, xxxv.

BOOK I

Henry VIII's Affliction and Pole's Love for Henry, 4; Henry VIII's Usurped Title of Head of the Church, 9; Richard Sampson's Defense of Henry VIII, 15; Pole's Reply to Richard Sampson, 19; Pole Addresses Sampson Directly, 20; Absurdity of Richard Sampson's Argument, 23; The Authority Conferred Upon Kings, 29; No Christian Kings in the Days of Christ, 34; Honor and Power Conferred on Thomas More and John Fisher, 37; Richard Sampson Confuses the Head of the Church and the Head of the State, 39; Pole Appeals Directly to Henry VIII, 41; Example of Constantine the Great, 45; The Origin and Function of Kings and Priests, 50; Punishment of Ozias, Dathan, and Abiron, 63; Gravity of Henry VIII's Crime, 68; Pole Again Addresses Richard Sampson, 72.

BOOK II

Sampson's Arguments Continued, 75; The Apostolic Succession Does Not Depend on the Habits of Men, 78; What
Peter Would Say if He Returned to Earth, 93; "Upon This Rock I Will Build My Church," 98; Sampson Distorts the Testimony of Augustine, Cyprian, Jerome, and Erasmus, 145; Further Direct Appeal to Henry VIII, 162.

BOOK III
Pole Admonishes Henry VIII, 175; Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, 181; Pole's Plantagenet Ancestry, 196; Henry VIII Weakens the Succession and Sows Sedition, 198; Eulogy on John Fisher, Thomas More, the Bridgettines, and the Carthusians, 204; Apostrophe to Pole's Native England, 220; Another Direct Appeal to Henry VIII, 259; Pole's Address to the Emperor Charles V, 271; Summary of Questions Directed to Henry, 278.

BOOK IV
Pole begs Henry VIII to Listen Attentively, 295; Pole Appeals to Henry VIII to Repent and Do Penance, 298; The Need for Faith, 302; Human Reason and the Divine Light of Faith, 307; To Henry VIII: "Be Converted and Do Penance!", 330.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

NOTE ON TEXTS

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

INDEX
Reginald Pole and Henry VIII

To have the blood of the Plantagenets and the Tudors coursing through his veins was something less than an undisguised blessing for a nine-year-old lad in the year that Henry VIII ascended the throne of England. In 1509 Reginald Pole was at boarding school with the Carthusians and presumably little concerned about his close relationship with royalty. His mother was Lady Margaret Salisbury, King Edward IV’s niece. His father, Sir Richard Pole, was a cousin of the first Tudor King, Henry VII. The Tudor heritage coupled with direct Plantagenet descent from George, Duke of Clarence, Edward IV’s brother, gave Pole in many ways a stronger claim to the throne of England than that of the reigning Tudor monarch himself. This close kinship would for a time bring many benefits to young Pole. Henry VIII aided his cousin Reginald with grants and benefices that enabled him to study at Oxford and to advance his career in the company of leading Renaissance scholars on the Continent. Pole’s gratitude to his cousin Henry VIII was rooted in admiration from early youth. In later years he would protest that Henry’s welfare had always been and would always be his deepest concern. In his vigorous appeal to Henry, Pole cried out: “May God be my witness that never has the love of a mother for her only son been greater than the love I have always had for you!”

Dramatic and tragic events were soon to cloud the future of both men. These events would compel Reginald to manifest his affection
and zeal for Henry’s welfare through strong and vehement opposition to Henry’s deeds.

By 1527 Henry VIII had entered upon his protracted and painful divorce proceedings against Catherine of Aragon. He had dreams of invalidating Pope Julius II’s original dispensation that had permitted Henry’s marriage to Catherine of Aragon, widow of his deceased brother Arthur. Whatever varied reasons may have motivated Henry, the desire for a male heir and a lustful longing for Anne Boleyn were dominant ones. Hoping his royal cousin would give him substantial support for this move, Henry had even commanded Pole to take part in a mission to the University of Paris seeking a statement favorable to Henry’s plan. Pole later explained his great reluctance in having had any part in this mission.

Events moved rapidly and Pole was soon confronted with the necessity of making a firm decision either to aid Henry in his divorce or to state unequivocally his determined opposition. Henry searched anxiously for an opportunity that might incline Pole toward the former choice. For this purpose, the death of Thomas Wolsey, November 29, 1530, proved to be fortuitous. Henry seized the occasion to offer Pole the Archiepiscopal See of York. The resultant interview was a stormy one.

Henry, confident that the offer of York would be sufficient to obtain his younger cousin’s favorable opinion on the divorce, awaited Pole’s visit. Pole had been praying desperately while preparing for this interview. The possibility of finding a compromise that would be both pleasing to the King and satisfying to Pole’s conscience was always present in this grim dilemma. When he was suddenly confronted by Henry, however, Reginald Pole found he could not speak. Finally he burst forth with protestations of appreciation and respectful gratitude for Henry’s generous offer. With firmer words he pleaded that he must decline the offer, that neither in conscience nor for the good of his soul could he approve the King’s plans. Henry was stunned. Few had ever dared resist the King so bluntly. And opposition to Henry VIII from those he loved most invariably produced in him even greater frustration and fury. His violence was often in proportion to his affection for those involved. This episode was no exception. Henry was intensely disturbed, his face changed in appearance, and he reached for the dagger hanging at his belt. Then he paused abruptly and told Pole he
would consider the matter later. Furious with anger, Henry stormed out of the room after dismissing Pole. Never again did he summon Pole into his presence. Later Pole related that at the time he thought Henry was going to kill him while he was speaking to the King.

Pole was anxious to return to the Continent and join his learned friends at Padua, Venice, and Rome. By 1532, with Henry's financial help and Pole's mother's blessing, he left for Europe. The next few years would bring news from England that shocked the Christian commonwealth, attuned though it had become to the restless violence characteristic of the age. Appeals to the Roman Court were abolished, the annulment of Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon was proclaimed, Henry's secret marriage to Anne Boleyn was validated by the First Succession Act of 1534, the clergy submitted and the Act of Supremacy was passed in the same year. Thus was "it enacted by authority of this present Parliament that the King our Sovereign Lord, his heirs and successors kings of this realm, shall be taken, accepted, and reputed the only Supreme Head on earth of the Church of England called Anglicana Ecclesia . . ."

**Pole's Reply to Henry VIII**

Early in 1535 Thomas Starkey, who had formerly been Pole's chaplain in Italy and was now chaplain to Henry VIII, forwarded an urgent letter to Pole. This none-too-subtle communication came as a personal request from King Henry seeking Pole's opinion in the "causes of matrimony and concerning the authority of the Pope." Pole was warned to avoid "dissimulation which his Grace most princely abhorreth," and to remember the "slenderness of this long usurped and abused authority of the Pope." Thomas Cromwell repeated a similar message and hoped that Pole would use his learning and understanding to answer the things maintained in Starkey's letter to him, which "was written by the King's express commandment." Another letter from Starkey bluntly reminded Pole of the opinion they hoped he would choose: "I feel sure that diligent examination of history and Scripture will show you that Christ's law determines no one kind of policy . . . the unity of head . . . hangs only upon mere policy."
During the summer of 1535 Pole did no actual writing on his reply. All the while he was gathering ideas for his great work. "Like the ant, he was storing up material for use in the winter." He spent the time alternating chiefly between residences in Venice and Padua.

On June 22, 1535, John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester and newly created cardinal, was beheaded on Tower Hill. On the sixth day of the following month Sir Thomas More met the same fate. When this tragic news reached Pole, he announced that if previously he had whispered his opinion in the ear of a friend, now he would shout it from the housetop. "Then I judged that those words of Isaias pertained to me no less than they did to the Prophet himself: 'Lift up thy voice like a trumpet' (58:1). Thus my voice would be heard not only in the Kingdom, but if it might be possible throughout the whole world wherever the name of Christ is cherished."

Pole started to write the De unitate September 4, 1535. He was "determined not to leave off till he made an end of it," and late in December he was "in vehement study of writing to satisfy the King." Edmund Harvel, a member of Pole's household, said that he would shortly recompense his slackness in writing to the King "by a fair work which will be a timeless monument to his talent and virtue." Still engaged with "extreme study" in writing his work, by the end of January, 1536, Pole promised to send Cardinal Gasparo Contarini the portion covering the authority of the Pope. By March 1, 1536, the work was "almost finished." To Cardinal Contarini's comment that Pole had "written too bitterly" about Henry, he could only protest that idle flattery of the King had been the cause of all the evil. On March 30, 1536, Pole announced that he had completed the entire book, "which is all about Penitence, to which he exhorts the King." Pole would not permit Cardinal Contarini to show the work to the Pope "lest it should become known in England that he had written the book and sent it to the Pope before he sent it to the King." He could trust the Pope's silence, but the "very walls have ears and eyes." The King must be the first to read the book. Late in May Pole wrote to Henry VIII telling him that the work was finished. "How it will satisfy you, He only knows in whose hands are the hearts of kings." Michael Throckmorton was instructed to tell Henry that no one had previously been allowed to see the complete book when he
was dispatched to England to present the manuscript copy of the De unitate to Henry VIII.

**Pole’s Literary Style**

Probably the most common criticism of the De unitate concerns the violence of the language, the personal invective, and the redundancy that mark certain sections of the book. The validity of any reply to this criticism must depend to a great degree on a view of the work in its entirety and on an awareness of the prevalent tone of similar works written by Pole’s contemporaries. The work must be evaluated in relation to its own historical setting. With all its prophetic fury, stern denunciations, and repetitive style, the work stands as the impassioned plea of a rudely disillusioned man for the salvation of his much admired and beloved friend, Henry VIII. Pole, with disarming affection, pours forth profound protestations of love for King Henry and a touching concern for his welfare, together with passionate pleas for his repentance and reform. Pole had seen Henry’s peril. How could he dissimulate? With God as his witness, Pole announced that he intended neither injury nor harm. Henry had gravely offended and had provoked the wrath of God as well as that of the highest earthly powers. What could Pole do but counsel the King’s safety and security? And Pole referred to the threatened infamy that might inevitably befall Henry, even while he hoped that somehow Henry might regain his former reputation and reign again in glory.

News of the deaths of Thomas More and John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, unquestionably accounted for some of the wrath and violence in Pole’s approach. “It is little wonder that there is something tumultuous, both in the style and the arrangement of a work written under the stress of such cross-currents of indignation and affection, of pity and personal affliction . . . and of apostolic zeal.”

In the opening pages of the De unitate, Pole clearly stated that a sense of duty and a debt of gratitude compelled him to write to Henry who “was not motivated by a love of truth.” Pole told him that Thomas More and John Fisher had undergone the punishment of the most wicked criminals for holding an opinion identical with Pole’s.
These men have "refused to admit that the head should be severed from the body of the Church. They preferred to have their own heads severed from their bodies." Pole directly confronted Henry VIII with these words:

The very nature of my treatise makes it inevitable that it will become more bitter as I advance my arguments for the care of your salvation . . . I have long been aware that you are afflicted with a serious and most dangerous disease . . . I know your deeds are the source of all this evil . . . Many, inspired by the enormity of your actions, are saying that you are not merely ailing, but that you have in fact lost your mind . . . It is a common opinion that when you caused the deaths of those holy men you really breathed forth the last breath of your own mortal life . . . Only with the greatest grief can I say that the axe intended for their necks penetrated the vital parts of your spirit and brought eternal death. No one but God Himself can now bring you back to life again . . . In my opinion more than any other king of this Island, you have brought greater and more violent injury to your country . . . Yet in spite of all this, I cannot abandon my love for you . . . I shall not despair. I shall never cease calling out loudly for your recovery . . . Your Mother, my Prince, is the Church, the spouse of Christ . . . You may corrupt and assail her but she cannot forget the duty that a mother owes to her children, even as she now receives unbearable injuries from you . . . But at the same time she is pursuing you, she is calling out for your return, she is constantly solicitous for your salvation.

Pole’s disenchantment was that of a man who suddenly found his cherished friend turned into a raving wild man. Among many characterizations describing the man with whom Pole was dealing, these projected estimates of Henry VIII by knowledgeable scholars are pertinent to a discussion of the De unitate: If Pole used strong language, "it was because he professed to believe that strong language was needed to reach the heart of the schismatical monster of England, and bring him to repentance."4 More recently a similar authority presented this image of Pole’s antagonist: “Glutted with power and wealth, the bonny prince had degenerated into a surly old tyrant, determined at all costs to have his own way. No one knew what was going to happen next . . . The only certain thing was that anyone who criticized the King or stood in his way would be instantly crushed.”5
Introduction

In January, 1536, two books endeavoring to prove that the King was the supreme head of the Church in England had been received by Pole from Stephen Gardiner and Richard Sampson.⁶

Stephen Gardiner was Bishop of Winchester, and as a theologian, humanist, and jurist he lived a distinguished although checkered career. Under Henry VIII he favored the divorce proceedings from Catherine of Aragon and wrote his work in defense of the new royal supremacy of the Church. His strong leanings toward the traditional Catholic faith inclined him to attack Thomas Cranmer’s interpretation of the Real Presence in the Eucharist. Gardiner was Chancellor of Cambridge University until his removal by the Duke of Somerset at the beginning of Edward VI’s reign. In 1553 he was released from imprisonment in the Tower by Queen Mary Tudor and appointed Lord Chancellor of England on the eve of the Catholic restoration. Such transiency of loyalties was not uncommon in this era. Gardiner’s tract was dignified in expression and cautiously ambiguous in its defense of Henry’s authority over the English Church. He admitted a vague validity in the claim of the Roman primacy’s popular authority, in the sense of service and use. His defense of Henry was “most cunningly written but made up of the falsest arguments.” Pole acknowledged receiving Gardiner’s book, published “to prove, like Sampson’s book, that the King is the supreme head of the Church of England, and that the Pope has no special authority. This authority is most impugned by those sworn to defend it. The books were sent to educate him in the opinion which the King wishes him to follow and whatever his opinions may be, he is not permitted to be silent.” The effect of this book on Pole only strengthened him in his position on the Roman primacy, and to that extent Gardiner’s tract may justly be said to “have brought about for its own part, the composition of one of the greatest controversial works in the sixteenth century”⁷ the De unitate.

Richard Sampson was Bishop of Chichester in 1536. He was transferred to Coventry and Lichfield, 1542–43, and died at Eccleshall in 1554. His attack on the Papal supremacy was, by comparison with Gardiner’s, weak, incoherent, and packed with logical fallacies and patent absurdities. Since this was a volume that the defenders of Henry’s new ecclesiastical position valued so highly when they sent a copy to Pole, the latter chose to demolish it with vigorous arguments
and gentle ridicule. Examples of Pole’s irony in accomplishing this task may be found in greater abundance in Books I and II of the De unitate. Pole’s annoyance at the triviality and near levity of ideas seriously advanced by Bishop Richard Sampson led him to say he did not know whether Sampson’s impiety or his impudence was the greater, unless Sampson was clearly a blockhead! As one of his strong points, Sampson presented the biblical admonition to honor the King. Sampson, therefore, concluded that the honor properly belonging to the supreme head of the Church should be attributed to kings. Pole indulged in some playful sarcasm as he reminded Sampson that the Scriptures also command us to honor our parents, to honor old men and physicians. More bluntly Pole said: “But if you confer the honor of supreme head of the Church upon the King because you once read in Scriptures the words: ‘Honor the king,’ what renowned honors surpassing all royal honors would be due your father if he happened to be an elderly physician!” Scathingly Pole commented: “Surely, Sampson, you must be fooling!” Pole summarized this point of his argument against Sampson by showing that the latter’s view of Henry’s position as supreme head of the Church was ridiculous, since it logically and inevitably would lead to the conclusion that Nero, for example, was the spiritual superior of St. Paul!

In a more serious vein, Pole’s righteous indignation is a major leitmotiv of the De unitate: “The succession of the Kingdom is called into doubt for love of a harlot . . . Anyone resisting your lies is punished by death . . . Your miserable apes of sophists talk nonsense . . . Your pestilential flatterers . . . By the stench of his mind a flatterer happens on such tricks.” The violent language must be read in relation to the men for whom it was written and the age in which they lived. Even Thomas More had been singled out “as having the best knack of anyone in Europe at calling bad names in good Latin.”

Personal vituperation, thinly masked vulgarity, and unrestrained name-calling dominated the bitter religious polemics of some 400 years ago. The tortuous invective and repetitive ambiguities were not confined to any one side. Renowned prelates were, apparently with a rare degree of pleasure and enjoyment, referred to as “idle-bellied carnall epicures . . . time servers of a foxie generation . . . blowballe bocherly brothers . . . confoundours of ordre, murtherours of the
commonaltie . . . settours up of Satanes synagoge . . . ravenying wolves in shipes clothing . . . very imps of Antichrist . . . double-faced epicureous biteshepes." Swept along with the coarseness of the age, controversial writers delighted in brightening up their rhetorical pieces with little phrases like "scabb'd sheep . . . foul lips . . . devyl's ape . . . mouth filled with bitterness . . . vomited his mal-edictions . . . bilge-water . . . lying Roman blockhead . . ." Fundamentally kindly and learned men could, without noticeable qualms of conscience, happily expound on "what a cankered mynde this heretyque hath . . . He bloweth and blustereth oute . . . his abominable blasphemy . . . Impertinent babblers trifle thus . . . sooty wicket of Hell . . . pestilential hissing of this serpent." Few were spared this coarse vituperation and virulent name-calling. Prolixity and redundancy were likewise characteristic of the greater number of these religious controversialists. By comparison with many of his contemporaries, Reginald Pole is remarkably moderate and restrained.

Although in Book II of the *De unitate* Pole marshals his strongest arguments in defense of the apostolic succession and the supremacy of the See of Peter, several lengthy passages in the latter part of this Book are marred by a labored repetition and prolixity that will seem excessive to the modern reader. In the concluding sections of the same book, however, Pole returns to his more ordered and gently ironical style when he summarizes his refutation of Richard Sampson. The core of Pole's plea would be lost were these more labored pages to blur the cynical and scornful descriptions of Anne Boleyn, the passionate eulogy on More and Fisher in Book III, and the poignant appeal for Henry VIII's repentance that marks almost every paragraph in Book IV.

Philip Melanchthon once remarked that he could not deny the charge that Martin Luther frequently indulged in severity, saying that because of the magnitude of the disorders, God gave the age a violent physician. Pole too was the "violent physician" as he wrote his reply to Henry VIII of England. In later years he told Emperor Charles V that he had sent the *De unitate* to Henry VIII just as he would have sent medicine to a sick and ailing man. He did not shrink from telling Henry directly that the nature of the disease he had contracted necessitated violent measures.
Pole’s Political Philosophy

The accumulated, inherited customs of the realm and of the Church, together with the teachings of Scripture, provide the basis of Pole’s appeal to Henry in the De unitate. It is the King’s usurpation of the spiritual leadership that fires Pole’s unrestrained condemnation. The whole concept of a political community is involved in Pole’s position on this question. Pole’s sympathies leaned strongly toward a limited monarchical type of government as the best order not for benefit of a part of the people, but for the whole community. The people, the community, are not and never will be happy under the leadership of a King who has usurped the divine purpose and powers of the spiritual sphere of the Church. Propter populum igitur Rex, non populus propter regem; the King exists on behalf of the people, not the people on behalf of the King. This medieval aphorism summarizes Pole’s fundamental argument that “the happy life of his people should be set before the governor of a commonwealth, just as a favorable course for a navigator, health for a doctor, victory for a commander.” Pole’s thought was in accord with the medieval constitution tradition. Henry was guilty of misconduct, crimes, tyranny. Therefore, Pole appeals to an opinion, still commonly held by his contemporaries, that a tyrannical ruler might be deposed. In a famous and controversial passage in the De unitate, Book III, Pole rhetorically called upon the Emperor Charles V to turn back from fighting the Turks and bring his might to bear upon the restoration of England to Christendom. Pole made it quite clear, however, that this was a personal threat to Henry alone, not a public appeal to the Emperor.

Concisely phrased, his argument was: the goal of a just king is to make his people happy. This is not Henry’s goal. Therefore, Henry is not a just king. God has implanted in our souls a common sense for perceiving the need for living our lives in accord with nature. When God founded human nature He infused a desire for social life in man, rather than in the bee or other common animals. Reason forms the ideal norm and standard of right conduct. Pole cites Cicero and the medieval political theory as exemplified by Isidore of Seville in support of this view: “It is just that a ruler should be bound by the laws . . . For whether the ruler has strengthened the peace and discipline of
the Church, or whether it has been destroyed, he must render an account to Him Who entrusted the Church to his care." Another medieval aphorism paraphrased Pole's position: *Rex eris, si recte facias, si non facias, non eris:* you are King if you act justly; if you act unjustly, you will no longer be King. The denial of an absolute spiritual authority in the Church was, by the inexorable laws of logic, implicit in the self-appointment of Henry VIII to the position of head of the Church. The imperialist and anti-papal theories of Marsilius of Padua had given direct inspiration to many of Pole's antagonists such as Edward Foxe, Richard Sampson, and Stephen Gardiner. Some 100 years earlier, Pole would probably have been a canonist of the papal tradition, in that era of the conciliar theorists. As it happened, however, Pole was a product of the Renaissance humanist tradition. In his use of the Christian Fathers, he was the positive rather than the speculative theologian. He appeals to the Church Fathers chiefly for their authority. He found in them overwhelming evidence for the superiority of the spiritual power, including that of the papacy and the episcopacy. Pole's arguments were thus directly adapted to the intrinsic exigencies of the early sixteenth century religious and political upheaval.

Thomas Cromwell had once recommended Machiavelli's *The Prince* to Pole. Immediately Pole sensed the beginning of a new order that would bring no good to the Christian Commonwealth. He did not have to look very far to find examples of scheming politicians taking their own selfishness and greed as a norm for imposing their ruthless plans on the masses of people under their authority. The *De unitate* is, in its wider significance, an attack on all who would impose an unjust social order on human beings under the hypocritical guise of political expediency. In one of his letters Pole unequivocally summarized his reaction to *The Prince*: "I found this type of book to be written by an enemy of the human race. It explains every means whereby religion, justice and any inclination toward virtue could be destroyed . . . For this teaching not only offers poison for princes and their sons to drink for their own fatal destruction, but it also offers even greater destruction to those of you who are subject to kings and princes."
Reactions to "On the Unity of the Church"

When he had finally spoken his mind on the question of the divorce and the King's new title of supreme head on earth of the Church of England, Reginald Pole was probably little surprised at the violent reaction the book created, although the vacillation evidenced by some whose loyalty to Rome had been assumed could not have been reassuring. Edmund Harvel, a gentleman formerly included in Pole's household and now in Thomas Cromwell's service, was not exaggerating when he said: "That there came not such a thing abroad as this shall be in our day." Pole had intended that nothing would be hidden from Henry, and he had hoped that Henry would read the parts most critical of his actions. He insisted that he was not at all concerned about being odious to the King, as long as Henry himself "persevered in rendering himself odious to God." Cardinal Contarini reported to Pole that Henry had read the book but had not yet recovered from Pole's folly. By July, 1536, even more desperate appeals were reaching Pole advocating moderation on his part. Thomas Starkey wrote beseeching Pole to relent in his attack since the King was one who "forgives and forgets displeasures at once." Starkey followed this questionably optimistic note with an offer to volunteer his services in endeavoring to reconcile Pole with the King.

Among the allies of Henry who were aiding the advance of the schism and giving strong support to currently expedient "orthodoxy" in Church policies was Cuthbert Tunstall, Bishop of Durham. Like other courtiers of Henry, Tunstall had favored the King's divorce and the oath of supremacy, although he later wrote a treatise affirming his belief in the Real Presence in the Eucharist. Imprisoned during the reign of Edward VI, he was released by Mary Tudor and restored to his see. At Mary's death, Queen Elizabeth was hopeful that Tunstall would once again break with Rome. This time he refused, however, and was made a virtual prisoner in Lambeth Palace until his death in 1559. Tunstall, in his first reaction to Pole's work, spoke of the bitterness of the book and commented that the whole of the De unitate ran wide of the truth. He made a vague reference to the "discomfort" Pole's mother would have in seeing her son swerve from his Prince. Tunstall maintained that there was no proof of the King's separation from the Church, and he warned Pole against obeying any summons
from the Pope to attend preparations for the Council. Unaware of this change of opinion on Tunstall’s part, Pole was nevertheless not at all impressed by Tunstall’s unexpected arguments. To Pole they appeared weak and feeble. Pole even questioned whether Tunstall had “thoroughly read his book.” In writing to Cardinal Contarini, Pole expressed his disappointment and added that he was never more deceived than he had been by his mistaken opinion of the zeal he thought Tunstall bore to religion. During all this correspondence, Tunstall, whose reputation among English scholars was high, was trying to convert Pole from his stand on papal supremacy, and was beseeching Pole to be mindful of his family.

Earlier in the summer of 1536 Pole had received a letter from Henry VIII that seemed to imply that the King’s displeasure might not be as great as had been thought. Henry took this opportunity to urge Pole to come home to England. To this proposal, however, Pole had nothing to offer other than a forthright refusal. For Pole to have reacted favorably to Henry’s request for his return at that time would have been “to cast himself away.” By July of 1536 Pole doubted that he could call his country his own, since to obey the laws of his country meant to deprive himself of heaven. Starkey continued to grieve over the temper Pole had displayed in his book. He was amazed and heartbroken over Pole, “the man beyond the sea.” Writing to Pole in September, he included all his reactions after he had had the opportunity to read the De unitate. He so marveled at first that he was never again going to write to Pole. With astonishment he had read the book aloud with Tunstall and had reached the conclusion that any judgment would be frantic that would hold that mere slipping away from the obedience to Rome meant also the separation from the unity of the Church. In the opinion of Starkey, Pole’s former chaplain, the arguments of the De unitate “would make every old custom of the Church necessary to salvation . . . More, Rochester [i.e., John Fisher], Reynolds, and others suffered by their own folly. They died only for a superstition.”

Even while Pole was being urged to refuse an offer of the cardinalate, Pope Paul III named him a cardinal. Pole had ardently requested that he might be spared this dignity. A hesitancy to assume such tremendous responsibility and a deeply latent shyness were characteristics that often made Pole shun official appointments as if he
saw in them only unwanted honor. The Pope had been fully aware of
Pole’s reluctance. To overcome this, Paul III had sent a barber along
with the formal message conveying his final decision on Pole’s appoint-
ment. Presumably the barber came to “restore” Pole’s tonsure, al-
though no convincing evidence has ever been produced to establish
with certainty when, if ever, Pole had received the tonsure. Tech-
nically the tonsure made him no longer a layman and marked him as
a cleric destined for the Church. This would not have been an absolute
impediment were Pole at a later date to choose to marry. Court
gossip had frequently discussed the possibility of a marriage between
Reginald Pole and Mary Tudor, daughter of Henry.

When Pole ultimately would come back to England in 1554, he
would return in an entirely different capacity. He would then come
to stand at the side of his cousin Queen Mary Tudor as personal
advisor, friend, and as papal legate to the realm of England. A brief
summary of these intervening years is essential if one would have
better insight into the character of Pole and the vital role the author
of the De unitate was to play during these troubled and crucial deca-
des.

Pole’s Later Career

Any evidence of Pole’s reputed apathy toward affairs of the world
and a reluctance to participate in public activities was at this point
in his life to fade into the shadows. The gaze of political and ecclesi-
astical leaders on the Continent and at home in England would focus
on him from this day until his death. After his appointment as legate
de latere to exhort the King of England to return to the unity of the
Church, he would have little time for “learned leisure.” The Pilgrim-
age of Grace had inspired Pope Paul III to send Pole to Flanders on
his way to England. Pole’s arrival in Flanders was too late to accom-
plish much, and as he traveled through France, Henry VIII sought
his extradition as a traitor. King Francis I of France could hardly
approve of this, although he himself was involved in a delicate diplo-
matic situation and feared giving offense to Henry VIII. Forced to
abandon this abortive legation, Pole in 1539 was sent on a similar
mission, this time to the Emperor Charles V at Toledo, and then to France.

One of the more dramatic aftereffects of the writing of the De unitate had been Pole’s attainment for treason. Thomas Cromwell announced that there were many ways to get rid of a traitor in Italy. Thus Pole, the “detestable traitor,” was pursued on the Continent by Henry’s spies and assassins. Even after Thomas Cromwell had himself met the headsman’s axe, Henry as late as 1545 was still having Pole trailed.9

Although the spies pursuing Pole in Europe were serious threats to his own freedom and security, his anxiety was even greater lest a turn of events might affect his relatives. Nor were his fears unfounded. The wrath of Henry’s vengeance finally descended upon Pole’s loved ones. “The folly of one brainsick Poole [sic] . . . one witless fool,” as one version explained it, was to bring about the ruin of a great family. The fate of the scaffold fell on the Cardinal’s brother, Henry Lord Montague, in December of 1538. The fatal violence of Henry’s anger had reached out to Pole’s mother, the Lady Margaret Salisbury10 who was thrown into the Tower two years later and beheaded with but an hour’s warning on the morning of May 27, 1541. Henry had discovered a gruesome way to remove a few of the surviving Plantagenets. Pole’s personal grief at the separation from his friends and relatives through their violent deaths only heightened his zeal for Church reform and the defense of the papacy.

On August 21, 1541, the Pope appointed him Governor of the Papal States at Viterbo. Pole’s years as Governor in this district, some 40 miles northwest of Rome, were marked by his kindliness and leniency in handling some who were under suspicion for heresy. His residence became the center for lengthy and complex religious discussions among intimate friends, including the English scholar George Lily, the poet Marc-Antonio Flaminio, the Venetian nobleman and life-long friend of Pole, Alvise Priuli, and the famous poetess Vittoria Colonna. Pole, while not trained too deeply in formal theological studies, was to act as spiritual director of this group. Some, including Flaminio, almost fell completely under the spell of Lutheran theories on justification. With Pole’s guidance and direction, however, Fla-
minio was to adhere steadfast to the traditional faith, dying eight years later in the Cardinal's house.

In his quest for ultimate spiritual solace, Pole's guiding principles were not always absolutely clear. His intimate friend, Cardinal Contarini, attended the 1541 Ratisbon Conference with the hope of bringing about a clarification and legitimate compromise on the Lutheran teaching on justification. Contarini was one of those who felt strongly that individual probity of life and a humble spirit were the best means to use in countering the many controversial Lutheran interpretations on justification.

A more challenging opportunity for active work in the Church reform program soon presented itself to Pole. In October, 1543, Henry VIII was informed that Reginald Pole was one of the three cardinals appointed by Pope Paul III to assemble the General Council of Trent. Diplomatic entanglements between the Emperor Charles V and Francis I of France had contributed frustrating complications in the earlier efforts at organizing the Council. However, by May, 1545, Pole was well on the way to Trent, the Italian city just within the border of the Empire that had been selected as the location for this assembly. Even here Henry's assassins were relentlessly pursuing Pole as he traveled from Viterbo. Clever disguises and a devious route helped to insure Pole's safe arrival at Trent.

Almost a decade earlier in 1536, Pope Paul III had appointed a Reform Commission of nine men. This had included Pole; Jacopo Sadoleto, the Bishop of Carpentras; and Gian Pietro Caraffa, later to become Pope Paul IV, all of whom were created cardinals at the same time. The commission drew up a famous report on ecclesiastical reform. They pointed to the reckless exaggeration of papal authority by unscrupulous canon lawyers who would permit the Pope to dispense benefices not only legitimately but to sell them without incurring the guilt of simony. This, the reform commission said, was the root of all ecclesiastical abuse. These strong words were followed by the statement that it was "their intention to pass over entirely the Pope's position as sovereign of the states of the Church and to deal only with what concerns him as head of the Church universal and as Bishop of Rome."11 Every major abuse and scandal in the Church was listed in this report. The apathy of those foremost in the Church would
temporarily postpone constructive action concerning these serious efforts at reform and renewal.

The spirit of this reform group, however, continued to grow in the minds of men like Pole, Caraffa, and Contarini. The day was approaching when words would be turned into actions. The Council of Trent was opening. On December 13, 1545, the first official address was given by the Bishop of Bitonto, Cornello Mussi. All were asked whether they were meeting for the praise and glory of the Trinity, for the increase and exaltation of the Faith and the Christian religion, for extinguishing heresy, for the peace of the Church, for the reformation of the Christian clergy and the people, for the suppression and extinction of errors of Christian men... *Placetne vobis?... Responderunt... Placet...* They were pleased! Thus the great reform Council began.

The second session of the Council of Trent met January 7, 1546. Cardinal Reginald Pole sat with the two other Papal Legates, Cardinals Del Monte and Cervini. The opening address had been prepared by Pole and was read to the assembled delegates by Angelus Mascarelli.

Acknowledge our sins! Do penance! Implore Divine mercy to help the Church! This was the core of Pole's vehement message. He reminded all present that they were largely responsible for all existing evils. Delegates turned their heads toward Pole as the vibrant, stirring words continued: "We exhort you!... We are all in the same boat!... In the midst of tempests and dangers we must arouse ourselves and be vigilant lest we crash on the rocks... Strong in faith and hope, let us direct our voyage so we may arrive at the port of salvation for the glory of God... Before the tribunal of God, we ourselves are guilty... Truly we the shepherds are the cause of the evils now oppressing the Church. If anyone thinks this is an exaggeration... facts themselves which cannot lie, bear witness to the truth of these words... How will the Holy Spirit guide us if we do not admit that our shameful faults merit the just judgment of God?... With our prayers and a humble voice and contrite heart let us invoke the Holy Spirit to illumine our hearts... We exhort you, with love in the Lord, with one heart and spirit to glorify God the Father in Christ Jesus, Who is God the Blessed, for ever, Amen!"
The concluding passages of this address bear striking resemblance to the *De unitate*, Book IV, where Pole presented his poignant and impassioned exhortation to Henry VIII for repentance and reform. He continued enumerating the evils threatening the Church: the abundance of heresies, the breakdown of ecclesiastical morals, internal and external warfare. He told the delegates that the scourge of God was afflicting them, that they were causing many to abandon obedience to their shepherds. He commented pointedly that the man who should care for his fields is responsible for the briars and thorns even though he did not sow them. Prayer, repentance and reform, with Christ's mercy, provided the answer.

The close of the tenth session of the Council of Trent, September, 1548, marked the end of Pole's formal connection with this ecclesiastical body. The charge has sometimes been made that dissatisfaction with some of the trends of the debate on justification prompted his departure. No solid evidence has been presented to support this inference. Pole kept in touch with leading delegates throughout later sessions and, most significantly, he saw the wisdom of the final decree on justification and accepted it without question. Pole's health was the chief reason for his withdrawal at that time. An ever-present serious lung condition and an infection in one eye were causing him especial discomfort. These reasons seemed more than valid to the Pope who readily granted permission for his departure.

In the Conclave of cardinals following the death of Pope Paul III, November 10, 1549, Pole was actually offered the papacy. He refused to have this honor conferred upon him, however, and declined to accept the title by "acclamation." Cardinal Del Monte was then elected pontiff as Julius III. After a brief interlude at the Benedictine monastery of Maguzzo on Lake Garda, Pole was again called back to Rome. This time he was to receive his second appointment as papal legate to England, shortly after Mary Tudor's accession to the throne of England in 1553. The life-long dream of Pole for the restoration of his native England to unity with the papacy was now to become a reality. This dream, however, had still to await the dynastic schemes of Charles V before its fulfillment. Charles had long been hoping to have his son Philip become husband to Mary Tudor, now Queen of England. Pole's opposition to this plan received little consideration. Delay followed delay until finally the marriage between
Mary and Philip took place as Charles V had desired. Sufficiently resigned to this event, Pole, in July, 1554, wrote words of rejoicing to the Emperor over the news received from England concerning the wedding. Pole’s joy was undoubtedly more the result of renewed hope for his own entry into the English realm than it was the result of any personal elation over the union of the Spanish bridegroom and his English wife. Pole told Charles that now the true religion might be established in England, and great comfort and quiet might come to England and all of Christendom.

In September of 1554, Pole was still awaiting permission to return to England. He told Philip that everyone but himself seemed welcome. Even though another legate were to come in his place, Pole would be abundantly satisfied. His main hope was only for the honor and welfare of England. Peter was knocking at the door! Finally, the door was opened, November, 1554.

Pole landed at Dover, advanced in triumphant procession to Gravesend, and with a gleaming silver cross of the legate sailed by barge to Westminster, whence he proceeded to the royal palace at Whitehall and was met at the gate by Philip and Queen Mary Tudor. Pole withdrew to the ancient episcopal residence across the Thames at Lambeth Palace, and Parliament prepared for an historical scene.

November 30, the Feast of St. Andrew, Cardinal Reginald Pole, papal legate to England, absolved the realm from schism and heresy during the years of Henry’s reign since 1529 and the years of Edward VI. The Cardinal received England back into the unity of the fold of the Catholic faith as Queen Mary Tudor fell to her knees. Philip, clergy, Lords, Commons, and all of the people present did the same. Tears of joy marked the faces of many that day while Pole pronounced the words of absolution: “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Amens echoed and reverberated throughout the crowds as the torches flickered in the growing dusk of that autumn afternoon. They sang a *Te Deum*. It was the first time that an entire nation had been restored to union with Rome. And it was, even to the present, the only time. That same evening Pole sent Pope Julius III a letter describing the event in great detail. On the following Sunday, the first of Advent, Stephen Gardiner, now Chancellor of the realm, preached a memorable sermon at the Cemetery of St.
Paul in London. Gardiner told the crowds that a shadow had been cast over the realm during Edward VI’s reign. The hour had now come for all to rise from their sleep. Not the King, not the Queen, not the legate, he told them, but the people themselves had with public consent withdrawn from unity with Rome. And then he added with unqualified frankness: “I do not excuse myself, I acknowledge my lapse.”

The dramatic splendor and exaltation of this St. Andrew’s Day was not destined to pervade for long the brief and troubled period of Pole’s ecclesiastical appointment. Serious problems immediately confronted him in his work as papal legate to England. They were to increase rather than diminish during the slightly more than three remaining years allotted his life. Not the least of these problems was the question of the restitution of Church properties that had been confiscated during the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI. Pole finally had decided upon a compromise that he hoped would not be considered a timid concession. The present owners were permitted to hold their lands without penalty, but also without any assurance that they could do this with a clear conscience. The Journal of the House of Commons for October, 1555, reports the reading of a Papal Bull that confirmed Pole’s liberal policies concerning ownership of the former abbey lands.

Pole had always strongly opposed the use of force in dealing with those suspected of heresy. Moderation, kindliness, and sympathetic understanding marked his approach to this problem. However, the number of those who suffered for their consciences under Queen Mary Tudor have admittedly given her reign a tarnished and tragic reputation. By today’s standards, the persecutions were as misguided as they were futile. By norms of that age, they were neither unusual nor excessive. Pole’s leniency was unable to withhold the hand of the Queen completely, although his general policy of moderation succeeded in freeing 20 victims who had been condemned to the stake by Bishop Edmund Bonner of London.

No defense of this phase of Mary Tudor’s reign can have validity today. However, religious disruptions in the early months of her reign may partially explain her resort to futile violence. That Pole did not make even stronger efforts to restrain Queen Mary may by some be viewed as a weakness. Mary could scarcely place stronger
reliance upon other counselors. She could not have been expected to have absolute confidence in her first minister, Stephen Gardiner, Chancellor of the Realm. He had been one of the foremost opponents of her mother, Catherine of Aragon, at the time of the divorce proceedings, and he had been one of the most voluble defenders of Henry VIII in his attack on the papacy. Bishop Bonner once said that Gardiner was not "worthy to wipe Pole's shoes, neither for learning, judgment nor sobriety of life."

Pole shortly now exerted strong efforts toward positive reform and renewal of the Church in England. He summoned a national synod to meet at Westminster and Lambeth in 1555. With his authority as papal legate, he challenged the clergy to root out prevalent abuses, to enforce clerical residence in the dioceses, to improve and increase their preaching. He established diocesan visitations that were to reveal more starkly the urgent need for reform. In his zeal for the preparation of a better-educated clergy he urged the bishops to imitate the example of Ignatius of Loyola and his Roman College. Pole first introduced the word seminary (seminarium, a seed-bed) to denote the colleges for the proper training of candidates for the priesthood.\(^{19}\)

Finally, on March 22, 1556, Cardinal Reginald Pole was consecrated Archbishop of Canterbury. Only two days previously he had been ordained a priest. On March 21 he offered his first Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. That same day Pole's immediate predecessor as Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, met death at the stake. Cranmer's enigmatic personality has challenged the popular mind over the centuries. One notorious act, however, has survived the careful scrutiny of historians through the years. At Cranmer's consecration as Archbishop of Canterbury he took the customary oath "to be faithful and obedient to Blessed Peter and to the Holy Apostolic Church of Rome." Before taking this oath to the pope as Vicar of Christ, in the presence of a notary and witnesses, Thomas Cranmer swore another oath declaring that the oath to Peter's successor he was to take at his consecration was a mere matter of form. Such an act of public perjury had not escaped Pole's attention. He wrote directly to Cranmer, charged him with perjury, and reminded him that while others had been perjurors by breaking an oath after they had taken it, Cranmer had broken his oath before he took it!

On May 23, 1555, Gian Pietro Caraffa was elected Pope, taking
the name of Paul IV. Founder of the Theatines in 1522, a religious
group dedicated to higher spiritual and intellectual standards among
the clergy, he had long been one of the more vigorous leaders of the
reform movement within the Church. In 1536 Pole had collaborated
with him in preparing the report of the earlier Reform Commission.
This fiery and zealous man, now in his seventy-ninth year, had become
exceptionally surly and irascible. His animosity toward Spain con-
flicted sharply with Pole’s efforts to preserve the peace. Pole’s op-
position only served further to anger the Pope. Paul IV seized upon
this opposition as a pretext for attacking Pole and for giving un-
questioning credence to every false rumor and malicious slander that
men of selfish interests were bringing against Pole. Ignoring Pole’s
life-long dedication to the defense of the Papacy, he readily accused
Pole of heretical tendencies reaching back to his years as Governor of
the Papal States in Viterbo. In April, 1557, he deprived Pole of his
powers as legate in England. In June he summoned Pole to Rome.
Only the fact that Mary Tudor withheld this summons and refused
to show it to Pole enabled him to remain in England. Thus the man
who was then probably the most outspoken defender of the See of
Peter was now unjustly accused by one of Peter’s successors. And this
was the same Pope who, only a year ago, when conferring the arch-
bishopric on Pole, had praised him highly. Perhaps more than any
other event in Pole’s career, his resigned acceptance of this pathetic
paradox confirmed his absolute devotion to the papacy as a divine
institution.

Pole was stunned, hurt, and shocked, although in no way was he
shaken in his loyalty to Rome. This blow, however, contributed to the
decline of his rapidly failing health. Late in 1557 Pole sent a mes-
senger to Paul IV with a sad and forceful letter. He reminded Pope
Paul that he, the Pope, had received greater benefits from Pole’s
labors than any Pope had ever received from any legate for many
ages. He protested the Pope’s precipitate revoking of Pole’s appoint-
ment as legate, without even granting him the opportunity to speak
a word in his own defense. Then he told Pope Paul that the course of
Pole’s whole life had been led in obedience to the Faith and to the
Roman Church, that he might daily gain more for Christ and the
Church.

Some might call it poetic justice, others dramatic irony that both
Introduction

Queen Mary Tudor and her Cardinal cousin Reginald, whose careers in life had been so closely intertwined, passed to their eternal rewards in relative peace and calm on the same day, November 17, 1558. The Queen died at seven in the morning. Twelve hours later, across the Thames from the royal palace at Whitehall, Cardinal Reginald Pole breathed his last breath at Lambeth Palace. On his death bed, hearing of the Queen’s death earlier in the day, he remarked that in the course of his life nothing had ever yielded him greater pleasure and contentment than the contemplation of God’s providence as displayed in his own person and that of others, and that in the course of the Queen’s life and of his own, he had ever remarked a greater conformity, as she, like himself, had been harassed during many years for one and the same cause, and afterwards, when it had pleased God to raise her to the throne, he had greatly participated in all her other troubles entailed by that elevation. Today the body of Canterbury’s last Catholic Archbishop rests in the Chapel of St. Thomas à Becket in Canterbury Cathedral.

Pole’s Legacy

The renowned nineteenth-century historian and essayist Thomas Babington Lord Macaulay referred to Reginald Pole as “the last and best of the Roman Catholic Archbishops of Canterbury, the gentle Reginald Pole.” More recent authors in their evaluations have emphasized Pole’s strategic position on the Tudor historical scene: “In many ways, he is the key figure of the English Reformation”, “Cardinal Pole ... was of a kindly disposition ... he was regarded by all as the very embodiment of the Catholic Reformation.” Winston S. Churchill presented this succinct and pertinent observation: “... his family having been lopped and shorn in Henry’s judicial murders ... (Pole) was a zealous and austere Catholic.”

Less favorable estimates of Pole’s character and achievements have, of course, been made. An anonymous “Citizen of London” printed a small volume in 1579 that was probably not intended as humor, although it included thoughts that may well bring a smile to the modern reader. This “Citizen of London” made frequent allusions to: “Arrogancie ... mother of all mischiefes ... Romishe rebels
who prefer soveraigne Pope . . . to . . . soveraigne Lady, the
Queenes most excellente Maiestie . . . so was Thomas Becket, a
Prelate as traterous, as Felton the Papist was . . .” These words,
together with the following verse, appeared during the reign of Queen
Elizabeth I, in the traditional spirit of the coarse irrelevancies of many
religious polemicians in that era. The “Citizen” directs his words
against Reginald Pole and his *De unitate*:

> Th’ aspiring mind, caused Reginald Poole to swarve,
And to become a Traytor to the King,
Troth tryes it out, and law and justice bring
Unto his mates such death as they deserve:
He quakes for feare, and through the Seas doth carve
To Rome, and there is by the holy Pope
Made Cardinall, and obtynes a larger scope.
With might and mayne Poole then the Pope doth serve,
And sayeth the King may not be supreme head:
Two learned men which do lament his fall,
Send him This Booke, that follie to forbid.
Yet he (God wot) regards it not at all,
But like an Asse, doth for a Scarlet hatte,
Forsake his God, his King, and Countrye flatte.

Pole’s personal holiness of life was never in conflict with his pur-
suit of learned studies or his unswerving defense of the Church uni-
universal with the apostolic successor of Peter as its visible head. To this
extent he lived the ideal of Thomas More, the martyr saint he eulo-
gized so eloquently in the *De unitate*. More always insisted that learn-
ing is a positive good, even though the uneducated are able to merit
heaven without it. As More maintained that scholars often make their
study of natural things a road to heavenly contemplation, so also did
the similar message of the Renaissance Christian humanist, Reginald
Pole, reach out to his world and to the modern world. In a wider sense
Pole addressed not only Henry VIII, but also the world of his and the
present day, when he said: “Nothing more dangerous can happen to
a city, a kingdom, or to all mankind, than an erroneous opinion con-
cerning those matters that pertain first to the security of the soul, and
then to the security of the body.”
Pole's most recent biographer has given a very adequate summation of this timeless contribution:

"We must also remind ourselves that, owing to his part in the Catholic reform movement, he was able to take a firm stand against the dangers of the modern State. In claiming room for the newly revived religious forces he was bound to set a limit to the insatiable Leviathan. It is this stand that should secure Pole a hearing in our time. There is no other refuge, we have learnt, except religion, but that refuge can become a veritable fortress if it is built with the seriousness and care of men like More and Pole. The sphere of inwardsness, they knew, must be safeguarded against the brutal attacks of secular power, and if the State invades this sphere, no natural loyalties must prevent determined resistance against this outrage. No one would claim that Pole was always successful in this resistance, but there can be no doubt that he tried to perform this task to the best of his ability. And he was among the few men of his time who fully realized the significance of this issue."  

Not all of Pole's learned contemporaries combined such spiritual altruism with their Renaissance scholarship. Those distinguished Humanist scholars with whom Pole was on most intimate terms, however, were in the tradition of a valid Christian Humanism. To name even a few of Pole's friends and correspondents is almost to present a roster of the more distinguished scholars of his day: Erasmus, whose correspondence with Pole was always friendly and weighted with scholarly comments on new editions of Basil, John Chrysostom, and other Church Fathers; Christopher Longolius, the scholar who left his library to Pole; John Colet, Dean of St. Paul's in London; Thomas Lupset, who had worked with Erasmus on the edition of the New Testament; Jacopo Sadoleto, the learned Bishop of Carpentras; Ignatius of Loyola, whose newly instituted Society of Jesus received warm approval from Pole for the way of life followed by Loyola's companions, and who wished Pole "God's blessing in bringing about the Catholic restoration in England"; Vittoria Colonna; Michelangelo; Pietro Bembo; William Latimer; Richard Pace, secretary to Henry VIII and ambassador to Venice; Thomas Linacre, one of the five or six Greek scholars in England at that time, and Pole's tutor.

If the Catholic Restoration in England brought about by Pole that St. Andrew's Day in 1554 was destined to be short-lived, his efforts
were not entirely in vain. Pole’s example of learning and sanctity lived on in the work of Cardinal William Allen and the famed colleges and seminaries at Douai, Reims, and Rome for English students in exile during Elizabethan years. The legacy of Reginald Pole was revived again in Cardinal Newman’s *Second Spring* and the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy in England in the nineteenth century. The sixteenth and nineteenth century cardinals of England were in many ways, in their respective eras, dedicated to the same goals of learning, sanctity, and the unity of the Church.

Evidence of such goals had not always marked the historic patterns of unity of the Church in England. From the *Ecclesia Anglicanorum* of the era of Pope Gregory the Great, through the years of Lanfranc, Anselm, Thomas à Becket, Pope Innocent III, and the *Ecclesia Anglicana* of the Magna Carta, papal and royal spheres of authority were often in conflict. Pole’s papal defense in his day at a specific, critical moment in history set him apart even from the entire English hierarchy—with the exception of John Fisher. This was significant not only for what he said, but for the very fact he was also one of the few who recognized, as he freely admitted, papal scandals and the unworthiness of some of Peter’s successors. William van de Pol, in a recent ecumenical study, presents this pertinent summation: “If ever there was a victory won by Satan, it seems to be because he managed to make the papacy unrecognizable through its degeneration in the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance.”

Certain historic failures, however, as the present Archbishop of Canterbury has said, cannot justify wholesale refusal to consider the Petrine claims. “Peter will find his due place, and ultimate reunion is hastened not by the pursuit of ‘the Papal controversy’ but by the quiet growth of the organic life of every part of Christendom.” Pole’s commitment also involved firm dedication to personal spiritual growth, a positive witness to Holy Scripture, and a conciliatory approach to many of the basic values stressed by continental reformers. His alertness to the defense of principle did not dull his awareness of the desperate need for growth of the organic life of Christendom—an awareness typical of only too few in his day.

Vices and abuses in the Church and churchmen in the complex political turmoil of the sixteenth century caused many clergy and laymen to lose all sense of perspective, to be uninformed when intelli-
gent action and leadership was called for, to be caustic and arrogant when calm reflection and Christian charity were desperately needed. Pope Paul VI in his first encyclical noted that any contemporary dialogue must not be “proud, bitter, or offensive... nor must it lead to a watering-down or subtracting from the truth.” Awareness of the violence and severity that characterized religious controversialists in an earlier age, must be motivated by love and sufficient objectivity to realize that virtue and vice are not the peculiar possession of any one person, sect or even nation. Hans Küng has given a valid interpretation of this problem for the ecumenical era, even as he has placed Reginald Pole in the very select group of those few in the sixteenth century who knew where the guilt rested:

It is a hopeful omen for reunion that the latest presentations of Church history from both sides, on the subject of the Reformation and its causes, bear a strong resemblance to each other. Both sides nowadays see the good in the other and the evil in their own... Protestants see the positive values in the Church of that age, and Catholics recognize the Church’s share in the guilt of schism. This confession of guilt on the Catholic side is by no means new. At the time of the Reformation itself Pope Adrian VI made the famous confession of guilt at the Diet of Ratisbon (1522–23), and so did many leading Catholics of that time as, for example, the Papal Legate Cardinal Contarini, Cardinal Pole, who presided at the Council of Trent, and the commission of cardinals who produced, for Paul III, that famous programme of reform, De Emendanda Ecclesiae; these are followed by St. Peter Canisius, St. Clement Hofbauer, Cardinal Newman, and many others down to Pius XI. The list includes... Pope John XXIII. 23

Slightly more than 400 years have passed since Cardinal Reginald Pole, the last Catholic Archbishop of Canterbury, was succeeded by Matthew Parker, the first Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury. The present Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Rev. Arthur Michael Ramsey, is the one hundredth man to hold that historic title. Dr. Ramsey’s immediate predecessor, Dr. Geoffrey Fisher, 24 on his return from a historic visit to the Vatican in December, 1960, was met by the Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool, Dr. Heenan. Archbishop Fisher drew his attention to the pectoral cross that had been given him by the Patriarch of Moscow, and Archbishop Heenan remarked that his own episcopal ring had once belonged to Cardinal Reginald Pole.
On the occasion of Pope John XXIII’s death, Archbishop Ramsey noted that “in every part of Christendom there is grief at the passing of a great Christian leader.” And the standards of the Archbishop of Canterbury flew at half-mast, the very first time that an Anglican prelate’s flag had ever been lowered in tribute to the head of another Church. The present reigning monarch of England, Queen Elizabeth II, is a direct descendant of Lady Margaret Salisbury, Reginald Pole’s mother. Some 14 generations separate Queen Elizabeth II through her mother, Lady Elizabeth Angela Marguerite Bowes-Lyon and daughter of the fourteenth Earl of Strathmore, from Reginald Pole’s brother, Henry Lord Montague. In humble recognition of Pole’s stirring appeal for prayer and penance, one may today read his On the Unity of the Church with greater peace of mind and understanding, in the shadow of Rome, Canterbury, and the world, than would have been possible some 400 years ago in the shadow of Lambeth, Whitehall, Tower Hill, and a world still awaiting discovery.

When he forwarded the original copy of the De unitate to King Henry VIII, Reginald Pole included one final suggestion. That same suggestion would seem to be an appropriate conclusion to this introduction: “The book, to be understood, must be read all through.”

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

1 De unitate is the popular short title form for Pole’s Pro ecclesiasticae unitatis defensione; On the Unity of the Church.

2 Cardinal Gasparo Contarini, a Venetian senator, former ambassador at the court of Emperor Charles V, and one of Pole’s closest friends.


6 The two books were: Stephen Gardiner’s De vera obedientia, translated in Obedience in Church and State: Three Political Tracts (ed. and trans. by Pierre Janelle), 1930; and Richard Sampson’s Oratio, qua [sic] docet, hortatur, admonet omnes potissimum anglos, regiae dignitati cum primis ut obedient . . . , London, 1535. (A copy of this 1535 edition is at the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C.)


8 Although Pole loved his learning and learned companions, this aspect of his character may easily be exaggerated. In Alfred Tennyson’s romanticized poetic drama, Queen Mary, Pole is portrayed as tolerant, gentle, and kindly
in the midst of bitter persecution of heretics. However, Tennyson had Stephen
Gardiner make the following charge against Pole:
A bookman, flying from the heat and tussle,
You lived among your vines and oranges,
In your soft Italy yonder! You were sent for,
You were appeal’d to, but you still preferr’d
Your learned leisure.

9 “Sir Thomas Wyatt, the poet, for instance, when English resident in Spain,
undertook as part of his diplomatic duties, to have Reginald Pole murdered
while the cardinal legate was visiting the Emperor.” Garrett Mattingly,

10 December 29, 1886, Pope Leo XIII approved a decree of the Congregation
of Rites on the Beatification of the English Martyrs and named Margaret
Pole among the blessed.

11 A printed version of this report of the 1536 Reform Commission appeared in
London, 1609: Consilium deectorum cardinalium et aliorum praelatorum de
emendanda ecclesia.

12 The translated passages are based upon the complete Latin text: Admonitio
atque hortatio legatorum sedis apostolicae ad patres in Concilio Tridentino,
lecta in prima sessione, Cracow, 1546.

Pope Paul quoted Pole’s famous decree on seminaries (Synod of London,
Feb. 10, 1556) that became a model for the canon on the institution of
seminaries that emanated from the Council of Trent in the De reformatione
decree approved July 15, 1563.

1864, p. 61.

17 Philip Hughes, The Church in Crisis, 1960, p. 310.
p. 98.
19 G. B. (anon. Citizen of London), A Newyeares Gifte, dedicated to the Popes
Holiness, and all Catholikes addicted to the Sea of Rome, London, 1579.
24 On the visit of Dr. Geoffrey Fisher, Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, and
primate of all England, to His Holiness Pope John XXIII, see Augustin
Pole’s Defense of the Unity of the Church
Willingly would I give up life itself, my Prince, if I only knew what to write or not to write to you on this occasion. In fact, I have not quite decided whether I should write to you at all. Many serious occurrences throughout the world tend to hold my mind in suspense and doubt, and to make my advice ineffective. Could any reason for writing to you in the first place be more suitable than your wish and command that I do so? You even suggest a topic for this treatise, a topic entirely in harmony with tasks that have now engaged me for a good number of years while you were a patron of my studies. This would indeed seem a most suitable reason for writing to you. Of course, your own request that I write with special reference to the confession of the name of Christ might be an even stronger incentive. After you have thus requested my opinion, silence would indicate not only neglect of duty but also lack of gratitude. The very salvation of my soul would be at stake. Many take this risk, for one reason or another, when they avoid speaking out in defense of the confession of Christ’s name. A sense of duty alone might at first have moved me to undertake the writing of this work. My indebtedness to you for many favors demanded that I heed your request. Now this added realization of my debt of gratitude strengthens my obligation and compels me to reach my decision. Only too readily can I perceive some of the obstacles in this momentous task. These should not impose absolute restraints upon my work, but at the most merely set limitations to my task. Rather than entrust my sentiments to the many pages of a lengthy literary work, I would certainly more willingly express my opinion on this matter in a single word.
On the other hand, however, many things impede and deter me in this task. Not the least is the fact that a love of truth does not motivate you as you propose for my consideration this question of the Roman Pontiff's authority. Still another is your new and usurped honor whereby you have arrogated to yourself both the name and the authority of supreme head of the Church in England. For you are not really inquiring what my opinion in this matter might be, as would be customary in any ordinary controversy. Nor do you really want me to speak out freely and express in writing the opinion that seems most probable to me. You set forth your own view with all the authority of a definite decree and an established opinion. Your opposite viewpoint greatly conflicts with truth itself. As long as you insist upon your view, however, you will certainly consider as an enemy and traitor anyone who chooses to argue with you. You will probably decide that he merits the same penalty that you have established for most wicked criminals.

What then? Since I find it impossible to agree with you, shall I reveal and express in writing my opinion that directly contradicts yours? Shall I thus render myself guilty of lese majesty, through my own written words? For I certainly do not want to arouse the wrath and anger of one who has been so generous to me, one whose many favors I so gratefully acknowledge. Whether this task indicates special prudence or the lack of prudence on my part, I know not. Sallust, the historian, was most fortunate in his choice of words when he declared that it was sheer folly for anyone to tire himself out in vain, seeking nothing but hatred.

Could anything indicate more clearly that I am vainly tiring myself out in attempting to persuade you to change your opinion, than the blood of those [i.e., Thomas More, John Fisher] who were guilty of no other crime than holding an opinion identical with mine? At first they incurred only your hate and umbrage because they preferred not to desert the truth. Finally, innocent men that they were, they underwent the punishment of most wicked criminals. Indeed this was a mercy for them, a fitting reward for their heroic effort. Thus a task that they undertook on your behalf proved to be of no worth to you and the occasion of their own deaths. They not only lost all their time and trouble, as the saying goes, but they lost their very lives.

But what am I doing? How can I speak in this manner concern-
ing those men whose virtue, learning, and deep faith in God gave testimony to the name Christian in our own country as well as throughout the world? Through countless ages to come no one will be able to recount deeds more praiseworthy than theirs. Can I voice the thought or imply that they who have labored for the cause of the Church and attained only death as a reward, have done so in vain? I cannot possibly speak thus of these men since I have often heard, with great satisfaction, that Christ Himself said that not a single hair of their heads could fall to the ground without the consent of an all-provident God. I cannot even formulate in thought, much less express in language, the suggestion that they who have endured such great hardships and difficulties in the cause of Christ should have lost their lives in vain and with no evident purpose. I simply cannot do it, my Prince, I simply cannot do it. Such absolute lack of all religious conviction is something foreign to my nature. Impious fraud and deceit would be my crime were I to speak thus, for I would be lacking in gratitude to God Himself. How could I show greater ingratitude than by implying before God and my conscience that I could only derive as much profit from the deaths of these men, as I derived from my studies in the readings of the greatest authors? My studies extended over a long period of time and were directed solely toward my intellectual development. Could I now pretend that I questioned the value of the deaths of these men? How could I do this since I have not the slightest doubt that many in the Church of Christ reaped similar and even greater profit in the same cause?

Later in this treatise I shall avail myself of opportunities to explain the nature of these benefits. Now, obviously, as I started to say above, I would not want to be so lacking in religious conviction as to claim that they who have conferred such great personal benefits upon me had actually died in vain. With firm religious conviction, a certain fearfulness of mind compels me to recognize that these men showed no hesitancy in offering their bodies as sacrifices for their cause. They refused to admit that the head should be severed from the body of the Church. They preferred to have their own heads severed from their bodies. Though the providence of God called me far away from this immediate danger, I do not hesitate to commit to writing my own opinion in this whole matter. Never, indeed, with God as my guide, shall I falter in the task of composing this treatise. Never shall I
hesitate to bear witness to the same, before all men, as circumstances permit. These matters naturally pertain to the glory of God and of the Church. What follows, therefore, should certainly be of sound value. I must not write in any random manner, though in this particular part of the discussion I had to glance back at such outstanding examples as those I have mentioned. Yet even now I am hesitant about my manner of writing, about what I should call you and how I should address you.

**Henry VIII’s Affliction and Pole’s Love for Henry**

If a faithful servant should be called to the bedside of his kindly master who was seriously ill, would not this servant be filled with doubt as to the appropriate manner in which to address his master? This would be particularly true if the servant knew that his fellow servants, possessing similar confidence and trust in their master, had lost their lives while tending their master in his illness. If a physician should be summoned to the bedside of a sick man, though the physician knew that other doctors had lost their lives by contracting this contagious disease, would not this physician after doing all in his power for his patient be somewhat perturbed as to the proper manner of addressing his patient? He would be especially concerned if he did not wish to evidence any hesitancy, nor disturb his patient. Naturally, I am equally perplexed as to what manner of addressing you I should choose. Many very holy men, my fellow workers in fact, were in a sense physicians of your soul. They were deprived of their lives only because they did exactly what I now plan to do. Is it any wonder I should be perturbed? For the very nature of my treatise makes it inevitable that it become more bitter as I advance my arguments for the care of your salvation. I may not be sufficiently able to investigate all aspects of this question. I have grave doubts, however, about your ability to do this. I am also worried about the degree of equanimity with which you will tolerate the remarks I have made thus far. I actually wonder whether you will tolerate them at all. For indeed, my Prince, just how much can you endure? Can it not be said that you are suffering from some mental affliction, that you do not have the power to retain your ordinary balance of common sense and reason?
After all, you have caused the death of those who so toiled that you might live a healthy life.

What am I doing now? How shall I begin to address you? No one can call me anything but a faithful and trustworthy servant. No one who knows anything about me is ignorant of the fact that for many years I have been engaged in the composition of this treatise, having foremost in my mind a study of the afflictions of the mind and a practical means for their cure. I have long since been aware that you have given definite evidence of being afflicted with a serious and most dangerous disease. There is a very obvious remedy, if only you are willing to be cured. Certainly no fear of offending you in a matter of such grave importance to you is going to restrain me from uttering those words which you must hear, and hear often, if you ever hope to be cured. For such a fear would only cause me to abandon all interest in the care of your salvation. I know your deeds are the source of all this evil. Were I to keep silent about them I would hardly be doing my duty as a faithful servant whose advice in this matter you have personally requested.

How can I pretend my knowledge about your disease of the mind is so limited that I would not even venture to give it a name? Actually many others, inspired by the enormity of your deeds, are openly saying that you are not merely ailing, but that you have in fact lost your mind. It is a common opinion that when you caused the deaths of those holy men you really breathed forth the last breath of your own mortal life. The very axe that struck off their necks and seemed to snatch away their lives, truly brought them immortality. Only with the greatest grief can I say that the axe intended for their necks penetrated the vital parts of your spirit and brought eternal death. No one but God Himself can now bring you back to life again. Hence it is somewhat foolish for me to attempt to offer some human remedy. It would be just as foolish if, after a burial had taken place, someone were to whisper the physician’s advice into the ears of the corpse. Many others, however, offer these human remedies. In fact, these are the remedies offered by nearly everyone hearing of your crime, for by now nothing is more widely known throughout all Christendom.

What shall I do now? What would one think were I to put my trust in people who act in this manner? Perhaps I may avoid the charge of foolishness if I call upon you as one who still lives, at least
in a way. Frequently I have seen tearful and grieving mothers addressing their dead children by name and protesting their separation as these parents followed in the funeral procession. Now no one would call these mothers foolish, although their words do seem unreasonable since they are addressed to those incapable of hearing. We attribute actions like these to a certain religious sense and inner feeling inherent in all mankind. Could I not therefore, in all justice, be given a certain privilege of religious sense and be permitted to address you, even though you may be dead? This concession should surely be made since your death is of a kind not commonly recognized by men. It is known only to God.

May God be my witness that never has the love of a mother for her only son been greater than the love I have always had for you. No child has ever cherished his parent with affection greater than mine for you. No person has ever been subject to a king more just and merciful than you. You can perhaps find the strongest proof of this when you reflect on the following. In my opinion you, more than any other king of this Island, have brought greater and more violent injuries to your country. No one certainly, has ever inflicted greater hardships upon the Church, the common parent of us all. These so far surpass all personal offenses as to exceed comparison. Yet in spite of all this I cannot abandon my love for you. In all justice you should concede that this is my attitude since I venture to address you, to call upon you, to cry aloud and shout out those things that pertain to your salvation, even though all inform me your soul is dead. Though all others may have given you up for lost, I have not abandoned hope for your salvation.

How am I to know whether God might change my voice into the voice of His Son, so that even the dead might hear it? Is this not an event of common occurrence? Often those considered dead in the Church on account of their grievous sins, were despaired of by everyone and given no hope for life. Has it not happened, however, that they have heard words uttered to them on behalf of the salvation of their souls? A single word from one ignorant person interested in saving their souls, often has suddenly called these people back from death to life. This has happened even when all skilled physicians had given up hope for life. Could this have occurred otherwise, had not God made that simple voice the voice of His Son, a voice that even
the dead could hear? Why then should I despair of your salvation just because I may have seen others more illustrious than myself trying to restore you to health again, and failing in their attempts to cure you? Assuredly I shall not despair. I shall never cease to call out loudly for your recovery.

In doing this I have the special example of our common mother. Though this mother may have driven you out of her home like a mournful corpse, yet she is none the less overwhelmed with grief. She sadly mourns you, she laments your forsaking her, and with all the power at her command she beckons you back again, if not actually by word, at least by tears and signs. This mother is the Church, my Prince, the spouse of Christ. Unless you reject her, in fact even if you do reject her, she remains your mother. You have so completely destroyed all feeling of devotion towards her that you hardly recognize her as your mother. You may corrupt and assail her, but she cannot forget the duty that a mother owes to her children, even as she now receives unbearable injuries from you. She may be compelled to exclude you from her home, just as she has regard for the rest of her sons. But at the same time she is pursuing you, she is calling out for your return, she is constantly solicitous for your salvation.

Filled with indignation, you may perhaps inquire about the nature of these injuries, you may ask why I say you have rejected your mother the Church. Filled with indignation, you may complain about the tragedies I am about to bring to your attention. And immediately you say that by doing what you have done you have renewed the affairs of the Church, you have done these things on behalf of the Church herself, you are persuaded you have authority for all your deeds in the will of the Church herself, as contained in the sacred books. Here, my Prince, I implore your kind patience in listening to me, for this is a matter of the highest importance. It pertains to your honor and salvation in a way surpassing all others. The question is: do those innovations that you have introduced into the Church agree with the will of the Church? This is the same as asking whether they agree with the will of Christ. For whoever disagrees with the will of Christ is opposed to his own salvation. Whoever obstinately adheres to things contrary to the will of Christ and of the Church is preparing his own disastrous destruction.

Therefore, this is a controversy dealing with a matter of tremen-
dous importance. If ever before, surely now, you ought to listen to this matter in a kindly and attentive mood. The great number of people who have suffered the death penalty for this cause, indicates most clearly the gravity of this controversy. No one can say that they were not pre-eminent in wisdom and fortitude, since all that they had to do to preserve their lives was to assent to your own opinions. For this reason alone, I think that the importance of this controversy is evident. That you may more readily seek out the truth in this matter and give diligent consideration to the opinions of all involved, it is essential that you listen with due kindness and patience to both your friends and enemies, should there be such. You should not refuse to hear anyone who demands a hearing in this matter. If you are willing to listen to anyone, certainly no one has a more just claim on your attention than myself. I say this not because I have any special connection with the many men who have previously addressed you in a vein similar to mine, but rather because if you listen to me as I express my opinion in writing you are listening to your own favored kinsman. In pursuit of my own literary studies, I have been in search of most precious wares, I have dwelt in many countries and have spent a large portion of my life in foreign lands. Whatever profit, however, I may have derived from my studies in literature is in all justice entirely at your disposal, for I gained this profit solely through your generosity.

Out of all the nobility in England, you chose myself alone as the one upon whom you would shower your care and interest from my earliest youth. Since all are accustomed to behold and cherish their own possessions, certainly you should not have any fear that I would willingly and knowingly impose upon you or persuade you to accept falsehoods instead of the truth. There can be no grounds for having even the slightest suspicion that I could possibly be guilty of so infamous and perfidious a crime. For by such shameful devices I would be deceiving my King and my Prince, which deceit would be equal to the very grave crime of infecting the public good with venomous poison, for the King cannot be deceived without many accompanying evils coming to the commonwealth itself. I would also be guilty of the still greater crime of bringing disaster to the King himself to whom I am deeply indebted for all the benefits and protection I have received through his generosity. The name of traitor would hardly be
On the Unity of the Church

a proper term for one guilty of such behavior. Words would be lacking fully to express such criminal atrocity.

Therefore, my Prince, be assured concerning my intentions and hear me as your foster-son. If you have persevered thus far as I conclude my introduction, by now listening attentively I promise you that the whole question of truth itself and your salvation, which is now imperiled by manifold contentions, will be made vividly clear and certain for you.

Henry VIII's Usurped Title of Head of the Church

First of all I shall examine the problem, as I said above, that is at the bottom of all this misunderstanding. I refer to your denial that you have brought any injury upon the Church. I shall explain the nature of the injury I am discussing so that all points involved will be clear. My treatise will then develop other aspects of this question in their proper course. Therefore, I maintain and repeat, that I can conceive of no greater injury you could inflict upon the Church than to abolish the head of this Church from the face of the earth. You do exactly this when you deny that the Roman Pontiff is the one head of the Church on earth, the Vicar of Christ. Another injury follows immediately from this when you set yourself up as supreme head of the Church in England. I say that this latter injury follows from the former. For to have done the latter it was necessary to presume the former. You had to deny that there was one head of the universal Church before you could establish yourself as supreme head of the Church in your kingdom. In that manner, therefore, your self-appointment depends upon your denial of the existence of one head of the Church. Otherwise you could not act in this way. Even if the Roman Pontiff were not the head of the Church, it would not be possible for kings continually to become heads of churches in their own realms. I shall consider this point later.

Now let us turn to the question whether an injury was done by removing the one head from the government of the Church. You alone out of the vast number of Christian kings were the first to deny that this head was the Roman Pontiff, something all people have
admitted throughout many centuries. Perhaps the full extent of this injustice is not easily perceived in a body as large as the Church where size alone beclouds the power of observation. Let us consider, therefore, this injustice as it might exist in another body whose parts and size would be more in keeping with our power of observation. Here we might more readily understand the nature of this injustice. Imagine that you were considering a change in some state, similar to what you have undertaken in the Church. You are desirous of bringing this state under the power of one person, whereas formerly it had been governed by a group of men. Would this be a slight injustice against that state? Consult the histories of all communities and you will find that no more serious injustice can be inflicted upon a state than to impose the rule of one man where the rule of the people had formerly flourished. How many wars and insurrections have had their origin in a similar cause, while the people prepared to avenge such injustices and the rebelling factions attempted to defend their positions.

Turn now to the consideration of a similar situation in your own kingdom. Are not people accustomed to living in a monarchy, only with great hardship and violence reduced to a form of government in the hands of many? Do they not consider this a grave injustice, as indeed it is? There can be no great change in any state without accompanying serious injustice and disturbance to the commonwealth. If any change in government involves some injustice and danger, how much greater still will that injustice and danger be where the change is made from the best to a poorer condition! It is this type of injustice that you have now inflicted upon the Church. For wherever men have assembled together, wherever the opinion of many ages has been consulted, a community of men with the government under the control of one man has always been written into their customs as the best possible condition of life. You now plan to overthrow this condition in the Church and to substitute many heads in the Church. Now is this a slight injustice?

You say that you are conferring a benefit upon the Church. Some pontiffs are evil, you claim. But I reply that if every state were to be changed as often as there happened to be an evil person at its head what kingdom would long stand? The whole human race would live in a condition of utter confusion. What state would have a stable government? There is scarcely a territory subject to the rule of a king
that can boast three good kings in succession. For hardly has a son succeeded his father before the people begin to wonder whether the present good king might not demoralize his son should this king reign too long. If even in civil states and kingdoms it may not be useful to change conditions solely on account of the iniquitous rule of one person, so much less is such a change useful, permissible, or legitimate in the case of the Church. For the Church is established not by men but by God. Truly I know we have reached no agreement on this point, although I trust that later on I can make it clear.

It is manifest to all who are capable of fair judgments that this is the condition of the Church as recognized by all men. Anyone who attempts to change this, particularly on his own authority alone as you are now doing, inflicts great injustice upon the Church, which depends upon no mere mortal for its foundation. Your own lack of interest in the welfare of the Church is equally evident. You are considering only your own personal advantage. Have you not sufficiently betrayed your own will? You rejected the head of the universal Church and you divided the Church itself among kings as you would divide a piece of land captured from the enemy, or some booty that you had gained in a war you had waged. As though you were the lord and master of all, you have appropriated for yourself as supreme head those things acquired by the Church during your reign and you have made an attack upon the very goods of the Church itself. According to your fancy you make decisions, changes, and regulations in matters pertaining to the Church. Whereas formerly all kings who professed the Christian faith received laws from the Church and willingly obeyed them, you are imposing laws upon the Church and forcing unwilling ministers in the Church to obey. What need is there for arguments to display the iniquity of this deed? Is it not sufficient to bring forth the fact, as I mentioned above, that you usurped something in the Church that no king ever considered attempting?

There has been no lack of kings in the Church who were desirous of honor. Only would that there had not been so many! There have been many kings who were primarily interested in their own welfare and profit. Only would that these had not been so numerous! If to be appointed head of the Church might be considered the highest honor and one implying great personal profit, why is it that no king has ever been found so ambitious and greedy that he dared to assume for
himself the title of supreme head of the Church, or even ventured to strive for it? Since the founding of the Christian faith there have been many kings eager for great wealth and many honors. Why is it, my Prince, I beg you, that not one of these has been found who discovered this title of honor himself, or who had a flatterer bold enough to advise him of this? The only explanation lies in the absurdity of the whole idea. This was the immediate deterrent. Such a deed neither had nor ever could have even the slightest appearance of justice. For it is certainly true that rulers who are not openly acknowledged as tyrants, even if seeking something unjustly, will at least search for a semblance of right. Noneboldly undertook this title of honor, since such an act had not even the appearance of right. You, however, found a remarkable appearance of right. You say this honor has been conferred on kings by the authority of Scripture. Now my Prince, among all your predecessors would there not have been one king sufficiently attentive and informed in Scripture to note and seize upon such words so clearly referring to this greatest honor? Or suppose, my Prince, that all were ignorant of the Scriptures. Imagine yourself, more than all your predecessors, to be well informed in sacred Scripture. Would not some of the many flatterers surrounding you have advised you that this honor could find support in Scripture?

Why is it that some flatterer, carried away with arrogance and shamelessness on realizing that countless pages of history are filled with the names of kings who were always ambitious for new honors, never conferred this profitable title of supreme head of the Church upon his king? There is not a flatterer who is not clever enough to use every opportunity for added glory, no matter how abandoned or deceptive the device may be. By the stench of his own mind the flatterer happens upon such tricks. Shall we conclude that you have the most farsighted and shameless flatterers that any king ever possessed? Is it not true that over a period of years many kings were eagerly seeking the greatest and most profitable honor that could be theirs? Were not base flatterers, like dogs, sniffing after similar distinction as long as it had the appearance of righteousness about it? The one distinction your own base flatterers have bestowed upon you was concealed from all the others. You alone have found the most clever, though also the most shameless, of flatterers who dare to assent to your every opinion.
On the Unity of the Church

Now let us forget all these and imagine that you were the very first of all to discover something new in Scripture, something that no other ruler or private individual in any age ever realized. Why is it that no approval of your discovery is given by a single living ruler who has been made aware of your important discovery and its accompanying honor and profit? Why does not even a single one consent to follow your example in any way? Why is it that not one friend or enemy among all rulers can be found who would snatch this title of honor away from you? Surely no honor would be more sought after if these rulers thought that you had properly conferred it upon yourself or that it might legitimately be taken away from you. Is it not evident that the Most Christian King [Francis I, King of France] who agrees with you in many matters differs diametrically from you in this? He thinks you assumed this title unjustly and that he could not properly assume it himself. This is his opinion despite the fact that you claim to have received this title through the opinion of a council. Have you reflected that the Emperor Charles, a leading proponent of a cause of religion, is so disgusted with your action in assuming this title that he considered you to have been deprived of all honor and self-respect? All Christian rulers agree on this point. None is sympathetic with you, none agrees with you, none would dream of imitating you.

If the nature of the Church were such that it should be ruled by many heads, these supreme heads being kings, what kind of a Church, I ask you, are you making? Whose spirit would govern this Church, if for many centuries it were ignorant of its own nature? Was the Church in constant doubt as to whether it should be ruled by one or many? For ages past many men’s minds have been clouded in darkness as far as the nature of the physical universe is concerned. The Church has been illumined for many years by a new light from heaven. Are you going to make it shine with your own paltry light?

Despite a tendency toward polytheism and though clouds of obscure understanding may have hampered certain philosophers of old, even they recognized that the world was governed by one Ruler. Do you think that the Church was in ignorance concerning its own nature while those philosophers had discovered the nature of authority in the universe? I wonder if you begin to comprehend the nature of the injury you are conferring upon the Church? Indeed, you injure Christ
Himself when you ignore the known fact that the spirit of Christ
governs the Church, when you suggest that for centuries the Church
has been in ignorance concerning the question of the Church being
governed by one or many. Is the Church governed by kings or priests?
By the immortal God, what outrageous insults you heap upon the
spouse of Christ, in fact, upon Christ Himself!

I well know that my own opinions will have little effect upon
you. They will merit but slight consideration from you unless I
strengthen my bare argument with the added testimony of sacred
Scripture. I have been advised by those who asked me to write to you
at your suggestion that anyone who wishes to assail your deeds should
search for opinions in the sacred Scriptures wherein you have sought
a foundation for all your deeds. They tell me that you depend not
upon the arguments derived by human reason nor upon the precedents
of earlier men but rather that you rely solely upon the sacred Scrip-
tures. Human reason and experience can deceive and be deceived.
Those who rely upon the sacred Scriptures cannot err. There they will
find a true and certain norm by which all our words and actions
should be measured. You claim this norm for all your deeds. It is
truly said, my Prince, that he who relies on sacred Scripture as a norm
for all his deeds cannot err. Scriptures, however, contain both words
and thoughts. One should not grasp at the verbal meaning to the
neglect of the sense of the passage in the context. At first glance many
words can be adapted to our own individual inclination, and often
we can twist them around to our own purpose, like a leaden bar. In
this manner many who profess to follow the sacred Scriptures have
fallen into most pernicious errors. This path to error has been taken
by all heretics in the Church. They followed only the words of the
Scriptures, neglecting the true sense or deliberately perverting a
passage to their own way of thinking.

In this connection, my Prince, I fear that you should first be
admonished, because by reliance on the authority of Scripture you
have usurped for yourself the title of supreme head of the Church.
If at first glance you think that some words give this impression, you
should attend more carefully to the real meaning of the context. In
my opinion you should be admonished even though I might find some
word in all Scripture that would seem to substantiate your meaning
or support your interpretation. Indeed, I venture to say that you
cannot find one word in all sacred Scripture that when rightly understood would support the claim of a king to be head of the Church. You cannot even discover a single word that could remotely be stretched in meaning to convey your own interpretation. Even the most abandoned heretics were able to find a few words in Scripture to quibble over in defending their false doctrines. Even though you hope your own interpretation might be valid, it contradicts all scriptural sense and does not offer even a single word upon which you can base your claim.

Richard Sampson's Defense of Henry VIII

Of course, you may imagine that your advocate, Richard Sampson,\(^1\) presents some words from Scripture in defense of your authority as head of the Church when he cites in his book a passage from the First Epistle of Peter as follows: “Honor the king” (1 Pt. 2:17). If you think, however, that such authority as you now usurp for yourself comes from these words, you may be sure that no one else finds even the most superficial suggestion of this meaning in the context of that passage. In that passage no mention is made of the head, whether supreme or lowly, nor is the Church itself mentioned. Even though this passage offered some verbal foundation for your claim to authority, you would still have to examine more carefully the meaning of the thought expressed according to the context of Peter’s Epistle.

Since Sampson contends that the authority of kings in the Church is based upon these words, I am now really undertaking a battle with him. Nor would anyone appear more at fault and guilty than myself were I to refuse to enter this conflict. Yet I hardly know what necessity compels me to enter this battle arena reluctantly. However, why should I refuse? Why should I not show the greatest alacrity in entering this conflict, since I am defending an opinion that I know is true? Do I fear the force and might of my opponent’s doctrine? Not in the least! Therefore what is there to keep me out of the conflict? Why do I hesitate? Why do I fear? I shall speak quite frankly, my Prince, though my remarks may not be as related to the matter under discussion as they are pertinent to my whole attitude in speaking at all.
So I shall tell you what restrains me, what makes me slow to enter this conflict.

In the first place, by my own natural accord, I tend to avoid all strife and contention. My custom of acting this way extends from my boyhood to the present. I have avoided all public or private contention and I have not had any litigation before the judges. This is a very unusual circumstance in the case of one who has justly owned some degree of worldly goods. To such an extent have I avoided arguments with others that I do not think there is a word that causes greater distress to my soul than the word contention itself. Therefore, my Prince, if I had to engage in this conflict with Sampson alone, I should do so most unwillingly. This is especially true since the nature of this argument compels me to speak with some vituperation concerning his ability, his doctrine, his manner, and even his soul. And my disposition has ever been such that I cannot act in this way without great personal sadness. I have always thought that where vice existed it should be concealed and cured by other means than harsh invective. I greatly prefer expounding the virtues of those with whom I am closely associated, as I now am with Sampson. Those who know me more intimately can testify that I speak the truth here and am not inventing these things for the sake of personal pride and ostentation. I fear that some will suspect that I say these things on behalf of my own glory, for I know there are many who do not approve of my opinion. There are some who will attribute these remarks to a certain apathy of spirit rather than to a natural leniency and clemency. Whatever may be the case, I assure you that such is my nature. Whoever does not believe my words might call in my deeds as witnesses. He might believe me then.

Only with great reluctance, therefore, do I enter this conflict with Sampson. If I act thus unwillingly against him, great is my grief when I argue with one who is the protector of Sampson, with the one who favors Sampson’s side of the argument. My grief is great, my Prince, as I argue with you. For you stand by Sampson’s side and protect him with your body. Every javelin of discordant opinion hurled against him will of necessity first pierce through your own breast as it strikes at your reputation. Only God Himself who searches the hearts of men can see what great sorrow oppresses me. My grief is so overwhelming that even I who experience it cannot begin to measure it
in my mind. My grief becomes even greater when I realize that this conflict will thwart the plans of my whole future life.

Since boyhood my life has been devoted to the study of letters. My many friends, including yourself, in kindliness have often admonished me for my diligence. You have frequently warned me to place a value upon my health equal to the zeal with which I was pursuing my studies.

Negligence at this task was one thing with which no one has ever reproached me. Therefore, my Prince, I had long since decided that everything I derived from my arduous study of literature, all benefits acquired from my long vigils with books would be placed at your disposal. Thus they might, God willing, serve to magnify the outstanding virtues of your soul. I had planned that I would add to your kindly munificence what glory I could through my writings. I had hoped to accomplish this for the greater glory of the benefits of your reign and for your immortal glory both in the eyes of God and of man. All this I considered due to you as my most worthy benefactor during my years as a student. I desired to do all this for you who were so closely related to me by blood—for you, my Prince, and finally for my native country.

Now, alas, what shall I say? What complaint shall I utter first? Has every opportunity been snatched from me for ever satisfying this life-long, most sacred and ardent desire? I am most deeply grieved because the one talent I had developed whereby through my literary art I might add to your glorious plans, has been snatched from me. My grief increases even more when I realize that the time has come when I am compelled to resist your plans. I am compelled to oppose all your deeds with all the power and strength of whatever literary talent I have at my disposal. Of what avail is my talent, however, unless I completely change my feelings toward you, unless I abandon my love, devotion, and every impulse that I have for your honor and service? I shall not do any of these things, however. Not only are my feelings toward you entirely unaltered, but now more than ever before, I am anxious to be of service to you. For I realize that you are in dire need of assistance from anyone who is favorably disposed toward your dignity and security. What impels me in this manner? My sentiments regarding you are still the same. You have extended this invitation with a display of kindness never before shown to another. This I
readily admit. How could I deny it? Well might I complain that since evil circumstances have inevitably made such a separation between us, my strength is somewhat lacking and the result is that you cannot make the best use of my services. This by itself would not unduly grieve me since there are others far better equipped than myself upon whom you might call. Personally I feel sad, however, when I reflect that I am deprived of realizing an ambition toward which all the plans and acts of my life have been directed since boyhood. I have always acknowledged and ever will acknowledge from the bottom of my heart the prime importance of your welfare. Thus my sorrow increases when I perceive that the perversity of currently disturbed affairs forces me to advance your welfare by strongly opposing your deeds. In a sense, this writing of mine that you now demand should be an offering of the first-fruits of my literary endeavors. Its contents should commemorate your virtues, your renown, your glorious deeds. Merely to think of this now fills my soul with anguish. The glowing white heat of my literary work has been quenched even as its path followed closely the very center of your accomplishments.

How shall I proceed? Though I cannot abandon my firm determination long since dedicated to your security, present circumstances now compel me to offer strong opposition to your current opinions. How can I otherwise hope to remain your true friend? Or should I forget my interest in your own security and turn to enticing flattery as I address you? Yet I dare not venture to estimate the harm that might be done should I do this. So the path of my appeal to you will lie in the direction where my hope for your security is greatest. Whether I speak hypocritically or from the sincere depths of my heart, the outcome itself will reveal. If you will only hear me attentively and patiently, my Prince, I promise you that the outcome of this work will be in accord with your wishes. The nature of the disease you have contracted necessitates violent measures. Even though I may seem to be not only your bitter opponent but actually a violent enemy, even though you may think I am wounding you, even though you may imagine that your fame and honor are being attacked and overwhelmed with the most insulting effrontery,—even so, you will come to realize that the result of all this will bring you joy and glory. You will not only not grieve because I have wounded your pride, but you
will actually rejoice exceedingly over my words. I offer you my hand on behalf of your salvation.

A superficial glance might give you the impression that at every moment your honor and reputation were being snatched away from you. I am not trying to do this. Rather am I attempting to remove the false foundations of your apparent honor and to strengthen and confirm a sound basis for your honor and reputation. To gain this victory you will endure much, but you will be conquered by truth itself to which all else must yield. For this victory will belong not to you or me but to Christ Himself. Thus I can promise that you will be restored to the royal throne that you appear to be in danger of losing. Those who now oppose you as one destroying the Church, those who accuse you of every impious crime, those who are responsible for urging that you be expelled from the Church as a traitorous enemy—all these will not only look upon you kindly but will consider you a most glorious work of Christ, a new King reunited with Christ, a King more noble than any who has flourished in past ages. I promise you they shall look upon you as a man of greatest assistance to the Church. They shall not only demand that your old honors be restored but that many greater ones be bestowed upon you.

All this I can promise you, my Prince, if you will first allow me to assume the role that zeal for your security imposes upon me, if you will permit me to assume the role of an opponent to all those things that seem to have brought infamy upon you, if you will only be guided by my discourse to you as you would be guided by my hand.

Pole's Reply to Richard Sampson

Now I begin to assume the role of adversary, first with Sampson, then with you, and finally with all those who have proposed injurious schemes for your security. I shall oppose these for a long time. I shall fight against them. I shall endeavor to reduce their power and to be of the utmost assistance for the cause of your security. Finally, I shall compel them to look to their own salvation. This they will be compelled to do, if truth, the most potent of all realities, can accomplish anything.

First I take up the argument with Sampson. He has summoned
into one definite battle all those who refuse to concur with his opinion concerning the defense of your honor. Now let us examine exactly just what Sampson has to offer on your behalf. Let us see the kind of armor he uses in his attack. Indeed, I see it clearly. He begins with a long introduction in which he repeats everything from the beginning of the human race. In this introduction, he recalls the great beneficence of God toward the human race. By thus commemorating the divine benefits he hopes to arouse the hearts of men to love of God. Then, having aroused this emotion of love, he proceeds to show that the proof of this love consists in obeying the commandments of God according to the text: "If anyone love me, he will keep my word" (Jn. 14:23). Sampson teaches that everything prescribed in the sacred Scriptures is contained in the words of Christ. Furthermore, since among the precepts in the canonical books it is written in the words of Peter that those subject to the rule of a king should honor the king, Sampson concludes that this precept should be especially observed without hesitation by everyone. If this interpretation, however, were logically followed one would be bound to obey the king by doing whatever the king commanded. Thus, Sampson's clever conclusion indicates the type of armor that he desires to use. For just as Goliath as he advanced into battle against the sons of Israel, carried his tremendous spear that was covered with iron of a weight beyond my reckoning, so does Sampson armed with this long introduction advance against the sons of the Church. The length of his introduction does not disturb me, although I do suspect some kind of deception.

Pole Addresses Sampson Directly

It seems fairly certain, Sampson, that if you were entering this conflict openly within the sight of all and free from all deception, you would not have to indulge in such a lengthy and tediously repetitious introduction. For would anything else be necessary if you were writing sincerely and without any intention of fraud concerning those words of Peter: "Honor the king"? Would not your wish to make it unquestionably clear that these words were to be interpreted in accord with the meaning Peter gave them, suffice? Why the need for such a lengthy introduction if you only wanted to state something that was
readily conceded by everyone, without the need of any long introduction on the special authority of Peter? Who would object if you only set forth the naked words of Peter that the king should be honored? Would not all immediately concede that a certain obedience was due a king? I certainly detect some deception that your argument scarcely conceals. As soon as you recognized that everyone’s mind was impressed by the mention of the divine precept concerning honor and obedience due the king, you immediately inferred that if a king must be obeyed by divine command then surely one should do whatever the king commands. The King, however, commands that we should no longer obey the Roman pontiff as supreme head of the Church on earth. Therefore, if proper respect is to be given the honor due the King, we must all obey his wishes in this matter. It is here, Sampson, that you desire to deceive us. Your pitiful actions are not those of an upright man.

Lest you should be successful in your attempt, I shall reveal the nature of this fraud. I concede that honor is due a king. I even grant you more than you demand and shall assist your argument in this one respect. For I maintain that not only should Christian kings be obeyed by Christians but even rulers not of our same Christian faith should none the less be shown proper honor by their Christian subjects. We have a clear and remarkable example of this in the case of the children of Israel who lived for many years as captives under the King of Babylon. They were not only bound by the divine precept to obey the king, but as we read in the Book of Jeremia, they merited severe punishment for refusing to obey King Nabuchodonosor. Sampson, this kind of obedience has its just and proper limitations. These children of Israel obeyed the King in external matters pertaining to the royal authority. When, indeed, this same King issued a command far in excess of his legitimate authority and commanded them to adore a golden idol, then the best of the children of Israel considered it preferable to be thrown into a fiery furnace rather than obey the King in this respect. God gave evidence of His pleasure over their decision by saving them from the flames.

There are countless other examples of our Christians who honored their pagan kings and emperors. Certainly Peter had such rulers in mind when he said: “Honor the king.” No king had yet received the faith. All were infidels. Yet Peter advised that they should be honored.
And the Christians willingly obeyed these rulers in matters concerning royal and imperial authority. When Domitian, however, desired that they should honor him not as King but as a god, then all Christians resisted his commands. There was no type of punishment that the Christians would not suffer rather than consent to such a command. In this resistance can we not see clearly that these Christians were first obeying the divine precept? They did not imagine that the command to honor the king could conflict with the law of God.

Now in a similar manner, Sampson, to return to our own discussion, we honor our King of England and obey his commands. But when he says: “Honor me as supreme head of the Church; grant me the place of the Vicar of God,” then we refuse absolutely. The long spear you used in your lengthy introduction about the love of God and obedience to His laws avails you nothing. Obedience to the laws of God teaches us that a king should not be obeyed in this matter. The limits of a king’s authority are definite, not infinite. Our obligation to obey is similarly limited. If you had known this, or rather since you know it, you should have preferred to discuss this question with us frankly, not deceitfully. It simply would not have been possible for you to attempt to attack with such weak arguments the obedience we know from the Church is due the Vicar of Christ. You, however, rejoice in these arguments. You hope that no one will perceive their artifice. This is something like the case of a victorious gladiator who has completed his first encounter with his opponent. The gladiator thinks that he will be heaped with praise and glory as he turns to the people and remarks that the blind temerity of his adversary amazes him. The gladiator wonders how anyone could have dared to oppose him. Thus Sampson acts when he perceives that he has concluded the King should be honored as the Vicar of God in the Church because God has ordered that a king should be obeyed. Sampson addresses his book to the people of England and says that he marvels that anyone could be found who would be sufficiently stupid and ignorant to disagree with his opinion.

In the opinion of Sampson, both More and Fisher appear to be stupid and ignorant. In fact, they were not only stupid and ignorant but actually out of their minds, since they chose to oppose Sampson’s opinion not only by word but by giving their life’s blood. It suffices merely to oppose the names of these two distinguished men to the
blind and arrogant madness of Sampson. This is particularly true, my Prince, since you have acknowledged the worth of these men with praise greater than you ever conferred on another in your realm. In my own presence you have named Fisher as the most learned theologian you ever knew. In your own words you have attributed to More practical wisdom so great that you would willingly have sacrificed your kingdom in order to possess similar wisdom. In the estimation of Sampson, however, the wisest of all men, these two men stand out as fools, ignorant of the very meaning of Scripture and lacking in all common sense. At this moment I shall say no more about Sampson, except to add in this place a few comments about his remarkable wisdom in interpreting the Scriptures, a wisdom in which he takes special pride.

Sampson supports his opinion concerning the honor due the king by citing other passages in the Scriptures. He claims great familiarity with St. Paul and refers to these words: "For there is no power but from God . . . Therefore he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God" (Rom. 13:1–2). Since, then, no one can deny that royal authority depends upon God, Sampson adds that the King is a minister of God and no one can resist his authority. Here Sampson cites numerous scriptural instances, somewhat in this fashion. The King as the minister of God holds the place of God, and has supreme position here on earth. Thus the Scriptures say: "Honor the king." Sampson holds that there is no doubt the honor properly belonging to the supreme head of the Church should be attributed to kings.

Absurdity of Richard Sampson’s Argument

I beseech you, Sampson, since it pleases you to rely upon this admonition of Peter about honoring the king, and since you seem to base all the defense of your case upon this passage, please answer this one question. Have you not also read in Scriptures that parents should be honored? What a beautiful and fitting text this is for introducing many other passages from Scripture urging children to honor their parents. Apart from all such honorable rewards, has not God commanded us to honor our parents? Are not they who resist their parents' commands guilty of resisting the command of God? Since parents,
therefore, have all the qualifications for receiving the honor you claim for the King, why do you not attribute this honor as due parents instead of the King? Why do you not think that parents should be awarded with the title of supreme head of the Church? You think the King deserves this title. Anything you can find in all Scripture to support the conferring of this title on the King applies equally to your parents. Do you wish only to please the King and not please your parents as the Scriptures advise? What if your father had been a physician? Then another crown of honor would have been due your father. If he were an old man, then indeed your father would actually surpass all kings in honor! For the Scriptures tell us that physicians and old men should be especially honored. Now if you confer the honor of supreme head of the Church upon the King because you once read in Scriptures the words “Honor the king,” to what great extent would not the honor due your father surpass all royal honors if your father happened to be an elderly physician!

Surely you must be fooling, Sampson, not arguing. You compel me to become a bit playful with you. However, if you seriously think that those words “Honor the king” carry such tremendous weight, if you really believe that they justify your claim for the King’s position as supreme head of the Church, I implore you to reflect upon those words attentively. I beg you to consider diligently the context of the passage in which these words appear. But first tell me this. Who wrote these words? Peter. To whom did he write them? To those who were obeying the Romans, at that time masters of all the earth. Had these people been converted to the Christian faith? Yes, they were Christians. Peter praised their faith. He admonished them to honor the king. This is absolutely true. But where did Peter write these words? At Rome. Who was ruling Rome at the time? Nero, by whom Paul, the colleague of Peter, was killed because Paul had pleaded the Christian cause before Nero. Peter ordered that all Christians should honor Nero, even though in the words of Paul, Nero carried a sword. No one can deny this. Neither Peter nor Paul ever offered resistance to the emperor in matters pertaining to his imperial authority. Both men gave him all honor due him as ruler and emperor. Paul, at the very moment he was being accused by the emperor, actually was honoring him. What can we make of all this? If we desire to be wise, in the company of Sampson, as we interpret the Scripture, what
On the Unity of the Church

conclusion can we reach? What other possibility is there except to conclude that Nero was head of the Church? If you reach this conclusion, however, your own head becomes rather ridiculous. Indeed, I myself would laugh over this serious matter, were it not for the fact that the laughter that your own remarkable wisdom arouses carries with it many tears.

I certainly confess that neither Fisher nor More ever taught that such conclusions could be reached from the words of Scriptures. I cannot imagine that you are so stupid and so lacking in the fundamental knowledge of argumentation that you think you have reasoned properly when you derive your own peculiar interpretation from these words of Peter. You want to play a game, it would seem, in a matter of most serious concern. Or rather because you speak from the royal palace as from a place of refuge, you want to amuse your followers and everyone else while you please the King. You probably thought it would assist your own passionate longing for public approval of your opinion, if in this hopeless case you indulged in a little experimenting by eloquently distorting the sense of scriptural passages without regard for any theological learning. If you only intended to practice how many arguments from sacred Scriptures you might incorporate into your writing, could you not have chosen a more suitable topic? Could you not have found a topic where you would not have brought injury to yourself and others while you chose to sport about and play a game? Could all this have been a frivolous game to you? Or, to come closer to the truth, could you have hoped by this one argument alone to have avoided the swords of the King and to have achieved all your ambitious desires? Could this game of games have been so great you did not care in the least how many thousands of souls might be corrupted by your writings, how many thousands might be led away from the true teaching of the Church? Did not this exclamation of Christ ever occur to you? "But he that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea" (Mt. 18:6). Since you have given scandal to so many thousands and infected so many with your depraved ideas, what kind of punishment do you expect from God in return for playing such an unholy game?

You still appear to be speaking in all seriousness. Even as you
write, you seem to put great trust in your arguments. Thus you say
that, God willing, you would call upon all learned men to produce
just one passage in Scripture that would show where God ever or-
dained any authority greater than that of a king. You would want all
men who consider themselves learned to produce evidence from sacred
Scripture for just one type of power greater than a king’s.

O Goliath, Goliath! I cannot now call you Sampson. It is in name
alone that I can see any resemblance to Sampson, though you have
much in common with Goliath, the Philistine. He attacked the uni-
versal Church of God. He so reproached the army of the living God,
if I may use the words of the Scripture, that he challenged anyone
brave enough to fight. Similarly you now challenge anyone capable of
disputing this new and novel doctrine of yours. You prove yourself
more clever than Goliath in offering a challenge. There were many
brave men in Israel when he offered his challenge. You, however,
chose the occasion to offer yours when the bravest of those who would
be first to defend the cause you oppose have been removed from the
scene of battle. It seemed that no one would be sufficiently negligent
of his own security to dare to defend an opinion opposed to yours,
in view of the fate of such brave men. Finally, you offer a challenge
at a time when you think the souls of all others will be filled with fear,
since they realize that the very brave leaders of the cause you oppose
have all been slain. For unless you judged thus, why did you not make
this attack when Fisher and More were still alive, to mention but two?
You would not have dared to open your mouth in their presence!

Truly your ignorance of the plans of God renders your cleverness
of little avail. God’s wisdom often sees fit to defend His cause not by
the strongest, but sometimes by the very weak. Thus He caused the
youth David, ignorant though he was of all the art of fighting, to
become the opponent of Goliath and to resist the attack of that very
brave warrior. Relying on divine assistance, David proved victorious.
In a similar manner God has aroused me to answer your challenging
attack, though I am but a boy in the art of fighting and have devoted
my life to the cause of peace and mildness even as David was con-
cerned with tending his sheep. I have firm hopes of achieving in this
conflict the same victory that was David’s as he fought against Go-
liath. For you, equipped with sword, spear, and shield, advance
against me, having all the favor and authority of the King on your
side. With all the glittering brilliance of these weapons you imagine you can terrify everyone. I, on the contrary, advance against you in the name of the armies of the Lord that you are now reproaching. The Lord will give you over into my hands and I will carry away your head, as all the world knows, because this Lord is the God of Israel. And the universal Church knows this because the salvation of the Lord does not depend on spear and sword.

Now let us return to the argument and repeat those words of yours that have caused this dispute. You write as follows: "I would like to call upon all who consider themselves learned to bring forth evidence from sacred Scripture for just one kind of power greater than a king's." In what way could you have been shown than by these words what a stranger you are, for it is in this manner that the Philistine interprets Scripture. Could you have chosen a better way in which to declare yourself a stranger to the dogmas of the Church and ignorant of the whole Christian profession? Could you possibly have brought greater opprobrium upon Christ, the Son of God? You destroy all the fruits of His Incarnation if you claim that He neither brought nor conferred any power greater than that of a king. What about the fact that He conferred upon men the power of becoming the children of God? Is this power greater or less than the power of any mortal king? Did kings have this power previous to His coming? Could they confer this power? Christ conferred upon men the power to conquer this world and the prince of this world before whom kings themselves bow as a sign of respect. Do you desire to think that this power is something less than the royal power? Did any king before the coming of Christ ever have this power? How great and shameful is your ignorance, if you never knew that this power is mentioned in Scriptures! Indeed, your shamelessness is completely hopeless, if while you knew these things were mentioned in the Scriptures yet you asked your question as if no such mention existed.

In almost every word, or at least in individual expressions, the Scriptures abound with reference to the divine power conferred upon men not only over all things of the natural order but also over everything that the mind of man can conceive. Now you, a man who professes to be a Christian, inquire whether mention is made anywhere in Scripture of an authority that excels that of a king. What else did these divinely inspired men who left us the Scriptures through the
assistance of the Holy Spirit say, what other purpose did they have
for their writings other than to warn men of the dignity of the voca-
tion to which they were called and to exhort all men to lead a life
worthy of such a high vocation? But you insist on asking whether the
sacred books make mention of a power greater than a king’s. Long
before Christ came upon the earth, when men were living under the
precept of the natural law, kings possessed their royal authority. Christ
surely did not detract from this power. He brought and conferred
upon those who obey His doctrine a power that exceeds comparison
with all others. Not only do the volumes containing the history of
Christ give testimony to this fact, though you seek therein support of
your own view, but the very heavens and earth itself, the natural
order of the whole universe call out loudly and proclaim this power.

Let us consider for a moment the extent of the power that kings
possess. Guided by nature and reason, have not many philosophers
and authorities in political affairs recognized this royal authority?
Many of these men have thoroughly discussed this matter in their
books and have left nothing that might be desired for further con-
sideration of this question. It can clearly be seen that they have con-
cealed nothing that might pertain to the question of royal authority.
These writers, guided by nature and human reason alone, could not
know very accurately about the authority that Christ, the Son of God,
established on earth. They could not even suspect the frequent men-
tion of this authority in the Scriptures. For this divine power far
surpasses nature itself and exceeds all possibility of comprehension by
natural means alone. Nature alone cannot reveal this power, nor “hath
it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for
them that love him” (1 Cor. 2:9). Through Christ who gave Himself
to us, we are made new creatures and called to participate and share
equally in the glory of Him Who created nature.

Have you forgotten all about the Apostles who were ordained and
chosen by Christ and sent forth by Him into all parts of the world?
Have you forgotten them when you write that no mention of any
power surpassing the dignity of a king can be found anywhere in
Scripture? As long as I think you have escaped the depths of impiety
and insanity, I cannot believe you are saying that the Apostles did
not have some special authority. Indeed they had special power, and
after they received this authority from the Son of God they were sent
forth into the whole world. Just as the Apostles were appointed and received the title of ministers of God, I grant that kings might have received the same title. But now we want to clear up the question whether kings or Apostles have the greater power. It is a fact, as we can see, that the Apostles were ministers of God by the very function of their office. Kings never had that power. This is sufficiently established by Scriptures themselves. The Apostles were ministers of the Gospel of God. Through their hands the Holy Spirit was given. Whoever receives the Holy Spirit, and all who obey the apostolic teaching will receive it, will be raised above all other authority that may be found in the natural world. They who accept the Holy Spirit will become and be called lords of the earth, citizens of the heavenly kingdom, heirs of God and co-heirs of the Son of God.

The Authority Conferred Upon Kings

What kind of power did God confer upon kings, what kind of office did He confer upon them when He established them as His ministers? He appointed them many ages ago long before the coming of Christ. Did I say ages ago? God founded human nature, and He infused a desire for social and community life in man rather than in the bee and other common animals. He so created human beings that they would not be self-sufficient but would need the mutual assistance of others and willingly associate together with their fellow-men. He implanted and infused in our souls a common sense for perceiving the necessity of living our lives in accord with nature, a certain realization that one man or group of men should be delegated with the highest authority and power to repel all violence and injury and to care for the needs of this universal society. Then it was that God foresaw and provided for all the safeguards that would be required for the preservation of this human society. Therefore, when Christ came into the world, He did not establish kings for the first time, for they had long since been appointed by nature herself as heads and protectors of human society. You ask me who conferred this honor and authority upon kings? I reply that Christ conferred no new authority upon them but merely confirmed the old authority they had received from nature.
One can say, however, on these grounds that the authority of kings was increased by Christ. He bestowed upon kings special strength, surpassing purely natural power, to assist them in carrying out the duties of their office. Nature alone could establish the position of king. Nature alone could not perfect this royal office and compel all kings to use the dignity of their royal authority in the proper way. Christ certainly conferred this special gift upon all those who, in the words of the Apostles, are obedient. Is it a greater power to be obedient in important matters or to command? It is true that Christ conferred this power upon kings not any more than upon all other men who naturally have an inclination for the preservation of human society. If we are to confine our discussion to kings, however, it is certainly true that the honor that Christ conferred when He came into this world did not in any way detract from the authority of kings. Hence it may be said that since Christ's coming destroyed all unjust powers, the authority of kings themselves is just.

A similar situation might be noted in the case of a ruler who, after a long absence, returned to the people of his native country. He had left his own country in a condition of pristine vigor based upon principles of right. On his return he found that many depraved and evil customs had become popular. Yet he had hoped that he might establish a city based upon even more noble laws. However, this ruler did not desire to abandon all that had been done during his absence. He merely corrected those evil conditions that had begun to flourish. He retained all the other changes in his community and considered them as advantages and services to the prestige of his country.

In a similar way Christ came into this world, just as if returning to His own country. He found kings necessarily exercising their power over the affairs of their fellow servants in those matters that pertained to the guidance of life in accord with nature. Since these kings were pre-eminent in using their authority in this regard, Christ did not change them. He made it clear, however, that He had come to found a new city in which those who were to preside would surpass kings in dignity and the manner of ruling. And all who were pre-eminent in the old city would be subject to this new authority. The Prophets often referred to this on many occasions, as at the time He was requested to give a tribute in the name of Caesar. For then it was that
He turned to that disciple who would receive the highest dignity in the new city where all things would be on a more lofty plane, and He questioned Peter thus: "The kings of the earth, of whom do they receive tribute or custom? Of their own children, or of strangers?" (Mt. 17:24–25). And when Peter had answered "of strangers" to this question, "Jesus said to him: Then the children are free." In these words He wished to make it clear that no tribute should be demanded from those who were not strangers, for they are truly the children of God and "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof" (Ps. 23:1). All others in the old city are slaves to their servitude. Lest Jesus should scandalize these others, however, He added: "Go to the sea, and cast in a hook; and that fish which shall first come up, take: and when thou hast opened its mouth, thou shalt find a stater: take that, and give it to them for me and thee." By this act He gave testimony that He was truly the Son of the Lord of nature who is superior to the law of nature itself and to whom all nature renders obedience. By this same example He indicated that He was above all kings of this earth who may exact tribute from their children. At the same time, however, lest He should give scandal, He desired to offer the tribute for Himself and Peter whom He had chosen to be the successor to His new kingdom on earth. It is for this reason that Peter himself admonished Christians to "Be subject . . . to the king as excelling" (1 Pt. 2:13). And this warning was necessary lest Christians, possessing such admirable dignity that surpasses all honor conferred by nature alone, should abuse this liberty granted by Christ. They might otherwise be held in contempt by those who have had conferred upon them a certain kind of dignity in accord with the order of nature. Therefore, Peter admonished Christians that they should be subject to the king. In this connection Peter is not only warning that Christians should be subject to their king but he is also trying to persuade all who hold any power from nature or custom established in imitation of nature that they too are bound by a higher power. The words of Peter clearly indicate this meaning in the same passage where he says: "Be ye subject therefore to every human creature for God's sake: whether it be to the king as excelling; or to governors as sent by him."

Paul writes in the same manner when he is speaking not only about royal authority but also when he admonishes concerning the obedience
that should be displayed toward the rulers of this world. Paul begins as follows: “Let every soul be subject to higher powers; for there is no power but from God” (Rom. 13:1).

You certainly cannot prove that any new or special power not previously possessed by kings had now been conferred upon them by the Scriptures. Nor can you call upon the testimony of the Scriptures to show that any special honor that had not belonged to kings before the advent of Christ should now be conferred upon them. If in any discussion concerning the honor that should be given to kings, you can only say that the Scriptures have in no way detracted from the honor due them, this fact at least should be clearly established for you on the authority of Scriptures. The words of Paul make this patently clear where he is speaking of the honor deserved by those in power through the law of nature: “Tribute, to whom tribute is due . . . honor, to whom honor” (Rom. 13:7). Here Paul speaks as though this thought were known to all and inscribed in the souls of men. Nor did Christ make any change in this respect. It is just as if He said that the accustomed honor should be shown toward kings and the accustomed tributes given. Those who are called into the kingdom of Christ are frequently admonished by Peter and Paul and all the authors of divine Scriptures that they should show the proper humility and obedience toward God. They should be “As free, and not as making liberty a cloak for malice” (1 Pt. 2:16).

It is surely malice to resist the power established by nature. For they who so act are destroying the dignity of a power far greater than any that nature herself can offer. They have the example of Him who is the Author of this dignity, who though He was Lord of nature yet chose to obey the laws established by nature. He made this evident since He obeyed kings and other powers although they were established by nature. In doing this He was not obeying nature and man, but His Father, God, who is the source of all power and order. “There is no power but from God . . . He that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God” (Rom. 13:1–2).

Peter and Paul, therefore, are in agreement when they speak of rendering honor and obedience to power. What powers did they mean? They meant those powers existing outside the Church, those that had not as yet been incorporated into the body of the Church.
They were speaking about the honor that should be given these. Their words, therefore, cannot show why a king's authority should be greater than that of any other person. For Peter says: "Honor all men" (I Pt. 2:17). If you so please, you may argue that Peter, speaking by divine authority, said "Honor the king." Therefore the king is the supreme head of the Church. Therefore, the king is the Vicar of Christ. But since Peter also said in the same passage "Honor all men," we can conclude from your argument that all men are Vicars of Christ, that all men hold the office of supreme head of the Church.

If you have followed me thus far, Sampson, if you have any fear of what others might think about you, and if your blind desire of flattering the King has not made you completely bereft of your mind and all of your senses, do you not really think that books filled with arguments of the kind you have offered the public are really, as much as it is within your power, undermining the very security of your native country? What purpose other than the destruction of your own native country could you possibly have had in mind when you wretchedly attempted to deceive and deprave the minds of the people with arguments of this type?

Indeed, you consider the words of Peter, "Honor the king," so forceful that from them you can show Peter was of the opinion that kings are the heads of churches. Why, therefore, are not you also moved on behalf of priests by those words of Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews? He says: "Obey your prelates, and be subject to them. For they watch as being to render an account of your souls" (Heb. 13:17). Who are these, Sampson, who watch for the souls of those in the Church? Are they kings or priests? I do not think you are so overcome by lethargy and so deprived of your senses as to say they are kings. If, then, they are presbyters and priests to whom the care of the Church is entrusted, listen for a moment to the words of Paul as he spoke to the Church about these men. He said: "Obey and be subject to them." If we want to weigh the meaning of words, "to be subject to" is something more than "to obey" or "to honor." We honor many to whom we are not subject, from whose laws we are completely free. When Paul, however, instructed the Church concerning the honor that should be shown to these guides who watch over the salvation of souls, he was not content with saying "obey them." He added the words:
"be subject to them." What other meaning could he have had in mind? The soul and the members of our physical body are subject to the head. Thus we should be subject to the head, to the prelates who watch over the care of our souls. What more could be said?

You seem never to have read this passage in Paul. For if you had read it you would surely never have challenged the opinion of all the scholars who oppose your views. Out of all the sacred writings scholars especially present this one passage to show that as much honor should be given to the power of the prelates as to kings, according to the words of Peter where he says: "Honor the king." So, though I am neither a scholar nor worthy of being a disciple of the great authorities whom you have challenged by your effrontery, I could present the complete words of Scripture as being opposed to your opinion. However, I clearly offer this one definite passage for your consideration. You have no grounds upon which to base a reply to my interpretation of these words.

Finally, you should read this text of Paul to the Hebrews. Unless you are remarkably ingenious in the art of deception, you have not read it as yet. Note particularly the words: "Obey and be subject to." The meaning is not confined to mere obedience and honor in the sense of "Honor!" taken by itself. The command "to obey" and "be subject to" ought to be applied to kings according to your opinion. If they are the supreme heads of the Churches, it is their duty to watch over souls. This is particularly true since we read that the Apostle Paul used these words in addressing the presbyters of the Church of Ephesus: "Take heed to yourselves, and to the whole flock, wherein the Holy Spirit hath placed you bishops, to rule the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28).

No Christian Kings in the Days of Christ

If you speak in this manner, you no longer have me for an adversary. I shall certainly not dispute you. My opinion will be worth little when opposed to such pertinent replies. I am really ashamed that I have spoken at such great length against such futile arguments.
On the Unity of the Church

However, before I leave you, I should like to ask just one question to which I would be grateful to receive a reply from you. This is the question. Have you ever read in the whole canon of Scripture about any king who was a disciple of Christ while He was on this earth, or have you read of a king during the age in which the Apostles were preaching coming to hear the doctrine of Christ? I shall answer for you, since there is only one reply that you can truly give. The sacred Scriptures make no mention of any king who was a disciple of Christ at that time, nor of any king who presented himself to hear Christ’s doctrine during that period. For this was the time concerning which the Prophets had foretold, as we know from Peter’s reference to this subject, when kings were leading opponents of the deeds and doctrines of Christ. David the Prophet said: “The kings of the earth stood up, and the princes assembled together against the Lord and his Christ” (Acts 4:26). What can you answer to this? On the authority of Scriptures do you want us to believe that kings were appointed heads of the Churches, when you could not even show that kings constituted any part of the body of the Church according to these same scriptures? You present a monstrosity greater than that portrayed by the painter whom Horace the poet describes. “If a painter should wish to unite the neck of a horse to a human head . . .” I speak in this manner for it is impossible to speak otherwise without deliberately desiring to stray from the truth of the Scriptures.

The men whom you, on the authority of the Scriptures, want to call supreme heads of the Church were not even included in the body of the Church at the time that Christ dwelt on this earth and when the Scriptures were being completed. Membership in the body of the Church was farthest from the mind of any king at that time. The very order and development of the doctrine of Christ, when the full meaning of His coming is realized, greatly confirms and strengthens the ample testimony of Scripture in this regard. For we who are Christians know that Christ came to conquer the world through a power that has nothing in common with the world. He came so that He might prove to all that neither His doctrine nor His power came from the world. As Paul says: “The weak things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the strong” (1 Cor. 1:27). Who does not see that the greatest confusion concerning this new
power and the power already possessed by kings would have resulted, if He had first chosen those very kings whose authority and power were greatly renowned in the world? In no other way could He make it clear to man that His power was truly divine and in no way dependent upon men or the world. Christ wanted to make this clear to the world. Therefore, in the beginning He did not choose kings, nobles, learned men, or anyone from those highly esteemed. But as Paul writes: "And the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible, hath God chosen, and the things that are not, that he might bring to naught things that are: that no flesh may glory in his sight" (1 Cor. 1:28–29).

While Christ was living here on earth and during the time of the Apostles, we can find absolutely no information from Scriptures concerning any king who was appointed head of a church. No church existed in any part of the earth. However, we cannot say that a Church was not established by Christ before He left this earth. It is not possible that there was no head of this Church, since it was to grow to perfection in all the rest of its members and finally develop into a just and perfect body. Who is there who does not see that at first the Church grew? Then it confounded those whom the world particularly admires by receiving into it those who are held in contempt by the world. Then, slowly increasing, the Church was finally enlarged by the addition of kings. Here the growth of the Church ended. And the kings came in last, something in the fashion of feet. Just as these kings, indeed, were considered foremost in earthly power in the eyes of men, so were they considered last of all in regard to that divine and heavenly bestowed power that raises human nature above itself.

If you would now ask me, as you did before when you challenged all those who professed learning and literature, to name for you some power in Scripture that would be equal to the power of a king, I would not answer you as before by naming veritable columns of the Church. I would not name the Apostles and all the others who received the first fruits of the power of the spirit of God. You seem to have forgotten about them when you ask this question. However, I shall proceed by first greatly condensing this question, and then by replying to you concerning certain men. Then I shall return to your general question and answer it in the way you request.
Honor and Power Conferred on Thomas More and John Fisher

First you ask upon whom, other than the King, I think Scriptures confer a greater authority. You would make a king the head of the Church by insidiously using the authority of Scriptures. I shall reply. I shall bring to your attention those renowned men who relied upon the authority of Scriptures and, with their life's blood, resisted the King, resisted you and all others like you. I say, indeed, that the King never could have conceived such a crime by himself. At your instigation he brought death to these men. I declare that these men had an honor and power conferred upon them that is greater than any ever attained not only by the King himself, but greater than that of all kings and emperors who have ever lived since the beginning of this world. I deny that the power of any king can ever compare with the power of the very men you consider wretched because you saw them put to death by the King's sword. You imagine they have less power than has the one who put them to death.

Why do I consider I have need for any lengthier treatise if I wish to explain this? For you, especially, like some uninformed Jew or other person from the mass of the populace, show that you value no power beyond that which can kill bodies or seize external goods. Hence it is all but vain for me to attempt to explain this to you. However, I do not regret the necessity of discussing this matter briefly. I see the enemy who has been overcome by these men, the enemy who holds you and the other authors of the slaughter of these men, bound in the chains of every kind of crime and greed. I see the two deadly spears of pain and pleasure that no human strength can ever resist. These spears have been twisted and violently hurled against these men in the many victories of the princes of this world—by the same enemy called in Scripture the prince of this world. But these spears were of no avail in shattering the firm spirit of these men. I see that neither the abundant offer of rewards nor the endurance of cruel sufferings, showed that they had abandoned their confession of the truth of that power they had obtained through Christ.

Since I see all these things, I say that I have no hesitation in expressing my opinion loudly and publicly, just as a herald would
proclaim the victory, honor and power of those who had striven for supremacy in the Olympic Games. I maintain that these men whom the King attacked, so surpass the King in honor and power that there is presently no one worthy of any kind of honor equal to theirs. Yes, and furthermore I shall add that even if the power of these men was not superior to that of any king, it would at least be preferable to a king’s power. The course of affairs has now shown my commendation of these men to be the common opinion of the whole Christian world. Their names are constantly renowned everywhere. They are celebrated by the highest admiration of virtue and of the power conferred on human nature by God. The loving conversation of all recalls their names. You and all your followers thought with one mind you could tear away the reputation and virtuous opinion of these men. You hoped they would undergo great evil and endure every monstrous and terrible injury beyond all description.

This is my reply to your question that you restricted to certain persons. If you ask me, however, in a general way what power equals that of a king, I reply: the power Christ conferred on those who endured chains for His sake is greater than any royal power.

Lest you think this is my own personal opinion, I have learned this same opinion from the holiest men whose teaching shines forth as the brightest light in the Church. The authority of John Chrysostom, for example, especially influenced me where he comments on these words of Paul: “Prisoner of Jesus Christ” (Eph. 3:1). Chrysostom bestows this title of honor not only on the name of king but also on the Apostles themselves as well as on the angels and the archangels. However, you may smile at the simplicity of those who bestow power and dignity on the men who have bravely endured cruel sufferings. We speak in this manner only because they suffered for Christ.

These very holy men, Fisher and More, suffered gravely at the hand of a Christian King. This is a special cause for grief. They suffered because they did not want to abandon the Church, the spouse of Christ, while its members were being torn asunder. These holy men preferred to have their own bodies dismembered rather than have the unity of the body of the Church destroyed. Paul, in writing to the Philippians, has testified that the ability to suffer for such motives is a special gift of God. After Paul congratulates them for this great gift, he concludes his sermon in these words. “For unto
On the Unity of the Church

you it is given for Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him” (Phil. 1:29).

You, however, are not able to conceive in your mind even a shadow of this power and glory, since you have never tasted it. As your own writings declare, you are only capable of understanding civil power and the civil mode of government. Your own words indicate this most clearly where you say that you want to prove by natural reason alone that the King is necessarily the head of the Church. In order to present your own opinion more clearly, I give your own words: “Who does not know that the entire political kingdom as a unit is a body, that individual men are the members of this body? Clearly it is none other. No other head can evidently be found. Custom makes this manifestly clear to you. What can be done, what decided, what decreed without the royal consent? Do you not see the supreme power of the supreme head?”

Richard Sampson Confuses the Head of the Church and the Head of the State

Of course, if I may reply to your last words first, I see that you are guilty of very great malice. You try to deceive the people and lead them into error through an ambiguous use of the word “head.” This word actually has two distinctly different meanings. Who ever doubted your words when you said that the King was the head of the state? Custom has established the validity of this meaning. Because he holds his position as head of the state, why should it follow that he should hold the same position in the Church? Who ever taught you to argue in such a malicious manner? I believe that you deliberately prepared this malicious argument for the very purpose of deceiving your people. For I cannot believe that you are so lacking in basic education, natural human intelligence, and reasoning power as to consider that your words in this connection have any validity as a proof. You say that because all the legal interests of all the citizens are referred to the King as supreme head of the body politic, the same thing should be done in the Church that has nothing in common with the body politic. You say, in fact, that the King is supreme head of the Church. I cannot believe that you sincerely place much faith in this kind of an
argument. Only a person completely lacking in reasoning would argue this way.

Indeed, if your own father were alive and head of a family, you would all the more be apt to conclude from the principles you employ that he himself should be king and head of the political body. For the Scriptures give the title of head to all who have wives and are fathers of families. A man is considered head over his wife, as Paul says, and has for his members those who are in his family and who refer all things to him as supreme head. Within the confines of a home, what can be decided upon without the consent of the father of the family? Therefore, your father would be king, he would be head of a political body. Furthermore, domestic government is more closely allied to political government than is political to ecclesiastical government. Nor is domestic government as inferior to political government as political government is inferior to ecclesiastical. It would follow more logically to say that your father should be king because he ruled in his own home, rather than to say that the King should be head of the Church because he rules over a city or a kingdom.

The conclusion reached from your argument is that you think the Church is a political body. If this is the case, in that respect I free you from the charge of malice. But I still say you are beclouded by a pernicious kind of ignorance. The distance between the civil and ecclesiastical power is as great as the distance between heaven and earth. Such is the difference between the body of the Church which is the body of Christ and a mere human political body. The words that Christ addressed to those whom He appointed rulers of the Church make clear the different kinds of government involved. For He said: “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them” (Lk. 22:25). But you do not make this distinction. When you inquired above whether any mention of any kind of power equal to that of a king might be found in Scripture, you showed that you do not consider these two bodies as differing in any way. You indicated that civil power held supreme position in all types of government. Were this the actual case, all the doctrine of Christ would be destroyed. There would be no Church. Christ would have come in vain.

To have the heavens and earth disappear would be better than to lose the words of Christ. The Church is so established upon a rock that no power either on earth or in heaven can demolish it. Though
you do not perceive the benefits of the coming of Christ, all desiring to avoid eternal suffering or hoping for some taste of happiness in this world or the next, realize the significance of His coming. On this great event alone depends the eternal salvation of each and every human creature.

These facts remain as the reason why you and all who are of the opinion that the power of a king is the greatest power given to men, will perish. If it is clear to you that your arguments lead along a path of ruin and destruction, I only wish that you had not dragged the Prince along with you. His inclination was of the highest type. Formerly he had no desire to destroy the Church. Hope was great for considering him a complete Christian in name and in accord with God. You have so corrupted him that one can scarcely hope for any good from him. In fact all good people fear every evil in him now.

Pole Appeals Directly to Henry VIII

Truly that is the situation, my Prince. For with deep sorrow I speak of you. I now address you. If the examples of countless most saintly men could recall you from your pernicious conviction, if the best of tradition could persuade you, then you would not abandon yourself to the power of your pestilential flatterers, just as though you were clinging to mud. All honest people are despairing of your salvation. Your actions bring the greatest sorrow to those who sincerely love you. Everything that might be able to free you is available, unless you reject this assistance, unless you so treat those desirous of enriching you that they will be deterred from their purpose. They may despair of your own will power since it appears to be opposed to all sane counsel. They certainly do not lack the will to assist you. However, your command imposed upon me the task of saying something in this connection. I might add that I do not lack arguments for my writing if I may choose them from the Scriptures. If you do not spurn these arguments from the Scriptures, I shall refute the opinion of the authorities you have followed. Without these arguments, however, there does not appear to be any reason why anyone would hope to accomplish anything with you.

I only wish it were true that you would willingly listen to these
arguments. For then I should approach this undertaking with great hope, although there are other more powerful paths that will even more easily and safely lead us to the portal of truth in difficulties of this type.

In discussions pertaining to religion it is always somewhat danger-ous and at times even pernicious to admit only arguments that may be proved by our own reasoning, even though they are presented on the authority of Scripture. Nevertheless, in my desire to give you saving counsel, you leave open for me only this one approach to yourself. Even were it possible for me to set aside arguments taken from Scriptures, at least I trust I should not lack arguments from reason. I hope God will see fit to so grant His light to the eyes of your mind that you will recognize and understand my arguments when I present them. Only with the help of divine light can these reasons be apprehended. You can readily see this from what has been expressly stated in Scriptures through the guiding spirit of God. However, when these arguments are brought into everyone's view, those that are pleasing to God will stand firm.

Now, however, before I do this by presenting arguments from the very books of holy Scripture, I would like to ask you a question, my Prince. Do the tradition of the Church and the custom of our prede-cessors carry any weight with you? Are you affected by the examples of the most renowned and distinguished men? If you prefer to hear my proofs for these questions, I shall offer them to you in this manner.

The tradition of the Church firmly established over many cen-turies supports the true opinion I am defending. Similar support is to be found in the customs of our predecessors and the examples of the most renowned and distinguished men. Neither custom nor the ex-ample of any honest and renowned man supports the opinion to which you adhere. The opinion you have just thought out comes to the ears of all as a novelty.

Even if your opinion were put forth by someone else—although I hardly think this possible—the reply of the most distinguished men would explode your views. Your own author's opinions would be condemned along with yours. In your estimation is the value of my argument so weak that it fails to make you concede its truth, validity, and worth? Are you still un convinced that my argument should be followed and yours thrown away and abhorred? I hear you say that
On the Unity of the Church

this argument is of no worth, that you are accustomed to credit arguments of this sort only to ignorant and uneducated men. Such men, you think, labor under a lack of proof. They substitute customs and the tradition of the Church in place of real arguments. You think those acting this way, even though they might be remarkable for some talent or learning, could never be trusted since they only imitate little women and men whom the populace dub simple-minded. You think idiots argue in this fashion. Idiots can never find arguments when they are pressed for reasons, so they say such was the custom of our predecessors.

Nevertheless, my Prince, I have heard that earlier you compared these men with the greatest scholars in the world, when they were being questioned concerning this new opinion. In your estimation they were easily to be preferred above all others. Certainly no one ever maintained they evidenced ignorance in their arguments. They produced testimony for their position based on sacred Scripture. By this very fact, they were claiming the general agreement and tradition of the Church to be on their side. Therefore, I felt that when these men acted thus they had sound reasons for their opinion.

Fisher and More adhered to this opinion. They cast aside all other reasons and said repeatedly that it was this opinion that held first place in their hearts and on their tongues as they chose to die. How magnificent were these men, how dear to God! They were shown to surpass their popular contemporaries in every literary skill worthy of a liberally educated Christian man. By a single response they proved they were also superior to others in the fullness of the Divine Spirit. They preferred the general agreement of the Church to all other reasons, arguments, and weight of authority. Only one who has been lifted up by the Spirit of God above the reaches of mere human thought can fully evaluate the power of all this. I hope later to have occasion to discuss this point further.

Now I might say that one who does not understand the light and force of the Spirit, who has not perceived in his soul the tremendous power of the general agreement and tradition of the Church can scarcely be expected ever to understand the importance of arguments drawn from the Scriptures. Furthermore, I might properly add that my efforts to persuade you to my opinion based on arguments chosen
from the holy Scripture are in vain, since you place so little value on the general agreement of the Church.

Lest I despair, I shall bring my arguments out into public view. I shall entrust the rest to God and His Spirit, who breathes where and when He desires according to His will. I see you cannot be satisfied unless all the arguments are brought forth. But I only wish you would allow yourself to be satisfied. I wish you would permit yourself to be governed by arguments and not refuse to follow where they call. You make me very suspicious that you are not willing to follow my arguments even when they are entirely explanatory. I become most suspicious when I read the books where a defense of your opinion is contained. I do not find any testimony from Scripture in these volumes. I do not even perceive any argumentation that is even probable. Yet you show yourself attached to this opinion like a starving lion clinging to his prey. You hold on to your opinion as firmly as the lion does to his prey. You attack and oppress anyone who attempts to divert you from this opinion. I have seen many oppressed by you for this very reason alone.

What am I to believe? That you do not even look for valid arguments? You hear only the words “honor the king,” words you interpret contrary to the authority of Peter whose honor you now dispute. You claim you are his equal in honor and power. I offer no new examples here when I say you hear the words of Christ presenting the most valuable testimony on behalf of Peter’s entrusted authority. “And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 16:19). You hear that the care of Christ’s flock is entrusted to Peter in the words of Christ Himself: “Peter, loveth thou me? Feed my lambs” (John 21:17). Though you hear all these words, you are moved even more by those words of the Apostle: “Honor the king.” Only the most violent distortion of their meaning in the context, however, can make these words refer to the opinion you are now cherishing.

Even if there were not a single passage in Scripture that would expressly and unquestionably prove my argument, yet one who prefers, as you do, to be guided by arguments from reason should be more inclined to accept arguments where their very abundance and resemblance to reason indicate their highest probability. On the contrary, however, although you present only one point having not even
the most tenuous resemblance to an argument from reason, as long as it may be distorted in accord with your own desires you grab at it, retain it, and cling to it. Yet you demand, God willing, that I should believe you are guided by the light of reason. You can say this because you and your followers claim some kind of power that surpasses reasonable proof. You claim not to follow arguments derived from Scriptures. This might be sufficient if nothing contrary to your opinion was to be found in the Scriptures. If nothing repugnant to your opinion was to be found in the Scriptures, and if very strong probability for your view might be found there, then this would be more than sufficient ground for your opinion. You say, however, that you do not follow scriptural proofs. Rather you accept the general agreement of the opinion of your followers and those of all rank in your realm who confer upon you the honor of being the supreme head of the Church in your realm, of those who consider you worthy of the dignity of this title. Persuaded by the consensus of these opinions, by your own judgment and authority you decide that you have been appointed head of all civil affairs and also of all ecclesiastical matters, that all controversies and pleadings of any kind whatsoever should be referred to you and your tribunal since you imagine you are judge over all.

Example of Constantine the Great

Behold Constantine the Great! I cannot restrain myself from exclaiming in this matter, from calling upon his name, from comparing his attitude in a question very similar to yours at present. This subject requires me to turn immediately to your reply and say that the leading men of your kingdom have no authority to confer this honor upon you. You cannot justly receive from them an honor they have no right to confer, without violating the oath by which you and they are bound. I shall say more about this later.

Now I cannot do this without calling upon the name of Constantine the Great, without exploring a certain act of his in a situation that bears close resemblance to your own case at present. Perhaps the nature of your own actions will become clearer through this comparison.
Constantine, therefore, was present at the famous Council of 318 bishops held at Nicæa. Then, as often happens among men greatly skilled in literature and the arts, at first a certain kind of rivalry began. Gradually this rivalry produced a variety of opinions and finally a general disagreement broke out. Thus it happened that these very bishops who surpassed all others in learning and talent could not refrain from a certain rivalry that resulted in a wide variety of thoughts and opinions. Finally it actually brought forth reviling and open accusations. These grew so bitter that both sides thought it would be the best course of wisdom for them to appoint the current Emperor as judge of their disputes and controversies. When the bishops had reached this decision and both sides in the dispute had brought to the Emperor the written booklet containing the summaries of their accusations, what did the Emperor do? For this authority was delegated to him by those then considered foremost in learning and virtue throughout the world, by those whose general agreement and authority would be able to bind the entire Christian world.

What then, I ask you, did the great Emperor do? Did he accept the character of judge in that fine gathering of priests of the Church so that he might gain more prestige and increase his own dignity in that regard? That was farthest from his mind. What did this truly great man do? He absolutely refused the character of judge over those men, and by so doing he increased his greatness. In place of the character of a judge and superior power, he assumed the character of a son. Even as a son admonishes his erring father with the greatest reverence, so Constantine, in words that conveyed all due honor, admonished those bishops. He admonished them to consider who they were, to consider the lofty position to which they had been summoned by God, and that God had appointed them over kings and emperors. As the Psalmist has said: “I have said: You are gods and all of you are sons of the most High” (Ps. 81:6). Finally, after joining his prayers to this very reverent admonition, he begged them to put an end to their dissensions and to show themselves worthy of such a vocation. Thus he concluded concerning their controversies, and added that no king or emperor could properly act as judge in their affairs, that this pertained only to him of whom the Psalmist said: “God hath stood in the congregation of the gods” (Ps. 81:1).³

Thus Constantine deserved to be called the great, or rather the
greatest in any age. However, what follows from this remarkable act of his? One definite result was that the bishops, overcome by shame and setting aside all contentions, were reconciled among themselves. Then through their general agreement, decisions were reached that brought the greatest benefits to the Church. Now for many centuries since the time of the Council these decisions have been observed by all catholic Christians with a reverence not less than that shown toward the books of the Evangelists.

Such was that noble Council of Nicaea. Wherever the name of Christian is cherished, there the acts of the Council are held in honor equal to that of the books of the Apostles. All Christians acknowledge the acts of this Council as inspired by the Holy Spirit.

On the contrary, what shall I say about the honor that has been conferred upon you in the midst of great dissension among the bishops themselves? Shall I say that you should not accept an honor conferred at a time like this since it is of no concern of yours to act as judge over those who enjoy the highest dignity in the Church? I shall not say this. I shall not be so harsh. But I certainly shall say that you should not seek this honor, that you should not strive to obtain it by using threats, that you should not compel such recognition from unwilling persons even as I have seen you do. Contrary to the desires of some, you refused to subscribe to certain documents containing promise of large amounts of money granted to you. You refused, I say, unless it were also stated in the document that this financial obligation was to be discharged to you in the capacity of supreme head of the Church in England.

If I seem to be imposing too great a burden upon you, certainly you should not do anything that would destroy the solemnity of the oath you gave the Church the day you received your royal insignia. For then you bound yourself by oath as you solemnly swore that you would not diminish the special rights granted by your predecessors to ecclesiastical men. You also swore you would not permit anyone to violate these rights in any way during your reign. But I am not complaining about the special privileges you yourself have removed, when actually you are overthrowing—as much as is within your power—the foundation of all ecclesiastical law. In attempting to separate the Church from its head, under pretense of official business with your magistrates, are you trying to destroy the reason for all your earlier
actions? Is it your desire that there should be no head for the Church, even though earlier your logical arguments actually appeared in books showing why the Roman pontiff had been recognized as Vicar of Christ for countless years?4

Has anything like this ever before been heard of in the Church of Christ? Of all the kings that have ever lived, both good and wicked, not one of them was ever found to be so ambitious as to strive after this honor. Not one flatterer was found to be so obnoxious—and this is a veritable marvel—as to offer such an honor as a possible booty. Therefore, there is nothing to marvel at if your own flatterers so far surpass all others in artifice and if they corrupt you by all snares that they lay. Truly this is an occasion for the greatest grief. For this kind of flattery is the most criminal.

What personal gratification can they be seeking who say that since you are King, therefore you are head of the Church? Are you a greater King than Constantine who was also Emperor? Your kingdom would hardly have been a tiny spot in his great empire. Were there not many men at that time who would willingly have conferred this title of honor upon the Emperor if they but thought this could be done with any appearance of right? This was especially true since the large numbers of heretics flourishing in those days were particularly eager to make their own position secure by corrupting the souls of their princes with every kind of flattery. Your own counsellors, by the perfection of their techniques, excel every flatterer who ever lived. They surpass all heretics in malice and do not allow you to refer to the example of even one great and renowned person.

And why do I present the example of only one man? I do this since you should be especially impressed by the example of this man. He has brought great glory to our own Britain. Here he was born of a very devout mother, who was also British.5 After he received his religion from Christian princes, in the judgment of all he was placed far ahead of all others in virtue and praise of religion. Indeed, I present the example of this man instead of that of many other Christian kings because by his example I hope to recall you from intruding upon an honor that I say no prince before you has ever dared to accept. I do not demand that you accept the stern example of Constantine. I might wish that you would refuse to assume the character of a judge, even as he did in a private case in the quarrel of the
bishops. Unless he had exceptional obedience and reverence for the anointed ones of God, would he not rightly have accepted the authority offered him? Indeed, I do not require such exceptional behavior from you, although such exceptional acts were once so characteristic of your nature that one expected your every action to be great and outstanding. But your flatterers, toward whom you turn your ears, have clearly crushed all such hope. So I do not now demand all these things.

I demand something that you shall not be able to deny without certain guilt. I earnestly entreat you at least to permit the priestly order to be separate and different from the office of king. I entreat you to admit that the office of dealing with matters divine is superior to that office entirely devoted to the care of human matters. What I now demand is only what nature herself demands, only what the order of God has established. It is in this regard that I beg you to pattern your actions after the example of that great Emperor Constantine.

In Constantine’s day the dignity of the rulers of the Church had not yet become apparent in the eyes of men. Their dignity was not as eminent as Christ afterward desired it to be. In the sight of all men He appointed priests over all the rulers of this world, and these rulers desired and willingly granted these appointments. There was not yet any special eminence or authority connected with priests and the Church, and the Church itself was in its youth and had not attained to the dignity that would raise it above nature. God Himself had added only relatively important honors and goods of the world. This was the time, nevertheless, when Constantine the Great bestowed honor on the Church. He recognized that bishops held a supreme position in the Church of God conferred upon them by God. He recognized that they surpassed all worldly rulers. But if Constantine recognized this in those days, now, while the princes and rulers of this world have submitted the symbols of their authority to the priests for the glory of Christ, I demand that you do not do the contrary. Do not use the symbols of your own authority to increase your own dignity or to lessen the dignity of the priests. Rather use it to elevate their dignity. Do not appoint yourself as head over the priests, for your duties are in an entirely different sphere. No one, no authority, no law, no custom calls you head. In fact all these oppose you, resist
you, and condemn the great injury of your deed. If one example or many, if any laws or customs are not able to persuade you to remove this plunder from your hands, at least attend to the dictates of natural and divine reason. Since you have always had the name "reason" on the tip of your tongue, at least consider first what natural reason teaches us concerning your duty as King, and then what it teaches us concerning the duty of priests.

The Origin and Function of Kings and Priests

For natural reason challenges you first to consider the origin and purpose of priests and kings. Then it commands you to give attention to the duties of both these groups and the manner in which they conduct themselves while exercising their duties.

But where is Sampson now? It appears that he has fled away. Yet here, if anywhere, he has an opportunity for demonstrating his powers against the dignity of priests. Now he might clearly explain to us the origin, progress, perfection, and purpose of the duties of both king and priest. For he must certainly clarify these matters if he has any intentions of joining hands with adversaries to show that the King is superior to the priest in this comparison of priestly and royal duties. But Sampson makes no such comparison. He withdraws. He says absolutely nothing about origin or purpose. Now he leaves it for me to undertake and carry on this task. I shall willingly take this burden upon myself, lest I give the appearance of fleeing away from a question concerning the clarification of this subject. But I shall treat this matter briefly here, since it is important enough to have it separated from my many other arguments. There would be need for a very large volume should anyone expressly undertake to treat of all the reasons underlying the origin, progress, and purpose both of the office and duty of king and priest. Furthermore, I shall be somewhat more brief in this matter, since my opponent has presented no reason for me to delay long, no reason that demands refutation on my part.

I shall now present reasons that have the greatest clarity consistent with brevity. I shall proceed with sound common sense so that all may at least understand what I have to say, contrary to Sampson who throws a dark cover on everything and confuses all. So now I
shall proceed with my argument. First I shall discuss the origin and duties of royal dignity. More than anything else that comes to my assistance here, is the fact that the origin of the office of king among nations is the same as that found long ago among the Jewish people. This is so described in the First Book of Kings. When the people of Israel became weary of their judges and thought that they might better wage war against their enemies and administer their affairs under the leadership of one man possessing supreme authority, they then began to desire royal authority. I shall present the original words, which are as follows. They are the words of the people addressing Samuel who had previously ruled over them in the character of priest and judge. "Behold thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways" (1 Sam. 8:5). The meaning these words are intended to convey is explained above in the same chapter where the Scriptures speak of the sons of Samuel who was a most just man: "And his sons walked not in his ways: but they turned aside after lucre, and took bribes" (1 Sam. 8:3).

The injustice of those then governing the commonwealth, therefore, was one reason for this longing for royal authority. Another reason was the fact that military affairs might be more suitably conducted by one man who would possess the title of king. However, when the Hebrew people explained these reasons to Samuel they did not agree at all with his advice, because he dissuaded them from accepting a king. The people of Israel said: "Nay: but there shall be a king over us. And we also will be like all nations: and our king shall judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles for us" (1 Sam. 8:19–20). By speaking these words the people showed that they would be similar to other nations. They would have one person who would be called by the name of king. This king would have two powers entrusted to him: the authority of speaking on questions of law and civil ceremonies, and the power of waging war should it sometimes be necessary to overcome enemy violence. These indeed were the duties of a king in the opinion of all nations. Kings among other nations had a similar origin.

Philosophers and men engaged in politics, in their writings on this subject, have never presented any other explanation for the establishing of kings. When these writers have discussed at great length the nature of man as a social animal, they add this thought. They say
there are two plagues that afflict every society in which the kind of life suitable for the nature of man is found: the plague of injustice at home, and the plague of violence from abroad. These writers add that men have freely subjected themselves to the dominion of one man so that these two plagues may be repelled and prevented. This one man should defend the weaker from injury by the more powerful and keep the firm guide of equitable justice in his office. He should make use of the services of the people in avenging enemies from abroad should that ever be necessary.

If, therefore, human prudence alone, human fortitude, and human laws discovered through the genius of men would be sufficient for removing all these evils and for securing a perpetual concord of society for the people, and if this were the final goal set for man in civil life, then assuredly in the nature of things there would be nothing superior to a king. But if the human prudence of this man does not look forward beyond his own prudence, if the fortitude of this man has no greater hope than in his own personal fortitude, this is not adequate for restraining the multitude in their duties in this civil society. For the origin of this office teaches us that this prudence does not surpass the function of a king. If there is anything that might perfectly protect civil society in a loftier manner, if there is some force greater than any human power making an attack against enemies, and if this same power might be administered by men, then this latter office and function should necessarily be preferred to the function of any king who is limited by the bounds of human prudence.

Where is the history that is silent concerning the function and duty of priests? Where is the human society in which the work of priests was not conspicuous both in making their society secure from its enemies at home and in defending it from foreign enemies? If there never was any nation of men that lacked divine worship, any nation in which the work of priests did not stand forth as pre-eminent, we must necessarily consider that the work of these priests was such that it merited corresponding honor and dignity. I have made only a note of this topic, since it is one that does not lack ample proof. No one who wishes to turn his eyes to these two groups and consider for a moment in what and with whom they are both engaged, can be blind to the occupations of these two classes. I have said before that it is the business of a king to protect and defend the affairs of the people
with human prudence and human fortitude. In all the actions of the
priest, however, in his dealings with the people, human prudence and
civil laws always yield to divine laws and divine words of wisdom.

Histories have furnished us with many examples from which we
may learn that when human reason was unable to arouse the minds
of men for an attack on the enemy, then one word uttered from the
mouth of the priest changed them from stags overcome by timidity of
spirit into lions demonstrating their fortitude. How often we have read
of princes and kings who abandoned their prepared plans and re-
sinded their previous acts by frequently substituting religion where the
function of the priest would be more fully employed. In writing of the
Roman state, Valerius declared the important position religion always
held there. The importance of the esteem placed on religion is clear
to all who have any memory of the past. All other nations held the
same opinion whenever they were undertaking great tasks and in-
creasing the extent of their power.

Thus, indeed, Valerius Maximus wrote regarding the Roman
state: "This state has always held that religion should be preferred to
all other things; this state has always desired that religion be con-
spicuous in honor in affairs of supreme importance. Wherefore the
imperial decrees have not hesitated to be subservient to things sacred;
for the outcome of human affairs will be more auspicious if they are
properly and constantly made to serve the divine power." If, therefore,
the highest decrees are made subservient to sacred things, what can
we say? Certainly only that the function of the emperor is to be a
servant to the priestly function. This is only saying that when Valerius
was discussing sacred subjects, he proposed for emperors and kings
the divine will expressed in sacred writings. Emperors and kings who
made themselves servants of the divine will were assured that their
government of human affairs would be beneficial.

But for a moment let us leave the histories as they examine the
nature and function of king and priest, and let us penetrate, if we can,
the origin of these groups.

I have said above that the king was given birth by the labor of
nature. Nature first of all always seeks to conserve and perpetuate
itself. Human nature was so constituted that individuals by them-
selves would not be able to obtain the essentials for life. They would
seek after a kind of society suitable for each one, first impelled to this
society by nature. It is not good for men to live apart by themselves. Nature recognizes that men living apart by themselves cannot provide the conveniences of life nor the necessities for sustenance.

That men might live, therefore, they first gathered in groups and sought society. There was a strong tendency, however, for the group of its own accord to be broken up unless it were to be held together and strengthened by some one person. Nature, therefore—fearing this dissolution and anxious to perpetuate herself for many ages—introduced government by one person. Thus nature guided and arranged for the preservation of the security of the whole group, for each individual, and for the perpetuation of all the people. This beginning of kings, this source of an individual emperor was first introduced for the conservation of many people.

The king, therefore, exists on behalf of the people, not the people on behalf of the king. If we desire to have a clearer expression of this origin of the king, Cicero's words, where he writes concerning the goal that leaders of public affairs should set before themselves, place before our eyes an answer to our question. The source of everything pertaining to the function of a king is contained in that goal. Cicero speaks as follows: "The happy life of his people should be set before the governor of a commonwealth, just as a favorable course for a navigator, health for a doctor, victory for a commander." To make his people happy is, therefore, the goal of a king. However, there is need for a clearer explanation if this goal is to be fully understood. In this same passage Cicero does not overlook this fact, for he continues thus: "It should be excellent with glory, rich with supplies, and honorable in valor." Behold, therefore, the absolute duty of kings everywhere is to make their people happy. Indeed, men who live in accord with the prescriptions of nature judge themselves happy when they lead a life of honor and virtue, when they have an abundance of those things pertaining both to the necessities and the joys of life. They believe they have obtained this when many gather together and subject themselves to be ruled by the prudence, justice, and fortitude of one man. I only wish, my Prince, that kings themselves understood this. Kings seek honor, glory, and happiness. This they should seek as a duty directly commended to them as a good for their own people. There, too, they will find their own good.

However, kings themselves sometimes seek these things for another
reason; namely, for their own personal good. They thus pervert the
custom of nature and separate their own from the public good.
Thereby they lose the very title of king, for kings who seek only their
own good are tyrants. Along with losing the title of king they also
destroy their own happiness and that of their people. They never even
taste with their lips true honor and the truly agreeable things of life
prepared by nature for those who pursue the goal she prescribes.
Though they never cease seeking these things, they always search in
vain. For nature placed all the agreeable things of this life that are
in accord with nature—all that delights, all the honor and glory kings
may obtain—in the common good. If kings refuse to seek these things
in the public good, they will never be entirely happy although they
may be seeking happiness above all else. The further they separate
themselves from the public good the more miserable they will become.

I hardly know whether I have digressed too far from my estab-
lished purpose of making clear the function of the king. I did not
intend to discuss perverse uses of the royal power. Since, however,
we have arrived at the true goal, we should now finally seek the
same goal with reference to the duty of the priest. What function
will be left for priests, if the happiness of the people, as we have said,
has been entrusted to the prudence, justice and fortitude of the king?
Will not their function be inferior to that of a king if no greater func-
tion than securing happiness can be understood?

What if the king by himself cannot preserve what has been en-
trusted to him? What if his prudence, justice and fortitude are not
sufficient for perfectly fulfilling his royal function? What if the pru-
dence of the king sends him to implore the assistance of something
else, something that demands to be joined to him, something greater
than all human prudence and more powerful than any human force
in obtaining happiness, something finally, that would greatly aid him
in obtaining his proposed goal of prudence, justice and fortitude?
This “something” is: to take counsel with the priest. Then I do not
think the priest is excluded from this function, nor is anything de-
tracted from his dignity. In fact his special eminence over all things
is clear, even though we say the happiness of the people is entrusted
to the king’s care.

However, it is now necessary to declare in what way the king
requires the assistance of the priest as a superior office, even though
the welfare of all the people has been entrusted to the king. Here it seems that priests would be excluded from the society of the people, unless we want to say that the king is entrusted with the care of the priest. But if we say this, we necessarily make the priest inferior to the king. I must approach this dilemma immediately. I maintain that priests are numbered among the people. Everyone recognizes them as people in some way a part of this society seeking happiness through the leadership of one person. Nevertheless, they do not have the same purpose the people have. Their purpose is not subordinated to the royal power. Indeed, I affirm that the priests not only so assist the king in attaining the happiness entrusted to them that the king could do nothing without them, but they have their own proper purpose that far exceeds anything that the king seeks or for which the people strive. And the function of priests is more distinguished and more divine than that of a king. It surpasses by far the desires of the people. But these remarks are greatly in need of explanation if they are to be understood.

Just as I did when I described the origin of kings in the nature of things, so I shall now attempt the same as I reveal the origin of priests. This certainly should be done if a comparison of the dignity of the office and function of king and priest is to be undertaken and examined as it ought to be. The very difficulty and magnitude of the task terrifies me. I am fearful lest just as the passage in Scripture describes Melchisedech as “the priest of the most high God” (Gn. 14:19) without mentioning his father, nor his mother, nor his origin and genealogy, so also it may happen that no matter how much I investigate the function of priests I may never arrive at their source of origin. Yet this human society of which I have spoken had its origin. The direction of this society to the end appointed by nature has been entrusted to the king. I have said that the king can never perfectly fulfill his function without the assistance of the priest. Therefore, I can say that it is necessary for the priest to unite with the king in assisting the people’s affairs. This, in fact, may be sufficient for understanding the matter we are now examining, the dignity of the function of priest and king, and which of the two is superior. This investigation should certainly not be particularly difficult if we turn for a moment to consider the pact by which the king exercises his office and the supports he uses as his own, and those he receives from
the priest. For thus I hope we shall see to better advantage the contribu-
tion of the priest.

In the case of the king, it is clear, as I have often said, that he makes use of human prudence, human powers, every human virtue, and every human help to guide men to happiness. But if the affairs of men depend merely on other human beings, if men themselves are masters of human affairs—either their own or those founded in nature and whose usage they observe—then indeed it would be sufficient duty for the king to preserve all that human society might desire. Since nothing is peculiarly proper to men, for all things are God’s, “the earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof” (Ps. 23:1), men truly are not masters of themselves nor their possessions but depend on the kindness of God. Their dependence is such that unless He who is Lord of all cherishes them with constant care in the way He had prescribed and nature has taught, no society of men would be able to enjoy its own well-being in any part of the natural world.

Thus it happens that the king’s human control of affairs is not sufficient for the preservation of human society. The function of a king is to counsel men in all their appropriate needs. He thus necessarily requires the assistance of another. The task of this assistant is to propitiate God with assiduous devotion concerning human affairs, to seek divine mediation for the people. How important this office and function of the priest is, how much it surpasses that of the king in being conducive to human happiness is clearly indicated by the fact that many nations lived agreeably without a king. The Jewish nation can give testimony of this. This nation lived happily for many years before anyone among them ever possessed the title of king. But no literary records have ever indicated that any nation lived without the priest. However, we learn from Simplicius, who cites the words of Theophrastus the philosopher, that a certain nation did flourish without any divine cult. But this nation was finally absorbed and swallowed up by the earth. There has never been a report of any group holding the name of society and tasting some part of happiness in the natural order of affairs that ever lived without the aid of religion and priest. Custom and nature herself teach us that human assistance does not suffice for the attainment of human happiness unless the superior power of a deity is reverenced in those things that are especially necessary for life. After we have cultivated our fields and done every-
thing within our power to procure our food, we have daily experience of the futility of our task unless a heavenly favor indulgently grants timely showers. Nature similarly warns us how the favor of the heavenly Deity can be conciliated when she impels us to beg by prayers for those things that are beyond our own power, though they are necessary for us. And this is the way God has prescribed for the nature of man. He wants men to lead a life of prayer and supplication; yet at the same time He does not want men to wallow in idleness and sloth. When man has done all within his power as instructed by nature, then he should beg from God for the other things that he knows surpass his own powers, things that he must have. God wishes us to lead a life full of toil, a life always intent on prayer if we want to perceive any share of natural happiness. And here we have the origin of those two high functions in human affairs: that of the king, which is full of toil and energy, and that of the priest, who transcends all human activities and is solely occupied in supplicating the Deity.

This is the beginning of the function of the priest. Here I shall show something concerning its origin and source as well as its surpassing dignity. For if it is more excellent to deal with God instead of men, then the pre-eminent dignity of the priest could not extend further. For nature herself has ordained that the function of the priest is to deal perpetually with God, always to be employed with divine and sacred matters.

The often-repeated origin of kings makes it vividly clear to us that their function, when they act in the capacity of kings, is confined within the sphere of human affairs. Human society has sought and accepted kings to administer these affairs. The very happiness that men seek according to nature has been entrusted to the prudence, justice, and fortitude of kings. But if we should venture to penetrate the deeper meaning of the function of a king, if we diligently wish to direct our attention toward a king’s actions, to consider him exercising his function and the manner in which he conducts himself in all things, we shall certainly find that the happiness he has been entrusted to procure is not the happiness to which mankind can give full consent. It is a happiness that would banish the plagues and disagreeable things of life, the injustice and external violence in many evil things that surround human nature. These evils, however, hover over the state like storms that toss ships being carried out into the deep. It
might be called some part of happiness if the king would defend the state against the two particularly troublesome things I have just mentioned above. In the same way one who while sailing has been carried out past all the rocks and has fled the storms and tempests might be called a most happy navigator, even though he has not yet come into port, though he sees it afar off. This mere freedom from disagreeable things is not the happiness that mankind seeks, unless all other highest prerogatives demanded by nature can also be enjoyed.

But the king can no more lead his people to these highest prerogatives than Moses could lead the children of Israel into the land for which they longed with so many desires. For Moses was not able to cross the river Jordan. Therefore, a king can no more arrogate to himself as his own the ability to lead his people to this true happiness, than Moses could lead the people whom God had entrusted to him. They all stopped this side of the Jordan. Though this was a most pleasant river abounding in things useful for life, nevertheless it flowed into the Dead Sea. Similarly, though it is pleasant to be free from adversity and to enjoy good and pleasant things, yet nature in her demands for happiness requires something else. Even if the king might supply something beyond, yet all these things are the kind that flow down a precipitous path into the sea of the dead. Never can mankind find comfort in all these things, never can it find solid and perfect happiness in them. But if the king himself, on account of the trust committed to him to make his people happy, takes pleasure in this remarkable function bestowed upon him, if he strives to fulfill it in every way, in what way could he achieve this more readily than by entrusting himself and his people to the priestly office? This would be like bringing them to a port. For the priests are the ones who have crossed the Jordan, who have led the people and the leader of the people himself, who have made clear the way to the long-desired land.

But I have promised a clear discussion adapted to the senses of men. I fear lest I may have exceeded the limits that I set for myself. Now as I refer to certain mysteries, I may make myself obscure even as Moses was hidden in a cloud apart from the sight of the people.

Nevertheless, those very philosophers who relied on natural reason alone were not very far from understanding the topic I have just been discussing. In fact, they recognized and wrote about it. In the first place, Plato himself affirms that the happiness of any human society
consists first in repelling the disagreeable things of life that are apt to destroy society—which I have said are entrusted to the care of the king. Secondly, it consists in divine worship which occupies the entire function of the priest, so that society may rest in port. Plato desires this port of human happiness and no others. And unless the ship of human life finally arrives at this port, no one can taste any share of happiness. Wherefore we can now conclude with the philosophers without mystery that the function of the king yields before that of the priest. The goal itself is superior to everything that pertains to the goal. Thus, since the priestly function includes the ultimate goal of happiness, of necessity it greatly surpasses in excellence and dignity all other functions—royal included—with which this goal might be compared.

Here let us consider briefly the priest in his own function. We might dare to penetrate into the interior part, even as we did to a degree when we were investigating the king. But I fear this would be no more permissible than it was for the people to enter within the tabernacle. For the High Priest alone entered there once a year hidden from the sight of all. However, I think it will be admitted that although what is done in the open within the sight of the people is most important, we judge things not visible to the people to be of greater value.

Let us consider, therefore, the things that are within the knowledge and sight of the people, the exterior function of priests. As I reflect on this, I am moved to doubt whether I should call them ambassadors of the people to God, ambassadors of God to the people, or even gods. In the first place, I see that this kind of embassy is necessary because it is evident that no state could exist without men who would assiduously present the case of the people before God. Because, as I have said above, all things necessary for the security of life are God's. These necessities will never be granted in any way to mankind unless the people attend to their tasks, their labors and their prayers. Constancy in prayer is absolutely necessary. Our need for essential things and our very lack of them has taught us that besides industry there is need for heavenly favor so that the fruits of the earth might be produced, as we said above. Nature herself as mistress has shown us that these things surpass our own power and cannot be obtained from the Lord of heaven except through prayer. All the very
imminent perils of mankind demonstrate only divine assistance can preserve us from them. Only the divine power can help us. Thus it happens, that nature herself has shown that supplication of the Deity is not only necessary but must be constant. Burdens of government prevent the king from having leisure for this duty. The many labors of the people do not afford them leisure for this duty. Thus it happens that some by their very nature should necessarily attend to this duty. As ambassadors sent by all they should faithfully attend to the people's affairs before God and commend them to His kindness. Lack of essential needs should never compel them to desert their necessary duties as ambassadors. The public should so provide that they lack nothing as ambassadors sent in the name of the state. The public should abundantly provide with proper dignity everything that pertains to the preservation of their lives. When I see these things I seem to see faithful ambassadors of the people before God who unceasingly present the promises and desires of the people to God. Again I see the way in which the priest conducts himself both with regard to the people and kings. Then I reflect that the priest does not receive commands from the people, as ambassadors are accustomed to receive the commands of those by whom they are sent. Rather he prescribes what the king and the people should beg and ask. The priest often corrects their petitions, often admonishes, always prescribes. The priest does all these things by the authority of God. Finally I hear those words of the Prophet concerning priests: "For the lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth: because he is the angel of the Lord of hosts" (Mal. 2:7). Do not these words in which the Prophet calls him the angel of the Lord show most clearly that the priest has been sent by God, that he is the ambassador of God and not of men?

After I observe all these things, after I observe that the priest exercises an authority over souls reserved by God for him alone, when I observe that neither the people nor the king has any part of this authority, when I observe that the priest has taken the part that is due God—for God also wanted that which is called the inheritance of God to be called the inheritance of the priests—when I observe all this, what else can I say concerning the dignity of priests other than what the Prophet has said? "I have said: You are gods and all of you are the sons of the most High" (Ps. 81:6). No one who looks into the
matter can doubt that kings can be surpassed in dignity in this regard. Here I shall say no more concerning this matter. I shall only call attention to the fact that one can see the dignity of both priest and king in no better way than by placing all of human society before his eyes. Three conditions are present in this society: first, that of the people; secondly, that of the king as a son of the people; and the priest as a man of the people. The people create the king as we have shown in the example of the Hebrews. We can presume that similar circumstances existed in the case of other nations. The people brought forth a king from among themselves. But they did not do this without a priest. We have seen how this happened in the case of the king of the Jews whom the people petitioned from Samuel, the priest. Similarly, a mother in bearing a child has need of intercourse with man. Since the priest is, therefore, like a man of the people—as a third condition of society—he acts in the character of father toward the king. In every way he is greater than the king, as the words of Paul confirm when he says: “And without contradiction, that which is less, is blessed by the better” (Heb. 7:7). It is manifest to everyone that the priest blesses the king and anoints him as he places the king on his royal throne. All these functions are entirely the duties of a father and elder. The priest finally entrusts the care of the people to the king while he himself separates himself from both conditions and exercises his duties with the Supreme King of all. Thus the priest appears as a father who would entrust his grown son to the care of his wife now well advanced in age, together with his family and whole household. For he as father must carry on his work necessarily far removed from the king’s domain upon whom the safety of all the family depends.

Here I consider that I have said all that should be said for the present concerning the function and dignity of priest and king. Many other points that might give greater confirmation to these arguments may be presented later. Since they are more abstruse, they are certainly not pertinent at this time. It is sufficient for the present to know that here are these two functions of king and priest, to know that of all possible human acts these two are the most important, to know that they surpass all other powers received by men either from nature or from God. Nevertheless, these two functions are not equal in dignity. The one that has the right of commanding is superior to the other. Since we have seen that this right is perpetually reserved
for the priest, and since furthermore the king acting in his capacity of
king never instructs the priest in his duties but rather, on the con-
trary, the priest prescribes what the king should do in his royal office,
we cannot doubt which of the two is superior. And if we now wish
to understand the remaining question, if we wish to know that these
two functions differ so greatly between themselves on account of the
great variety of affairs and men with which they are concerned that
God did not want them to be identified in one man, what better way
is there of showing this than by examples of men who dared to seize
both functions. One king will suffice to show the will of God even
though I could present many others. This king wanted to exercise the
functions of both priest and king in a civil society of men of which
God was the author and founder, a society based on God’s law. The
Scriptures clearly declare the judgment of God in this case.

Punishment of Ozias, Dathan, and Abiron

This man was Ozias, and even though he was King, he also wanted
to claim for himself the duties of priest. He wanted to act in a priestly
capacity. Since this was of such tremendous magnitude, we have a
very detailed account of it in Scriptures. The history of the case is this.
Since many remarkable deeds are narrated about this king, this great
enormity is described more accurately so that it might blot out all his
previous good actions. For all the other things we are told about this
King there is only great praise. To use the very words of Scripture:
“He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord” (2 Chr. 26:4).
And after his many glorious deeds had been recited, the Scriptures
conclude: “His name went forth far abroad, for the Lord helped him;
and had strengthened him” (2 Chr. 26:15). Behold a just king and
one dear to God! But where now is his crime? It follows immediately
in the Scriptures: “When he was made strong, his heart was lifted
up to his destruction, and he neglected the Lord his God” (2 Chr.
26:16). But why? The answer follows: “Going into the temple of the
Lord, he had a mind to burn incense upon the altar of incense”
(2 Chr. 26:16). Behold this whole crime! We read that his heart
was lifted up. But in what way was it lifted up? What did he desire?
For what did he ask? If the dignity of a priest were less than that of
a king, he who was king and desired to descend to the function of priest would by this act have declared a submission of spirit rather than pride and haughtiness. It would never have been said that his heart was lifted up because he desired to engage in a higher function that did not pertain to him. He neglected the Lord his God because he dared to join together the functions the Lord desired to keep distinct and separate. Let us place before our eyes the complete manner and reason of this event, following the words of Scripture: “And immediately Azarias the priest going in after him, and with him four-score priests of the Lord, most valiant men, withstood the king and said: It doth not belong to thee, Ozias, to burn incense to the Lord, but to the priests, that is to the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated for this ministry: go out of the sanctuary, do not despise: for this thing shall not be accounted to thy glory by the Lord God. And Ozias was angry, and holding in his hand the censer to burn incense, threatened the priests. And presently there rose a leprosy in his forehead before the priests, in the house of the Lord at the altar of incense. And Azarias the high priest, and all the rest of the priests looked upon him, and saw leprosy in his forehead, and they made haste to thrust him out. Yea himself also being frightened, hastened to go out, because he had quickly felt the stroke of the Lord” (2 Chr. 26:17–20).

Do you hear, Prince, what the Scriptures say? What is there to prevent you even slightly from hearing and properly receiving this in your soul? For here, the spirit of God that speaks in the Scriptures conceals nothing from us. He wants His opinion to be clear to all. If indeed you do hear, are you not terrified? Are you not filled with horror? Do you not fear a similar punishment? Instead, do you think such great ills were so accurately portrayed in Scripture for Ozias alone? Do you think the crime of one man, a king, and the punishment appointed for this crime may escape others? Is this not told to fill with fear others who might dare to imitate such a crime? In what way does your guilt differ from that of Ozias, unless it be that yours is much greater and more serious? For this act of his, unless Scriptures be otherwise interpreted, could seem virtuous. Would not the common opinion of men interpret as a virtuous act a report that a King’s devotion to things sacred made him desire to sacrifice in person, to offer incense with his hand? But when Ozias was warned by the priests that this did not pertain to his office, he became angry and
threatened them. This was his grave crime. He threatened the priests of the Lord. However, his wrath and threats did not go beyond words. When you, however, removed the supreme priest from his position and substituted yourself in his place as head of the Church, Fisher and More and the other holy men told you it was not your duty as King to act in the character of the head of the Church. They said this office belonged to priests whom God had chosen and consecrated. What did you do then? Did you only threaten them, angered as you were? Indeed, you killed the priests of the Lord; you despoiled the sanctuary of the Lord and polluted it with the blood of the holiest men.

With what, therefore, shall I compare your deed? Shall I compare it with Saul’s? Saul, because he killed the priests of the Lord in Nobe, was driven out of his city and with his children was handed over to the enemy. But surely he had some excuse for this deed since the arms of David were giving assistance to the enemy. Your deed has not even the appearance of righteousness. You have killed the most devoted priests of the Lord. You, I say, have killed the priests who wanted to disarm your enemies that were plotting the ruin and destruction of your soul. Had you only permitted, they would have done this. You have condemned for the crime of lese majesty those who admonished you concerning your salvation and your duty, those alone who showed that they desired the majesty of your royal name to be preserved. You condemned such men to the punishment of traitors. Where, then, can I find any crime that can possibly be compared with yours? Though the Scriptures abound with stories of many infamous crimes, yet I can find none that equals yours in magnitude or atrocity. Your crime is not equal to that of Dathan and Abiron or others of the tribe of Aaron who were only considered unworthy of holding the office of priests since they wanted to communicate with other tribes. This dissension did not extend beyond mere words. No one perished in this sedition. Nevertheless, God considered this crime so serious that He judged them worthy of being buried alive, to be swallowed up by a tremendous gap in the earth. This is what they deserved in the judgment of God.

In every way the dissension you incited in the Church of the Lord against the high priest surpasses in guilt every dissension of these men. Yours joined even more atrocious deeds to words that were even then the most seditious and haughty. But even if your words alone are
considered, what kind of words did you use? You were not content with the name of King, a name so august, so venerated among all nations that they would promptly confer upon you all honor due your dignity and office. You also wanted to be called supreme head of the Church in your realm, something no king ever coveted before you. Do you want to be Vicar of Christ? Do you want to act in the place of the Son of God? Does this differ in any way from the words attributed in the Scriptures to the prince of pride? “I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will sit in the mountain of the covenant, in the sides of the north. I will be like the most High” (Is. 14:13–14). You wish to ascend above all priests, for Scripture often compares them to the heavens and the stars of heaven. When you overthrew the Vicar of Christ, the Son of God, from his throne and set yourself up in his place, what else were you doing but saying: “I shall exalt my throne above the stars of God”? For thus you usurp for yourself the seat and authority of him who acts in the place of the Most High and who has authority over all priests.

By this method, however, you will never obtain what you so greatly desire. You will never be similar to the Most High you hope to resemble, in whose place you would act. Quite the contrary. By your arrogance and covetousness for this supreme position you display yourself most dissimilar to Him. Though by nature Christ was elevated and surpassing in dignity not only in all things that are, but even those that might be named or imagined, yet when He was made man He did not usurp the slightest dignity for Himself. In all that pertained to dignity and honor He awaited the judgment of God the Father. You are nothing in comparison with Him. You await no judgment, no custom, no example. You invade the highest dignity that can be named in this world. I beseech you, do you not see how dissimilar to Christ you are showing yourself? You want to usurp the character of His Vicar. You resemble the enemy Christ described in those words I have just recited: “I will ascend into heaven . . .” I have just recounted the punishment inflicted upon him for his pride, as described by the Prophet. Surely it should force you to tremble violently since you have imitated this pride.

However, Sampson defends you here. He says that I act maliciously in thus speaking about your dignity of name, as though you assumed it or seized it from others or achieved it by contention and strife. When
actually, however, as Sampson would say, I cannot be ignorant of the fact that this name was conferred upon you by all the leading men of your kingdom. Indeed, Sampson, I can be ignorant of this fact. For I certainly know it is in no way true, not even if I should see 600 documents with their seals affirmed and if I should see the men you call the leaders of the realm brought forward to make me believe that this new and hitherto unheard title of honor was conferred upon the King of their own accord. You shall not hear from me now why I speak in this manner. Later, perhaps, in a more appropriate place you may understand.

I shall say only this for the present, however. Thus I might immediately free myself from the charge of malice. Even though all the most distinguished persons in the realm would think this title of honor should be conferred upon the King, they have no right or authority for doing this. Therefore, he indeed has no right to receive this title. In the Church that embraces so many nations and kingdoms, is the general agreement of only one kingdom sufficient for taking the authority of the highest priest in the whole Church and conferring it on others whom neither the law of God nor the Church ever permitted to share in the priesthood? If so, can it not be said that Dathan and Abiron together with the other authors of the conspiracy were rightly able to transfer the priesthood from the tribe of Aaron, where it properly belonged, to other tribes? Could they not also communicate with these tribes? If one wanted to defend your act, whereby contrary to the laws of the Church you attribute the authority of the highest priest and all other priests to the King, on the grounds of the consent of the princes of your realm, would he not have even a better case in defending the seditious deed of Dathan and Abiron against the judgment of God? Thus both deeds might be compared and one would be assured that both deeds had only the appearance of right by reason of the power of consensus of opinion. For Dathan and Abiron could give this reason for their deed. If consensus of opinion might give their act validity, they might say it appeared to be something rightly done, since 250 men thought the same as they did. That is the number, according to the Scripture, called at the time of the council (Nm. 16:2.)

Now indeed, if we might speak of these men who approved the deed of Dathan and Abiron, they were such that if a council of the
Church had been called there would not have been three among them with sufficient authority to merit nomination. However, your whole kingdom in a universal council of the Church would not in any way possess even as much authority as those 250 men possessed when summoned by name at the time of the council in the synagogue of the Jews. In what way, therefore, can your act be approved without giving greater approval to Dathan and Abiron? The very severe punishment imposed upon them declares the gravity of their deed in opposition to the will of God. Yet when their act is compared with yours, theirs might appear moderate. For although the crime of sedition is serious by itself at any time and when performed by anyone, yet some who plan sedition display greater moderation than others. It seems that we cannot call the deed of these men by any other name than that of sedition. And yet as soon as Moses reminded them that finally on the last day they would all hear the judgment of God, they all waited. Now calm and all of one opinion, now no longer filled with dissension, they gave their assent. They gave no evidence of the things customarily associated with sedition. There was no plundering, no slaughter; no violence was used against anyone.

What sign of moderation does your sedition show? You awaited neither the judgment of God nor that of men who have some authority in the Church. On your own opinion alone you overthrew the one whom the Church recognized as head, and you seized possession of the name of supreme head of the Church. Immediately, as though it were a duty for the head of the Church to cut off the heads of men, to rob both the Church and men, you first attacked the goods of those who did not approve your act. Then you plunged your sword into their bodies. How many men, in the name of God immortal, have you killed? For many ages now the Church has not had such saintly men who were so skilled in learning.

Gravity of Henry VIII’s Crime

Who upon hearing and pondering the gravity of the punishment for those who sinned less gravely, could expect God not to punish you as severely? Or, if he expects it, is not his whole soul filled with horror? Even as I write these words and consider the judgment of God against
On the Unity of the Church

them, I tremble all over with fear and trepidation. When, however, I reflect on your deed, I am completely dissolved in tears and seriously fear for your salvation. On the other hand, when I consider your deed, it seems I should not only not be fearful for you and pray God to avert His punishment from you, but rather that I should beseech God for the glory of His name to bring this punishment as quickly as possible. With Elia I should cry out to God and say: “O Lord they have thrown down thy altars, they have slain thy prophets with the sword, and I alone am left, and they seek my life to take it away” (3 Kgs. 19:10). And with David: “O Lord revenge the blood of thy servants, which hath been shed” (Ps. 78:9–10).

I have all the more reason for making this petition since the Scriptures are widespread throughout England and are published by your own advisers. You are trying to present to the people an explanation of your deed, taken from Scripture. To prove that your case is approved by God, you use this as the strongest argument. You say that ever since it occurred to you to overthrow the authority of the supreme pontiff and to occupy his place yourself, you have not met any calamity. For your fields have everywhere produced the most abundant fruits. There had been no decline or decrease in those things pertaining to a pleasant life. This is the argument, indeed, by which those imposters of yours hope to deceive the people. Actually they are increasingly deceiving themselves, and you most of all. For punishments of the kind we have been considering—if indeed they may be considered punishments rather than gentle admonitions of a most kind Lord concerning the quest for salvation—refer to lesser crimes and not to the type of impiety that you have conceived. Certainly you will endure punishment of the wrath of God much more harsh than any that might befall you on account of infertile fields, even though you might suffer from a severe famine. For you will endure not a famine of bread, but a famine of the word of God. Heaven is not closed to your fields as happened to the prayers of Elia for three years, during the rule of the impious Achab, when it never rained. But Heaven is closed to you; it is closed to your soul. Through these years since you lapsed into this impiety no heavenly shower has poured into your soul. You have not eaten the fruit of virtue. But as one completely bereft of the spirit of God, you have turned to plunder and slaughter.
Could anything besides your latest crime show more clearly that the spirit of God has departed from your soul? When you usurped for yourself the authority of the supreme pontiff, you ventured into something that Christians outside the authority of the Vicar of Christ would not attempt, something that even pagans who had never heard the name of Christ did not consider within their province under any circumstances. What pagan would have acted in the place of the pontiff? How much better understanding the pagan had of what was fitting for a pontiff. I refer to the son of Titus Vespasian. He was a virtuous Emperor with a most kindly nature, and he desired to keep his hands pure from blood and slaughter. As tradition tells us, for this reason alone he desired to be Pontifex Maximus. He believed that when the honor of pontiff had been bestowed upon him, his hands would be bound and held as though by a chain, lest they should reach out to slaughter any man. Did he not act soundly? He probably never heard of the name of Christ. He certainly did not know Christ nor embrace His teachings. He could scarcely surmise the difference in dignity between emperor and pontiff. But he judged correctly that nothing should be more foreign to the man who acted in the capacity of pontiff than to have hands contaminated by human blood. He would not be the author of anyone’s unjust death.

You who profess the faith of Christ cannot be ignorant of the kindness and mildness He requires of His followers. You are well aware that He requires these qualities especially in those who hold office as head of the Church. Yet just as if Christ had commanded only slaughter, you were not satisfied with your royal powers. You also claimed the pontifical power for yourself. You undoubtedly seem to think that the royal power is valid not only for punishing those who have been justly condemned, but that the pontifical power gives license to punish the innocent without any justice. You showed this at the beginning of your notorious pontificate by slaughtering the most virtuous and innocent men. Thus, while you were holding both powers, no one could flee from your cruelty. Would you do these things if there were a drop of heavenly grace and dew left in your soul? If Heaven were not absolutely closed to you? If you had not been completely abandoned by God who is the light, salvation, and life of the soul? Would you do these things if a more evil spirit than
On the Unity of the Church

that of Saul abandoned by God and unable to rest, had not vexed and agitated your soul?

But Sampson says that I exaggerate too harshly in these words, and that I willingly fill up pages with complaints of this kind. He says in the first place that I indulge my affections by weeping over those who everyone knows were most dear to me. Then, indeed, he says that I consider this some kind of an act, that I speak bitterly and very pitifully so I might more vehemently move the soul of my reader by indignation and mercy. He says that in this manner I might avoid replying to his presentation of arguments, around which this question centers. He says that even if I do reply, my response is of such a nature that it cannot be examined and judged by agitated minds.

But if I am to consider this subject carefully, why should I not immediately omit complaints and reply to the arguments that he himself brings forth against the authority of the pontiff? Sampson argues that it is unquestionably clear that the Roman bishop has no authority beyond his own Roman province. It is clear that the pontiff has usurped for himself the succession in place of Peter, for this authority is nothing since Peter himself never had such authority over the other Apostles. It is clear that the authority of the King greatly exceeds the authority of absolutely everyone else. Sampson says that he has proved these statements with most certain arguments. If I ever hope to refute these arguments, should I not direct my discussion toward them rather than toward complaints that in no way pertain to this matter?

For if the Roman pontiff has no authority, if the king truly has the highest right to govern all ecclesiastical and civil affairs, and the authority to fashion laws of every kind and to enforce these laws when they are not obeyed, then it is evident that these men whose deaths I bemoan committed a crime against the laws of the prince. This is no time for complaints. They were justly punished with death. But if, on the other hand, the King has no such authority, if the Roman pontiff is the supreme head of the Church, and if it is his duty to act as supreme judge over all controversies that arise in the Church—even in examining cases involving kings—then certainly it is easy to refute Sampson’s contrary opinion.
Pole Again Addresses Richard Sampson

Therefore, if I consider that I can do this, should I not set aside those complaints having no bearing on this matter and reply immediately to these arguments? If I may not entirely restrain myself from these complaints, might I not finally make use of the wretched abundance of these objections after I have summed up my case? Properly, indeed, Sampson, you decide that complaints should be made only after the case itself has been proved. I shall certainly not act otherwise.

For you divided your book into two parts. In the first part you attempt to show that the King is the supreme head of the Church in his kingdom and that he has the power of death over all who do not obey his laws. I trust that I have given a sufficient reply to this. I know that I have shown most clearly that no law, no custom, example, human reason, nor any reason taken from Scriptures can declare that the King is in any way connected with the position of head of the Church. Furthermore, I have shown that those men who refused to obey his impious law were most unjustly put to death. Surely this was not the time for complaints, when I have been describing so great an injury and injustice against such men. But if you think I was thus indulging my grief only because those who were killed were my friends, I certainly admit and I willingly proclaim publicly that they were my dearest friends. For how can I conceal this fact? I rejoice over this as I would were I to have the friendship of all kings and princes now living. Indeed, were this friendship and intimacy to intercede for me with all who are most powerful in human affairs, my joy in such great and ample friendship could not be as great as my pleasure in having known and been friendly with those men who were unjustly put to death. You, therefore, think the deaths of these men were unfortunate. Truly you are unfortunate since you cannot comprehend the nature of their deaths. Though I certainly derived great benefit from these men during life, by their deaths I have reaped even greater profit.

Now you think all the benefits that could be gathered from these men have been removed. I anticipate benefits even more abundant than before, nor have I any doubt about this. Wherefore, Sampson, if I seem to display too much grief at the death of these men, I do
not do this for their sake. I have as my witness for this God Himself who reads the hearts of men. I see nothing that pertains to these men that should not be received with the greatest of joy. But if you want to know the true reason for sadness over these men—though I doubt that you will believe me—I shall nevertheless tell you. I cannot permit it to be hidden any longer. It is for your sake, Sampson, that I grieve over the deaths of all these men. Especially do I grieve for that one man who has been led on by your pernicious advice. For thus it happened that he fell into the treachery of imposing the penalty for traitors upon men who were most devoted to him, men who merited every distinction. This is the sorrow that torments me, this is the sorrow that compels me to fill my writing with sadness. I have just considered how seriously God will avenge this man unless he quickly recovers his senses. Now I say this, giving warning that it is more certain than what we see with our eyes. For now I foresee that the approaching punishment of God for this man will be more burdensome than the one we beheld in Ozius who was afflicted with leprosy, more burdensome than the punishment of Saul who was killed by his enemies. Later I may amplify my remarks about this punishment. Now I shall speak very briefly and as truthfully as possible. If I bewail the enormity of his deed, I do this for only one reason. I see that one way lies open for him to turn aside so severe and bitter punishment of God: to recognize his crime and implore pardon. But surely he will never do this unless the severe cruelty of his act is placed before his eyes. This I have tried to do in the words I have written thus far. In those that will follow I shall do this at greater length and, as I trust, more clearly.

In the meanwhile, however, lest you think that I have spoken at such great length about the plan, method, and atrocity of his deed because I have despaired of the case and because I cannot reply to the arguments you have presented against the authority of Peter, I shall not delay in instantly refuting your arguments. But as this book has now reached a sufficiently fair size, I shall make my refutation in the second book, which follows immediately.
NOTES TO BOOK I

1 Richard Sampson, Bishop of Chichester in 1536. He was transferred to Coventry and Lichfield, 1542–1543, and died at Eccleshall, 1554. In Books I and II of the De unitate Pole refutes Sampson’s work entitled: Oratio qua [sic] docet, hortatur, admonet omnes potissimum anglos . . . 1535. Through the courtesy of the Folger Shakespeare Library a microfilm copy of this very rare volume was made available for use in preparing this translation.

2 Horace, Ars poetica, 1–2.

3 Sozomenus, Historia ecclesiastica, Book I. Constantine voiced this same sentiment in his address to the whole Council of Nicaea.

4 Henry VIII, Assertio septem sacramentorum, 1521.

5 St. Helena was born in the middle of the third century, possibly at Drepanum on the Nicomedian Gulf. There is no sound historical foundation for the story of her English birth, handed down through the Middle Ages by the chroniclers.

6 Valerius Maximus, “De religione,” Book I, Ch. 1. Valerius lived during the age of Tiberius and compiled nine books entitled: Facta et dicta memorabilia, Memorable Deeds and Sayings, a collection of historical anecdotes for use in schools of rhetoric.

7 M. Tullius Cicero, Epistolae ad Atticum, Book VIII, Ep. XI.

8 Several passages in Plato’s The Republic refer to the need for repelling the disagreeable things of life; e.g., Book III, 387–88; Book VI, 501. Two sections in Plato’s The Laws seem to correspond even more closely to the idea that Pole is attributing to Plato: Book IV, 716 and 759. There Plato notes that for the good man it is most profitable for happiness of life that he sacrifice and be in communion with heaven through prayer and worship.
BOOK II

Sampson's Arguments Continued

In the previous book, Sampson, we have given an adequate reply to the first part of your volume. There you attempted to prove that the King is head of the Church in his own kingdom. We have clearly and vividly refuted your arguments and shown that neither law, custom, the example of great men, nor any reason, natural or derived from Scriptures, enables the King to appoint himself head of the English Church. We shall now proceed to reply to all the points you present in the second part of your volume to support your impious opinion in opposition to the one supreme Shepherd.

You have so fashioned this first part of your volume, however, that I hesitate regarding the most powerful kind of arms I should use to test my strength with yours. For you repudiate the arms that one would normally consider just and legitimate, were he to enter this contest with a desire of arriving at truth. Am I, indeed, to think that I should take the armor of my opponent, or should I reject it? Shall I permit you to prescribe for me the kind of arms I should use against you, especially when I have at hand arms whereby I could immediately vanquish you without any trouble? Behold, I beseech you, how incautiously you have entered this contest, how in our first combat you have left your throat and side exposed to attack. For, after a lengthy discussion that lacked strength and power to prove anything, you give the pretense of concluding that the King's authority was highest. Then you turn to the people and exhort them to obey the
King as minister and Vicar of God. When you have said this, you immediately follow it by speaking against the pontiff in this manner: "I do not recognize as Vicar of Christ that Roman bishop who has no right to act outside his own province." Perhaps you feared, Sampson, that as soon as the people heard the name of the Vicar of God and the obedience due him, they would think that you were speaking about the true Vicar of Christ whom the universal Church obeyed for many ages. Therefore, very cleverly and timely indeed, you added this: "I do not speak of that Roman bishop."

Since you speak as a victor over all your adversaries and as one who can command anything to be done, what shall we do, I beseech you, Sampson, to that Roman bishop? For these many, many years he has held the title of Vicar of God. You say indeed that he has no more power in England than the Bishop of Canterbury has at Rome. Indeed you speak too imperiously, Sampson, especially against this man whose authority has always been highest for many ages throughout the whole world wherever the name of Christ is reverenced. Now you would confine his power within the boundaries of one city.

Thus this Sampson now speaks just as though he had overthrown the authority of the pontiff by royal force and held it besieged within the walls of Rome. Sampson says the pontiff may act as Bishop of Rome and should be confined within the boundaries of the city.

But let us see, Sampson, on what authority you rely as you say this. Is it the authority of the King’s sword or the holy Scripture? You reply immediately. You say there is not even one word in the sacred writings that attributes to him any power of ministering outside the province of Rome. Therefore, you put your trust in the authority of the sacred writings. But beware lest by relinquishing the authority of swords and by relying on the authority of the Scriptures you may lose your greatest protection—that of the sword. Beware lest you give yourself over to your opponent who will instantly shatter all the force of your opinion. If you wish to rely on the authority of Scriptures your authority will immediately tumble you to the ground. Behold, therefore, how I shall meet your argument here. You say nothing can be found in the sacred writings attributing any authority to the Roman pontiff beyond the confines of that city. But Sampson, by your good leave, those who understand the Scriptures far better than you or I, whose lives, uprightness, and teachings have been renowned in the
Church throughout the ages, think otherwise. They teach that the Roman pontiff's authority flows from the authority given to Peter by Christ Himself. They have, indeed, gathered from the words of Scripture this manifest authority of Peter. Among those I should first name I would include men like Gregory and Bernard. Were I to follow with the names of all the others I would need an assistant to give me their names. All of these men differ greatly from you in this question. There is no opportunity now to present their writings and testimony against you. Were I to do this, what would you say? What would you answer? As is your custom, would you not rub your brow and say that since these men were similar to you, they too were liable to deception and error? Would you not say it would be no fairer to believe these men than to believe you who are equally familiar with Scriptures? But, Sampson, though these were men they were, nevertheless, different from you, if we go to those things that are customarily considered in deciding whether or not to trust a man.

All of these men were very holy, very learned and, indeed, very skilled in understanding Scripture. Countless people and the astonishing consensus of the universal Church substantiate these men possessing such qualities. None ever had a similar opinion about you. Since this is so, do you think it proper for you to compare your sole judgment with theirs? What if I leave the opinions of men and consider only the tradition of the universal Church? This tradition has for many centuries confirmed the authority of the Roman pontiff. Will the name of Sampson and his doctrinal opinion be of such value that it will be given greater credence over that of the whole Church?

But who does not see that if I use only these weapons against you—weapons that are surely legitimate in a contest of this kind—I can vanquish you immediately with no trouble at all? Only the sons of the Church should be the highest judges here. In the opinion of these judges, who would be considered the victor? You, however, refuse particularly to accept any type weapon founded on human authority and the consensus of the Church for many centuries. You demand arguments; you consider yourself greatly superior to these arguments.

But Sampson, I cannot omit these completely. However, lest they appear inferior to any other type of weapon defending the cause of truth against your opinion, I shall deal with you thus. First I shall
contend against you with arguments; or rather I shall expose the falseness of the reasons that you wish to appear as arguments. Then I shall bring forth into the open arguments whereby I may establish the opinion I have learned from the Church. This will pertain chiefly to the testimony of holy men. I shall make it my duty to present against you only the testimony of those renowned men whom you have presented as assenting and testifying to your own opinion—unless you are completely bereft of all discernment. I promise that I shall make it my duty to present and bring forth only these men against you. From their own words I trust I shall make manifest how maliciously you have distorted these very words to conform to your opinion. Of their own accord they could not possibly agree with you. When I have accomplished this, when I can no longer argue with you, when I shall not only have shown you the testimony of some one distinguished man, but the testimony of all—then I may certainly bring about your ultimate submission to the authority of the Church that you now attack so impiously, relying as you do on natural arguments rather than on faith. Unless, of course, you suffer from a blindness imposed upon you by God. This, therefore, is the final fruit of victory that I hope for, both from you and from your colleagues.

The Apostolic Succession Does Not Depend on the Habits of Men

But now let me proceed to the matter at hand and let me first refute your arguments. What follows next in your book to which I should reply in its proper order? The fact that you say: “The Pontiff says that he is the successor of Peter, that he has received this authority through this succession. If saintly Peter were here at present he would deny this in its entirety.” Thus you begin your attack on the pontifical authority. But I do not hear any arguments yet. You only say that Peter would deny it if he were present. Truly, I beseech you, if I am to debate with you concerning this question, how would you prove this was the intention of Peter if I should doubt you? You say: “Without a doubt he would cry out against this imposter: ‘Oh! Imposter! Oh! Ambitious, proud and arrogant man!’” You say these things and you offer many other words of great reproach that
Peter would use were he present. Since you are so familiar with Peter and profess to know what he would say were he brought back to life, I beseech you finally to explain to whom he would make this reproach, to whom he would direct these words of opproprium? For you mention no one thus far. Would he rage furiously, in the way you indicate, against all the Roman pontiffs who have succeeded him? But many of them were good and distinguished men. Such words would not apply to them, especially when uttered by Peter. Would he direct such shameful words against Linus, Anacletus, Evaristus, or in later times against Sylvester and Gregory? Neither in life nor after death did anyone ever offer similar objections to these men. Least of all did anyone accuse them of the crime of ambition and pride. All of them, however, were successors of Peter and professed to have received lawfully the authority of this succession from Christ Himself. Since these words, therefore, can in no way be applicable to these men, name someone to whom Peter might speak in this manner. Thus far, indeed, when I hear you raging against the name of the Roman pontiff as though using words of Peter himself, you make no mention of any particular person. This seems like hearing someone break forth into words as often happens during an especially dreadful dream. I consider such a person as disturbed by some kind of insanity during his sleep. Thus, Sampson, I hear those words of yours. I decide you are vehemently aroused by some opponent, as though you were pleading a case in your sleep. Now, finally, wake up! Tell me accurately just who this person is against whom Peter, a most holy man, has risen with such abandoned language? Who is this person whom in the character of Peter you have received so shamefully in a dream? But here you are silent. You offer the name of no one. You only continue to add reproaches. What do you want me to do? Do you want me to divine the meaning of these words that came to you in a dream? But here, perhaps, someone might say that if I want to consider only more recent pontiffs there is no need for divination. The matter is clear. If I would only recall these pontiffs, I would immediately judge that such words were not uttered by a dreamer but by a person wide awake. Such words would be most appropriate for these pontiffs.

But why is this clear? Were some of the more recent pontiffs afflicted with the human vices of ambition and arrogance? What if I were to concede that some of the recent pontiffs—and, I might even
add, some of the earlier ones—were not derived from angels lacking all vice, but from corrupt mankind? Would it then be evident that Peter, were he brought back to life, would attack these pontiffs with such violent words? The reproaches you hurl against the supreme pontiff might perhaps be appropriate for some infamous and scurrilous man. Certainly they do not apply in any manner to Peter. He would not recognize them as you depict them. Why do I say these things? Because I see that Paul, who received the same spirit as Peter, on one occasion imprudently spoke some insulting words to the high priest of the Jews. But as soon as Paul was admonished that the man whom he had insulted was the high priest, he continued without interruption and excused himself by saying: “I knew not, brethren, that he is the high priest” (Acts 23:5). But Paul refrained from using words of reproach against the high priest who held only the title and shadow of the priesthood after the death of Christ, though Paul knew that this priest and all other priests who were authors of Christ’s death were impious, sacrilegious, and blasphemous. How unbecoming it would be, therefore, to burst forth with such words of reproach against the character of Paul, even as you have done against the person who is not a mere shadow of Christ but who truly acts in the capacity of Christ’s Vicar. Though such words are not appropriate to Paul, who would say they might be suitable for the person of Peter? Who would apply these words to any disciple of Christ?

It is indeed true that the corrupt customs of men who exercise a certain dignity of authority should in no way detract from that dignity itself. Let us be advised by the most excellent example of Christ, the Lord and Master of us all. When He disapproved of the scribes and Pharisees living so greatly at variance with their teaching, He did not, however, take away their power and authority. Nor did He deny that they truly sat on the chair of Moses. Therefore, though He warned against imitating the example of these men, yet He commanded us to do as they taught when speaking from the chair of Moses. Christ not only did not deny the authority of Pilate, though Pilate most unjustly abused it, He even confirmed that Pilate had received this authority from God above. Christ did this even as Pilate was condemning Him to punishment.

In what kind of figure of speech, therefore, is Sampson indulging when he says things concerning the leader of the Apostles, things that
would not be applicable in any manner to any disciple of Christ who desired to stand by the teaching and example of the Master?

I believe you want to imitate the rhetoricians who often use these figures of speech. But although the rhetoricians often present falsehoods in figures of speech, they do this with a certain elegance that aptly resembles the truth, so that their listeners will grasp that the character described is the one to whom the figure is applied. When you, however, present these literary falsehoods, they do not in any way resemble the character of the person you are describing. They are entirely foreign to the character of Peter. Would that you only sinned against the precepts of rhetoric! Then the only penalty would be that you were completely ignorant of precepts of this kind, or else that you would be considered as possessing little elegance in this kind of style. Now, however, you offend not only against the laws of rhetoric but you also sin all the more against God Himself, the Author of our salvation. To sin thus against God is to deprive yourself and all who are persuaded by these figures of speech of eternal life. This is to hurl yourself into eternal damnation.

But how can I make clear the great danger these words contain? Do you, Sampson, expect that this play on words, in the fashion of little literary flowers of the rhetoricians, will bring no destruction to others? Do you expect only the greatest profit to yourself from the King for whose sake you do this?

Believe me, Sampson, a snake is lurking beneath those literary flowers that appear so pleasant to you. Even now this snake is lurking, and it will infect you and all whom you have bespattered by your words with a deadly poison for the destruction of your souls. To make this clear, I shall collect a little nosegay of those flowers you have scattered around. I shall place before your eyes your words now gathered together in a bunch. Thus we may see most readily the poison lurking within them. I shall again present your words concerning the Roman pontiff. They are as follows: “The Pontiff says that he is the successor of Peter, that he has received this authority through this succession. If saintly Peter were here at present he would deny this in its entirety; without a doubt he would cry out against this imposter: ‘Oh! Imposter! Oh! Ambitious, proud and arrogant man! My Master, Christ, taught me humility.’”

Then Sampson continues with words he attributes to Peter. Here
he compares the humility of Peter, whose whole life was patterned on the example of Christ, and the ambitious and depraved life of the Roman pontiff. When all these words are brought together in a group they have this meaning: the Roman pontiffs who governed the same Church that Peter governed lived lives of evil and depraved habits; Peter's whole life conforms to the very best standards of Christ his Master. Therefore, the successors of Peter cannot be said to possess any authority through succession from him. Thus, according to Sampson, would Peter speak. However, I cry out against Sampson, in union with the Church that Peter always defended, that this argument is impious.

For if this argument concludes rightly to anything, it immediately concludes to the fact that there is no Church now. Truly indeed, long ago the Church ceased to exist and now there is no Church. For what constitutes the Church more completely than the succession of those men who govern the Church, such as the bishops? However, if the bishops who hold the place of the Apostles in the Church are required to live in the same manner as the Apostles, if no one can be said to be a successor of the Apostles unless he leads a life corresponding to the humility and many other virtues of the Apostles, then I beseech you, what kind of Church would we have now? Who can be found worthy of comparison in sanctity of life with those who received the "first fruits of the spirit" (Rom. 8:23)?

But perhaps Sampson does not make such severe demands. He is satisfied if these successors do not lead lives of depraved habits, if they are not entirely corrupted and abandoned in their habits. If they have habits so alien to those of the Apostles, then he denies that they are successors of the Apostles.

By what a weak and tenuous thread, Sampson, you connect the succession of the Church, if you want it to depend on the habits of men. If it appears that some bishops were evil, do you wish to abandon the succession? What Church, I ask, throughout the whole world can glory in the possession of men so holy that it could attain 10 good bishops in a continuous series? Or rather, what Church when it counts 10 bishops does not number 1 or 2 whose habits are corrupt and different from the lives of the Apostles whose successors they are? What, I beseech you, does this succession mean as far as sanctity
of life is concerned? Have you never heard that bad bishops succeed good bishops, even as bad kings succeed good kings?

A man of evil and shameful habits is entrusted with the government of the same Church that was Peter’s. That he succeeds to the life and habits of Peter can with truth be denied. Who in his right mind, however, would deny that he was truly successor to dignity, if the dignity conferred on him is the same as that conferred upon Peter? Were not those the words of Christ that I recounted earlier when He blamed the life and habits of the scribes and Pharisees even though He affirmed that they truly sat on the chair of Moses? When He had said this and had confirmed the authority they obtained through succession, He added: “All things, therefore, whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do” (Mt. 23:3). Thus He showed that the highest authority resided in them. Therefore Peter, if he desired to follow his Master, would never deny that those sitting upon his chair at Rome were his successors, even though they might lead lives of corrupt habits. Nor does one attributing such a denial to Peter depict the truth.

There is, indeed, sound probability that Peter would say such men were not worthy to succeed to so great a dignity to which Christ had called them after Himself. No virtuous person, however, would ever dare to deny the succession that greatly strengthens the Church. Peter would certainly not so act, were he to be brought back to life. Thus Augustine, in a certain passage,¹ reviewed this succession of Roman pontiffs from the accession of Peter down to his own time, in a continuous series succeeding each other in order. He testified to the other great things that held him in the faith of the Church. Often, moved by the greatest admiration for divine providence, Augustine considered that not the least of these things was the uninterrupted series of Roman bishops in the midst of changing affairs. He could not help seeing that among the bishops many led lives at variance with the habits of Peter. Here Sampson readily agrees with him. For Sampson makes no distinction as he portrays Peter uttering every reproach against the lives of all these men, whether good or bad. Truly, however, though the deeds of these men show corruption in their lives, they do not necessarily indicate that the succession was interrupted. If from no one else, certainly from Augustine, you can learn the
admirable providence of Christ as evidenced by the lengthy succession of bishops.

But Sampson, good man that he is, and distinguished imitator of the lives of the Apostles, is offended and cannot bear the fact that evil men should succeed good men. He even brings forth a reason from the words of the Prophet explaining why the Roman pontiffs who differ so greatly from the lives of the Apostles should be the objects of hatred. The Prophet says: "Therefore have I hated every way of iniquity" (Ps. 118:104). But if you have hated every way of iniquity, do you not know how to distinguish between depraved habits and a justly established succession, between evil men and the highest authority? Do you mean to take away that authority, to say there is no succession because an evil person happened to possess that authority? Do you want to do this when it is impossible to think of anything closer to God for maintaining human life than authority, of anything more admirable than succession? Thus I believe the "zeal of the house of God" (Ps. 68:10) that has eaten him up will not permit Sampson to see the very clear distinction between habits and authority and succession. He does not consider this distinction. He says he sees only that the habits of priests and especially those of the supreme priest—I refer to the Roman pontiff—have now degenerated from those of their predecessors over many centuries. He says he thinks they would act more reverently if this authority were taken from the pontiff. Since the Scriptures make no mention of any character greater than the royal character, it is his wish that this authority be conferred on the King. For thus he could deal most becomingly with the Christian people for whose sake he desires to labor. He could do this if that highest authority that up to now has been held by the priest, the Roman bishop, were entrusted to kings.

To accomplish this, Sampson deals with the people through his little volume. Why? Shall we think that Sampson attempts these things dutifully? Shall we think that his attempts are pleasing to God just because he would transfer authority to kings on account of the malice of some pontiffs? Indeed, I myself, who now seek an opinion in this matter, consider Sampson’s attempts far from pleasing. But of what value is my judgment, if I say that the endeavors of Sampson not only lack holiness but are particularly infamous? What authority has my lone opinion in so important a matter? The same authority,
evidently, that Sampson’s opinion has as he defends the opposite view; that is, none at all. Both of our judgments taken by themselves in a matter of such gravity are not only slight but of no worth at all. But my judgment, Sampson, is not the judgment of one person. Nor can I say that this, my opinion, has first been presented by myself. It is the opinion of God, Sampson! It is the judgment of God revealed in the sacred volumes for many ages past, a judgment that declares all your endeavors to be what they are and that condemns them as impious.

There is that passage concerning Samuel in the First Book of Kings that I mentioned above when I was speaking about the origin of kings. At that time the people of Israel were governed by Saul as priest and judge. There we read that they demanded the establishment of a king for themselves. They demanded this, because Saul was growing old and because his sons, who would succeed to their father, were on account of their depraved habits greatly degenerating from the very holy life and habits of their father. In the same manner you now demand a king who will exercise the office of supreme head of the Church for you. Because the sons of the Apostles, the Roman pontiffs, appear to have degenerated from their fathers, you do not wish to be subject to them any longer, but rather you wish to be subject to kings. But let us hear the words of Scriptures that are sufficiently clear both as an explanation for an act of the people of Israel and also for you. These words explain the nature of the judgment of God. Here are the words: “When Samuel was old he appointed his sons to be judges over Israel. Now the name of the first-born son was Joel: and the name of the second was Abia, judges in Bersabee. And his sons walked not in his ways: but they turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment. Then all the ancients of Israel being assembled, came to Samuel in Ramatha. And they said to him: Behold thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: make us a king, to judge us, as all nations have” (1 Sm. 8:1–5).

Behold the request of the ancients of Israel. I should certainly like to know from you what impression this request makes upon you. At first glance it does not seem to be pernicious. To you indeed, if you desire to stand firmly on your opinion, the request can only appear to be most just. In your opinion you would certainly grant them
their request immediately. They had before their eyes the priestly sons. They saw that these sons were about to succeed to their father's authority. These sons differed greatly from their father in their habits. They were attempting avarice, violence, and injury even while their father lived. What did they expect at their father's death? Indeed their expectations were such that they suspected the future would bring even greater injustices. The people saw that they would be living under most unjust judges for a long time indeed—for these sons were only youths—unless the people opposed them in time. They saw many other nations greatly prospering under kings. Were they able to think of anything better than to make a king for themselves? It seemed more just to them to do this without any factions and without any sedition. All the ancients of Israel, therefore, were assembled, for they appeared to have the right of making a king without consulting anyone else. Nevertheless, although all were in agreement, they did not want to attempt this on their own authority. They thus consulted the priest of God and asked him for his opinion concerning the appointment of a king. Was this not done properly? Can their petition in any way be objected to as unjust? What is your reply here? If you stand only by your own act you should say that this request was most just indeed.

How different is the defense you and your colleagues offer for your act! You did not call a universal assembly as did the children of Israel. You called only a very few, for you are very few indeed when you are compared with the vast multitude remaining in the Church. You consulted no opinion of the majority as the children of Israel did. You had no general agreement, no right, as they did when they assembled together the majority opinion of all the people. For they seemed by nature to have the right to make a king. You were very few indeed and had no right or any agreement except that of your faction. Yet you dared to change the condition of the Church and to transfer the supreme authority of a priest to the King. Wherefore if you desire even an appearance or shadow of justice to remain for your act, you must of necessity reply that the people of Israel acted most justly in changing their condition.

But hear what God Himself replied. First, however, that I may keep my discussion orderly, hear what the priest said on this occasion. "And the word was displeasing in the eyes of Samuel" (1 Sm. 8:6).
Here, perhaps you would say—cunning and naturally suspicious as you are—that you are not surprised that the word was displeasing to the priest because he saw all his authority and dignity being taken away by his sons. But certainly Scriptures cannot agree to this. The Scriptures continually attribute testimony of Samuel’s simplicity and justice. The Scriptures say that the cause of this displeasure was that the people said: “Give us a king.” For this pertained to a change of condition. But let us hear the words of God that followed when the priest asked for God’s opinion: “And the Lord said to Samuel: Hearken to the voice of the people in all that they say to thee” (1 Sm. 8:7).

Truly the people are acting similarly with you in this matter, even as the Lord showed in the case of the people of Israel. Hear the words of the Lord that follow: “For they have not rejected thee, but Me, that I should not reign over them” (1 Sm. 8:7). Behold the divine response of God! Behold the impiety of this request! But may I be permitted to ask the Lord a question? If in requesting a king, those who had previously lived under the priest were rejecting God, why then, O Lord, do you command the priest to assent to this request? The Lord answered this question not by a word, but by the result itself as later events showed clearly. He wanted them to be punished on this occasion because they had impiously made this petition. And so it happened. However, God commanded Samuel to announce and declare to his people the many misfortunes they would endure under the government of kings. There would be misfortunes far more serious than any they had endured during the administration of the priests. Wherefore, since the people did not want to listen to the voice of God but insisted on requesting a king, God finally yielded to their request. He did this not as a favor, but rather as a penalty. They could have kings in place of punishment. Wherefore since they preferred not to put faith in His words, they found out what an impious act they had inflicted upon themselves. They suffered more dire troubles under kings than they had ever suffered previously under priests.

Now, indeed, Sampson, since you have rejected the rule of the priest and placed the burdensome rule of kings upon your neck, you have rejected the government of God over yourself. Has not God declared to you in this way that you will suffer even more serious troubles than the King? But if you did not listen to the voice of God,
surely you could hear the voice of all good people who—even as you were first planning this device—very clearly gave similar testimony to you. They often restrained you by word from this impious request. However, possibly then you could not even hear the words of these men. Certainly now that God has permitted you to reject the priest and substitute the King in place of the priest’s dignity, you surely know that we have sustained far more vicious troubles than ever were ours under a priest. Here I call upon you and all the other priests who have rejected the rule of the Pontiff and placed the King over us in his place. Tell me, finally, which burden seems the greater? But here you are silent, you groan, you say nothing. You do not dare. There is no need for words. The matter speaks for itself clearly enough. It tells us that everyone sees that you have endured more serious troubles in the space of three years since the King has been placed over you in the distinguished and especially desirable position of head, than you ever endured during the many centuries in which the Pontiffs possessed supreme authority over you. For if all the burdens imposed upon you throughout many centuries were brought together, they could not even be compared with the smallest part of the many miseries—no other word is appropriate for such a life—that you have endured under the King.

Why, however, did these things happen to you? Because in rejecting the authority of the Pontiff and demanding a King instead, you did not reject the Pontiff. You rejected Christ. The judgment of God pronounced the act of the Jews impious when they set aside the power of the priest and demanded a king for themselves, although they seemed to do nothing clearly contrary to the law of nature or God. How much more impious it is to repeal this authority bestowed by God alone upon the Supreme Pontiff and to transfer this authority to this very King who deserves it neither by the law of nature nor by any other law!

Though the priests were avaricious, greedy, and unjust, this was not sufficient reason for the Jews to transfer authority from the priests to the king. How much less can your act be excused? For even though the Pontiff might abound with greater vices than the priests of the Jews, you would deprive him of authority conferred upon him by God. You would take this authority and confer it on a King. This is the explanation you give,
Wherefore, it is with truth that the Prophet, speaking in the person of God, cries out: “Woe to you, apostate children, saith the Lord, that you would take counsel, and not of Me, and would begin a web, and not by My spirit, that you might add sin upon sin! Who walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at My mouth, hoping for help in the strength of Pharao, and trusting in the shadow of Egypt” (Is. 30:1–2). He adds grave penalties impending for you. I say, however, these words pertain to you because no one is blind enough in soul not to see immediately that you have done all these things, if he will but turn his eyes toward your plans for a moment. You expect the same thing from the King that they expected from King Pharao. But God reprimanded them with these words by saying they placed their hope in Pharao and in the shadow of Egypt. Likewise you speak words similar to theirs addressed to the same Prophet on this occasion. You say to those that see: “See not: and to them that behold: Behold not for us those things that are right: speak unto us pleasant things” (Is. 30:10). Since, therefore, in all things you imitate words and deeds of these impious Jews, do you hope to be able to escape the same punishments that God appointed for their impious deeds, punishments the Prophet expressed in this passage where he says they placed their hope in Pharao and in the shadow of Egypt? Never, indeed, will this happen. More serious troubles await you, since your deeds are far more serious than theirs. The justice of God cannot pass them by unavenged. But divine justice has appointed to do all this in His own time for His glory and for your very great ignominy and punishment.

However, even up to this point, Sampson defends his case. He will deny that he or his followers took away authority from the Supreme Pontiff. Sampson claims that it could not be taken away for it never existed. He says that at no time did the Roman Pontiff ever have the kind of authority I indicate. In fact, he could not possibly have had it, since Peter himself did not have the kind of authority the Roman Pontiffs wish to derive from their succession from Peter.

If here you will dare to affirm these things, I do not know whether your impiety or your impudence will be the greater. If you will deny that the Roman Pontiff ever held the position of supreme head of the Church, not only the past but even present ages speak out. For, even though all of you will deny this, how small is the number of your
opinions when compared with the number of those that affirm this! In actual fact just how long is it since this Island began to deny this? The continual and constant agreement of this Island in recognizing the authority of the Roman Pontiff is numbered not by days, but by years and centuries. The space of three years has scarcely elapsed since the defense of the contrary opinion came into your mind. Who is there who does not know your reasons for opposing the authority of the Pontiff after this obedience of so many centuries?

But now you insist that I should reply to your arguments. I shall certainly do this, although you hardly deserve to be satisfied in this matter. Since, however, I have promised I would do this, I shall act toward you accordingly, as long as the following points are first agreed upon by both of us. Functions that are properly essential to the salvation of men are not to be taken away and repudiated merely because they are perversely abused. If the high priest wrongly uses his authority, the authority that I have shown to be held justly, is not to be instantly taken away. Just because some priests may abuse their power through profit and unrestrained wantonness, God does not wish the priest’s power of judging to be transferred to another. If you will concede these points to me I shall proceed immediately to answer your arguments.

I urge you all the more in this matter because almost all who begin to speak or write against the authority of the Pontiff becloud the minds of simple men with darkness. These writers present the vices of certain Pontiffs, vices that men commonly consider deserving of just hatred. Imprudent men are thus led astray to condemn this authority. To these the authority seems to have granted the wicked a license for sinning. Recently I have read this opinion expressed in a book written in the language of our native land so that the less educated of our people might be persuaded. The book denies that any obedience such as has been customarily given to the Roman Pontiff should be given now. To persuade his readers, this author, whoever he was—he did not add his name to his remarkable work—introduces his reasons.²

First, he collects the perverse and vicious habits of all the bad Pontiffs whom he also calls by name. He does not say a single word about the good Pontiffs. Then, in a long series he recites the names of those Pontiffs who appear to have conducted themselves badly
during their pontificates, and then lists their vices. Finally, he reproaches the people for their ignorance. For many ages the people did not know whom they were obeying when they obeyed Pontiffs of this type as vicars of Christ. Then, however, he questions whether any sane person would accept these men as vicars of Christ. Only the most abandoned person who was head of a family would admit men of this type into his household even in the capacity of the lowliest servant. Here, nevertheless, this writer acts more indulgently. He excuses the error and ignorance of the people because they thought they were obeying holy men who bore the character of Christ.

And yet, he finally concludes that now since he has revealed the habits of these men and expounded their lives—as if they had been hidden by the cover of ignorance up to now—the people should no longer persevere in their ignorance. There will be no longer any excuse for it. They would be sinning most grievously against God if, after they knew what these men and their criminal lives were like, the people continued to obey these men as though they were the vicars of Christ and bore His character. For what could they do that would be more insulting to Christ, who is sanctity and truth itself, than to think that these men, abounding in every kind of shameful crime, could act in the place of Christ? This concludes the book in which the author set out to deceive the people and to liberate them from just obedience to the Roman Pontiff. He thought this argument appeared to be the easiest way to impose upon the people. The people can scarcely ever make the distinction between authority and men. For the most part, the vices of men gravely abusing their authority cause people to consider the authority itself of little value.

But if one may act this way with the people, what king will be secure in his realm, what state will be firm? If the unrestrained wantonness, murders, grievous troubles of kings who have badly abused their power, if the robberies and plundering of kings are placed before the people in a long series, who can doubt how easy it would be for the people to come to hate not only the deeds of the men who exercised royal functions but also the condition of royalty itself? Would they not even abhor the very name of king itself as a pestilence?

We have a very remarkable example of this in the Romans. The Romans, on account of the more dissolute life of one or another of the kings—though these rulers were all most useful to the state—
rejected the kingdom itself along with these men and changed the entire condition of their republic.

Now books of this type have their value for deceiving the people. They succeeded in this more than in deceiving you, Sampson, for you are not exactly simple-minded. You can more readily deceive than be deceived. Now I demand that you admit a definite distinction of condition between men and authority. You show that in this matter at least you think as the uneducated public referred to in my example above. By this very opinion you condemn the man who abuses this authority as a license for sinning. You also think that the authority itself should be taken away. It follows from the nature of man that men may wrongly abuse their authority; this abuse is rightly condemned. Authority itself is truly from God and to that extent is a good. No one can condemn this authority without at the same time condemning God Himself who rules and directs as to whom He wishes the authority bestowed upon.

But, on your own behalf, if I cannot implore you to desist from your wicked and infamous opinion, yet surely I do not doubt that I may implore this from all who desire to be fair and honest listeners. I beg, on behalf of Peter, that they might decide that the insulting words with which you portray the supreme priest and successor of Peter are least appropriate for the character of Peter. They are surely farthest removed from his character. This is especially so since these words refer both to the insult offered Peter—and no one may rightfully speak any evil concerning him—as well as to a change in the condition of the Church of which Christ Himself was the sole author. This, I trust, we shall see more clearly later on. But it seems that you disagree. You seem to think your opinion is best for human affairs and the natural order of things.

Who could possibly conceive a condition better suited for the nature of things than that of the Church? With the greatest admiration we perceive its most beautiful order. From the lowest to the intermediate, from the intermediate to the highest, as if by a certain step, all things lead up to the government and control of one man. Is not this condition, this order, the most beautiful? Well, did not human reason, with nature as a guide, seek its own security and perpetuity when it founded cities, appointed rulers, and established order? Can any order be conceived that is better than to have the
common people ruled through intermediate magistrates, to have these magistrates ruled by higher ones, to have these higher ones ruled by the authority of the one supreme governor? Why, in the heavens themselves, as the divinely inspired virtues have revealed to us, we find the same order that human reason imitates in nature. The lowest orders of angels are directed by higher orders. These higher angels are directed by archangels. All angels, however, are made perfect under the government of one God.

*What Peter Would Say if He Returned to Earth*

What if Peter, who sees all this, should descend to earth and consider the condition of the Church of which God Himself was the Author, the Church over which God has placed men to dispense the divine goodness? He would see a Church in which the people are governed by the bishops and the bishops by the archbishops, one where all the authority of these rulers is subordinated to that of one man who acts in the place of Christ. This order was first proposed by nature as most glorious. Human reason afterwards tried to express this order more perfectly to the best of its ability. We have recognized this order, with the assistance of divine revelation, as the most glorious that can be imagined, since it has its most beautiful and absolutely perfect exemplar in heaven. Would Peter judge that this order should now be taken away on account of the more or less disorderly life of one man? Who can think Peter would do this? Who except some impious person would attribute this to his most holy character? Especially since all men know that he who holds the position of supreme head in the Church, whether he be good or bad, does not receive the honor bestowed. The honor is conferred not on a man but on the person of Christ through a man.

But if Peter should see that the Church was not at all disturbed by the wickedness of one evil man holding this position in the Church, he would recognize that this man acted in the person of Christ. Even if this man were the best, the Church would not venerate him but would venerate Christ Himself.

If, I say, Peter saw that the Church was not disturbed at how much or how little goodness or wickedness any man possessed who
held the supreme position in the Church, Peter would reverence in him the character of Christ. What should be thought of Peter in this regard? Would he recall the vast multitudes in the Church from their great and constant desire to obey the one man who held the place of Christ? Would he not rather glorify God and bestow highest praise upon the Church itself for such great and constant veneration of Christ? Would he not do this especially when he saw that not only the people in the Church, but also the princes of this world, the kings and emperors before whose tribunals all who professed the name of Christ were once accustomed to endure every suffering and punishment, had now devoted themselves to such great reverence and worship of Christ? They not only submitted the symbols of their authority to those men who bore the character of Christ but even willingly, eagerly, and most admirably indeed kissed their feet. Good or evil as these men might have been, they did this for Christ, not for themselves!

What great joy would fill the soul of Peter as he beheld these things! If on beholding these he wanted to use some kind of appropriate words, how much more likely would he attribute to the Church words similar to those the angels sang as they rejoiced at the birth of Christ: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men” (Lk. 2:14). Indeed, would he not sing this same hymn instead of judging any change should be made in this excellent order embracing the honor of Christ and the peace and tranquility of mankind? How would Peter be affected if he saw so many nations flocking together with such alacrity and general agreement of soul to recognize the authority of the one man who acts in place of Christ? How would he be affected if he saw the kings of these nations, previously opposed to the very name of Christ, now conferring every kind of honor? How would he be affected if he saw the kings who previously excluded Christians from their cities, their assemblies, from all contact with men, and who formerly persecuted Christians with every kind of punishment, now recalling the Christians and receiving them into their cities? If he saw these kings actually making their cities subject to Christians and dividing their authority with them? If he saw these kings giving Christians preference in every kind of honor, prostrating themselves as they kissed the feet of those professing Christ?

Surely Isaias the Prophet, who clearly testifies to all matters con-
concerning the Church, tells us what Peter would say and how he would be affected: "And the children of them that afflict thee, shall come bowing down to thee, and all that slandered thee shall worship the steps of thy feet, and shall call thee the city of the Lord, the Sion of the Holy One of Israel. Because thou wast forsaken, and hated, and there was none that passed through thee, I will make thee to be an everlasting glory, a joy unto generation and generation: And thou shalt suck the milk of the Gentiles, and thou shalt be nursed with the breasts of kings: and thou shalt know that I am the Lord thy Saviour" (Is. 60:14–16). All these things that we have seen happen were foretold by Isaias concerning the future Church. Had Peter seen these same things how could he be affected except as Isaias was? In this passage he indicates how all those who beheld these things and recognized the work of God would be affected. "Then shalt thou see, and abound, and thy heart shall wonder and be enlarged, when the multitude of the sea shall be converted to thee. The strength of the Gentiles shall come to thee: showing forth praise to the Lord" (Is. 60:5–6). These words not only probably but actually can and should be attributed to Peter. Thus he would speak were he to be brought back to life and were he now to see the condition of the Church. In the same way we know he looks down from heaven and together with the angels of God prays for God's eternal glory.

Sampson, with most devastating insults, describes the condition of the supreme priest. Such a portrayal is not only false and lacking in all probability, but is surely most repugnant to the character of Peter, most holy and apostolic man. But even now we may have doubts. If we want to hear the words of Peter himself in this matter, that will not at all be difficult. For we have Peter's writings, as well as Paul's. Since both expressed the same thoughts, this doubt will easily be settled. They will make Peter's opinion especially clear in reply to Sampson's assumption. Sampson thinks that some Pontiffs were evil, and yet in the opinion of mankind acted in the place of Christ. Therefore, they are not the successors of Peter and should not be obeyed. Thus Sampson's whole literary artifice views this matter. Let us therefore, after the pattern of Sampson, familiarize ourselves with Peter. We shall do this not as Sampson does, to attribute to Peter something unworthy of his character, but only to question Peter and to discover his reply in his own words and Epistles. Let us address
Peter in this fashion, when we have found the passage where Peter discussed the obedience due kings not professing belief in Christ. Do you really mean, most holy Peter, that Christian men, though they may be the most free of all men, should obey kings who do not have any connection with religion? "Yes, I certainly do," Peter will reply, "for this is the will of God by Whom they have been appointed 'for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of the good'" (1 Pt. 2:13–14). And rightly does the most holy Peter say this: "I hear the command of God. I hear and I give my full consent that these men should be obeyed because God so wishes. He has appointed kings to punish evildoers and to praise the good." But what if kings do the contrary? What if they inflict ignominy and punishment upon the good and bestow honors upon evildoers? Is it still the will of God that these kings should be obeyed? Peter will say that even then they should be obeyed "For this is thankworthy, if for conscience towards God, a man endure sorrows, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if committing sins and being buffeted for it, you endure? But if doing well you suffer patiently: this is thankworthy before God" (1 Pt. 2:19–20). Thus far I think Peter's opinion is sufficiently clear. There is, however, another question. If, most holy Peter, you say that profane kings endowed with authority should be obeyed even though they are strangers to the Christian religion, what is to be thought if religion is also added to the power of an absolute ruler who is now no longer a pagan but has become a Christian? He is ever prepared to look harshly on those who violate the precepts of religion in any way. Do you think, Peter, that this type of man should be obeyed? Who will now answer this question for Peter? Peter, indeed, seems to have left no definite words that give us a satisfactory answer to this question. However, cannot a sufficiently clear answer to this question be derived from the words of Peter just cited? A ruler who may be a stranger to all religion and even actively suppressing all religion, none the less might judge that all should obey him in those things coming within the scope of his authority. From this we can readily gather that if a ruler professes the name of Christ and sharply threatens those who would depart from religion, such a ruler would nevertheless, in Peter's opinion, be owed obedience in other matters. No one could doubt what Peter's opinion would be.

Now, therefore, my Prince, I beg you not to refuse to answer this
one question. Do your followers say this man is the Roman Pontiff? Surely when they have gathered together all the shameful things in his life, for the satisfaction of their own wanton desires, these men can say nothing more insulting about an evil Pontiff than that he was a ruler professing the religion of Christ, that he harshly threatened those who did anything contrary to religion, even though he himself took no part in religious observance. What then? Shall we obey such a man? What does Peter say? Indeed, Peter does not speak of such a case. But if this ruler were a stranger to religion, if he even opposed religion, nevertheless Peter thinks he should be obeyed. All the more, therefore, should we conclude that it would be Peter’s opinion that that man should be obeyed. This is so even though he professed religion and was most severe in his judgment of those who were heretics and were withdrawn from religion. If we can thus truly conclude, so would Peter also reply to this question.

Therefore, most holy Peter, if you could now confront the supreme Pontiff as though he were a great reigning prince, you would not hurl against him the violent insults that Sampson has fabricated as coming from your mouth. Nor could you, if you had the opportunity to address the supreme Pontiff, speak thus: “Oh! Proud, arrogant, imposter!” These words apply more aptly to Sampson. One might say that as an angel of Satan, Sampson transforms himself into an angel of light.

Thus this son of Satan hopes to deceive more simple souls by assuming the character of the greatest of the Apostles and by improving on his words. If anyone would call this Sampson a proud and arrogant imposter because he invents for the holiest Apostle words the Apostle would never say, surely it can be considered proper to turn against Sampson himself the very things he falsely and impiously utters against the Roman Pontiff, in the character of Peter. Cannot all of us Englishmen inveigh against this greatest of imposters because—we are for the security of our native land—we are more zealous for the security of the Christian flock within our native land?

You attempt to becloud these Christians with much darkness when you suppress the names of good Pontiffs who were of great assistance to this Christian state. You, however, select a few of the worst Pontiffs and place all their vices before our eyes. Thus you would lead all away from obedience to the Pontiffs. But other Chris-
tians well know how very good some Pontiffs have been! This very
nation of England—as you yourself cite from histories—had the
special prerogative from Christ of being the first of all provinces to
receive the faith at a public council, from Eleutherius the Roman
Pontiff. This nation was first, in public council, to render obedience to
the Vicar of Christ. And now, though all other nations have remained
loyal in faith for many centuries, this nation alone following your
leadership, would abandon this obedience. By your deceptions you
place before our eyes the vices of a few. As though there never were
any Pontiffs, as though authority had never been given to one of
them, you would take away all authority from the Vicar of Christ.
Would you remove the apostolate itself by mentioning only the name
of Judas and relating only his crime and treachery toward the Lord,
while you passed over in silence the names and virtues of the other
Apostles? By this one act you show that you rival Judas himself in
the magnitude of your crime. Just as Judas handed over Christ the
Lord to the leaders of the priests, you are now betraying the Vicar
of Christ and with him, all priests. You do this when you hand him
over to the rulers and kings. By this one crime you betray the universal
Church.

“Upon This Rock I Will Build My Church”

Deep shafts of this kind are the foundations upon which Christ
erected His edifice, the Church. By removing the first stone you
attempt to undermine the Church. Thus you especially betray Christ,
the Founder and Lord of all. Do you imagine your condition is any
better than that of Judas because he sold Christ for 30 pieces of
silver? Are you not undertaking a similar crime? You expect to receive
an annual pension of great financial value as a salary from the episo-
copal see of Norwich. The King has promised you this for many years,
as everyone knows. You formerly were accustomed to profess great
regard for the ancient rites and customs of the Church. Now you have
suddenly changed. You assent to every opinion of the King against
the laws of the Church. All who know you realize that you have
decided never to go against the wishes of the King because you expect
him to give you this wealthy episcopal see as booty. Later on, fear
of the King's sword so strengthened and increased your sentiments that you showed not the least hesitation in depriving the very Vicar of Christ of all honor. You did this, as you yourself have written, because the King so commanded.

The King commanded the Church that was formerly free to be subservient. The Church was to be subject to the authority and control of this man whose praises would have been great in the judgment of all good people if only, following the example of his great predeces- sors, he had not deviated from the established custom of the Church. But the King gave this command rather than show himself most obedient to the Vicar of Christ in all those matters that were properly under his control by virtue of his authority and position.

Much time would be needed to explain the amount of impiety that lurks in your treachery. Now I can only touch upon this matter regarding Peter. Impious man that you are, you impose an impious character on Peter when you depict him thrusting every insult against a priest of the Lord. Afterward you insult Peter even more shamefully. You depict him as depriving himself of the authority conferred upon him by God. Again he would deny Christ, now not at the voice of a servant girl but at the fear of the King's sword. For what would Peter be doing if he confessed that the office and position entrusted to him by Christ for many centuries—the office and position that Christ confirmed in Peter's successors and made manifest to all—was never at any time entrusted to him? You present him as saying this. He would be denying the very thing he affirmed he had been given by Christ. And Peter would now be making this denial, not trembling at the voice of a servant girl, but at the sword of the King. For all through your book you have unsheathed this sword against all who dare to disagree with you.

But let us now leave your impious words and deeds. Let us come to a consideration of the contrivances with which you hope to destroy the great authority of Peter. They are sufficiently clear. For you immediately proceed in this manner, without any equipment as if the matter were of trifling importance. Sampson speaks thus: "Peter never arrogated to himself this kind of primacy which he never exercised. Therefore he did not exercise it because he never received it." Evidently these are your strong arguments, for thus you begin your attack on the authority of Peter. You deny that he arrogated
this authority to himself. However, I do not know what you understand by the word “arrogate.” One could say, in opposition to the King, that he had “arrogated” his authority without right or example, and that this authority was not conferred upon him by another but was instead snatched from one who rightly held it. If you understand “arrogate” in this sense, according to the exact meaning of the word in Latin, in the sense that Peter never “arrogated” his authority to himself, then I must certainly agree with you. For Peter never “arrogated” this authority to himself. But when you add that he did not exercise this authority because he never received it, then you are not only speaking falsely but impiously as well. For Peter received it from Him who was capable of giving it. For proof of this fact there is the authority of the Church, the authority of Scriptures, the authority of all holy and learned men who have ever written or spoken about these matters. And the results of many centuries from the days of Peter down to our own age give marvelous testimony to this effect.

You, however, to prove that he did not receive this authority, begin to show that he did not exercise it. For this proof you abuse the testimony of Scripture itself. I shall, however, follow a different order. For first of all I shall show that Peter received this authority. Then I shall show that he also exercised this power, to say nothing further. All who acknowledge that Peter was a good man must admit this. I surely trust that I shall make this quite clear. I shall begin, however, with that passage in Scripture that you, since you apparently desire to do nothing to the point, refer to so contemtpuously. The Church, however, is accustomed to single out this one passage from among many others in support of her opinion. But you, possibly, would more readily deceive the minds of simple men by this device. You reject this authority as something light and of no moment. The Church considered this authority of great weight and very serious. Thus you plan your discussion. You say that the words of Christ to Peter in the Gospel, “And I say to thee: that thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my Church” (Mt. 16:18), do not pertain to this question.

Now, as I trust we shall see, they do pertain to this question. And you, especially, my Prince, will see this most clearly, if only you permit me to beg you to hear both sides with proper mind and judgment. Although greater and more weighty reasons should properly move you
On the Unity of the Church

toward the side I defend rather than toward the side you favor, nevertheless I do not ask this. I only ask that you show yourself acting fairly toward both sides while you examine the merits of both arguments. You should not concede to me anything that your reasoned judgment has not approved. Now indeed, I seem to have relinquished much that is justly mine, since I shall accept whatever your judgment will say, even though you openly show yourself far removed from my opinion. But I have such confidence in this cause that I would trust the judgment of anyone who did not desire to be an open enemy of truth. Wherefore now, my Prince, listen attentively! I demand that you concede that the Church was at least founded by Christ. Even though my opponent, Sampson, denies that Christ founded the Church upon Peter, he will never deny this. However, does not he who makes no denial know what the Church is? Does he not know what it means to found a Church? Certainly if we may judge from his book, Sampson shows that he knows neither of these.

However, I have appealed to the fairness of your judgment, my Prince, so that you may understand these things. I shall attempt to sketch them for you, since to explain them would require a larger work. In this way you may easily understand what is meant by the Church, if you understand the nature of your own royal position. You realize that it is found wherever there is a kingdom or state ruled by the power of one person. Kingdoms and states are a shadow and an image of the Church. They express the meaning of the Church just as an image depicted by a good artist reflects the true likeness of the body. But lest we be disturbed by names, let us say that the state is a picture of the Church, and we shall add no more to this for a start. Let us see what first meets us in this picture. What is it that first meets our eyes in the state but the gathering of a multitude? But every gathering of a multitude does not make a state. Let us add, therefore, what it is that makes the multitude civil. And let us say then that the state is a multitude of men gathered together through right and laws. But even now we do not perceive the state unless we shall see how and by whom it is governed. Wherefore, let us add this when we describe a royal state. Let us say that it is a multitude gathered together through right and law, obeying the command of one man. However, we have not sufficiently seen such a state unless we shall also see why and for attaining what purpose this multitude is gathered
together through right and laws and obedience to the command of one man. But this, surely, is not obscure. Men gather together with certain right and laws under the authority of one man, so that they might lead a life more suitable than one purely on a natural order, and that they might first favor the necessities of nature and then the conveniences of life.

Behold a picture of the state sketched briefly for you! It expresses the Church as a model. We shall know that this is true if we turn our mind’s eye toward the Church. However, here we meet, in the same way, a multitude of men gathered together by right and laws. But what is the difference between them? How can the model be distinguished from the image? In this way: in the state, human laws discovered by human reason restrain the multitude; in the Church, not human laws, indeed, but divine laws established by the spirit of God restrain the congregation. And since we say that the Church is similar to the royal state, this should be remarked especially in regard to the Church. For the Prophet calls the Church “the city of the great king” (Ps. 47:3).

Nor should we omit a consideration of the purpose of both these multitudes gathered together. We have even now discussed the purpose of the state that is restrained by royal authority. That might be understood more clearly, if it were repeated. We say, therefore, that states flourishing by human laws under the authority of kings have the same purpose placed before them as was presented to the people of Israel according to the flesh. Through the Prophet, God made a promise to those who willingly obeyed the laws. “If you be willing, you shall eat the good things of the land” (Is. 1:19).

God promised this to all who lived according to the laws of nature as instructed by right reason. They would, as I said, eat the good things of the land. All those blessings, as the Scriptures call them, promised by God through the voice of Moses to the Jewish people observing the law, are pertinent here. They are: the procreation of children, fruits from the fields, issue from the flock, and the many other things contained in the blessings of Moses. They may all be explained in the words “goods of the earth.”

Now what shall we say concerning the Church? Toward what does the multitude strive? For what do those who are gathered together under the leadership of God the King hope, as they obey the
laws of God and the laws of the spirit? Do they hope for anything except divine and heavenly goods? God has promised them these things through His Prophet: "And I will fill the soul of the priests with fatness: and my people shall be filled with my good things" (Jer. 31:14). Men, therefore, come together in the Church to enjoy divine goods. In the same passage the Prophet further explains as he speaks of the future Church: "And they shall flow together to the good things of the Lord, for the corn, and wine, and oil, and the increase of cattle and herds, and their soul shall be as a watered garden" (Jer. 31:12). Men, therefore, submit themselves to the divine laws and come together in the Church that they might attain not the external goods of the body, but the goods of the soul. If we should wish to express in one word what the multitude in the Church is striving for, we would say "to enjoy God." In God all goods are contained; on His account the people consider all other things of little worth and willingly reject them. God, however, spoke to Abram when he refused the gifts of the king who was dividing his booty: "Fear not, Abram, I am thy reward exceeding great" (Gn. 15:1).

Similarly, God speaks to all those who reject the gifts that kings can give in their earthly states. He is their reward exceeding great. Then God paid this reward exceeding great, to Abram in full when He desired the birth of His Son from the seed of Abram, His Son whom the Church recognizes as its Founder and through whose spirit it is perpetually ruled. All those, wherefore, who are within the Church do not refuse to endure any labors and suffering so that they might enjoy the greatest of all goods. This is a blessed hope for them; this is by far their happiest expectation.

We discover, therefore, the one end alone toward which the Church is striving. It is Christ, God Himself. We discover also that which comprehends, contains, and governs all things pertaining to this end. It is the spirit of God, the spirit of Christ who governs the Church even as human prudence governs a state or kingdom. I trust too that in this matter I shall have no controversy with Sampson.

But now that great argument approaches. It is certain that Christ appointed Himself the architect of this Church, to speak as though it were an edifice. It is certain that the Church began in time, grew in time, and was led to its highest summit in time. First the foundation and form of the Church were considered. Now we are investigating
that foundation further. Where did Christ place that foundation that
gave a beginning to this most excellent work? When we say that
Peter was the beginning of this edifice over men, when we say that
Peter was first placed as the foundation of the future Church, Samp-
son cries out that he cannot endure this. He says he will have no part
in a Church that was thrust upon a man. But why does Sampson say
this? He replies that it is because it would be building on sand. But
why? Do you fear that it will fall apart and tumble down if it is built
upon a man? And properly, indeed, might you fear, Sampson, if you
merely consider the man upon whom we say these foundations have
been placed. For he is, indeed, more tottering than sand, more fragile
than glass.

If there is anything more fragile than glass, he is feebler still. But
turn your eyes, for a moment, to the Architect. You will never worry
about its destruction if only He has promised stability. He has prom-
ised, however, that this building would be so secure that no visible
or invisible force could destroy it. But here again you will exclaim,
and now even more loudly. You say that you are quite convinced
concerning those things that Christ promised for the stability of His
edifice. But so firm a building could not have been constructed upon
a man so changeable and fragile. For Christ Himself has said that
the good architect does not build upon sand. Wherefore, it is not
consonant to think that Christ, Himself the architect, would want to
construct the foundation of His eternally enduring Church upon man
the most fragile of all. But thus far, Sampson, you cast your eyes too
much upon the man placed beneath this edifice. You do not suffi-
ciently attend to the Architect. Perhaps even now you fear the name
of a man. And this name certainly should be feared since you have
your eyes fixed upon him alone. Finally, if you are able to, turn your
eyes toward the Architect. Or if you cannot withstand such light, at
least hear what the Architect says; hear His voice: “Blessed art thou,
Simon Bar-Jona” (Mt. 16:17). This is certainly a name of weakness.
For Simon Bar-Jona was the name of a man; what he himself had
received from his father according to the flesh still remained in his
weak nature. But when Christ said He would establish him over the
Church, He changed this name. He added immediately: “And I say
to thee: that thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my
Church” (Mt. 16:18). Indeed Sampson, if you can hear the voice of the Architect, you need not fear any weakness.

If you fear that He cannot do this, He is the same Who made all things out of nothing. His word is His deed. You heard Him say that Simon Bar-Jona was Peter. Reflect now that it has been done. Simon is Peter. From a weak foundation comes a stable effect. And upon this rock the Church has been founded. There should be no further fear that the winds or the rushing floods will destroy the edifice. The edifice is now founded not on sand or Simon; it is founded upon Peter. If you will still doubt concerning this, consider the very great power of the Architect. You behold Him who created everything by a word! What terrifies you now? Is the hand of the Lord shortened? Can He not preserve such a fragile work, can He not make it permanent since He created out of nothing all that will endure forever?

Perhaps you are certain about His power, since you see He can do all things. But you doubt that He would desire this. Can we have a more positive example of His desire than in what the Church says? This is the Church, Sampson, that we have shown—in the words of the Prophet just quoted—has always been ruled by the Spirit of God, even as states are ruled by the spirit of man and human prudence. God has made known His desire so clearly to this Church that He wanted to give this name to it. The Prophet says: “And thou shalt be called by a new name; thou shalt no more be called Forsaken: but thou shalt be called My pleasure in her” (Is. 62:2–4). Let us inquire about the will of God from this Church. But what need is there for an inquiry? Look at the custom of the Church. If the will of God might be declared in the Church, where could we better understand this than in the custom of the Church? “Ask thy father, and he will declare it to thee: thy elders and they will tell thee” (Dt. 32:7). They acknowledge the custom of the Church, and they will say that Peter receives from Christ his position as head of the Church in place of Christ on earth. The Roman Pontiffs who succeeded him hold this same position.

But you show that you are not at all ignorant of this ancient custom. You yourself produced the thousand-year-old history of the King of the Britons, who sent to the Roman Pontiff to receive the
dogmas of the Christian faith from him. 3 If this King did not consider the authority of the Roman Pontiff greater than that of the others, why was it necessary for him to send such a great distance? Were there not bishops very much nearer? Surely it cannot be denied that there were bishops in Gaul from the times of the Apostles. Why, therefore, was it necessary to send away such a great distance to Rome, unless this King knew that the Pontiff was the successor of Peter whom the Church recognized as the Vicar of Christ on earth? When barbarians had invaded Britain and the faith had suffered a decline, who afterward renewed it other than a successor of Peter, Gregory, the Roman bishop who sent Augustine thither for the purpose of teaching?

But you will say that everyone knows these examples of custom. You will say that you want to know when this custom first crept in. From whom, Sampson, do you desire to know this? From whom other than the Church? The Church says only this: the custom has been handed down from the very times of Christ and the Apostles. But you will say this is not the case. Why? Do you not believe the Church? Truly this is the Catholic tradition. However, you demand writings. Have you such contempt for the Church of God, Sampson, that your only trust is in written words? What if all these writings had been lost, as almost happened? It is told in the histories concerning the Old Testament that all the books perished in the captivity of the Hebrews. These books were later restored anew by Esdras, filled with the spirit of God. What, moreover, if the same thing had happened in the case of the New Testament? What if these books did not exist? Would the Church have lost the name imposed upon it by God—“My pleasure in her”?

You, indeed, clearly show that you do not believe in the Church either with or without writings. For when the Church presents that passage in the Gospels where Christ speaks of the keys of the Church He entrusted to Peter, you find all the more fault with this. You brand it as something spurious; you snatch the book out of my hands; you yourself wish to inspect it, to read the words. Immediately you pronounce as of no bearing on this matter something that the Church says is of the greatest importance. You present an interpretation of this passage entirely different from that of the Church. What is there left to be said besides announcing openly for all to understand that
the Church has been in error these many centuries until Sampson arrived. Just as boys are instructed in the elements, so Sampson will instruct the Church in the principles of our religion. Indeed, a certain honor is conferred upon custom in civil affairs. In some cases where the force and meaning of certain writings is in question, custom becomes the best interpreter in these questions. Does Sampson confer this same honor upon the custom of the people of God in the Church? Whereas, though in civil matters custom alone obtains the force of law after a space of a certain number of years, in the Church Sampson does not even admit the custom of a thousand years. Sampson would rather remove the custom of so many years, as if it were but that of a single day. He would trust in himself rather than in the universal Church.

What kind of impiety is this, Sampson? But you say I repeat these things just for the sake of delaying, that I speak at such great length regarding the custom of the Church because I lack proofs from Scripture with which I might either confirm the custom of the Church or else weaken and destroy your opposing arguments. If you say that I am arguing with you in this matter unwillingly, you surely speak the truth. Nothing I do is more contrary to my spirit than this. There is, however, just one reason why I consider you most unworthy. When you hear my argument you reject it, even though—founded as it is on the custom of the Church—it is more forceful than any other. You wish to be satisfied in your own way. After a thousand years you summon the Church as if to a trial. You demand proof for so many years of custom. This manifests such impiety that it almost seems to me that I myself sin when I dispute with you with these arguments.

Were I to dismiss you immediately without any reply, I would be more inclined to think I was satisfying the will of Christ who forbade us to cast pearls before swine. Now, however, that I have been moved to decide to dispute with you, I shall add further arguments. I do this lest I might offer scandal to the weak who would think that I keep silent only because your arguments are so strong that I despair of my ability to answer them.

Therefore, I so pray to Christ that He may bestow His spirit upon me. For the person of Christ Himself, its Author, strengthens the custom in the Church, which Peter represents. I shall now proceed to an explanation of those words of the Gospel that the Church generally
presents in support of this custom. They are written, indeed, in the sixteenth chapter of Matthew. I repeat them here at somewhat greater length. Thus, possibly, all Christ’s questions to His disciples may become somewhat clearer. Christ inquired: “Whom do men say that the Son of man is? But they said: Some John the Baptist, and other some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets. Jesus saith to them: But whom do you say that I am? Simon Peter answered and said: Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answering said to him: Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I say to thee: That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven” (Mt. 16:13–19). Now I have recited these words—which Sampson says do not pertain to the matter at all—to show that Christ laid the foundations of the Church on Peter. It remains for me, following the authority of the Church and beholding her defense against Sampson’s attack, to bring forth the same interpretation the Church herself first showed. In so doing, my Prince, you cannot expect me to do more than interpret the opinion of the Church in words that may make this interpretation more evident. For I shall present nothing new. I have not the temerity to attempt that. I shall only elaborate upon this. I shall declare, in words that may be a trifle clearer, the interpretation of this passage that the Church has followed. I do not doubt that I shall succeed in making it clear and evident to all that Sampson’s opinion—opposed as it is to the Church’s interpretation—is an impious one. Sampson says it does not pertain to the case at all. Sampson’s opinion will easily collapse of its own accord, without any opposition, before all men who are not obstinate.

Here, however, many things should be repeated, if we are to attempt to penetrate the profound sense of Christ’s words in that question and in Peter’s reply. For almost everything that has been said in the mystery of mankind from the beginning of the world up to that day on which Christ asked His question, lies hidden in this question and the reply. But since I desire brevity consistent with clarity, I must of necessity leave these lofty principles—unless they
On the Unity of the Church

present themselves of their own accord—and turn to the very words of the Gospel. It was in this manner that Christ now questioned His disciples, first indeed, concerning the opinion of others, then concerning their own opinion. We should speak first about the occasion of His question. It was this. Christ was born of woman and, in external appearance of His body, did not at all show Himself above men. They called Him the Son of man, as He truly was. But He presented many signs and miracles that were above the nature of man. Quite properly a certain doubt would exist in the minds of men as to Who He was. But if men looked at His deeds, He was far above men. If only His external manner of body was considered, and not His character, He appeared to be below men. For thus the Prophet calls Him “most abject of men” (Is. 53:3). This diversity between His deeds and His person made the occasion for this question. It could not but create a variety of opinions in the minds of men.

But there are two classes of men. One class is that which Christ called “the world.” This is frequently mentioned in Scripture as in that text of the Evangelist: “The world knew him not” (Jn. 1:10). This name “world” signifies those who are completely dedicated to worldly things. The other class is that which Christ Himself has chosen out of the world. He says His Apostles were such men: “You are not of this world” (Jn. 17:9). Again in that prayer to the Father: “I pray not for the world, but for them whom thou hast given me” (Jn. 17:9).

Thus as their professions differed, it was inevitable that their opinions would be different. He sought to know the opinion of both classes, but first, indeed, of those who were out of the world. He called them pure men. He spoke thus as He turned to question the Apostles: “Whom do men say that the Son of man is?” (Mt. 16:13). All the Apostles answered this question with one voice. For this was easy to know and one did not wait while the other replied. The Evangelist, therefore, says: “But they said: Some John the Baptist, and others some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets” (Mt. 16:14). Thus far it was easy for the disciples to reply, for every day they heard the voices of the people speaking about Christ. Although the people admired His deeds, they did not suspect that whom they saw clothed in flesh was in any way above the nature of man. The people thought that they had a sufficiently great opinion about
Him if they compared Him with great men or said that He was one of the greatest prophets. Christ Himself did not add anything to that reply, nor did He question them further concerning the opinion of men. He said: But you, whom I have chosen out of the world, you whom I have made more intimately familiar witnesses of My deeds, "Whom do you say that I am?" (Mt. 16:15). Simon Peter answered. Why did the others keep silent here? Why did they not all cry out as they had done when asked the people's opinion? For then the Evangelist says: "But they replied." Would a reply have been displeasing had they all cried out with a single voice, "Thou art the Son of God"? Would not this have happened unless a most secret mystery lay hidden that reserved this reply for one person? Therefore, they did not cry out here. They were silent when speech was most in demand. For the Evangelist says: "Simon Peter answered" (Mt. 16:16). And what did he alone answer, while the others remained silent? "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." What moreover, was Christ's reply? "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 16:17).

Here He did not any longer direct His words to the group. He turned to Peter alone, called him by name and said that he was blessed. But by what name did He call Peter? Simon Bar-Jona. But this is surely a name of weakness. What was Simon Bar-Jona but the son of a weak man? It was perfectly fitting that he should have been called by this name, for it is a name of misery. Later, when freed of this name and made blessed, Peter would recognize the favor of his very great Liberator. First, however, Christ had asked His disciples for the opinion of men. They had presented Him with this opinion. Now, however, addressing Simon Bar-Jona, Christ says plainly that Simon is a man like other men. He says that among men Peter is a man of misery, but now he is blessed because he knows the Son of God. Christ says this according to another Evangelist: "Now this is eternal life: that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (Jn. 17:3). But how did he who was Bar-Jona know the Son of God? Why did he not name Christ as a Prophet, as other men did? Would he have acted as unhesitatingly as he did, would Bar-Jona have named Him unless he had received his words from heaven?
No works of Christ, however great, could bestow upon Bar-Jona or any man more profound knowledge concerning Him who walked among men clothed in flesh, than that they should proclaim Him the most excellent of men, a Prophet or someone very dear to God, but still a man. Now, however, Bar-Jona imbibed this knowledge from heaven and not from any of His deeds nor from anything in any way subject to the senses. He received this knowledge entirely infused into his soul by God. What then did he hear from Christ? Christ first pronounced him blessed for this knowledge that neither flesh nor blood but the heavenly Father had revealed to him. What then? What did Christ add after He had called Bar-Jona blessed? He said: "And I say to thee: that thou art Peter" (Mt. 16:18). But where is the name of weakness now? Where is Simon Bar-Jona? Certainly it was changed into Peter. What, however, did this sudden change of name mean? He was Simon Bar-Jona and was called blessed. Why did he not also retain the name that he had when he was called blessed? This, in the first place, seems to have been done so that Peter might be shown the nature of this new happiness by which he was pronounced blessed, that he would see it was not the kind of happiness his first parent had. This parent’s happiness could never have been stable since it was conferred upon one who was fashioned out of slime. This happiness would immediately dissolve like a work of slime. However, this "rock" placed upon him who was fashioned out of slime signifies eternal duration such as those things have that are built out of living rock.

Now, therefore, I must speak about the edifice He wanted to build and found. I refer to the Church. It is especially fitting for an edifice to be founded upon a rock. In this connection Christ Himself, as the Evangelist notes in another passage, calls a man who built his house upon sand, foolish, and those who built upon rock, wise. As an architect speaks about an edifice, so might we speak about the edifice of the Church. What, therefore, could be more appropriate than to change the name of Simon to Peter? What shows more clearly Christ’s desire to lay the foundation of His Church upon Simon Bar-Jona than the fact that He would speak in the character of an architect concerning the building of a Church? Suddenly He changes the name of him whom He calls blessed into Peter. And He adds: "Upon this rock I will build my Church."
By this very simple method that can be understood by all, I have narrated the words of Christ. No force of this exposition depends on the words of the Gospel; nothing is presented that is not particularly appropriate. This surely is apparent to all. But now let us discuss again the same words of Christ, so that I might render my opinion even more firm, that I might render it not only simple and true but also well fortified on every side against all who might attempt to oppose it. Now let us take those words of Christ to Peter where He calls him blessed. He says: “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven” (Mt. 16:17). Here, truly, what first offers itself for our consideration? Is it not the fact that he who is wretched by nature—for such is Simon Bar-Jona, and especially wretched because he has lost the knowledge of his Creator—is now pronounced blessed in the judgment of the Son of God? But why blessed? Because he had knowledge of the Son of God, knowledge that was not received from flesh and blood but knowledge that was inspired by the heavenly Father. Would he have been less blessed, however, had he received this knowledge from flesh and blood? Does it not make any difference whence one draws this knowledge? If happiness is founded in the knowledge of the Son of God, cannot anyone who receives this knowledge in any way be called blessed? But this, indeed, cannot be said. Many have the knowledge that Jesus in the flesh was the Son of God and they have confessed this. They were not called blessed especially on this account. Nathaniel and the centurion said this: “Indeed this was the Son of God” (Mt. 27:54). Others also said this. They were not blessed on this account. Why is this so? Because they received this knowledge from flesh and blood. Such knowledge is not at all like that which makes it possible for one to be called blessed. Nathaniel received this knowledge as is narrated in the Gospel: “Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, thou believest; greater things than these shalt thou see” (Jn. 1:50). The centurion received it on account of those signs he would see in the passion. Why are these not blessed? May John the Baptist, indeed, be called blessed? Christ testified: “There hath not risen among them that are born of woman a greater than John the Baptist” (Mt. 11:11). He knew that Christ was the Son of God, although he had this knowledge from the heavenly Father. For John thus testifies that
He who sent him said: “He upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining upon him . . . this is the Son of God” (Jn. 1:33–34). John knew this when he saw the Holy Spirit descending upon Christ in the form of a dove. But he was not blessed on this account, because even he knew this by an external sign, as if through flesh and blood. Peter understood these things in a manner higher than all others. Therefore he is given a higher title than John, though of John it is said: “There hath not risen among them that are born of woman a greater than John the Baptist” (Mt. 11:11).

How, therefore, did Peter understand this? Clearly in this manner. God had pity on the misery of man to whom this way to happiness was closed. Man had entirely ignored this way. God promised He would show the way. He would send Him who would make clear the way. This manner of knowing was not by man who is flesh and blood; nor was it by any external sign. This manner was clearly such as is described in the Scripture: “And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor: And they shall all be taught of God” (Jn. 6:45; Is. 54:13; Jer. 31:33–34). This manner of knowing was characteristic of the New Testament that God had formerly promised He would give. It was characteristic of those who looked to the Church of Christ, of those who were called the people of God. The Prophet, speaking of them in the person of God, says: “I have formed thee, thou art my servant, O Israel” (Is. 43:1). Wherefore, if I now interpret this passage in this manner, if I say He was the designer-architect who came to found this Church of the people of God, who always turned His eyes toward the Father who said: “The Son cannot do anything of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing” (Jn. 5:19)—if I say that He has made that man the first foundation of His Church in whom He found the characteristic knowledge of the Church as the Father had promised—if I say all this, would my words differ in any way from the sense of the words of Christ? The very words of the Architect make this same meaning clear.

Although He expected the Father would show Him the rock He had chosen to lay the first foundation, as soon as He perceived that Simon the son of Jona had received this knowledge from the Father He pronounced: “Thou art Peter.” My Father who is in heaven and has revealed this to you, has offered you to Me. “Upon this rock I will build my Church” (Mt. 16:18). Truly, however, before He said
this, He revealed that He knew the favor of His Father would be more widely recognized, that His Father’s mercy would become more manifest as this favor of heavenly knowledge was conferred on such a creature. For He called him who had received this revelation Simon the son of Jona. But as this is a name of misery, it is just as if He had spoken in this manner: “You are by nature a son of darkness. You have received nothing from your father Jona except sin, darkness, and death. Now that you have been made blessed by this knowledge of your Creator and Savior, you shall be free from misery, sin, and death. I shall perform these things. Upon you I will build My Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Thus the complete meaning of the words of Christ is that His Father revealed Him to Peter. Christ will reveal Peter to himself. But what did the Father reveal to Peter concerning Christ? He revealed that Christ “in habit found as man, taking the form of a servant” (Phil. 2:7) was by nature the Son of God, the Christ. Christ continues, as though He had spoken in this manner: “I will reveal to you concerning yourself. You who by nature are wretched and a slave, the son of Jona, will bear the image of the Son of God. Just as you have said to me: thou art Christ the Son of God, so also I shall say to you: thou art the son of man, thou art Peter. The Father has revealed to you that I am Christ the author and architect of human happiness who shall build the places that have been waste from of old, who shall raise up the ancient ruins of Jerusalem, who shall comfort all who mourn, just as He has given me a man as the very precious rock of His choice upon whom the building of human happiness will ascend into heaven —so I reveal the fact that you, though by nature you are wretched, will begin the edifice. You, according to me, shall be the first rock upon which I shall build. Just as I am the firm rock for all mankind, so after me you will also be the rock against whom neither the gates of hell nor any visible or invisible power shall prevail. Upon you I will begin to build my Church that I shall construct for the salvation of mankind.”

Thus far nothing has been presented that does not square to the finger’s breadth with the words of Christ, and also with the opinion that the Church wishes to make clear by these words. Christ knew that Peter was first in order of those men who would build the Church founded by Christ. The architect, God and man, consents to this in
these words when He says to Peter, after the heavenly revelation: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church."

But we do not speak properly of a man as a rock. Nor do we properly say that the Church was built upon a rock. These words are transferred from inanimate things such as stone and constructions from stones. We may properly say that we build with inanimate stone; concerning man, we say this improperly. Therefore, perhaps these words "man," "rock," and "building a Church upon a rock" may easily create some obscurity as they are presented in translation, unless their meaning is now more clearly explained. Not to omit anything that pertains to a clear understanding of these words, let us first show what is meant by building upon a man. Or rather, since these words have two meanings—a man is built in the Church; the Church is built upon man—let us first uncover the meaning of a man built in the Church. When I have shown the meaning of this, the second meaning should be very clear where we say that the Church is founded upon a man. But this comes second. It necessarily confirms the first meaning. For a Church cannot be founded upon a man unless a man himself is first built. If these things appear to be a trifle involved, the words that follow immediately will, I hope, render the matter unquestionably clear.

Now let us first speak about building a man in the Church. The Prophet Jeremia explains this to us in detail in the passage where he is speaking to Jerusalem about the future conversion of the Jews. He adds something about the "building" of these people, which is the same as the question for which we are now seeking an explanation. These are the very words of Jeremias, however, addressed in the person of God to the Jews and the tribes of Israel: "I will bring back the captivity of Juda, and the captivity of Jerusalem; and I will build them as from the beginning" (Jer. 33:7). Behold this building of men! And this statement is immediately subjoined: "And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity: and I will forgive all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned against me, and despised me. And it shall be to me a name, and a joy and a praise, and a gladness before all the nations of the earth" (Jer. 33:8–9). Thus the Prophet spoke. In those few words, indeed, he omitted none of the things we desire to know about the "building" of men. For though man from the beginning was raised up from the earth through the workman-
ship of God—as if he were an impressive edifice, the future dwelling place of God—sin threw this building down to earth again. Sins so destroyed the building that it became a den for wild beasts instead of a house of God.

This building of men, therefore, was destroyed on account of ruins; that is, on account of sin. God, indeed, promised this destruction in the very words with which He promised the building. And then this building was completely restored when sin was abolished and God’s name honored in it, when it was entirely dedicated to God’s praise. However, if this must be explained in even clearer words, I say that from the beginning “God made man right,” as Ecclesiastes says. We understand man to be “right,” however, when he completely turns himself to the Archetype in whose image and likeness he was fashioned. Man does this and stands “right” when he applies his will to the will of God that preserves him “right.” But when sin turns him away toward his flesh, then indeed he falls, then he is thrust down. This is the condition of the “building” now. It should turn its will back toward God. Wherefore, when the Prophet is speaking of the “building” he is first speaking about turning back: “And I will bring back the captivity of Juda, and the captivity of Jerusalem: and I will build them as from the beginning” (Jer. 33:7). Thus this is a summary of the meaning of these words and of the “building” of men. Sins should be removed and man’s whole will should be turned toward the divine will. This, finally, is the true “building” of man in the Church. When we say that man is “built” in the Church, we understand only that man, after the remission of sin, has turned his whole will away from himself and toward God so that man will announce the praise of God.

This is what is meant, however, by saying that the Church is founded. It does not mean that only one man should be “built” as in the beginning at the “building” of earthly man, but rather it means many people. It signifies the Church that was “built.” The Prophet expresses this in other words having the same meaning: “I shall form the people and it shall be to me a praise” (Jer. 33:7–9). This is just as if he said: “I shall form my people, I shall build my Church.” For the people, the multitude, constitute the Church. The Scriptures wish to express the firm stability of the Church and the fitting connection of its various parts that will never be separated. Thus the Scriptures call these men by the names of things having a most durable connec-
tion among themselves. They are called rocks, not carelessly thrown about but built one on top the other. Thus stability and order are signified. These two qualities are clearly understood in the security of a building constructed from rock. In this manner, therefore, all who are in the Church can be called rocks—even rocks placed in an edifice. Thus Peter commonly addresses all who are in the Church as “living stones built up” (1 Pt. 2:5). From these words we can understand that it can be said of all that “you are stones, you are rocks.” Here there is only a difference of words, not of things. So also can it be said of each one that is founded in the Church: “You are a stone, you are a rock.”

But Sampson becomes excited when he hears me say that all Christians are rocks. This is the same thing he would maintain, that he so vehemently asserts. He contends that by the words “Thou art Peter,” all who confess the name of Christ in the Church are rocks; of all who profess the Faith of Christ it can be said “Thou art Peter.” Such is the assurance that Sampson begins to place in himself and his case!

But Sampson, if I appear to gratify you in this by saying that all Christians are rocks, I shall also add something more that I think will be even more gratifying to you so you may know that in other matters where I disagree with you, I disagree unwillingly and by compulsion. I am not accustomed, of my own will, to disagree with anyone. I now, therefore, add this concerning those rocks such as I say all Christians are. I say these Christians have virtues of such a kind that when they have been “built” they can place genuine, associated rocks on the “building” of other virtues. These virtues so erected in this building may assist in the attainment of life eternal. For thus Paul writes: “Edify one another” (1 Thes. 5:11). Wherefore, on this account, all who are living rocks can be edified by all. Each can also be strengthened in the faith, by each.

But here, now, Sampson will rejoice. He will chant a hymn of victory. He will now condemn me since I have been conquered by truth and have fallen down to his own opinion. For did Sampson undertake in his whole book to show anything other than that what others say is appropriate to Peter alone—that he is a rock—can also be said in general of all who are in the Church? What if it be conceded that all are rocks, that all might mutually edify one another?
Then what is left specifically for Peter? Sampson maintains that the controversy is now over. His own case remains unvanquished.

Hear me, Sampson, and restrain yourself for a moment if you can. If you think that you have conquered because I have conceded to you that all Christians are rocks and can mutually edify one another, you do not understand what I have conceded to you. For in the first place the question does not revolve around attributing the name rock to other Christians. There is no controversy between us on this point. Not one of those whom your disagreement with the Church has made an opponent, has any quarrel with you. But when I concede that the name of rock was common to all Christians—for all have been made rocks by Christ—I say there is a very great difference in this common use of the name. This difference depends on the rank of dignity and excellence. For all do not hold equal positions of excellence in this edifice.

You, on the contrary, deny this. This denial makes the controversy. This, I say, is the axle around which the whole case revolves. It is a question of superiority, of whether or not Peter holds the position of first rock in this edifice, of whether he is the rock upon whom Christ testified He wanted to erect His edifice when He said: "Thou art Peter: And upon this rock I will build my Church" (Mt. 16:18). You, Sampson, deny this. I, with the Church, affirm it. But now we might expect proofs. For again we are called into battle.

Our arguments concern this rock. You maintain it should be removed from its place in the foundation where Christ placed it. I shall not allow you to do this. As I rely upon the forces of the Church, I trust I shall always so defend this rock against you that you will withdraw your position, or rather that you cannot even arrive at it. I shall immediately present facts that will to the highest degree strengthen this rock in this place, for it greatly pertains to this question. Without any difficulty at all, I can show from Paul himself, that though all Christians are rocks there is a difference among these rocks as far as dignity and excellence is concerned. Paul, using bodily members as an example, clearly declares that they differ among themselves in excellence. For although all are called members, one is superior to the other as is the eye to the foot. This one authority alone would conclude this whole controversy in my favor. But since I have begun this simile of rocks, I shall not abandon it now. There is a
passage in Isaias that makes clear the differences among stones themselves in this matter concerning the "building" of men under the name of stone. In this passage the Prophet, speaking in the person of God, concerning the "building" of the Church under the name of Jerusalem says this: "Behold I will lay thy stones in order, and will lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy bulwarks of jasper: and thy gates of graven stones, and all thy borders of desirable stones" (Is. 54:11–12).

From these words do not all immediately understand the most excellent order among these stones and also the very great difference between them? God had promised that He would lay some sapphires, others jaspers; that He would lay some in the gates, others in the bulwarks, but that all stones would be desirable. And lest his listeners should think that by the name of stone they should understand some material structure, he immediately adds and explains the kind of structure and stones that should be understood. "And thy children shall be taught of the Lord: and great shall be the peace of thy children. And thou shalt be founded in justice" (Is. 54:13–14). Now, therefore, the Prophet indicates by these words that he intends stones to mean those who are taught by the Lord. The Prophet notes that these stones differ not only in their excellence but also according to rank of position. Therefore, does not the man who was first taught by the Lord justly hold first place? And since it is clear from the Gospel that Peter was the one to whom the Father revealed the excellence of the Architect, should not the Author of this act justly give the position of supreme excellence to Peter? Could He have done this more worthily than by saying to Peter, after God the Father had made the revelation to Peter: "Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my Church" (Mt. 16:18)? Let us dwell for a moment on these words of the Gospel. "And I say to thee: That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church." We might greatly shorten this whole discussion by omitting all other rocks about which there is no controversy here, and by considering only that one rock upon which the Church was founded. Now, therefore, you deny that Peter was that rock upon which the Church was founded by Christ. But do you sufficiently realize, Sampson, what you are denying? Do you know what it means to build a Church upon this rock? If I asked you this in your presence, would you reply? You clearly would never reply,
because you do not know. You definitely show you do not know since you explain that these deeds do not signify something that must certainly be believed. Rather they signify your own opinion of this rock upon which Christ said He would build. Your judgment in this matter cannot be considered of any value, since you follow no firm opinion. For now you say that Christ is that rock upon which the Church was founded. Then you say that a confession of faith is that rock. Finally you say that the Church is that rock. But if you had a certain opinion, a carefully considered understanding of these words of Christ when He said that He would build His Church upon a rock, if you knew what was meant by building a Church upon a rock, would your opinion be so vacillating? Does not this very vacillation clearly show that you are beating around in the darkness like a blind man, that you have given no consideration to what you say? As a result, it is in vain that I now ask this. But it is necessary that this question be explained so that we may both know what we are defending and what we are attacking.

This, therefore, you many learn from your opponent. If you wish to acknowledge the truth, you will recognize what has been explained. For whatever may be understood to have been said about this rock, it certainly is clear that this rock upon which the Church is built signifies that rock which sustains the burden of the Church, the rock that should be placed in the foundation. The words: “Upon this rock I will build” make this evident. In actual fact, this building is not material. Neither the structure of the Church nor the foundation that sustains this structure is material. It is evident that the Church is a multitude of men concerning whom it can be said in translation that they are “built” and “built upon” this rock. It is, therefore, necessary that we understand by this rock such a rock that will be able to sustain the burden of many men. What does this mean but to sustain the burden of the multitude, the Church, with care and solicitude? And this follows of necessity. And with no less necessity is it evident that Christ understood by this rock not a confession of faith, not the Church itself.

For the customary manner of speaking would not permit saying the care of the Church was entrusted to a confession of faith. For what would then be the sense of these words? How absurd and far removed from reason such words would be! Nor can the Church,
should someone by chance think this the meaning of rock, be built upon itself. For this would not differ from the previous absurdity. It is evident that your two interpretations are both excluded, though we may speak of them later should it be necessary. It remains, therefore, that if this rock upon which the Church is built is the head of the Church that itself sustains the burden of the Church, then by this rock we should understand either Peter or Christ. But here you will smile, for you want Christ to be understood. For who can deny that Christ is the head of the Church?

As far as lies within my powers, Sampson, I indeed will never deny this. Nor, truly, will anyone who professes to be a member of Christ and of the Church ever deny that Christ is the head, that Christ is the foundation. Indeed all who are placed by Christ in the edifice of the Church as living stones will confess that Christ is the foundation. They will deny that anyone else can be so placed. Behold how much I attribute to this opinion! Here you will smile all the more and applaud yourself. But restrain yourself for a moment. I so agree with you in this matter of Christ being the head of the Church that I would say "anathema" to anyone who held a contrary opinion. In that very passage where Christ says "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church," I maintain with complete conviction that Christ above all should be understood as the rock and foundation of the Church. Nevertheless, I maintain that these words also pertain to the person of Peter so that he himself will be the rock upon which the Church will be built. Not only do the words of Christ where He said: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church," signify this, but also the following words where power, stability, and endurance to persevere against the gates of hell are promised. These words manifestly declare, I say, that Simon Bar-Jona was signified by that rock. Christ said: "And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven" (Mt. 16:19). What was the need for promising such great things to Peter in that passage, if not to give Peter the principal position of being the head of the Church? Justly, indeed, can Peter speak like Moses whom God appointed leader of the people of Israel and as head of the Synagogue: "Lord why hast thou laid the weight of all this people upon me? I am not able alone to bear all this people" (Nm. 11:11–14). For thus Peter could
speak when he heard he had been made the rock upon which the weight of the Church would rest, the rock that should support the Church: "Lord, why hast thou laid the weight of all this people upon me?" For Peter's multitude was different by far. This multitude did not embrace one people but all nations. It embraced the inheritance of Christ concerning which it is said: "Ask of me, and I will give thee the Gentiles for thy inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession" (Ps. 2:8).

I say that all people, all who will be the possession of Christ, will be entrusted to the care of this one man who was then appointed head of the Church. He must lead the people away from a tyrant far more cruel than the Pharao and conduct them past enemies far more powerful than the kings of the Chanaanites and Amorrites. For a very grave and continual battle hangs over these people, a battle not only with flesh and blood but with spiritual powers in the heavens. Peter will be troubled much more with an invisible constant enemy who will arouse the whole world against the people. When, therefore, Peter understood such a burden would be laid upon him—for he certainly knew, if he had only a brief moment for thinking about it—could he restrain himself from crying out with great tremor: "Lord, why hast thou laid the weight of all this people upon me?" (Nm. 11:11). But Christ anticipated all these thoughts of Peter when He said: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church." He immediately continued His words without interruption and added: "And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." This was just as though Christ had said: "When I say I will build My Church upon you, do not fear lest you cannot sustain such a position against enemies. For I have broken gates of brass, and burst iron bars. I have bound the brave man with chains and supported his materials of war. I have crushed the power of all your enemies, visible or invisible. The gates of hell will not prevail against you, if you only follow Me. I will open heaven to you. I will give you the power to open it for others. I will give you the keys of heaven so you might then perpetually summon assistance against every kind of enemy. I will renew a covenant of friendship. I will bring peace. It will be such a peace that whatsoever you loose upon earth it shall also be loosed in heaven. WHATSOEVER you bind upon earth it shall be bound in heaven."
On the Unity of the Church

Here we can understand the magnitude of the power given to Peter! How clear these words are in this passage, how much they point in every respect to the person of Peter when it is said: "I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven"! This is so evident that if nothing else had been presented, this very great authority conferred upon Peter in that passage saying: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church" would alone have shown most clearly the magnitude of the position entrusted to Peter. It would have shown most clearly that he had been made head of the Church. Sampson's presenting the fact that the same power of remitting and loosing sins was afterward given to all the Apostles, in no way at all diminishes Peter's dignity. Though these words were declared to all the Apostles as well as to Peter, they were declared to Peter in a superior way than they were to the other Apostles. This great power conferred upon the Apostles, moreover, did not diminish the dignity of Peter any more than the dignity conferred upon Moses by God was lessened when God took this same spirit from Moses, to whom He had given it, and imparted it to the 70 ancients. They were to carry the burden of the people with Moses, lest as the Scriptures say, he alone should be burdened. In the same way, therefore, Christ gave to the other Apostles and disciples, even as He had given to Peter, the same spirit and grace of binding and loosing sins so that they might bear the burden of Peter, lest he alone should be burdened. But those hearing that the same grace given Peter was also given to the other disciples appear to be disturbed. They are like the young man described in the Scriptures in these words in the Book of Numbers: "And when they prophesied in the camp, there ran a young man, and told Moses . . . Forthwith Josue the son of Nun, the minister of Moses, and chosen out of many, said: My Lord Moses forbid them. But he said: Why hast thou emulation for me? O that all the people might prophesy, and that the Lord would give them his spirit" (11:29). Behold what Moses desired! Behold how he did not fear that his own dignity would in any way be diminished when the grace he had received from God was communicated to many others! For what if all had prophesied? Would Moses have then been less a leader of the people? Who, except the young man, fears this? Similarly, in the case of Peter, if all the Apostles possessed the same grace of loosing sins
that Peter had, it would be childish for anyone to argue from this that the authority of Peter was diminished, that he did not hold the chief position in the Church.

Later, in the proper place, we shall speak more fluently about this. Now let us see in what way Christ and Peter are likewise both established as head of the Church. Let us see in what way we may say that these two are joined together as the foundation of the Church, since the same body cannot have different heads nor the same building different foundations. Let us see how I shall explain my opinion in such a manner that it will in no way appear dissonant or self-contradictory. But this will not be at all difficult to show, if we consider the necessary consequences of what at first glance appears to be my absurd opinion. I might express it in this manner. If Christ, God and likewise man, is the head, it necessarily follows that either Peter or someone else from the number of pure men will hold the position of head after Christ. However, Sampson will not approve the consequence. He will say that only a more absurd consequence has been derived from a previously absurd conclusion. He will say that a contrary conclusion may be more accurately inferred. He will say that if Christ is the head of the Church, neither Peter nor any other man at all is the head.

But I beseech you Sampson, reflect on this! If Christ is the head of the Church, He received this not as God but as man. For as God, indeed, He always was the head, He received this first place in the Church in time. If, therefore, as man Christ was head of the Church, I now say that whatever Christ received as man He received that He might sanctify it in itself, and then, that He might afterward entrust it to men when it had been sanctified. I say that Christ, as man, received nothing that He would not likewise transfer to men. But if He received it that He might transfer it, He also transferred it. Necessarily, therefore, someone received it who was a pure man. If this is so, I do not now think that Sampson would be so unjust to Peter as to think that anyone would be preferred to Peter alone of whom Christ says: “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church.” What could be more efficacious than this argument that Sampson ridicules as something spoken absurdly? If Christ, as man, is head, some other man also holds the same position. And if another hold it, of whom could this be said more properly than of Peter? Indeed, it will become even more explicit how properly this argument concludes, if we propose
for our consideration after Christ, a man acting among men and maintaining the position of head of the Church, if we ponder carefully for a moment what ought to be seen in a gathering of men such as the Church.

Is it not the form of governing that first comes to our attention? The form of governing, indeed, in this outstanding congregation is the same as for the universe—that the multitude might be governed by one person. And this person is also to be of the same nature as the multitude. Since it is a multitude of men, it should have a head suitable to such a body; that is, a man. We see that this was done by Christ while He dwelt upon this earth. What follows? Are we to think that He who came for the sake of man, He who established this form and observed the same while He was on earth, would abandon it when His bodily presence left this earth? Are we to think that He no longer wanted a man to be superior over men? That He no longer wanted men to have one of their own kind who would be head of the whole multitude? Can anyone think this concerning Christ? For Christ—that I might pass over the other signs and proofs for the chief position entrusted to Peter—when He was just about to leave this earth, entrusted the care and government of the Church to Peter when He said in these very words, not once, but a second and third time: “Feed my sheep” (Jn. 21:17). Assuredly in these words everything pertaining to the head, the vicar, the successor of Christ, is comprehended.

I shall treat these matters more accurately a little later. Now let me return to my purpose of making explicit the way in which Peter is also the foundation of the Church, even though Christ too is the foundation. If Christ is the rock supported as on a foundation, in what way can Peter be said to be such a rock? This, indeed, can readily be explained in that passage where Christ speaks about the wise architect. He says that the wise man builds not upon sand but upon rock. What this rock signifies is manifest to all. For who does not comprehend that the rock a builder first brings forth to be placed under his future building is not the kind spoken of here? The rock here spoken of is of the very kind that by its nature is suitable to support any building placed upon it. Many mountains and cliffs are of this kind. They consist entirely of solid and natural rock. Whoever wishes to build upon them does not fear that overflowing floods or onrushing winds will
tear his building down. But the other rock is certainly different. This rock the builder lays as a foundation to his work. When this kind of rock is joined to the natural rock, then indeed it supports the mass of the building and may well be called the first of all that is placed upon the natural rock. But unless this second kind of rock were supported by the natural rock it would not stand for a single instant of time. So that the living natural rock may justly be called the foundation of the foundation itself. The rock first set upon it by the builder may be called the foundation of the rest of the super-structure of the work. Such a rock, indeed, was Peter. Christ as Builder laid this rock in the very foundation of the building of the Church; the rock was to bear the burden of others that would be superimposed upon it. But this was done that neither Peter himself nor all the others would stand firmly upon themselves. They would depend upon another rock, a great mountain that would support everything. This is Christ Himself. The Prophets, filled with the divine spirit, foretold that such things would be, even before Christ placed Himself as a foundation for human needs. But Daniel the Prophet foretold this most clearly of all in that passage where he explains the dream of the King of Babylon. The King had seen a statue in a dream: “The head of this statue was of fine gold, but the breast and the arms were of silver, and the belly and the thighs of brass: And the legs of iron, the feet part of iron and part of clay” (Dn. 2:32). Thus, the King saw the statue standing “till a stone was cut out of a mountain without hands: and it struck the statue” and the statue was broken into many pieces and reduced to dust. “But the stone that struck the statue, became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth” (Dn. 2:35).

Therefore, though this King had seen in a dream all these things I have recorded, nevertheless he did not remember them. Daniel was first to weave the links together with the narrative of this dream, so that the King might easily understand it. Then Daniel added his own interpretation, saying that the four parts of the statue made of gold, silver, brass, and iron signified the four kingdoms before the coming of Christ. The stone, however, that struck and broke the statue signified the kingdom that Christ would set up and that would stand forever. This, he said, was signified by the stone that was cut without hands, which was truly the work of God. And this stone, indeed,
"shall consume all these kingdoms, and itself shall stand forever" (Dn. 2:44).

See how Daniel here explains the dream of the King even as he explains our doubts concerning the two rocks, the two foundations. We now say this concerning the two rocks. Concerning the foundation, we say that Christ is a foundation of the Church, by Himself stable and firm, just as is a rock for material buildings. However, just as in building a building no one can find a foundation other than rock or earth, so in the Church and throughout all mankind no enduring work can be done or accomplished unless it have its foundation in Christ. For it is Christ who was made in a great mountain, who completes the universal earth. This is what Paul says: "For other foundation no man can lay, but that which is laid; which is Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 3:11). For He is that rock upon which the wise builder builds. Wherefore Paul often exhorts that whatsoever we do, we do it in the name of Christ. All those things that are built upon sand do not have a foundation in Christ; they cannot have stability nor any endurance. Indeed, we see that Peter was not this kind of rock. He was only first of those placed upon that rock by which everything must be supported. Truly, when Christ promised that the gates of hell would possess no power against the Church that He was beginning to build, He said this in virtue of His foundation. The whole structure would be constructed by His own virtue, by the virtue of Him who was the "stone cut out of the mountain without hands," who filled the whole earth, who crushed not only all the kingdoms of the world but also completely destroyed the gates of hell. Wherefore, He now makes all this known in His own person: "And I say to thee: that thou art Peter." Do not these words of the Prophet sufficiently explain for us the kind of rock Christ would be? Can we not easily understand from them the other kind of rock that Peter would be? But even now, should we want the Prophet to explain to us what kind of rock Peter would be, we do not have to seek this any longer. For Zacharia the Prophet will explain it for us very well, in the passage where he speaks about a certain rock given to the high priest, Josue. This is the kind of rock we say that Peter was. He was given by God the Father in that revelation to Josue, the high priest. But let us hear the Prophet himself. The Prophet speaking to Josue in the person of God, says:
"Hear, O Josue thou high priest, thou and thy friends that dwell before thee, for they are portending men" (Za. 3:8). He says this first. What indeed, does he mean by "portending men"? We can understand the meaning from Isaias, as Paul interprets the passage. For Isaias says: "Behold I am my children, whom the Lord hath given me for a sign in Israel" (Is. 8:18). Paul interprets this to mean the Apostles. But let us hear Zacharia. After he has spoken in general about friends who are portending men, he then adds: "Behold I will bring my servant the Orient. For behold the stone that I have laid before Josue: upon one stone there are seven eyes: behold I will engrave the engraving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts: and I will take away the iniquity of the land in one day" (Za. 3:9). These things the Prophet says. Is not everything he speaks concerning the stone given to Josue also appropriate for Peter? The revelation of the Prophet showed that Peter was given by God the Father to Josue, the high priest. Furthermore, by the words "seven eyes," a Hebrew figure of speech, an indefinite number is signified by a definite one. This refers to the abundance of knowledge, the greater grace of spirit on account of which Peter was called blessed. Deservedly we can say that he possessed this.

"And I will engrave the engraving thereof." Now what does this mean, as though Phidias were speaking about his work? The following words make the meaning clear. "I will take away the iniquity of that land in one day." But why this? Was not the iniquity of the earth taken away when the promise that "the gates of hell will not prevail against you" was fulfilled? For previously, when they prevailed, the engraving was blotted out and the statue crashed to earth. Therefore, why is it now promised that the statue will be restored again and given to Josue, the high priest? But why do I linger on the testimony of the Prophets? Why do I search in the Prophets, as in hidden places, for something whereby I might show that Simon Bar-Jona was the rock given to Josue, the high priest, upon which He would bring His Church, when I have more explicit passages clearer than light itself? I refer to the words and testimony of Josue, the high priest. From these words, anyone who possesses the spirit of Josue can understand this question fully.

But because my opponent attempts to cover up these passages with darkness, lest any truth should be seen in them, I first had to shatter
this darkness. Then, however, as I hope, truth itself will illumine all parts of this discussion. This will readily happen if we understand that my words concerning the rock refer to a man. This rock should be placed in the foundation of the Church to sustain its burden. And here I am talking about a living rock; that is, a man who with care and solicitude supports the edifice of the Church and bears all the care of the Church. My opponent cannot deny this if he has any desire to explain this passage about Christ. He cannot deny that it is a living rock that is placed in the foundation, a rock that by its constant care will sustain the burden of the edifice. Christ, indeed, when He founded His Church consisting of a multitude of men, had no sooner spoken about the edifice of the Church than He spoke about this rock; that is, about a man. This man would be as a head to the body and govern all the other members and provide for all. Thus he wanted it to be clearly understood that no multitude could exist otherwise than by being founded in some one person. He wanted it understood that it was especially fitting for a multitude that would surpass all others by the bond of unity—such as the future Church would be—to be reduced to the care and solicitude of one person. There were many Apostles and they had not yet been enlightened by the light of the spirit of God. But nature guided the Apostles themselves to see that a multitude could not long be secure unless governed by one person. Only once, with Christ in their presence, did they argue about which of them would be the greatest, which would be supreme over the others. Even by the light of nature they perceived that unless someone were pre-eminent, the group could not long stand firmly. Had they not seen this, however, when Christ was present with them, dissension would have existed. And dissension is customarily the first cause in the dissolution of any society. Christ repressed this dissension among them concerning the chief position. Such dissension could not exist without some human ambition. This was as though Christ were saying that such dissension was in no way characteristic of the one He wished to be supreme in the Church of God. This dignity and first position would be possessed with humility, not with ambition and dissension. Christ, therefore, said that whoever wished to be greater in the Church should become least. He, indeed, by His example admonished them that this was the way to the kingdom of God. Though He was Master of all, He surpassed all in humility. He ministered to all. We may read
in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark how Christ repressed the strife of the Apostles concerning the supreme excellence of dignity.

In these places Christ said nothing whereby they might clearly know which one of them would be supreme over the others. Since they did not know He would leave them, how could it be any special concern of theirs to settle the question of a vicar while the Lord was still with them? For at the time this dissension began, the Apostles did not know anything about His passion, as the words of the Gospel show. But as the time of the passion grew close when He would be removed from their midst, during the Last Supper as described by Luke He openly showed them whom He would leave in His place. But even then this is not described as clearly as by John. The reason for this may be because He would return to them after His death, because He knew that would be the most opportune time for declaring His will. But finally, He was about to withdraw His bodily presence from them completely. After a short while He would leave the earth and ascend into Heaven from whence He would never return with His body before the end of the world. Then, therefore, He declared the name of the shepherd whom He desired to appoint as governor of His Church. This appeared to be His last will. He Himself appointed an ambassador and vicar on earth who would have the care of His people. This may be read in the last chapter of John. But let us return for a moment to Luke and the words of Christ to His Apostles at the Last Supper where Luke recounts that a dissension arose among the Apostles. It was the same that had arisen at another time, as the Evangelists testify. In the same way Christ repressed it so that He might condemn ambition and admonish them by His example of humility. Finally, however, He added that they would all be great, that there was no reason why they should struggle for honor among men, that He had prepared a greater honor for them, that in the kingdom of God they would sit judging the twelve tribes of Israel. “But now,” He said, “a greater and more timely struggle threatens, a struggle against the enemy who watches for your destruction day and night, who goes around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, who brought death to your first parent—in whom, indeed, you have all died. For Satan hath ‘desired to have you that he might sift you as wheat’” (Lk. 22:31).

Thus Christ spoke. But to whom did He address His words when
He said that Satan desired to sift you? To all? Hardly! To whom, then? To Simon. To that very one whom He had promised to make a firm rock against whom the gates of hell would not prevail. He now tells Simon that the prince of hell desired to have him that he might tempt his firmness. Even as this prince desired, when he was previously permitted to approach the first man who was created perfect in nature, to plot with his arts against this man’s salvation—so now, this prince of hell desired to be permitted to approach this new creature who was made above nature by the same Creator that he might also prepare snares for his salvation. For these, indeed, are the words of the Evangelist. For after he has related the words of Christ addressed to all the Apostles: “And you may sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel,” he then adds that the Lord said to Simon: “Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat” (Lk. 22:31). But here, though He was speaking about all when He said: “Satan hath desired you that he might sift you as wheat,” He addressed His words to Simon alone. This can be a very strong argument that Simon was head of all. Unless He wished to signify this, why when He was speaking of the future temptations of all, did He direct these words to one alone? This, then, is just as though He had said: “Simon, Satan desires to be allowed to sift for himself the congregation of which I have appointed you prince and head.” To what purpose would it avail Him, when He was previously speaking and directing His words to all, about the temptations that would be common to all, to direct His words away from all and toward one person? What other purpose could He have had but to note something of especial importance in this one man? What this was, His following words make clear: “But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail thee not” (Lk. 22:32). Behold the remedy against all temptation that would be common for the future! The prayer of Christ for the faith of one man, for the faith of the head. The following words of Christ, directed to Peter alone, make this absolutely clear: “And thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren.” What could be said more clearly than this? The care and confirmation of the faith of Peter’s brethren, who were the Apostles, is entrusted to Peter alone! “But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail thee not: and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren.” This passage in Luke is sufficiently clear, indeed, to show the will of
Christ concerning His future vicar. It is made even more explicit in John where certain acts of Christ after His resurrection are commemorated.

For at that time the occasion seemed to demand that Christ explain His will most clearly, since after a little while He would leave the Apostles. They would no longer enjoy His presence. If we consider, therefore, the words He then spoke, they completely dispose of the controversy about which we are now disputing. Many things are told concerning Peter in the same section of the Gospel. From these sayings certain words are a sign of future dignity. I shall begin, therefore, with this first sign, which may be considered one of the greatest. This is certainly true of Mary Magdalen who at the command of the Angel first announced to Peter that Christ had been taken away out of the sepulchre. But I am not relating this event quite accurately. The Evangelist does not say that Mary ran to Simon Peter to announce this, but rather: “She ran, therefore, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved and saith to them” (Jn. 20:2). This is accurate. This is the wording of the Gospel. The event is related about both Apostles. Similarly, in the Acts of the Apostles where many deeds of Peter are recounted, it is indicated that John was also present. Sampson uses this argument to disparage the authority of Peter, as though Peter alone did not report the miracles but that he was always in the company of John. Actually this especially signifies that Peter supported the person of that disciple whom Jesus loved. Jesus had scarcely departed from him whom He loved, when John continually stayed close to the side of Peter, even as he had been accustomed to stay close to the Lord. By this fact, John declared that the character of the Lord was transferred to Peter. But this we shall see further on. Now let us begin to treat of the signs of the future power of Peter.

In this twentieth chapter John speaks thus: “Peter therefore went out, and that other disciple, and they came to the sepulchre. And they both ran together, and that other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And when he stooped down, he saw the linen clothes lying; but yet he went not in.” Why did he not go in? Did he prefer not to go in? This is certainly some proof that he preferred not to go in! For after Peter had entered, John immediately went in. If, therefore, John did not think there was something special
that pertained to Peter, why did not John, who came first, enter the sepulchre as soon as he arrived? He could have entered the sepulchre more conveniently alone. But he restrained his steps; he waited. What does this signify but that he should wait for him who held the place of Christ? The narrative continues concerning Peter: "Then cometh Simon Peter, following him, and went into the sepulchre . . . then that other disciple also went in, who came first to the sepulchre." By this John wishes to signify that it pertained to the one whom Christ Himself had left in His place, to enter first the sepulchre of the dead Christ.

According to Sampson, however, these arguments conclude nothing. I know, indeed, that for a Christian who is not led on to be persuaded by specious words collected from human wisdom, they do conclude. These arguments, especially when they are joined to the authority of the Church, are more certain than any knowledge derived by demonstration. But I have almost forgotten the matter with which I should be concerned. Therefore, I shall dwell no longer on other signs of the future dignity of Peter as narrated by the Evangelist in the same place. One of these signs was this. As soon as Peter saw the Lord on the shore, he did not wait in the ship as the others did, for the Lord to come to him, but immediately cast himself into the sea. By this he particularly portrayed the person of Christ walking upon the water, since the others were carried in the ship. Likewise here, since they had taken so many fish in the place where the Lord directed them to cast their net, "they were not able to draw it, for the multitude of fishes" (Jn. 21:6). Concerning Peter alone, however, it is said in the same passage: "Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land, full of great fishes, one hundred and fifty-three." All these things are said in a mystery. Indeed, many others were scattered throughout the Gospels as most certain signs of the will of Christ. But now I omit these things, on account of Sampson. For he believes neither the Church nor Christ Himself, unless they present in vividly clear words what they desire. He does not become a servant of the will of God; he pretends he does not hear when the Lord speaks somewhat obscurely. But this indeed, Sampson, is not the custom of the servants of Christ. These servants recognize His will as sheep recognize the will of their shepherd by his voice alone. They understand these things without a nod or frequent signs. If you are included among those
people, you would certainly not reject this form of reasoning in those matters pertaining to the meaning of God's will. When Paul, in this very important matter, wants to show the regard due by divine right to those who preach the word, he uses this single argument taken from the Old Testament: "Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?" (1 Cor. 9:9). Here, Sampson, should there be a dispute between him and Paul, would deny this consequence just like a subtle logician. He would instantly bring forth another explanation of this passage.

I say this now, Sampson, because I see that this is an extremely manifest proof of divine will taken from Scriptures, where a sophist could hardly find occasion for captious objections. You, however, as I shall show, attempt to elude every force of argument with your perverse interpretations. But we should not depend upon signs when dealing with such a servant concerning the will of God. Sampson demands well-explained arguments included in the form of a syllogism.

Wherefore, Sampson, listen attentively. I shall follow your custom. I shall present the clear voice of the Lord Himself concerning His will. Only, do not forget what has been proposed to us in this question. It will not be out of place to remind you of this once again. We are inquiring about that rock which Christ has placed in the foundation of the Church, about that living rock, I say, which sustains the burden of all others that are superimposed. The words of Christ show that this rock is only one: "Upon this rock I will build my Church." We are now asking whether this rock is one, whether Peter may be understood by this rock, whether the care of the whole Church of Christ is entrusted to him. I now present this in clear and manifest words. What if I now show in words none the less clear and manifest that Peter was appointed after Christ to be the shepherd of the Christian flock? Will it not be certain that Peter is that rock upon which Christ promised to build His Church? It will be absolutely certain. Can anything more clear and manifest be presented than the words of Christ to Peter alone, even though the other Apostles were present? We read in John that He addressed Peter by name and required a token of faith of his love and questioned him: "Simon, son of John, loveth thou me more than these? Peter saith to him: Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee" (Jn. 21:15). Then when He had received this confession of love as a pledge from him to whom He could safely
On the Unity of the Church

entrust everything, He immediately added: "Feed my lambs." Are these not the words of Christ? If you do not hear them yet, Sampson, He repeats them again: "If thou lovest me, feed my lambs." If even now you do not recognize the voice of Christ concerning His vicar, behold now for the third time He exacts this same confession as a pledge and entrusts all to Peter. This time He does not say "Feed my lambs," but "Feed my sheep." If you hear and understand, is there any further need for exposition of these words? If you demand an explanation, what one should I prefer to present other than the interpretation of that very holy and learned man, John Chrysostom. In commenting on the words "Feed my sheep," Chrysostom says it is his opinion that these words mean "Be the leader of your brethren." But are these words not clear by themselves? If Peter is commanded by the Christ, the supreme Shepherd, to feed the sheep of Christ, are not the sheep of Christ entrusted to the care of Peter? If all who are in the Church are the sheep of Christ, since the sheep of Christ without any exception are entrusted to Peter as to a shepherd, is not the whole Church without any exception attributed to Peter's care and control? What do you say to this, Sampson? By what clever talent will you evade such clear words of Christ concerning His vicar? But you, indeed, do not cease trying. Later on we may see the nature of your attempts.

Although, as I have said, all controversy has been removed, let us nevertheless now bring back into the midst of our discussion that passage of John. Thus, not a single scruple or difficulty concerning the words of Christ may be left for Sampson. I do not doubt that these things that I have said would abundantly satisfy all other Christians who might hear them. But let us revert to the words of the Gospel that we might see how little material remains for Sampson to attack with artifices. "Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land, full of great fishes" (Jn. 21:11). But why did Peter alone do this? A little while before, it is said that all the disciples who were then in the ship were not able to draw the net for the multitude of fishes. And now Peter alone drew the net on land, a feat of greater difficulty. Since the net was so full, all marveled that it was not broken. Is not this net, crammed full as it was, similar to the kingdom of heaven, similar to the Church in which every kind of fish is gathered together? It cannot be dragged along by many, for thus the unity of the net and the
Church would be torn asunder. It is necessary that the Church be continued by one person. Peter bears the character of this person, for he alone drew the net that all the others striving together were not able to draw.

Here, however, Sampson will say that I imitate allegories, that I depart from the literal meaning and look for new meanings. What shall I do, Sampson, when the literal meaning leads me in this direction? The words of Scripture are such that besides the literal meaning that seems to be the body of the text, they also include another interior meaning, a spirit. If the body of the literal meaning summons me to the spirit, if I see the greatest harmony between them both, do you demand that I abandon the meaning which is superior? I read those words—criticize me as you will—telling how Christ stood on the land, on the shore of the sea. I read that His disciples were fishing and that they could not catch anything, though they labored all night, until after they heard His voice. I read that after they had been advised by Christ as to which side they should throw their nets, they caught so great a number that they could not with all their strength draw them to land. I read that the net was dragged by the one who first of all had met Christ standing on the shore. And certainly when I read these things in their literal meaning I do not only understand that then a great miracle was performed by Christ, but I also judge that now the same thing is being done. For this represents to me the state of the whole Church. It represents a state that now is and always was, after Christ had ascended from us into heaven. For Christ demonstrated that the Apostles are fishers of men in this world, as in a sea. They gathered together a very great multitude; they would all have labored in vain as in the night, had not Christ enlightened them with His light.

Now, indeed, I see that the multitude that the Apostles comprised would have been useless for dragging the fishes to shore. With the guidance of Christ they were received in a safe place. Now that the multitude was increasing it was necessary that one should draw the whole Church to Christ, as if it were one large net filled with many fishes. In its literal meaning this one certainly was Peter. Peter is the same one in the Church, even as each of his successors is the same. I can conceive no other image than this in my mind when I read these words. However, I now come to that lunch which the Evangelist
records in the same passage. For immediately after fishing, Jesus calls them to lunch: “Come and dine.” Then I reflect that not a single one of them all moved a hand for preparing food, though they had before their eyes the labors of their own hands. They awaited until they had been served by one Himself. “And Jesus cometh and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish in like manner.” You will understand that I am preserving continuous order here, though I may seem to have separated one text from the rest. These words, after the repast, indicate this: “Simon, lovest thou me more than these?” (Jn. 21:15). Why did He say “more than these” unless He demanded something more from Peter than He did from the rest? What, however, did He demand unless it were what He Himself was doing as long as He was present in His body—that He should feed the brethren? By this emphasis in words, Peter was especially commanded to do this. Thus He seemed to place in this one man the salvation of His whole flock for whom He would die, if the flock were to be fed by this one man. Therefore, I see that these things were done then, and on turning my thoughts to the present condition of the Church I now see one man who holds the supreme position, who has the care of all and who is the shepherd of all.

I see that he is the Roman bishop, the successor of Peter. How can I doubt that his is the position derived from the will of the supreme Shepherd who, while He was present in His body, gave to Peter the duty of sustaining His functions? Could there be anything better than the following words of Christ for removing any doubts that might still remain in this matter? That He might make manifest His appointment of a successor to Himself, in these words to Peter He also testified concerning the kind of death He would undergo. This is what these words signify: “When thou wast younger, thou didst gird thyself” (Jn. 21:18). Then He concludes: “Follow me.” The meaning of all these words is plainly this: “As long as I was here bodily present with you, I nourished you who are my sheep, with word and doctrine. Now I shall go that I might send another Paraclete who will bring more fully to your minds whatsoever I shall have said to you, who will strengthen you. Furthermore, Peter, I leave my sheep to you. By feeding them and by dying on behalf of them, follow me that you might prove to all that you are truly my successor.”

If we still seek confirmation of this opinion of Christ, cannot the
greatest evidence be found in Peter’s question about that beloved disciple? For when Christ commanded Peter, on behalf of the love He had for him, to undertake the care of His sheep and feed them, then Peter seemed to marvel—seeing that beloved disciple following—why Christ had not said to this disciple: “Follow me and feed my sheep.” Peter, turning about, saw that disciple whom Jesus loved following, the disciple who also leaned on His breast at supper, and said: “Lord, who is he that shall betray thee? Him, therefore, when Peter had seen, he saith to Jesus: Lord, and what shall this man do?” (Jn. 21:20–21). “Jesus saith to him: So will I have him to remain till I come, what is it to thee? Follow thou me.” Earlier Christ had separated Peter from all; now He separated him even from the beloved disciple so that his dignity and office would shine more brightly. “If I desire him to remain until I come, what is it to thee? Follow thou me.” This was as though He had said: “Do not inquire about the others. In my Father’s house there are many mansions. In my Church there are many functions, different positions. Others will not lack these positions. If I want this man about whom you are inquiring to remain until I come, what concern of yours is this? I entrust to you the duty of feeding my sheep. Fulfill it! Be attentive in this; the other cares will be mine. If, dying, I have entrusted my mother to him, to you I have entrusted my spouse, to you I have entrusted the care of my Church. Follow thou me. I am the first rock. I am that rock cut from the mountain without hands, the rock who will make full the earth. Now, besides myself, no other foundations can be laid. I support all other foundations. All power is given to me in heaven and on earth. The Father has appointed me Builder of mankind. This new work, withdrawn from the hands of God the Architect fell to earth and was divided into two parts. I join these two parts together again. From a fragile work I make a durable one; from slime I make living rock. And what else do I now wish? I wish only to build, to place living stones in the foundation, to begin first from you to whom my Father first revealed me as Builder. You will be the foundation of this building. You will support all the rest of mankind that will follow after. I have prayed for your firmness, for your faith. Being once converted, confirm thy brethren. I have appointed you the first of your nature next to me in this edifice. Follow me. Just as your care is of chief concern to me who am God and man, so let the care of mankind
be your chief concern for I have imparted divine power to you. As the Father has commanded me who am both God and man, to take care of all, to build all, to feed all, finally to gather together all the dispersed sheep, so, now that I am about to leave the earth and return to my Father, I establish the same order. I choose one man who will have the divine power for supporting my functions. You are that man to whom the Father first revealed my dignity. But I shall reveal my dignity to you. You will be that rock upon which I will begin to build. Follow thou me. Others will then follow you. I shall never withdraw my spirit from you even to the consummation of the world, even though I shall not be present in person. Others will not be lacking to support my person. I shall give them the same divine power that I give to you. You, now, begin to follow me. Later others will follow after you. Amen, I say to you, this generation shall not pass away, till all things be fulfilled.”

What about this, Sampson? In a continual series for more than fifteen hundred years we can count those who have succeeded to Peter’s position. That can only be shown in the case of the Roman Church in which the successors of Peter have been supreme. Certainly this would never have happened unless Rome, attacked as it so often was by heretics and so frequently plagued by barbarian peoples, had been supported by the word of Christ. Now Christ preserved this succession with the most powerful declaration of His word. Will you now, Sampson, I ask, say that this succession is nothing? Do you so trust in your malice that you hope to abolish this succession so completely that not even a remnant of it will remain? Do you hope to reduce the Church to such solitude that men may think it never existed? To this purpose you direct all your attempts when you would prove that Peter was not the successor of Christ, that Peter was not the one to whom these clear words of Christ were directed: “Follow thou me; feed my sheep.” But, Sampson, you exert yourself in vain. Although I present the bare words of Scripture as I have done in the case of those just quoted, I have not strengthened these words by the authority of other scriptural passages. I have done sufficient for this case and my duty. Now I beseech you, what would you say were I to present not less than three similar passages? The first is in Matthew: “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church.” I have explained the interpretation of this in many words. There can be no
other meaning than this. By the rock upon which the Church is built, one man should be understood. He should strengthen and increase the Church in the faith of Christ. What else can be understood by the building of the Church? He should exercise care and sustain the burden. But what if you deny that the Apostle Peter was such a rock? Do not the two remaining authorities, contrary to your belief, clearly confirm the opinion of Christ concerning Peter? In the first of these, which is taken from Luke, it is said: “But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren” (Luke 22:32).

How could the words of Matthew be interpreted more clearly than by these words of Luke testifying most completely that Peter was the rock upon which all others would be confirmed? Now, however, add to these the words in the last chapter of John. After Christ’s resurrection, these very valuable words were addressed to Peter alone: “Feed my sheep.” Does not this appear to be the last will of Christ? As Christ was dying on the cross, it was His last will to commend His mother to the beloved disciple. Later He would return to His mother in person. Was it not even more the will of Christ to entrust the Church, on behalf of which He had died, to Peter? For not until the end of the world would He return to His own in His bodily presence. How great was His solicitude in making this last will. For those who are making their last wills customarily say these words to their friends: “If you love me, care for this.” Thus Christ said: “If you love me, Peter, feed my lambs; if you love me, Peter, feed my lambs.” Lest, perhaps, Peter should think some lesser care were entrusted to him and not the highest—although Christ had even then expressed this sufficiently—He then added: “Confirm thy brethren.” Nevertheless, since these words were as His last will, He gave a third solemn testimony of His love: “Feed my sheep.” Thus, Christ said that He entrusted the care of the brethren to Peter; in short, that Peter should feed all who were His sheep.

Behold, Sampson, the last will of Christ! Behold all His powers that He left to this world, which are firm in this world! He entrusted them to the care and faith of Peter. Behold how He left Peter alone as protector of the sons of God! Why do you attempt to attack with artifice these very clear and manifest words written in His last will? What would you do to the last will of a friend, or your father’s last
will, if you dare to destroy and violate the last will of God—especially since His last will has been confirmed by continual observance for fifteen hundred years? For after all these years you now attempt to drive away from the successor of Peter the sheep of Christ entrusted to the care of Peter and his successors. How wickedly you drive them away! To whose care would you entrust these sheep? The King's care? So, indeed, you would; not the priest's or the bishop's care, but the King's! Why this is acting just as Cacus did! You will remember that while Hercules slept, Cacus drove off into his cave many of the cattle from Hercules' herd. Cacus turned his footprints backward so as to deceive anyone who might be looking for him. In the same way you have led the sheep of Christ—driven from the Church as from pastures—backward into the cave of Kings. For never since the founding of the Church did it occur to anyone to think that the sheep of Christ were entrusted to the care of a king. For what else would this be but handing over the soul to the care of the body? Who ever sought for the sheep of Christ in the custody of a king?

If you handed them over to the bishop of Jerusalem, or of Antioch, or of Constantinople, or to any priest—although you would have acted contrary to the will of Christ the supreme Shepherd—your impiety would have had some likeness, some semblance to truth. At least this person would have been a priest. In a matter in which there cannot be the slightest doubt as to Christ's will, you entrust the sheep to this man, the King. You are like a crafty thief who hides his booty in a place where he thinks no one will dare look or search for it. But there is one who will look and search. Do you think the Roman Pontiff sleeps and therefore that he will permit you to steal without punishment—as Cacus did while Hercules slept? But, Sampson, the Lord of the sheep is not sleeping. He sees you and He sees you from Heaven.

For not only do we the survivors, bleating like sheep, indicate to the Shepherd by our voices where we have been driven by you, even more does the blood of those you killed for their refusal to hear the voice of a hireling cry out continuously from earth to Christ. Oh! Infamous crime! From the time the name of Christ the Shepherd was first heard until now, we have never read of anyone allowing such a crime against Christ and His Church. Do we struggle against the authors of this wicked and impious crime with more kindly words,
as though they were still of our own flock? This would be the same as having most severe laws against those who drive away their plunder from some other person’s herd or flock; the same as having no established laws or penalties, however, against those who try to drive away and destroy the whole flock of Christ and who would kill the most distinguished sheep in this flock. But perhaps the atrocity of this crime makes it so great that no one desires from you the accustomed penalties prescribed by law. All expect some unaccustomed kind of punishment for you from God, such as came to Dathan and Abiron. For you imitate all their crimes. No Christian considered it an unjust punishment of God when the earth swallowed them up. But if God, that He might show the riches of His mercy in a vessel of wrath, has balanced the tardiness of the punishment for your impious obstinacy with the seriousness of this punishment—for He has thus far permitted you to remain alive—we should imitate the leniency of God and strive against your sword and words with words alone.

Let us now, therefore, hear Sampson. He denies that he is a thief and robber of the flock of Christ, for he has taken from an unjust owner, not a just one. He maintains that he has acted justly and reasonably, that he did not employ violence except against those who would not listen to reason. Let us, therefore, listen to this rational animal who thrusts the name “reason” at the sheep, although he has long ago lost the name “Christian.” What, therefore, do you present against those passages that I have just now produced from the Gospels? Where does your reason lead you? Do you not hear that the sheep of Christ have been entrusted to Peter? Do you not hear that the duty of taking care of the brethren has been given to Peter, since his faith was confirmed by the prayer of Christ so that he might confirm others? “And thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren” (Luke 22:32).

“I hear all these things,” Sampson will say. “But these do not pertain to the duty of Peter any more than they pertain to the duty of any Christian man.” Why is this so, Sampson? Finally, what proof do you offer us? “Because,” he says, “Christ was speaking in the person of Peter to each and every individual among the faithful. It is the duty of every single Christian man solicitously to teach his brother, to console him, to rebuke him.” This is Sampson’s argument, and it is his greatest. He argues that because something pertaining to every
individual was entrusted to Peter in these words of Christ, "And thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren," therefore Peter has no special authority above others. Sampson argues that because Christ addressed all Christians in the person of Peter, there was nothing special about the character of Peter. Peter was given no more authority and power by these words than were the others. Does this kind of reasoning please you? But your words, repeated again, show that this reasoning must please you. For thus you plainly conclude about that passage: "When therefore, Christ said to Peter: 'And thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren,' He was not thinking about future power. He only thought that when Peter was converted and had received the faith, he would be eager to confirm others in the same faith. But this is the duty of every Christian man as I said above." This is your opinion, Sampson. Because the care of every individual is entrusted to Peter, because something common to all others was entrusted to him, therefore no special authority is to be derived from these words. But if this reasoning is proposed by a rational animal, let the same animal answer me.

Let us imagine that Christ appointed a certain king. But I do not want to deal in fictions with you, lest I leave material for you to attack with artifice. I shall take an argument from that solemn ceremony that one sees all kings observing. When kings are installed in office is not a certain formula of ruling presented to them? Do they not swear to this? That they do certainly cannot be denied. What is this formula like? That they should administer justice from the laws—and many similar statements. But we should understand that everything is embraced by this administration of justice from the laws. Was not this same formula prescribed for our King when he first undertook the government of this realm? Absolutely! He received this power of administering justice from those who possessed this right of our native land by established custom. And from that time he began to be King. So it is!

Now, however, Sampson argues thus. He says that the administration of justice pertains to a judge as well as to a king. Sampson says the task of bestowing rights on each and every person has been entrusted to judges—as many of them as there are in the realm. Therefore, the King is not king by reason of this duty entrusted to him. For this is the kind of argumentation that Sampson uses against the
authority of Peter in his office as shepherd. "For," says Sampson, 
"Christ gave this teaching to all in the person of Peter—especially to 
the preachers of the word. Therefore, this does not make Peter su-
preme shepherd, since in just as many words this teaching may be 
transferred to the office of king." Since the administration of justice 
from the laws is entrusted to the King, I say—and surely you cannot 
deny this—that this same teaching was given to all who are in the 
kingdom, especially, however, to judges. The King, therefore, has no 
special authority in the administration of justice that would surpass 
the authority of judges. Is this your argument? Truly here this argu-
ment should have validity, in the same way that you use it. Do you 
wish to inform the King how marvelously you defend his case? You 
bestow a strange, unjust authority upon the King, an authority you 
can never guarantee. Would you snatch away his authority, even 
though it is conceded by all to be legitimate?

But listen to another conclusion I present from the words you offer 
as opposing the authority of Peter. I present them first to confirm 
the authority of Peter, then to confirm the King's authority. For I 
shall not diminish the King's authority if I preserve his along with 
Peter's. Now, therefore, recognize your words. You say, and say it 
often, that to confirm the brethren was entrusted to Peter in the 
person of all men. You say that the command to feed the sheep of 
Christ was entrusted to Peter in the person of the Church. Therefore, 
I now conclude, contrary to Sampson, that Peter is the shepherd of all, 
that he has authority over all. Perhaps you cannot hear this. But hear 
the same thing transferred to the royal power. The administration of 
justice is entrusted to the King in the person of all who are in the 
kingdom. That each person should minister justice from the law to 
his neighbor was a command both to the King and to everyone else. 
Therefore, the supreme authority of the King belongs to everybody.

For what do you seek, Sampson, when you inquire about the duty 
of the King? Is it some duty separated from everyone else, is it some-
thing that does not pertain in any way to others? If this is your opin-
ion, you err greatly in your judgment. If you are seeking in this 
manner, you will never find what you are looking for. You seem to 
imitate boys who only recognize the King by the different respect he 
receives from others, by his crown or by some other external sign. 
Such boys do not notice anything else. But you act in this manner
if you seek for a separate kind of duty in the King, something that he does not have in common with others. Certainly you will never find it in this way. But follow my advice. Seek farther for something that is common to all people and instantly the duty of the King will appear. But if you can recognize the King only by external signs and by his crown, at least think about the golden circle that embraces the duties and obligations of all the people. This circle completely entrusts to the care of one man what each one should do privately. "This is in the King so that it might be in all the people." But if you are seeking for something separate—for the third time I warn you—you will certainly never find it by considering the duty of the King.

But you indeed, Sampson, are so dedicated to theology that you seem to have forgotten your own proper profession. I refer to the civil law, before whose symbol of power you formerly thrust yourself. Do you, ignorant as you are in your own profession, desire to appear more learned in a strange one? Do not the civil laws teach you concerning a ruler, teach that when the sovereignty of the people has been delegated to one man this one man now embraces whatever duties and obligations each individual had? Do not the civil laws teach you that the just ruler will be one who renders to each person that which belongs to all the people and to each individual person? The situation is the same regarding Peter. Christ entrusted to him the strengthening of others in the faith. This pertained to all and to each one individually. In your own very words, was not authority over all the others then conferred on Peter? For if the duties of each shepherd are signified by the one function that was bestowed upon Peter, do you not make him shepherd of the shepherds of all?

Sampson Distorts the Testimony of Augustine,
Cyprian, Jerome, and Erasmus

Here the tardy Sampson produces the authority of Augustine, as though Augustine agreed with him. Commenting on that passage from John where Christ says: "Peter, feed my sheep," (Jn. 21:17) Augustine states that Peter acts the part of the Church. Sampson cites Augustine to prove that a ruler to whom the sovereignty of the people has been transferred cannot act the part of the people in his kingdom.
Could anything more absurd be imagined? For when is a king better recognized than when he says something in the person of the kingdom? As the kingdom is to the king, so is the Church to the shepherd. What other interpretation can we give when the person of the Church is represented by the shepherd? Is he not the shepherd of all? This miserable man Sampson is so far off when he produces the authority of Augustine, that he knows this authority of Augustine is greatly contrary to his own opinion. He knows that to name Augustine is to name a great adversary of his own case. Yet Sampson drives the reader of his book to the words of Augustine and commands him to read there that what Augustine says is favorable to Sampson’s own opinion. These words, however, if they do anything, completely overthrow Sampson’s opinion. Furthermore, Sampson cites the words that Augustine wrote in explanation of Christ’s remarks to Peter: “Feed my sheep.” I willingly yield to you, Sampson, as often as I know you urge me on to Augustine. For I know that he is a very acute opponent of your case. But when we bring these words into the midst of this discussion I should like Augustine himself—not you—to interpret these words. What, therefore, does Augustine say? “There was one man; by grace there was one Christian; by even more abundant grace this one and the same man was the first of the Apostles.” But see, I beg you, how greatly you can strengthen my own opinion by this quotation. Does not everything I have said concerning Peter agree exactly with all that Augustine himself says so eloquently in these words? Have I not testified from the very beginning of this discussion that Peter—if you would consider him alone—was the one miserable and fragile man out of the number of those about whom Job speaks: “They dwell in houses of clay, they have an earthly foundation”? Have I not testified that by grace, out of clay this same man was made a solid and living rock, that he no longer dwelt upon an earthly foundation but on a foundation cut from the living earth? Have I not testified that Peter possessed this in common with all Christians? By more abundant grace, however, as Augustine now says, this one and the same man was first of the Apostles. Is this not my opinion? “But now,” you say, “Augustine by saying ‘the one and the same was first’ did not mean first in authority but first in order.” This, indeed, Sampson says,—not Augustine. Whether or not this is truly the mind of Augustine, I would like to learn from Augustine himself, not from
you. Augustine, however, will never say this. In the first place, it is false that Peter was first in the order of calling among the Apostles, since his brother Andrew was called before Peter. Andrew led Simon to Christ. As soon as Christ saw Peter, He said: "Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is interpreted Peter" (Jn. 1:42). Nevertheless, He did not bestow anything especially above the others on Andrew who had brought Peter to Him. Who but Augustine himself can make it clear whether Augustine spoke as you say, or whether he thought that Christ endowed Peter with supreme power over the other Apostles? But to me and to all who do not want to attack with artful devices, to all who desire to know the opinion of Augustine in good faith, a sufficiently clear exposition is given in the words I have just quoted from the book of Augustine.

Furthermore, if you here demand something even more evident, I shall present the words of Christ Himself to which I shall add the clear interpretation of Augustine. This interpretation is so clear that even if you decide to act the part of Momus on every occasion, here you will not have the occasion. It is the passage where Christ's words are taken from Matthew 17. Here the Evangelist describes the man who came to Peter and demanded a didrachma for tribute. He asked Peter whether his Master Christ would pay the tax. And before Peter could ask, Christ anticipated Peter and asked him whether the sons of kings were accustomed to pay tribute. But I omit these events here and come to the act of Christ when He finally said: "But that we may not scandalize them, go to the sea, and cast in a hook; there in the mouth of the fish thou shalt find a stater; take that and give it to them for me and thee" (Mt. 17:26). These are the words of Christ to which I now apply not my own but Augustine's interpretation. Augustine writes as follows in the Book of Questions on the Old and New Testament, question LXXV: "The didrachma is payment for the heads." But perhaps you do not understand this. Possibly you are in doubt as to why Augustine speaks of a didrachma when Christ had mentioned a stater. Wherefore, lest this should delay you, this is the explanation: a stater was equivalent to two didrachma. Only one didrachma was actually demanded from Christ for Himself and His family, not a stater. The didrachma was payment for the head of a family. For among the Jews each head of each individual family paid only a didrachma as tribute to the Romans. Christ, how-
ever, paid two didrachma when He paid out a stater, one didrachma for Himself and another for Peter. He wanted to show that in His family there was a double head; one head was God and man; the other head was pure man—that is, Peter. But I do not want you to put any faith in my interpretation. Listen to Augustine whom you present as one favorably inclined toward your opinion. For, following the words in Augustine, "The didrachma is payment for the heads," are the words "When the Savior commanded that which was due to be paid for Himself and for Peter, He seemed to have paid for all. Because even as all sources of authority were in the Savior, so also after the Savior they were all contained in Peter. For He appointed Peter head of all." Behold! Augustine says that after Christ, all sources of the power of the Master are in Peter. Augustine says: "Behold the head of all!" This is the man that Sampson presents on his own behalf to support the contrary opinion.

Why are we seeking a David who will cut off the head of this Goliath? With his own sword Sampson wounds himself. For not only the proof that you present, Sampson, but also the authority you offer serves on my behalf. Nothing could better bring about the condemnation of your own opinion. However, after Sampson has brought forth his strong proofs defending his opponents' opinion rather than his own, what does Sampson do now? Indeed, he imagines he is now the victor without any opponent. But finally he arrives at the point where he cannot deny that the authority of the Roman pontiff, the successor of Peter, has now continued for many centuries. Now, like a grave and leisurely philosopher, he searches for the reason for this. He searches for the first font of this very great authority of the Roman pontiff, which, as everyone maintains, is possessed by the vicar of Christ, the supreme shepherd of all, the one to whom the care of the universal Church was entrusted. Sampson does not hold his listeners in suspense for long while they await his reply to such an important question. But when Sampson has asked whence the Roman bishop appropriated such great authority for himself, he immediately adds that perhaps this bishop obtained it by the excessive support on the part of princes and the people, perhaps by the detestable ambition and pride of bishops of that place. But how would you prove this, Sampson? For I immediately reply that neither of your reasons is true. It is certainly particularly wicked to say that so great authority
On the Unity of the Church

was derived from such a source. But I do not want to annoy you while I say this. Rather continue, Sampson, and say why you think thus. Sampson says: "Because nothing is more certain under the heavens than the fact that by divine right no more primacy or authority should be attributed to the Roman bishop than to the bishop of any other place whether in England or in France. For saintly Peter did not even possess this authority." But if I should deny this, Sampson, how would you prove it? Do you think your authority is so great in the eyes of all that they will believe you alone as you speak contrary to the general agreement of the Church? No one now even puts faith in your sworn oath. And such distrust is well-founded. For, contrary to your oath sworn to the Church at a time when you acknowledged its unity, you now seem to tear it apart. However, he offers no other proof. Sampson says that everything should be conceded to him for this reason alone. Human right entitles him to assert his superiority so confidently!

And thus, leaving the very part of this section that should be proved, Sampson advances to the other part. However, Sampson also adds certain proofs from the inscriptions of letters of Cyprian and others. He says that in these inscriptions nothing is attributed to the Roman pontiff except that he should be called the bishop of Rome, or Brother. I do not know for what purpose you present these. Would you prove that the authority of the pontiff does not exist by divine right? As if that were evident, would you prove from these inscriptions of letters that his authority does not even exist by human right? Whatever may be the case, I see indeed that your spirit is failing you. For now you show that all your arguments together with your strength and talent are completely exhausted. You declare that the only argument you have left is the one you gather from the inscriptions of letters. Have you never heard the proverb that people quote when they want to disparage the trustworthiness of something that is narrated as a fact? They say it is as true as the things that are customarily written in the inscriptions of letters. Have you never had this experience in letters written to you, even as I have often had in those letters that good men write to me? For they attribute to me in the inscription of their letters things that I could never recognize as true, unless I were most immodest. Do you recognize it as the truth, Sampson, when some write to you as a most learned man, a man ornamented
with every kind of virtue, a most important man and many similar things? But even if you recognize these things as absolutely true, how little weight they would have before an opponent who denied them, even if the very best men had written to you! You would certainly not achieve anything against this opponent if you were to use this argument, if you were to say that it was the very best men who wrote to you and conferred these titles of honor upon you in the inscriptions of their letters.

But if it were your intention to bring against the pontiff things that are inscribed in letters in order to detract from his authority, why did you not oppose against his authority his own letters in which other princes are accustomed to find his true titles? Then you would find not “shepherd of the shepherds” but “servant of the servants of God”? These arguments would accomplish more for you. But you plainly show that you are tired out from fighting in this case, that all your strength has been consumed, since you present the inscriptions of letters. Finally, nothing remains except for you to breathe forth your spirit. Speak sincerely, I beg you, Sampson; do not pretend. If you decide to produce the testimony of Cyprian against the authority of the Roman pontiff, why did you not present something from his letter beyond the inscription of a letter? An inscription, as you see, has little value. But the things that are written in the letter usually have very great value. Did you not dare to inspect strange letters? Is this your modesty? When you examined them did you not find anything that would support your opinion? But I say to you that if you had examined them you would have found things that most assuredly condemn your opinion. And they would more fittingly reply to the question that you proposed concerning the source of the pontiff’s authority. They would prove that your own opinion was particularly wicked. For in the first place, as if by some obelisk, this one letter written by Cyprian to Cornelius, the Roman bishop, injures your whole book. For what else are you doing in that whole book of yours if not showing that no one person was supreme in the Church, that the Roman bishop, the priest of God, should not be obeyed, that the Roman Church has no authority over other churches? For these are the chapters of your renowned book. However, what does Cyprian say to this? He says that opinions of this kind are the seeds of heresy
and schism. Let us present those words from the interior of his letter. Let us abandon inscriptions. In this we shall be bolder than Sampson. These words, therefore, are: "Heresies do not arise, nor are schisms born in any other way than through lack of submission to the priest of God."¹⁰ You cry out, Sampson, "Obey the King." You take away obedience due the priest. Cyprian says thus is heresy born, because the priest is not obeyed and this includes obedience due a king. But hear the rest: "One person is not considered to be priest in the Church for a time and one to be judge in place of Christ for a time." Do you hear, Sampson, the font of heresy?

The source is this: to think that there should not be one priest in the Church, one person as judge in the place of Christ. How does this agree with your opinion? The only thing you do throughout your whole book is to take away this unity. But let us continue. Hear the rest: "If, in accord with divine authority, the universal brotherhood of men would submit to this one person, no one would ever make a move against the body of priests. In accord with the divine verdict, the approval of the people, and the agreement of the other bishops, no one would make himself a judge of a bishop nor of God. No one would tear apart the Church of Christ by a division of unity. No one, to please himself or to be especially pompous, would found a new heresy among the people. Only someone possessed of an abandoned mind and sacrilegious temerity, would think that a priest could be made without God's approval." Do you hear the last words, Sampson? You undertake an investigation of the one Roman bishop. Cyprian has said just above that the denial of this bishop as judge in place of Christ is the beginning of all heresies. You, therefore, question him. You inquire concerning the source of his authority. And you add that the source is the support of the people, the princes, and the detestable ambition of the bishops of that place. Do you not hear Cyprian replying that such belief is an act of sacrilegious temerity and an abandoned mind? But listen carefully, then, to what follows: "Do not two sparrows come and neither of them fall to the earth without the will of the Father?" Since he says that minor events cannot happen without the will of the Father, does anyone think that a great and important matter can take place in the Church of God without the knowledge and permission of God, that priests, His stewards, can be
ordained without His consent? But you say this is done by the support of princes and the people, by the detestable ambition of the bishops of the place. However, hear what Cyprian subjoins presently: "This is not to have the faith by which we live, not to give honor to God by Whose nod and approval we know and believe all things are ruled and governed." Do you now see what Cyprian does on your behalf?

Now these words I have just quoted are in a continuous sequence in Cyprian. A little later, however, words follow concerning Peter. You deny that the Church of Christ was founded upon Peter. But if I should desire to present all that Cyprian says in this letter in condemnation of your opinion, I would certainly have to interweave his entire letter into my book. For I have never read anything that more clearly reveals and refutes all your attempts. For Cyprian speaks as though he had seen the King's attack on the supreme leader of the Church, the Roman pontiff. He also explains the cause of the attack. "He pursues the supreme leader of the Church so that great misfortunes might rage more horribly and violently against the Church, when the ruler has been removed." What more could Cyprian say if, when the King had driven out all obedience due the supreme head of the Church and Vicar of Christ, Cyprian might have seen him raging and advancing fiercely against the possessions and bodies of those remaining who still cherished the unity of the Church? Cyprian continues concerning you and the other schismatic priests who have deserted the supreme ruler of the Church: "It is no wonder that some have deserted the supreme ruler, a servant, since even the disciples of the Lord abandoned Him as He was performing very great miracles." And after a space Cyprian adds: "Peter, truly, upon whom the Church was built by the Lord Himself, speaking for all and replying with the voice of the Church, says: 'Lord, to whom shall we go?'" Does not Cyprian clearly say now that the Church was built upon Peter? Finally, in that same letter, Cyprian writes thus concerning the Roman Church: "Besides these things, they dare to go to a pseudo-bishop who himself was appointed by heretics. They dare to bring letters from profane schismatics to the chair of Peter and the principal Church from whence is derived the source of all priestly power." What could be said more clearly or more magnificently on behalf of the dignity of the Roman Church? Cyprian calls it the chair
of Peter. He says that all priestly unity is derived from that chair. The dignity of that chair of Peter is so venerated that Cyprian is indignant that anyone should be so bold as to bring letters from schismatics to that chair.

Nevertheless, as Cyprian’s words following in this place clearly show, the schismatics did this with a reverent purpose. For they sent letters containing an accusation and false complaints against their bishop. But Cyprian says this boldness was disgraceful. They did not stand in such awe of the majesty of the Roman Church that they hesitated to bring their false complaints there. This holy man was angry at these schismatics who had acted unjustly concerning their own bishop. However, they could not have acted more honorably toward the Roman bishop, since they sent from Africa to Rome those who would complain about their own bishop and who would implore the trust and assistance of the Roman bishop. For surely this was an indication of their greatest esteem for the Roman see. And yet they brought falsehood. To this extent they did not stand in awe of the majesty of the Roman Church. Cyprian considered their act disgraceful. For Cyprian thought it should be unlawful for anyone to present accusations before the Roman bishop unless they were true and certain. If, therefore, Cyprian could now come back to life again and hear you, Sampson, not only presenting such false complaints against the bishops of our native land but also especially false complaints against the Roman bishop, if he could hear you raging with your sacrilegious speech not indeed against one alone but against all who ever professed to sit in the chair of the universal Church as successors of Peter from the beginning, if he could hear you presenting a defense of your wickedness based on the inscriptions of one of his letters—how greatly would zeal for the house of God and respect and affection for the Roman Church arouse Cyprian against you!

But this is what his letter is like. You would offer the inscription of the letter of Cyprian as an attack upon the dignity of the Roman Church. You seem to have produced this letter to compel me to recall what Cyprian wrote against your opinion, rather than to use the authority of Cyprian against me. For assuredly, unless you had advised me about this letter I never would have mentioned it. There is nothing that can be presented from this letter that does not plainly
go against your opinion. But this is Cyprian, Sampson, who you say lived about 250 years after the Apostles. I am greatly pleased that you noted the time so carefully.

However, if you continue to act in this manner, I fear indeed that the King will suspect that I have a prevaricator for my opponent, a man who pretends to act on behalf of the King but who actually suggests to his adversaries things that they can use with great effect against the King. For what could give greater confirmation to the dignity of the Roman Church, what could better defend my case against your false charges than the very antiquity of this most holy man? He lived at a time so close to the Apostles and said the same things that I say. He says that from the beginning the Church possessed unity from the Roman Church. He says the Roman Church is the chair of Peter. He says the Church was founded upon Peter. Who can think otherwise than that this was the opinion of the Church from the very days of the Apostles themselves, since Cyprian lived at a time almost contemporary with the Apostles? This opinion has come down to us from that time to the present—about fifteen hundred years. What doubt can there be about affirming that this was always the opinion of the Catholic Church? What doubt that all who dissent from this opinion are schismatics and heretics? If I were to bring forward only that with which you now supply me, my case would be proved in the opinion of all who want to be fair judges. You of your own accord act thus when you mention this passage from saintly Cyprian, an ancient and holy writer. You call upon him especially to confirm your opinion. You absolutely overthrow your own opinion even as you call upon Cyprian to confirm it. I do not know what I can do but use the authority of this man against you. Nevertheless, since you presented Cyprian, I shall not dismiss him before you hear the condition of our own time explained in fewer words. The question is whether secular power follows after ecclesiastical power.

Unless you are clearly a blockhead, you know very well what Cyprian decides in this question. You know how he opposes your case. While you have been seeking a protector and a patron, you have been summoned yourself. Now these are the words of Cyprian in his letter to Lucius, the Roman pontiff following the death of Cornelius. Cornelius was the pontiff to whom the above letter from which I have just quoted was written. "Then the secular authority
suddenly broke forth against the Church of Christ, against Cornelius the blessed bishop martyr and against all of you, so that the Lord might confound and check heretics and show what the Church was. Thus He would show who was its one bishop chosen by divine ordination, who were joined with the bishop in sacerdotal and priestly honor, what true people of Christ were bound together by divine love of the flock, who were those whom the enemy should attack, who on the contrary were those whom the devil would spare as his own. For the adversary of Christ only persecutes and attacks the camp and soldiers of Christ. The enemy of Christ has only contempt for the prostrate heretics and once he has made them his own he passes them by. He seeks to destroy those whom he sees standing.”

Behold how clearly in these few words, Cyprian places before our eyes all your wicked efforts. By your reliance on the secular authority you would persecute the Roman bishop whom Cyprian calls the one bishop, together with all his followers. Cyprian also adds a reason why God permits and tolerates such persecution.

If these facts please you, you may present as many similar defenders of yours as you like. You may even present Jerome himself. And Sampson does just this! For with the same impudence with which a little earlier Sampson praised Cyprian and Augustine as advocates of his own opinion, he now names Jerome. He does this, though they are his greatest opponents. He says that Jerome recognizes that the Roman pontiff has no authority over other bishops. But he has scarcely said this when the words of Jerome occur to him. It is impossible not to quote them immediately so that his falsehood may be exposed. Indeed, these words plainly show that Jerome in no way agrees with Sampson. In fact, almost more than in the case of Cyprian and Augustine, Jerome’s words attribute authority to the Roman pontiff: “Who consumes the lamb outside of this house is profane.” This is the same as though Jerome said that he who disagrees with the Roman Church was profane. But these are the only words that Sampson cites from Jerome to prove that no particular power was bestowed upon the Roman pontiff nor upon the Roman Church. And he is not content to present the bare words of Jerome by which this falsehood is clearly exposed, lest someone should understand that Jerome meant something other than the Roman Church when he says “this house.”
Sampson advises us that Erasmus of Rotterdam interpreted this passage to mean that the Roman Church was signified by “this house” and that in the opinion of Jerome, the primacy of the Roman Church is declared in these words. But actually Sampson is not so unfair himself that he would so openly set his own opinion against the authority of others. Indeed, he says this was the interpretation of Erasmus. Sampson adds that Erasmus does not speak very sincerely in this passage, that Erasmus makes this interpretation very carelessly. Why this, Sampson? Because Erasmus does not agree with you, do you say he does not speak sincerely?

Erasmus was most experienced in the literary arts. No one in our age ever expended greater effort and talent in literature. He wrote more books than I believe you have ever read. He edited works more scholarly and erudite than you would ever be able to understand. Finally, there is scarcely a writer from antiquity whose piety and doctrine was so approved by the Church. A monument to his industry can be found in his works. It is evident that no ancient writer ever read Jerome with greater diligence than did Erasmus. Does it suffice for you to say against this man, as you reject his opinion, that he does not interpret Jerome sincerely, that he writes inadvertently? At least present something to show that you reprove Erasmus with care and sincerity!

But Sampson presents absolutely nothing! When he has thus reproved Erasmus for his opinion about the pontiff’s authority, Sampson passes on to other arguments. Indeed, this is Sampson’s conclusion: “But in this very important passage Erasmus does not appear to speak as sincerely as he does in many other passages; for here Erasmus with extreme inadvertence interprets ‘this house’ to mean the primacy of the Roman Church.” Is this not your conclusion, Sampson? It clearly is. Then you turn your discourse to other matters after you have rebuked Erasmus for yawning, after you have accused him of great insincerity in his function of interpreter. You think it sufficient to dismiss him so insultingly. But if you have no personal reason for your dismissal of such a great man, at least you should have some explanation for the Englishmen to whom you were writing. At least for them you should render some explanation of your rebuke. For you know that among Englishmen the name of Erasmus is sufficiently famous and well received. If your name were to be compared with Erasmus’
in the realm of learning, yours would be most obscure. Would you satisfy these men with such an inadequate explanation? Why should they believe and agree with you rather than with Erasmus?

But what if Jerome himself comes to the defense of Erasmus? Does not this entire outrage fall back upon you? Unless Jerome were to deny his letter entirely, he must defend Erasmus. In his whole letter Jerome appears to have presented nothing beyond his profession of the primacy of the Roman Church. In his words Jerome so defends the dignity of the Church that he not only calls anyone a profane person who disagrees with him, but he also affirms that such a person will undoubtedly perish like someone found outside the ark at the time of the flood. What, indeed, does the argument of this whole letter show if not Jerome’s disturbance over the internal dissension among the churches in Syria? They were dividing into many sects and were being torn asunder by the deceit and malice of heretics. Nor did he attribute so much to his own judgment that he would be able to decide to what church he should adhere. Jerome decided that this matter should be referred to Damasus, the Roman pontiff whose Church Jerome calls the chair of Peter. And when referring to the pontiff, Jerome protested by everything sacred that the pontiff’s authority should prescribe what Jerome should follow, and what he should avoid in such a variety of opinions, what he should speak about and about what he should be silent. For Jerome acknowledged no church but the Roman Church whose authority should be followed. One who refuses to be in communion with this Church cannot in any way attain salvation.

Well! Let us present Jerome’s own words. They are very clear in this opinion and need no further interpretation: “I follow no one as first but Christ. I am associated in communion with your blessedness, that is, the chair of Peter. I know that the Church is founded upon this rock. Whoever consumes the lamb outside this house, is profane. If anyone is not in Noah’s ark, he will perish while the flood prevails.” Could anything be expressed more clearly than this? But he said these things after he had presented many others concerning the dignity of the Roman Church and the absence of a firm foundation in the Eastern churches. Jerome said that in these churches the seamless tunic of the Lord woven from above was torn apart into small pieces. He said this because of the variety of sects in these
churches and their disagreement with the Roman Church. Jerome calls the Roman Church the chair of Peter. There the incorruptible inheritance of the Fathers is preserved. Jerome recounts very many particularly glorious things figuratively described in the Scriptures concerning the Church. Should I desire to relate them all I would have to introduce his whole letter here. For, as I have said, Jerome's whole letter is concerned with declaring most clearly how much he himself attributes to the authority of the Roman Pontiff. Sampson says that Jerome bestowed no name of honor upon Damasus other than to call him brother. Although this may not directly pertain to our question, yet I shall present what Jerome testifies so that the shamelessness of this lie will stand out more clearly. Therefore, at first he said many things about those who were pre-eminent in the Church of Rome. He recounted many names of honor conferred upon them, including this: "You are the light of the world, the salt of the earth." Then he adds this, directed to Damasus, the pontiff at the time: "Although your greatness terrifies me, nevertheless your kindness invites me." If, Sampson, Jerome attributed no authority to the pontiff greater than that of a brother, would he ever have written thus that he was terrified by the pontiff's greatness? All that follows certainly declares that the pontiff's authority was greatest for the sole reason that he was the Roman pontiff. "Envy of the summit of Rome departs, ambition recedes when I speak with the successor of the fisherman and the disciple of the cross. I follow no one as first but Christ; I am associated in communion with your holiness, that is, the chair of Peter." But the conclusion of Jerome's letter especially shows how much he attributes to the pontiff. The passage follows: "Therefore, I implore your holiness, by Him crucified for the salvation of the world, that you give me power in your letters either to keep silent or to speak about the hypostatic union." In such a dissension among the churches, what else could have been written to Christ Himself were He here bodily on earth? And this is the letter that Sampson was so careful to quote in attacking the authority of the Roman pontiff. For he not only noted the beginning of the letter in his book, but also carefully advised his readers as to volume and page in the works of Jerome. I am unable to think of any purpose you may have had for doing this. I do not think you could find a more appropriate passage for confirming the authority of the Roman Church, if you should
go through all the books of Jerome in quest of such a passage. I might say that the same thing happened to you that happened to the people of Balaam. When Balaam was led to curse the people of Israel, all the words that he spoke referred to blessing them. You act like this. Whatever you have brought forward thus far in your attack on the authority of the Roman pontiff and the Church, motivated as you are by hope of reward, has actually greatly strengthened this authority.

The witnesses you produce against this authority all speak their testimony against you and on behalf of the Roman Church. In this regard, indeed, you and that false prophet have everything in common. But in this respect the prophet differs from you: he spoke against his own will and when he blessed instead of cursed, he knew, nevertheless, what he was doing. You speak of words of blessing, thinking you greatly aid the case of your attack. Even as you think you are attacking the opposition with words, you are actually greatly strengthening it with arguments and witnesses. For could you name a greater adversary of your case than Jerome alone? First, there is his word opposing your view of the foundation; for Sampson denies that the Church was built upon Peter. These words are clearly expressed in Jerome’s letter addressed to Marcellus against Montanus.13 For here Jerome says that Peter the Apostle, upon whom the Lord founded His Church, fulfilled the prophecy and promise of the Lord at that time. And he continues further. What, I beseech you, will you say? Indeed, that I might immediately dismiss you as conquered by your own confession, I should like only to know whether you have ears. For you certainly seem to lack them since you do not hear the clear and evident words of Jerome to Damasus. For if you had heard these words, you would never have reminded me so carefully concerning this letter.

Truly, now, do you deny that Jerome attributes to the Roman pontiff, the successor of Peter, no honor greater than that due a brother? If those words that you present in confirmation of your own opinion do not sufficiently show Jerome’s reverence toward that see, Jerome’s letter immediately following this one should be read. It is in that volume which you cite so diligently. For when Jerome did not receive an answer to his first letter, he wrote a second one in which it may be seen how much he attributed to the Roman pontiff. For when, in such an important matter, he had not received the reply that
he had previously requested so eagerly and with such supplicant words, he would—even if he considered himself merely an equal—have had just cause for demanding one. And indeed, he did demand a reply. But in what way? Just as though he were dealing with Christ Himself in this matter. But I omit the rest, lest I recount the whole letter that shows, in very supplicant words, Jerome's desire for a reply without any appearance of a demand. However, in this manner, when he had indicated the opinions of the opponents disagreeing with the Roman Church, Jerome concludes his letter: "I, in the meanwhile, cry out loudly. If anyone is attached to the chair of Peter, it is I. Miletus, Vitalis and Velinus say they adhere to you. I might believe if one said this. Now, however, two are lying. Perhaps all are. Wherefore, I implore you by your blessedness, by the cross of Christ, that you who follow the Apostles in honor may follow them worthily. For you alone may sit as judge with the twelve as Another girds you, an old man, with Peter. I implore you, so you may with Paul follow after the city of Heaven, that you indicate to me in your letter with whom I should communicate in Syria. Do not despise my soul for which Christ died." These are the concluding words of Jerome's letter. I think you can see from them—indeed, you are one who can see—how much Jerome is doing on your behalf. Whom do you now present as a witness? What will you say after these things? Or rather, before you arrived at this point what have you said? Clearly only those things that make you not only self-contradictory, but also opposed to the common sense of all.

What I shall now bring into the midst of this discussion will seem to be words of an insane man, of a man not disputing rationally. Indeed, I almost passed them over. But surely they should not be passed over. You wanted to show, therefore, in those words of Christ, "Upon this rock I will build my Church," that Peter is not to be understood by the word "rock." You say that the Church is not built upon a fragile man, but upon a confession of faith; you take away Peter the man. But lest your opinion, however, might be immediately rejected by everyone if you presented it without any authority, you present the author Liranus. But recall your own words for a moment. "Christ did not build His Church upon Simon Peter, upon a man. That would clearly be to build upon sand. He built upon the faith that Peter confessed—that Christ was the Son of God. Here He said, in
the person of Simon Peter, to all the Apostles: 'Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you.' You say these very absurd things lest you might appear to speak without authority. You then say, lest this would seem to be my dream, "I omit all the old Greek and Latin interpreters. I accept only Liranus as my interpreter. He is familiar with all the flatterers of the Roman pontiff." Indeed, Sampson, you certainly do this wisely. For you omit those who do nothing in your favor. In fact, they are greatly opposed to you. However, you say the Church was founded upon the faith alone of Peter—removing the man. You are talking and writing something no sane person would ever say. If you do not permit me to call this a dream, indeed I have nothing else by which I can call it—unless, perhaps, you prefer to call it silliness. For that it certainly is. You, when wide awake, speak something that Liranus, whom you think you have as your author, would not say. You speak something no one in his right mind and reason would ever say. A little earlier you were afraid to say that Christ built upon man, because of the uncertain and insufficiently stable nature of man. You feared that man could not stand alone for any length of time, that he was about the same as something built upon sand. Now, however, you establish an edifice upon something that cannot exist for even a moment separated from man, upon something, I say, that if it has any foundation at all is necessarily founded upon man. For how can faith exist by itself, separated from man? Did you learn from logic? Were More and Fisher so little skilled in literary ability that you would challenge them and other learned men? Would you set up accidental qualities and not have them inhere in a subject? Would you establish something eternally enduring on such a basis? For what is faith itself, by itself? Is it not a certain quality, some accident in the mind of man? Did anyone ever think faith subsists by itself? You not only make Christ remove faith from its own subject—that is, from man—but you also make Him place that faith under the Church, the multitude of believers, in place of a foundation.

How monstrous these deeds are, Sampson! For you cannot allow them to be called dreams. But if you had only mentioned that you had some writer as an author who approved your opinion, you would plainly be mad. Now you present this author. You indicate that he is scarcely worthy of your approval. You say he is friendly with all the
flatterers of the Roman pontiff. I, indeed, shall not reject him. From the very beginning of this dispute I have not presented the authority of any writer less than an Apostle or Evangelist. I have always disputed with you from the Scriptures, since you and your colleagues have not admitted the authority of any man whose name was not in the Scriptures. You have rejected all such. Thus I cannot enthusiastically admire you now as you fly to Liranus, a man not approved even by your own judgment of him. But, as I said, I do not at all reject this man. I consider him to have been a good man and an excellent writer. I now hold this opinion all the more since I see that you, a wicked man, do not approve him. You only decorate his name with the description. You say he is a friendly interpreter for all the flatterers of the Roman pontiff. Indeed, I do not see that he is friendly to you. You are not a flatterer but a scurrilous calumniator of the pontiff. You quote from this author something that can never be found in him. For you will never find in Liranus that Christ founded the Church upon a confession of faith separated from man. If Liranus speaks about a confession, he speaks about Peter confessing Christ. His own words—in the passage you quote—show that he thinks this way. He calls Peter, to use his own words, the head of the Apostles. Therefore, Liranus rightly speaks about faithful Peter building the Church. You are clearly delirious when you say that the Church was built upon faith, separated from man. Nor will you ever find any writer who agrees with you in this.

Further Direct Appeal to Henry VIII

Behold, my Prince, the kind of patron you have put in charge of your case. He says only quarrelsome things; the arguments he presents in support of your case can only subvert it completely. He speaks words that no sane person endowed with common sense would ever utter. This, indeed, is the man who places his trust only in his reason! He even desires that everything related in Scriptures as taken from the voice of the divine spirit be reduced to his own “reason.” Unless those things agree with this “reason” as a norm, he rejects them. He also spurns and rejects the interpretation of the Church that always has the spirit of God as master. He brings forth his own in-
terpretation—like the darkness of his "reason"—into the very clear light. Finally, he defends his own opinion against the common agreement of the Church.

Therefore, Sampson, you now deserve the penalties of this clear light. It would not enter the mind of any sane person, acting in a case similar to yours, to speak and write as you do. But what am I doing now? For I have known that you, Sampson, are such a man. By most certain arguments I hold that you have been proved and shown to be such a man. You not only cannot protect your own interests, but the very things you present on your own behalf act in great opposition to your own opinion. Everyone of any sense abhors your words, resembling as they do those of a madman rather than those of a sane person. Why do I continue to discuss other things with you, to reply to your arguments that are of the same type? Doing this can only be to imitate insanity. This is especially so since I did not undertake this dispute concerning your case. I had scarcely read your book's inscription containing in so few words so many absurdities and self-contradictions before I knew what kind of things I might find in the remainder of the work. I have always considered you as unworthy of serious opposition. But then, as I see, your book pleased the Prince. But then, Sampson, since I hope I have even now shown the weakness of your arguments, their repugnance and self-contradictions, I now direct my words to you, my Prince.

What, therefore, should I think? Should I think, indeed, that the writings of Fisher and More displease you, that you give greater approval to the teaching of Sampson and his followers? Does the language of these latter men appear to you to be so probable, so propped up by the solid foundation of arguments that you would reject this opinion not only of Fisher and More, but also that of the universal Church? The opinion of More and Fisher, the most learned men this Island has ever produced these many centuries, is an opinion approved for many ages by the common agreement of greatly learned men. Would you reject this opinion and be eager to spurn and overthrow it in every way? But surely the writings of Sampson and his followers exhibit neither erudition nor eloquence. They rather exhibit the greatest nonsense, incredible ignorance not only of the liberal arts, but also of the sacred writings. Yet these men purport to glory in supporting these arts alone. Just this one little book of your patron,
chosen from the great number of those who appear to favor your case, sufficiently shows the kind of men they are.

What, therefore, should I think? Should I think that such futile arguments, in such an important case, would so prevail over you that you would be persuaded by them to have separated yourself from the Church? But who can think this? Therefore, neither the arguments that these men write nor any other arguments of this kind would persuade you. But since you had previously been persuaded by another reason you would not dare to confess openly, you found special pleasure in these reasons offered to you later on. For you smear these opinions on your own opinion, or rather on your own ambition, as a pretense. Those who supplied you with these reasons were especially pleasing. Those who opposed these reasons were particularly hateful. But what does this mean? Why does not this reason that induces you to delight in the words and writings of these men, dare to come forth naked in public? Does it fear, perhaps, like a prostitute who has not so far advanced in shamelessness that she would dare to show herself naked in public? Finally, however, when this reason is clothed and more ornately adorned with the writings of these men, it dares to go forth in the company of respectable matrons. Undoubtedly this is so. When this reason hesitated to come forth, Sampson and his followers spontaneously approached and offered it their own writings. These men promised they would make this reason no longer shameful in the eyes of men. They promised it would become sightly and remarkable as the king’s daughter. Thus David speaks concerning the Church: “within golden borders, clothed round about with varieties” (Ps. 44:14–15). These men promised, I say, that they would adorn this reason with the garment of the spouse of Christ. Since this greatly pleased them, they made a hostile attempt to rip apart the garments of God. The Scriptures left to us by the spirit of God always bring forth something pertaining to the honor of the Church. These men, however, rushed to the Scriptures to extract something from them whereby they could cover their prostitute who feared to go forth naked in public. Surely the attempts of these men could only be most pleasing to you; you were anxious that your reason that bound and fettered you with abiding self-love should produce some appearance of honesty. What could this man more honorably produce than something adorned with the special plunder and garments of Scripture?
On the Unity of the Church

By this means, Sampson not only prides himself on fearing the sight of no one; he also urges all to look at him carefully. He holds that all will be convinced he is virtuous and good. And thus, my Prince, the books of these men zealously offer you their hireling service, in defense of your case, as if they were adorning a private prostitute with matronly garments. They do not, indeed, persuade you. For such futile reasons cannot persuade anyone who can hear the other side as you have often heard it. Nevertheless, they so please you that the reason or words of no other man can have any influence with you.

And in this group I speak of myself. For against the opinion of these men, I may not convince or persuade you to my opinion, which is the same as that of the Church. I am so far from hoping you will be converted to my side by any words of mine, that on the contrary I think that even if God had endowed someone with the spirit of Paul and the eloquence of Cicero, and even if such a person pleaded my opinion before you—even then he would accomplish nothing. In fact, I also think that the men more capable of explaining the truth of the case would achieve less than others. For your ears are not capable of hearing the truth. Nor is your mind, occupied as it is with your contrary opinion and your willfulness, capable of grasping the truth.

What is my reason for writing to you now, even though I think I can accomplish nothing? In the first place, indeed, I should not keep silent since you have requested my opinion in the cause of Christ. Then, by my writing against the books of those who profess they can cover the turpitude of your case with plunder from Scripture, I might at least be able to make clear to all that the disgrace of these men’s books no more covers your case, than did the fig leaves cover Adam when, after his sin, he tried to hide his nakedness from God. But on the contrary, the more books these men write, so much the more do they show that your own opinion and theirs is joined with singular foolishness. Thus they act like errant fools who, when they have stripped off their garments and displayed their naked bodies, place a net around themselves. They think no one can see them when they are thus covered. Thus it is that Sampson and his followers most assuredly succeed finally in having men behold your insanity and turpitude more attentively than if you had never sought a protecting covering in Sampson. For no one reads their books without constantly beholding
their foolishness, without shunning this turpitude as something detestable, without indignantly crying out and judging that you should instantly be thrust out of the Church of God. But, as I have said, let us omit these men. However, my Prince, what shall I do with you? By destroying the arguments of those who confirm your most perverse opinion, should I attempt to show the truth of my own case more clearly? Perhaps you expect this of me.

I know, however, that Sampson—whose insolence can never be blocked—will demand that he wants no reply to his other arguments. He especially wants no reply to the most important argument in his opinion, the argument that you should remove the authority of Peter. Sampson even attributes this argument to Paul. Sampson finally attempts this in these words: "But if Peter alone should have that absolute authority of which he boasts, what shall we say concerning Paul? Paul, without consulting Peter, confirmed the Corinthians, the Galatians, and even the Romans themselves, in his doctrine. He even rebuked Peter to his face. Finally, from this it can be concluded that if we wish to confer the primacy of power upon saintly Peter, this primacy did not extend beyond the Jews. For Paul testifies that he himself was appointed as preacher and teacher of the Gentiles; he says that Peter was no more entrusted with the Gospel of the uncircumcised than was Paul with that of the circumcised.” To Sampson, perhaps, this seems to be a very firm argument, one that demands an immediate reply from me. It demands at least, my Prince, that I should not omit showing you the weakness of the arguments of these men, were I ever to have any hope of persuading you to prepare a courageous soul free from all passion in order to receive the truth. For Sampson scarcely surmises that I possess this power. For I have dealt with his other arguments where I have shown that the authority of Peter, specifically attacked by Sampson, was actually established. I shall act similarly toward the arguments he now boasts about, especially toward the argument that says it was Paul’s opinion that Peter was commissioned with the Gospel of the circumcised.

Do not the Master’s words concerning Himself best show that Peter was to act the part of the Master? "I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel" (Mt. 15:24). Whoever, therefore, detracts from the authority of Peter and limits the extent of his power to the Jews because Paul said the Gospel of the circum-
cision was entrusted to Peter, would by the same method limit the extent of Christ’s authority to the Jews. For Christ said that He was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel. But if this argument concludes so impiously concerning Christ, it also concludes equally falsely concerning Peter. For the Scriptures testify of Christ: “I will give thee the Gentiles for thy inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession” (Ps. 2:8). On Christ’s departure from the earth, Peter was entrusted with feeding His sheep. This is especially so, if this argument says that only sheep of the house of Israel were entrusted to him. For only an impious person would deny that the feeding of Christ’s sheep pertained not to Judea alone but to the whole world. But, says Sampson, what shall we do about Paul if Peter has the supreme authority? For Paul established churches and appointed bishops over them without consulting Peter. Truly, if you should receive any reply here, it should be the same as in the case of Thomas, Andrew, and the other Apostles. For why do you not inquire about all of them in the same way? They all received the power of evangelizing from Christ, not from Peter. Do you not know that Paul received his authority to preach the Gospel by a revelation from Christ Himself? Similarly the other Apostles who were Christ’s disciples while He was on earth, had no less authority. If you knew this, why did you inquire about Paul rather than about all the other Apostles? Did you think that what Christ did in His own person could diminish the authority of His vicar?

On the other hand, I should ask what we should do about Sampson. Though he presents the authority of only one Apostle, he tries to tear down and destroy the dignity of the greatest Apostle. Or what will become of him if I am not strong enough to extricate myself from such an inept adversary, to say nothing of his impiety? But that second argument of Sampson is hardly inept; rather it is particularly powerful against the authority of Peter, since he was reprimanded by Paul in the view of the whole Church. Without doubt this argument would be very powerful if one wishes to strengthen authority by it; it is the weakest of all, however, for removing the authority of Peter. This will immediately become evident if one carefully comprehends in his mind the matter concerning which Peter was reprimanded and if one attends to the manner and cause of the reprimand. Peter’s command that ceremonial laws be observed was the cause of this reprimand.
What, therefore? Can we say that Peter did not know that the ceremonial laws had ceased through the law of Christ? Peter was the first of all to reveal to the Church the opinion of Christ, his Master. He learned this from the revelation at Joppe some years before Paul, as we learn from the Scriptures, learned it from his vision. Therefore, Peter knew. He was not reprimanded for his ignorance of Christ's will, but rather because—while he knew this opinion—he concealed the fact that he knew it. It is this concealing of Peter's, I say, that was reprimanded by Paul. But why Paul himself? Did not Paul also sometimes hide the fact that he knew? When Paul had circumcised Timothy and while he himself had his head shaved and then entered into the temple, did he not then conceal? He most assuredly did. If, therefore, this is so, how could Paul's reprimand be just when it was directed against one who had the same fault as he did?

But assuredly, this fault made the concealing just for both men. For the concealing of knowledge held great justice for both, though open confession would have held greater justice. The knowledge of the times possessed by both gave proof of this justice. For both, at that time, concealed something since their sheep were so weak that Peter and Paul feared lest their sheep might desert Christ, if they had said the sheep should adhere only to either one of them, because of the ceremonial laws rather than the laws of Christ. For then, even as now, there were Jews—should we wish to consider them—who had placed all hope of their salvation in the ceremonial laws and in external and shadowy ceremonies. Since, therefore, it was the goal of the Apostles to receive as profit for Christ those whom they saw attached to the ceremonial laws, they did not in the beginning greatly attempt to abrogate the ceremonies of the law. As prudent dispensers of the word they considered it sufficient if they might implant the name of Christ in the souls of those people in whatsoever manner. And so long as they were thus exerting themselves, they used the ceremonies of the people. They also conceded that they themselves might join the people in observing these ceremonies. But all the while they were concealing their own true opinion of these ceremonies from the people, to whom an open profession of the truth would have profited nothing. In fact, this very concealing profited them all the more. But Peter and Paul, nevertheless, never passed over an opportunity, if they saw their
disciples were apt to perceive the truth, for explaining their own opinion of the law and the ceremonies.

Wherefore, as time progressed, Paul had so gained ground—with the grace of Christ helping those who had received the faith—that now he had conducted several provinces to a sincere faith and hope in Christ. There were in these provinces many Jews who had rejected all trust in the law and ceremonies. Finally, however, he came to Antioch. There Peter, thus far because of the more stubborn Jews, had kept hidden what should be truly determined concerning the ceremonies. At Antioch, Paul, instructed by the Holy Spirit, thought the time had come for revealing more freely the truth in which the souls of so many provinces had been strengthened, lest there should seem to be any difference in his doctrine concerning who was chosen as an Apostle and to whom the Gospel of the circumcision had been entrusted. Paul did not hesitate openly to reprimand Peter in the Church since he persisted in this dissimulation. This certainly could not have happened without the highest providence of God, since the greatest regard was had for the salvation of both Jew and Gentile. This surely strengthened their souls especially, since Paul reprimanded Peter frankly and with the certitude of truth. Peter, without offering excuse for his act, endured this reprimand even though he was free from any fault and had always acted for the salvation of the flock. But did not this reprimand detract from the dignity of Peter, did it not signify his inferiority to Paul? Hardly ever are the greater accustomed to be reprimanded by the lesser. On the contrary, the lesser are always reprimanded by the greater. I confess that this was the custom in the ancient household about which it is said: "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them" (Lk. 22:25). Then, indeed, this custom was observed so that superiors were not accustomed to be reprimanded by their inferiors. But in the Church, those who are superior do not exercise dominion but are rather helpers having before their eyes the example of the Lord of all Who also administered to servants (2 Cor. 1:23). Here, truly, the former custom has no influence.

For charity, by which this house of God is governed, would not permit the former custom to be retained perpetually. But wherever the utility of the Church seems to demand, an inferior does not hesitate to reprimand a superior. Charity enkindled by the spirit of God
would hardly permit itself to refrain from reprimand, especially in such a question of the greatest importance to the Church. The question was whether they who by the blood of Christ had been brought to the liberty and glory of the sons of God, should be led back again to servitude of the law, or whether they might be so entirely free from all the burden of the law that the law would have no right to rule or compel them. But both of these apostles had found that this liberty, indeed, was given to each and everyone redeemed through the blood of Christ. Nevertheless, as I have just said, since the people with their weaker eyes were unable to stand such great light, the Apostles covered up their opinion for a certain time for the sake of the people. Finally, the souls of many had been enlightened by the light of faith through the preaching of the Apostle of the Gentiles. Not yet, however, had such light arisen in the dark souls of the Jews. Their own Apostle was compelled to conceal something that he might hold them in the faith of Christ. This appeared to be the most appropriate method for curing their blindness and ignorance by the Holy Spirit. For the Apostle himself, in the sight of all, permitted himself to be reprimanded for this concealment. This reprimand, indeed, like fire struck from flint, necessarily shone with the brightest light of truth in the darkness of the Jews. It achieved much more for the enlightenment of their souls than proper and simple preaching of the truth would have been able to do. In this reprimand, however, which Peter was seen to endure so patiently, it was evident that Peter had made no mistake. The fault was on the side of those on whose behalf Peter was compelled to conceal. The very great charity of Peter toward the people and the certain light of truth became evident, as that day brought forth an end to the question of observance of the law.

If nothing else, this certainly declares clearly that Paul did not reprimand Peter as an inferior or even as an equal to himself, since Paul testifies as he writes to the Galatians that he always attributed to Peter more honor than he gave to any other Apostle. In this passage Paul also writes that three years after he had begun to preach the Gospel at the command of Christ, he came to Jerusalem that he might see Peter. But what do you say to this, Paul? For it is fitting to question you concerning the cause of this journey. Was it only for a rest from your very laborious duty of promulgating the Gospel, since so many other prefectures in your province remained
for you to visit? Would you turn aside on your journey for the sake of seeing one man at Jerusalem? The city was not in your province and did not truly have any need for your preaching since it not only had its own bishop, but also Peter, as you confess in this passage. Why did you want to do this? Would the desire of knowing one man have such power over you? You write that after you gave your name to Christ you knew no one else according to the flesh. Did you recognize greater authority and dignity in Peter than in other men or other Apostles, so that you thought it an inevitable duty to bring yourself to visit him in person? Your act creates this suspicion. In fact, we cannot think of anything else. The very word by which you express the desire of seeing Peter—as certain very holy men have noted before me—declares that this visit was not motivated by the common desire of men to know Peter's countenance! But when you write that you will go to Jerusalem to see him, you use a word that expressed in Greek—the language you used in writing this—your desire of seeing him, coupled with a certain admiration. For by his special, august majesty he aroused in men a desire to see him.

If you did everything at the admonition of the Holy Spirit, if all your acts were governed by the highest wisdom, we want to know and inquire about this. But what could more clearly declare to us your deference and tribute to Peter than your own act? When engaged in so laborious and difficult a task that you could not find any time free from your duties, you desired to divert the path of your journey to Jerusalem. You did not do this for the sake of seeing James, though he was then bishop of Jerusalem. You mention him only incidentally as you indicate that you saw him. Nor did you do this for the sake of seeing any other Apostle; you write that you did not visit another. You diverted your journey for the sake of seeing Peter alone, and you even remained with him for 15 days. What can testify more certainly, I beseech you, that you gave greater deference to the person of Peter than you gave to all the others? Thus we might understand, when you afterward reprimanded Peter in the sight of the Church, that you did this especially so that the great dignity of the matter under discussion might appear to bring even greater authority to the person being reprimanded. For thus were you taught by the spirit of God whom you have as a Master in all things.

Here we might leave Paul, my Prince, and turn our discussion
toward you. Surely, indeed, Paul might have reprimanded the disciples of James had he wished to rebuke an inferior. These disciples were certainly part of the reason for Peter’s choosing a plan of concealment. Had Paul desired an equal, he might have reprimanded James himself at another time. He could have done this most opportunity when he was defending himself and rendering an account of his method. For then James admonished Paul because he too freely rejected the ceremonies of the law. Now, however, Paul did not resist James. He presented nothing in his own defense. In fact, Paul even yielded to James’ admonition. And together with the other Jewish ceremonies, Paul acknowledged their worth to the extent that he shaved and entered the temple. Nevertheless, though Paul acted thus, he later accused Peter concerning the same question. Why so? Certainly because the economy and dispensation of the Holy Spirit reserved Paul’s reprimand for a more appropriate time and for that person who was placed as a living rock in the foundation of the Church. When this rock was struck by Paul, another stone in the same structure, the Holy Spirit might send forth the spark and light of truth more clearly to the Church universal.

In reprimanding Peter, therefore, Paul did not obscure the authority of Peter. He illumined it all the more and rendered it clear to all. Many other acts of Paul similarly have the appearance of diminishing Peter’s dignity. Actually, they greatly enhance his dignity. For, indeed, the very duty of preaching is handed down not from Peter or from Paul but from Christ. To Sampson, this seems to detract something from the authority of Peter since it does not appear to establish or appoint Peter especially in the place of Christ. For before Paul was called to the apostolate, Peter did not seem to hold the place of Christ as his own, since he was only one of the Twelve. But when Paul was commissioned by Christ to belong to this number, the number of the Apostles did not exceed 12 so that it would, indeed, correspond to the number of the tribes of Israel. We can only think that by this act of Christ He commissioned Paul—rather than having Peter do so—so that the number of Apostles would remain complete and intact. For if one admits that someone would be the successor to Christ, not even the opponents of Peter’s authority are shameless enough to say that this successor would be anyone other than Peter. Therefore, Paul was not admitted to the office of Apostle by Peter, but by Christ. Nothing
On the Unity of the Church

could signify to anyone that Peter was not the successor of Christ. Rather, even if the slightest doubt had previously existed in this most certain matter, that act itself removed all doubt.

Therefore, for these reasons, I think that all can perceive most clearly how weak are the foundations of Sampson’s case. His arguments fight among themselves and endeavor to overthrow his case rather than to defend it. What he produces as suitable for making his attack is in every way more suitable for weakening his own position.

Since I find it disgusting to advance one step further with this man, I shall end at once both the discussion undertaken with this man and also this book. From now on, however, I shall not contend with such an inept opponent, but rather I shall deal with the King. That I might take counsel for the salvation of the King was also my reason for undertaking this argumentative discussion with Sampson.

NOTES TO BOOK II

1 This refers to a passage in one of the more familiar letters of Augustine where he treats of St. Peter and the Roman primacy and lists the Popes from Peter to Anastasius I (A.D. 398-401). “Si enim ordo episcoporum sibi sucedentium considerandus est, quanto certius et uere salubriter ab ipso Petro numeramus, cui totius ecclesiae figuram gerenti dominus ait: Super hanc petram aedificabo ecclesiam meam et portae inferorum non uicent eam . . .” (Corpus Scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, 1898, Vol. 34, Pt. 2, p. 153.) “If the order of the succession of bishops is to be considered, with what greater certainty, truth, and security can we number them from Peter. For thus the Lord addressed Peter who represented the whole Church: ‘Upon this rock I will build my Church and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it . . .’” After naming each pope down to his own day, Augustine concludes by saying that not a single one of them can be found to have been a heretical Donatist bishop.

2 Pole may be referring to “Articles for Priests Unlearned,” 1535, probably written at the suggestion of Henry VIII. Cf. Complaint and Reform in England, 1436-1714 (ed. W. H. Dunham and S. Pargellis), 1938, pp. 125-134.

3 Lucius was a legendary hero, frequently named as the “first Christian king” in Britain. Supposedly he lived in the second century. The account of Pope Eleutherius receiving a letter from Lucius announcing his conversion appears in the Catalogus Pontificum Romanorum written c. 530. Cf. Dictionary of National Biography, vol. XII, p. 243. Venerable Bede copied this story in his Ecclesiastical History, and later Geoffrey Monmouth added much legendary detail.
4 Jesus, alias Josue, the son of Josedec, the high priest of that time.
5 John Chrysostom, *Homily 88 on John xxii*, 15–25. He comments on Christ's entrusting to Peter the primacy over his brethren. This is the only reference Pole makes in the *De unitate* to one of the Greek Church Fathers. On August 25, 1531, Erasmus wrote to Pole to tell him his "Chrysostom is safe and I [Erasmus] will send it . . . for the whole MS. was copied sometime ago by my secretary."
7 Momus: from Greek mythology; the evil spirit of blame or mockery; the son of night.
8 Augustine, "*Quaestiones veteris et Novi Testamenti*," Migne, PL, XXXV, col. 2272.
9 Obelisk: the symbol —, or † used in old manuscripts to mark a doubtful or spurious passage or reading.
11 Cyprian, "*Epistola unica S. Cypriani ad Lucium papam de exilio reversum*," Migne, PL, III, 1005.
12 Jerome, "*Epistola XV ad Damasum papam*," Migne, PL, XXII, col. 359.
13 Jerome, "*Epistola XLI ad Marcellam*," Migne, PL, XXII, col. 475.
14 Jerome, "*Epistola XVI ad Damasum papam*," Migne, PL, XXII, col. 359.
15 Liranus (Lyrànus) died c. 1340. His writings influenced Luther and Melanchthon and other Reformation writers who frequently quoted him. A popular verse-pun of the sixteenth century was: *Si Lyra non lyrasset, Lutherus non saltasset*; If Liranus had not played his lyre, Luther would not have danced.
BOOK III

Pole Admonishes Henry VIII

Up to this point, my Prince, I have employed my labors and efforts to show that a king can in no way be supreme head of the Church. I have endeavored to show that this function belongs to the Roman pontiffs, the successors of Peter. I have confirmed this by the authority of Sacred Scripture, the testimony of the holy fathers, the habit and customs of our predecessors, and by the general agreement of the whole Church now long since established through many ages. Finally, I used various other proofs and examples. Unless I am mistaken, I have refuted with most efficacious arguments all things that seem to be opposed to this opinion. If you, my Prince, can read both sides with a just mind inclined toward neither side, you will easily perceive the truth of this cause. I have undertaken this cause for the sake of your salvation. In fact, I accepted this cause when you conferred it upon me.

What shall I do now? For who would ever prepare to pour precious wine into a vessel containing no wine for a long time without first thinking about cleansing the vessel? Now your soul is like a vessel from which true opinions have been emptied and into which all collections of false persuasions have been poured from all sides like dregs. Indeed, I see that I have erred greatly since I have said many things thus far in order to show you more clearly the truth of this cause, without thinking of cleansing your soul. Had your soul not been so saturated and full of deadly opinions, I might have poured into it many most truthful and salutary things. Or at least I might have
poured them forth. Because your soul was full, you might not have received them. Accordingly, I have done a great injury to truth. I have certainly wasted all my efforts, for I have profited not at all in my desire to advise you especially through these efforts. Now, therefore, since I recognize my error and desire to correct it, what should I do? What else can I do but urge you to cleanse your soul immediately so you might show yourself as a vessel worthy to receive the truth? For unless you manifest this, you will certainly not be able to perceive anything I have said thus far for the sake of showing the truth, nor anything I shall say afterward. I have a far greater duty to admonish you in this matter than to dispute against Sampson. For unless I first persuade you of this, my attempt to persuade you to the truth shall be in vain.

But how shall I achieve this, since you think your soul is cleansed? You think it contains truth itself within, and that this truth is infused so abundantly that you can also divert it to others. Would it not be proper for you to learn from others what you would teach all? For I hear that all involved in controversies concerning dogmas of the Church refer to you and inquire your opinion. They then embrace it as though it were offered by an Apostle. This is truly proper, if you are the head of the Church as you assume.

However, why do I say I have heard that you usurped the knowledge of truth in the dogmas of the Church? The decision you brought against Fisher and More and other splendid and most holy men clearly reveals to all how much knowledge of truth you have assumed for yourself. You have so condemned these men with your false opinion that you inflicted capital punishment upon them, merely because they refused to defer to your opinion. Oh!—what darkness—that I might say nothing more unpleasant—a darkness more dense than that which flattered the Egyptians themselves! (Ex. 10:21–22).

Here I shall not say that either you or any of your followers can be compared with Fisher and More in talent, learning, prudence, or in any similar qualities. These qualities are essential for anyone desiring to think correctly concerning the opinion of these men. You, on the contrary, are so inferior to them in these qualities that anyone who even thought of making a comparison would injure these men most unworthily. I would even say that if you possessed to the highest degree the qualities I have enumerated, if you consumed more time
and industry in understanding the Scriptures, if you possessed talents far superior to these men, nevertheless you would still assuredly be acting in the greatest darkness. I know you lack one thing that these men possessed. And this one quality is such that without it no light of truth can possibly appear in your mind concerning matters pertaining to the faith.

You would very definitely be acting in the greatest darkness as you inquire into this question, since you so veil my own opinion with darkness. My own opinion agrees with the truth and with that of Fisher and More whom I mentioned above. The truth of my opinion is the same as that of the Church. Before I continue speaking any further about this, I should exhort you to come out from your hideous cave, where the ray of truth will never penetrate, into the open air where you can see light itself. Come into the Church of God from which you have departed. You have completely immersed yourself in this abyss of infidelity.

Finally, however, what is that one quality possessed by these men that you, I say indeed, lack? Without this, nothing can be known in the Scriptures, nothing can be known concerning the manifestation of any kind of truth to be sought from the Scriptures. It is the spirit of Christ, my Prince, the spirit of Christ from which all these truths are derived. If the Scriptures are read without this spirit of Christ, neither the Scriptures themselves nor anything pertaining to their understanding can be sufficiently perceived. However, this truth is of the greatest importance in dealing with this present argument. For the argument is such that Scriptures give a complete explanation. Outside the Church this spirit of God guides no one. If you would only subject yourself to the Church where the spirit of God rules, at first glance you would instantly recognize, as the Scripture says, "at the hearing of the ear" the absolute truth of these things. Since you lack the spirit of God, no course of words or arguments can reveal to you what I have said especially regarding the unity of the Church.

For what do you think? Should I begin to describe to you the temple of the Jews? There was only one temple for such a numerous people. Here, of necessity, all who wished to sacrifice had to come, regardless of the extent of space and territory that might have separated them. At no other place would their sacrifice be pleasing to God. No warlike king was permitted to build the temple, even though
he might have been acceptable to God. Only a peace-loving king could do this. Now, indeed, I might speak of this structure as Scripture does. "And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone hewed and made ready: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house when it was building" (3 Kgs. 6:7). I might say these things and those which Christ, the peaceful King, has now said concerning the building of His Church, concerning the hewed stones the Prophets so often mention. I might add that in this work neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron was heard nor any human implement employed. Then when all the stones were polished and squared by the virtue of God, without human power, they were placed in the building of the Church.

When I say these things, if any ray of divine light remains in you, would you not perceive in your mind and soul what these people accomplished by necessity, even before I express it to you in words? Would you not see what ought to be in the temple of God, in the Church that is portrayed by that material shadow? And if the Jews saw this with their eyes, would not the light of the spirit so enlighten you that you might see with your mind's eye all these things expressed concerning the Church of Christ? That Church is built by the hand of God from living rock. Would you not see these things more certainly than the Jews were able to perceive them with their bodily eyes as shadows? The spirit of God especially teaches you that all these things happened to the Jews in figures. Would you not see, indeed, that the truth of these things has been shown to us, though they appeared only as images to the Jews? You would surely see these things, and see them more truly and certainly through the spirit, than the Jews saw them with their senses. Surely you understand most plainly that what is related in the sacred books concerning the building of the temple was written not only for the Jews but for us! For these many obligatory sacrifices could scarcely be observed by all, since great intervals of space and territory separated many from Jerusalem where the temple was located. We, however, can do this very easily since we adore and sacrifice in the truth of the spirit. We have not a temple limited by the bounds of one place, but the Church that embraces the whole world. These things, therefore, the spirit of God continually teaches you concerning the temple and the Church.

Even as I have done regarding the temple alone, I should now
speak about the ministers of the temple and the high priests of the Jews. I should first show that great dissension existed in this matter, lest anyone might seem to possess supreme power. I should show how gravely God looked upon the authors of this dissension as they resisted the high priest. I should then show the great miracle, when the rods of all the tribes were gathered in the temple. The rod of Aaron alone blossomed while all the others remained dry (Nm. 17:6–8). Now I should add that after the Church was afflicted with the most grave dissensions, there were men who tried to divide its unity and who dared to oppose the supreme power of one man in the Church. I should show that many churches seceded from the Church of Rome and were swallowed up by the devil even as Dathan and Abiron were swallowed up by the earth. Finally I should show that the Church of Peter alone blossomed like the rod of Aaron. I should show that this Church, like Aaron’s rod, appeared dry outside though within it retained and always would retain the sound and incorrupt truth of Christian doctrine as a principle of life. I should furthermore show that the rods of the other Apostles remained dry since not one of their churches can be shown that was not either completely destroyed or strangely corrupted within in doctrine. Were I to show all these things you would not allow me to progress further without exclaiming instantly—were there any light of the spirit in you—that everything said about the one shepherd is absolutely true! Certainly the greatest admiration would seize you, since it happened that though the heads of the Roman Church were sometimes corrupt even as successors of the other Apostles were, though by nature the “rods” of the former were no drier than those of the latter, nevertheless no heresy ever occupied the Roman Church. Its doctrines were always true and consistent with the teachings of Christ the Master.

Developments in the other churches were far different. I say that the admiration seizing you for this continually blossoming rod should be no less than that seizing the Jews when they perceived the blossoming rod of Aaron. You should never again oppose this Church. Just as the Jews ceased their dissension when they saw the miracle of the rod of Aaron, so you should change your seditious dissension into admiration of the clemency of God and love for His Church, when you perceive the greater miracle of God in the “rod” of Peter. But I might further continue to portray the unity of this shepherd more closely
and to recall to your memory how the eleven Apostles were also sent forth as preachers to the Gentiles and were dispersed throughout the whole world. Yet this duty was reserved for one man through the authority of Christ, since Paul writes that he was made Apostle of the Gentiles by Christ, and Peter, Apostle of the circumcision. Thus one man might hold the honor of this function entrusted to all. This is just as though it should be understood that all mankind, which the Scriptures customarily divide into Jews and Gentiles, was entrusted to these two men. As I have shown, mankind was protected from a multitude of rulers by the will of Christ who reserved the care of these two men as ambassadors.

I would pronounce what Paul himself testified concerning the people of the Gentiles of whom he was the Apostle. He said: “Nations shall be rooted in the seed of Abraham as a wild olive ingrafted in the root of the olive tree” (Rom. 11:17; Gal. 3:8–18).¹ So also do I say that the apostolate of Paul was implanted in that of Peter like a sprout planted in a tree; from two there was one effect.

The spirit would make it possible for you to see clearly were you only to turn your understanding eyes toward the Roman Church. In that Church the apostolate of Peter and Paul merges into one. Not a few years but many centuries testify that we see this never to have happened in the case of two Apostles in any other church. What need is there for many? Everything is conducted from everywhere toward Peter as toward one tree; everything is implanted in this tree that draws from Christ, in whom this tree itself is planted—as from favorable soil—the healthy and vital nourishment that it then disperses to all its branches. I say, finally, that this is the will of Christ. The unity of the Church might be better preserved when the individual churches are implanted in this one Church. This one Church is as a mother and root of the others. From this Church they may imbibe sincere doctrine in peace and harmony. That spirit, concerning which I have now spoken, will make it possible for you to see this most clearly. That spirit will show most plainly that without doubt this is the Roman Church. But because the spirit of God has deserted you, you yourself cannot perceive this nor can you believe others who see it and tell it to you.

But in what way, you say, do I know that you have been deserted by the spirit of God? Because, my Prince, the Lord is not in disturbed
emotions; the Lord is not in a lofty spirit overthrowing mountains and changing rocks. For thus Elias the Prophet spoke. But to use my own words and not those of the Prophet, I shall say openly that the spirit of God cannot be in such inhumanity as you employed in killing most holy men, or in such plundering and pillaging of the possessions of the Church. For, as Elias says, the Lord is in the rustling of a gentle breeze. Since your own deeds truly declare that you are very far removed from all kindness and clemency, what can I do but pronounce most vehemently that you have been abandoned by the spirit of God? But this argument is not strong enough for you to believe that you lack the spirit of God. Here, perhaps, you require more certain proof of this very harsh opinion. I have other more certain signs of the impending—and actually present—wrath of God for your own punishment. I cannot, however, recount this without the greatest grief of mind. Do you say: "What are these signs?" I could show you a sign like the one related about Herod. He perished when his entrails were completely consumed by fire. Another sign could be found in what happened to Ozias whose forehead was instantly afflicted with leprosy when he resisted the priests of God. By such signs I think you would immediately recognize the wrath of God. Thus Ozias recognized it, as the Scriptures related: "He had quickly felt the stroke of the Lord" (2 Chr. 26:20).

**Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn**

Even now I have more certain signs than these of the Lord’s wrath against you. Only with the greatest grief can I recount them. If they are annoying for you to hear, as they are for me to recount, you my Prince should bear the burden of this harsh discussion. For proper comprehension of this discussion could be a remedy for all your evils. Unless you understand this, there will never be any hope for your salvation. Thus it happens that if I wish to be true to myself and my duty, I must of necessity explain these things; and you, if you would cherish your own salvation, must listen to them attentively. Therefore, as you hear these things, at least consider that I have come to you as a physician who comes to one seriously and dangerously troubled. Wherefore, if I seem to act somewhat unkindly toward you, if I seem
to cut through your soul, if I seem, finally, to burn with passion, at least think that I act thus because I see no other method for obtaining your salvation. The violence of the disease excludes more gentle remedies. These may even seem to be extreme to you, but in the judgment of all others they are most gentle. They say that they marvel at my foolishness in thinking there is any occasion for preparing remedies for such a desperate disease.

But charity does not fear the shame of foolishness. As long as a sick man breathes, there cannot be grounds for despair. And I, indeed, shall not cease to attempt everything that is within my power. But I would so like to discharge my duty in this connection that I might penetrate your interior with an iron instrument. I would remove your diseased blood, I would cut away your unsound limbs. Thus, both you whose salvation is being considered and also I myself who cannot touch or behold foulness without great horror of soul would both be free from all trouble. For once, however, my spirit may be strengthened to venture upon this. For why, indeed, should I shudder or avoid touching your wounds? You consider them of such little importance you think they deserve no sorrow. In fact, you rejoice over your good health in those very things that I—simple man that I am—call wounds. Certainly they are inflicted upon you by yourself and not conferred by chance or by any external violence. It is this, my Prince, that makes me grieve so bitterly. For first I behold that you do not realize the danger of this very great evil. Then I behold that you, a wise and prudent man, have caused all this yourself since the finest and most faithful men have been dissuading you in vain. But now come with me, and along with me recognize your wounds. Is it not a serious wound for one to be deprived of all honor, all generosity of soul, all esteem? Is not this especially true in the case of one who was most zealous for true honor, of one indeed who excelled all others of his rank as most renowned, of one who flourished with the greatest of true glory?

This cannot be denied, since no one can deny that you once possessed a great reputation for talent and virtue. No one can deny that you zealously cherished this among all Christian nations and people wherever there were public discussions of learned lawyers and theologians, wherever there were discussions not accidentally and carelessly assembled by the common people, but in places where there
were learned philosophical discussions in the customary manner of those pre-eminent in learning and desirous of deciding an opinion by deliberation. Answer me, my Prince, who would be your enemy among these learned men? Who would be so hostile to your name and reputation as to hurl vile and shameful charges against your life that for 20 consecutive years had been lived with the greatest of glory? Who would hurl such charges that would seem to be too little if they said only that you had consumed all this time in debauchery and adultery, unless they added that this period of your life was polluted and contaminated with concubinage and unpardonable incest? Nor would they say only this. In place of such mild accusations they would consign your deed for perpetual memory in public monuments so that by the public authority of all learned philosophical gatherings you would be pronounced incestuous. Who would this enemy be?

But surely I know you will burn up with passion and say that I am acting most outrageously toward you when I present so openly and nakedly these things that pertain to your ignominy. You say I keep silent about the things that pertain to your honor, since there can be no greater honor than for you willingly to undertake such great infamy and shame to make satisfaction to the law of God. You say there can be no greater honor for you than recognition of your error, and your concern for the continual salvation of your soul, without regard to your reputation. I know you will say this. And here, my Prince, I shall call upon your patience. I now ask nothing more but that you will listen attentively with subdued spirit while I give you these replies. I well knew you would oppose the law of God to all that might be said concerning your shame and defilement. But, I beg you, hear me patiently.

You now use in your defense the very thing that is the source of all your wretchedness. For when you would repudiate your wife with whom you had lived for 20 years you did not then see that the law of God forbade you to uncover the shame of your brother, that it forbade you to marry one who had been your brother’s wife (Lv. 18:16). But, indeed, when you desired to marry another, you could not do that without rejecting your wife. You do not appear to have done this heedlessly, but rather with great thought. For that reason you sought refuge in the law of God. As witness of your bribery, you destroyed this law of God with your crafty interpretation and produced
it in approval of your own lustful desire. But behold what happened!
To the extent that you acted disgracefully toward the law of God,
so did God permit you yourself to be afflicted with shame and disgrace
greater than any enemy of yours could have fashioned, even though
he cleverly tried to injure you, even though through night and day he
thought of nothing except your infamy. We cannot recall any other
king whose memory has been preserved for us in writing who was
afflicted with such disgrace. Here again, you burn up with passion and
persuade yourself that you do so justly since I said that you did not
abandon your wife with the intention of obeying the law of God, but
rather with the intention of using the law to satisfy your own lustful
desire. You ask me how I can know what your intentions were? Who,
indeed, except God, knows your mind completely? That person also
knows, my Prince, to whom God desires to reveal it. I say, however,
that in this matter I am one to whom God has revealed your mind.
But here you will exclaim: “Oh! Impudence and singular arrogance!
Would God reveal my thoughts and inner senses to you?” Now re-
strain yourself a trifle. For I say God has revealed them to me. How-
ever, He has not revealed them to me any more than to all others who
might wish to take the trouble to understand this cause. A little later
I shall make this so manifest that it can be denied by no reason at all.
Although, what need is there for me to show that I use divine revela-
tion in understanding this, when human reason is so acute? In this
regard you yourself openly explain your own intentions!

For do you yourself not make it evident that no new scruple
troubled you when you dismissed your first wife, on the pretense the
law prevented you from keeping her? You had her as wife for all of
20 years without any fear of the law. If the law moved you, why did
it move you so late? Had it never occurred to you at all? Am I to
believe that a period of 20 years was not sufficient time for you to
think about the law? Although it might be said on your behalf, if you
were then prohibited from this, that nevertheless you did not know
the source of any law forbidding such marriages. But as soon as you
knew the law, you exerted every effort to obey it. But all your defense
in this regard is torn down by your eagerness and effort in seeking
that dispensation from the pontiff. You cannot be excused through
ignorance of the law. But, indeed, though you knew the command
of the law, you did not know its force or importance; nor did you
know how great a crime one who acted otherwise would be inflicting upon himself. Someone else, indeed, might say this with a degree of plausibility. But you have absolutely no access to this excuse. You cannot seek refuge in it. You say that this law is deeply implanted in men's minds, that this law which you affirm is so in accord with the very nature of man that even if no divine Scriptures existed prescribing it, nevertheless it would be perceived by all through some silent sense of nature. Will you prove to anyone that the force of this law has been unexplored by you alone for 20 years? That you have no knowledge of it? But come now, you might be brought to trial as you use such a shameful defense.

If any controversies concerning most abstruse questions of divine light exist, you would like to arrogate for yourself the position of judge and arbitrator in a question of hidden knowledge concerning divine things. You who desire to be head of the Church confessed, a few years previously before this question about the marriage law arose, that the force of the law of nature was written in the minds of all without inscribed letters. But did you not perceive it? Do you use this defense? I think you are excluded from every defense except to say that you rejected your wife because you wanted to satisfy the law of God. What, therefore? Why do you mention the law? This, indeed, my Prince, you do not say. Nor is it any wonder, since I myself who have no guilt here, cannot mention this disgrace and infamy without the greatest shame. But nevertheless it must be mentioned.

You, a man of your age and with such experience, are miserably burning with passion for the love of a girl. She, indeed, has said that she will make herself available to you on one condition alone. You must reject your wife whose place she desires to hold. This modest woman does not want to be your concubine! She wants to be your wife. I believe that she learned from the example of her sister, if in no other way, how quickly you can have your fill of concubines. She, however, was anxious to surpass her sister by retaining you as a lover. This woman, pleasing to the one by whom she appeared to be so ardently loved, desired to be joined to you by an indissoluble bond. She desired to remain with you perpetually. And in this passionate longing you responded mutually. In fact you actually surpassed her so that you thought it would be the greatest achievement of your fortunes, the height of happiness, if your legitimate and just wife were
cast out of your marriage and it were permitted you to be united with this woman in matrimony and to live with her forever.

And how many other things! Certainly it cannot be said that this was the height of happiness for you both. For yours, by your passionate longing, was even greater than hers. Therefore, it remained for you to discover a way in which you might fulfill your very great and very impotent desires. This was most difficult for you to accomplish. Your wife was endowed with great nobility and virtue. You had her companionship for many years and, in particular, you received from her a daughter now grown to womanhood. This daughter, without controversy, was to be the heir of the kingdom. She bore the name of princess from her days of swaddling clothes. It did not seem easy for you to expel your wife from the royal marriage couch. Then all acts of earlier times would be confused and even the succession to the kingdom would be uncertain. But in the face of all these things no more appropriate plan came to your assistance than for you to say that you were prevented by divine law from any longer keeping your wife with whom there has never been any conjugal bond from the very beginning. For this was a question concerning the salvation of your soul, something more important than even your kingdom itself and all the succession. This method seemed most plausible. Nothing at all was lacking except patrons who would undertake its defense and so strengthen the affair that it would have valid arguments. There was no lack of such patrons in the great group of those professing theology. These men had often disputed many more abstruse things in their universities. The question had only just been proposed. It would not have to look around eagerly for patrons. It would have the King for its special protector. And these men did not seek any further.

What you desired for your own gratification was anticipated by that man [Thomas Cranmer] whose desire was his own gratification. He sent his priests and his grave theologians as tokens of his manifest will. They not only affirmed that it was permissible for you to dismiss your wife, but they also said you would sin grievously if you retained her for a single instant. They said that if you did not permanently repudiate her they would denounce it as a very grave offense against God. This, first of all, was the origin of the narrative. But the authority of the pontiff was on the opposing side. With a papal dispensation, you had your first wife. If some scruple concerning a precept of the
law could be introduced, he might protect your security. Nor was the strength of this precept so great that it could not be remitted or overlooked for a legitimate reason. This had often been customarily done justly in degrees of affinity and consanguinity. But here when your case appeared to be tottering, the ministers of this girl supported it on her behalf. In this connection they recounted the different opinions of writers among whom were learned and renowned men who affirmed that the pontiff had no right to grant something that was not permitted by divine law.

So here when your cause had almost been extinguished by mention of the dispensation of the pontiff, it began to revive. Now you were not without hope of certain victory. It appeared that it was a subject open for discussion and that the question could be properly asked whether the pontiff could give a dispensation in this matter. Nor was there any doubt that this question would have many supporters when it was brought forth into the disputations of the universities, for it had the King as its very great patron fighting on its behalf with all his authority and resources. Nor were you at all mistaken in your opinion that your cause would find supporters if it sought refuge in the universities. It found some among those who were moved more by their insatiable desires than they were by their reputation. But they were not as prompt as you had hoped. This question that at first seemed agreeable to those who had undertaken its support, was disapproved in all the universities in your own kingdom. Even its defenders were influenced by all kinds of outrages. Now would this question ever stand firmly by any general agreement of a learned philosophical gathering, unless royal threats were found to be of greater influence than prayers usually are over the minds of so many men. These royal letters filled with threats were presented to the heads of the universities. As assistants with abundant resources these threats sustained the weakening defense. They restored integrity to the campaign. But if it were necessary for you to use these resources at home, it is not my business to say here what you used abroad; that is, among the universities of foreign nations. For there your threats were of no avail. Dissension none the less continued to be fought out. Even if I were silent about this, who does not know about it?

But I shall return to your intentions, which I had begun to say that God had revealed to me. You did not make such a grave and
serious mention of the divine law for some scruple of conscience. Rather you sought this precept as a false witness to assist you in covering up the shameful disposition of your mind. By the deceitful mention of this scruple you would smear with false colors the malice of your act; you would even dignify it. But how did God reveal this to me? Not by Himself, indeed, as He has often revealed many things to others. He revealed it by this adulteress whom you have led into your wife's marriage-bed. This woman, I say, whom you now have with you—since you have repudiated your legitimate wife—this woman revealed all your intentions to me. You ask how this can be? I shall tell you, indeed, if first you reply to the things I ask.

If you abandoned your wife because the law persuaded you that it was necessary to pronounce such a marriage abominable, should you not take the greatest care not to contaminate yourself again with a similar marriage? Should you not abstain absolutely from such persons who were in a similar or even worse condition than your first wife was? Surely you cannot act otherwise if the reason of a law is to influence you in any way. They who suggested such a marriage to you or who mentioned it in any way should be objects of hatred to you. For what kind of a woman is this one with whom you are now associating in place of your repudiated wife? Is she not the sister of the girl whom you first violated and whom you kept with you for a long time afterward as a concubine? How, therefore, do you inform us you are seeking refuge from an illicit marriage? Are you here ignorant of the law that no less explicitly forbids you to marry the sister of her with whom you have been made one body, than it forbids you to marry her who has been made one body with your brother? If one is to be abominated, so is the other. Do you not know this law? But you do know it best of all! How do I know this? Because at the same time you rejected the dispensation of the pontiff to marry the wife of your brother, you were striving with great effort to obtain from this same pontiff permission to marry the sister of her who had been your concubine. Could you have so made this petition, if previously it was not established that the pontiff had the right of giving a dispensation in the first case? Therefore, does not this woman whom you now consider your wife, show most clearly what your intentions were? Does not God, by her character alone even if she were silent, make it
certain to all that you mentioned this law not to be restrained by the mandate of God but to honor your own passionate longing?

But there is something else that makes your intention here all the more clear. For this matter concerning your brother’s wife is much less important! Why is this so? Because, although you married your wife whose nakedness the law forbade you to uncover before the sight and eyes of the Church, nevertheless she came to you as a virgin. I do not think that you will say that the sister of this woman whom you now possess was left a virgin by you. Now whatever the law might seem to do regarding your first wife, it has no effect at all if it can be established that your first wife was untouched by your brother. For that law forbids you to uncover the nakedness of your brother. This precept applies to a situation where the bodies were joined in the marriage act. Therefore, by the words “uncover the nakedness of your brother” it was forbidden that she should be your wife. But where there were not bodies joined in the marriage act, there was no nakedness of your brother that might be uncovered. Here the prohibition of the law does not hold. But how greatly it does hold in the case of her whose sister you clearly violated!

But how was I able to know that the wife of your brother was a virgin when you married her? Did God also reveal this to me? What need was there for a revelation from God? Does not the age of your brother persuade me sufficiently? He was only 14 years old when he departed from this life. Does not the fact that your brother’s body was physically weak sufficiently prove this? Finally, is not the fact that this most holy woman swears to this, sufficient to establish its belief? But you, perhaps, do not put any faith in this. However, my Prince, would you believe yourself? If you would believe yourself, you received her as a virgin. You confessed this to the Emperor. It would have been most inexpedient for you to make this confession if you were then thinking about a divorce. But you truly said this at that time when the great crime of repudiating your wife, the aunt of the Emperor, had not yet occurred to your mind. The Emperor cannot certainly forget this. Does not God sufficiently indicate your intention to everyone? He has snatched away from you every respectable excuse. When you had only the excuse that the law forbade you to marry the wife of your brother, He revealed the concealment of your pretense. He
permitted you to offend by marrying this person, although the opinion of the law against her was clear, rather than to allow you to use the law for an excuse. Your other excuse, virginity, was completely excluded by legal censure.

Thus it is manifest to all how the reason you present for dismissing your wife is the least true of all. And all the more is this so, since as I have just shown, you have heaped rewards upon those you now have alone as instigators and assistants for your loves and pleasures in this new marriage. You consider as hostile enemies all who, on the contrary, oppose all this. But God, my Prince, God does not smile. They who attempt to deceive God and His laws only deceive themselves most of all. If we ever had proof of this we certainly recognize it now in your most clear example. For after you had decided upon this pretense of the divine law that you say is the same as the law of nature and that you pretend especially terrifies you, you repudiated your legitimate wife. And so God has permitted you to fall and wander in other matters, so that from that very moment you have done scarcely anything that is in accord with the prescribed order of nature. Whatever you have attempted to do in this question is manifestly contrary to the law of nature. And this happened first of all in that very matter I have just mentioned, where you were thus the author of your disgrace. You sent legates to all the provinces where you knew there were university centers, so that they might bring back this renowned title of honor, so that you would not be a fornicator and an adulterer but an incestuous person who had lived for 20 years contrary to the law of nature! Could anything happen more contrary to the law of nature than for someone to use such great and abundant zeal as you did on behalf of this cause? You were eager to impose a title of infamy and perpetual disgrace upon yourself. Anyone who even accidentally contracted such a reputation would want to efface it, even by willingly and generously meeting death. Truly, what kind of a legation was this? To what extent was it in accord with the laws of nature? Clearly it was of a kind that brought laughter and joy to your enemies, but only sorrow and great grief to your friends.

Would you send such a legation to an armed enemy? Was not this even more cruel since the greater the enmity aroused against you, the more willingly was your legation received, the more promptly were your commands fulfilled. For what were your commands? You com-
manded votes of as many learned men as possible to be gathered together to testify to the shame of your previous life, to testify that all your youth and young manhood had been defiled and contaminated by incestuous concubinage contrary to all divine and human law, to testify that your life was even below that of wild beasts who are at least restrained by natural law. An enemy of yours would willingly assist you in any of these things, particularly if his intentions toward you were wild and ruthless. How promptly he would act toward you in this manner, if he knew that you would treat him in the same way you treated other rulers who were friendly to you. Indeed, you gave orders to the spokesmen for your legation—to make this matter quite clear—that lest the memory of your renowned title should perish, they should seek to have it inscribed in public, written memorials. The votes of private, individual men were not enough. You also wanted it witnessed with public tablets and the signed documents of the universities. An enemy would willingly do all these things, especially as I have said, if his intentions toward you were cruel and implacable. If an enemy, and a cruel enemy at that, would zealously and willingly concede all these things to you, what great grief and pity would these things bring to the souls of your friends! For you sent this legation to your friends not feignedly, as I have just pictured in the case of your enemy, but in actual reality. With your letters and orders you begged this favor from them in place of the greatest benefits. You begged that they would so favor your shame as to act willingly and openly reveal in their writings all the disgrace of your earlier life. You begged such learned men to confirm this in every possible way.

You were not ashamed to strive for these things from very great men who were rulers outside your own kingdom, as if in the theatre of the world. How, therefore, did you act at home in the meanwhile? In every way possible you were trying to bribe everyone who was held in esteem for learning and scholarship to make known your infamy. You exerted greater efforts with those at home than you did with those abroad, for those at home more truly loved you than did those abroad. For that reason they opposed you all the more. Greater grief of soul seized them, since you imposed upon them an obligation they could not fulfill without contributing to your great crime. I can say most truthfully that I was included in this number. For—and may God be my witness—I cannot remember anything in all my life that
was more painful than that famous legation offered to me at your command when I was residing in Paris. Especially since at that time I had withdrawn from that deliberation, lest I should become a participant in their consultations. Although you were author and instigator of these questions, even then they were being discussed in opposition to you at home. Indeed I could not imagine how this question would be proclaimed outside your realm. Nevertheless, while I was dwelling there, your letters and commands came to me to plead your cause with the Parisians. I recall that at that time I replied to you as soon as I could, because of my sorrow at such an unexpected message. My grief had for some time taken away not only my voice but my very thoughts. I asked that you would excuse my lack of skill. I requested you to send someone else who was more experienced in matters of this nature. And you did this immediately. If you had not done this, any kind of death would have been easier for me than to undertake this task. Though I never completely accepted this duty, I did allow this part to be imposed upon me for a time as long as someone else would be on hand to whom you would entrust this whole business in which I had said I was unskilled. It was not so much the fact that I was ignorant of justice in this case; it was rather the fact that I knew the just side of this case and was therefore all the less suitable for carrying out your desire in this matter. However, you now sent out a spokesman of your legation to all rulers, to all the universities. You expected them to bring back good tidings, just as the Apostles did. And what kind of good tidings were these? If would be the greatest of good tidings to you if each one said something most defamatory about you. If one should say that the earlier part of your most shameful and abominable life had been led contrary to the very law of nature, this person would be considered the greatest “evangelist,” this person would at least be worthy of a bishopric!

Those shameful things that were recounted about Julius Caesar by the dissolute soldiers when he was carried triumphantly into the city—that we might consider him a bald-headed fornicator—were not sufficient for you. But to these things your distinguished soldiers would add that we should consider you most incestuous. You would applaud such a eulogy bestowed upon you that you would show abroad to everyone the most insulting letters addressed to you, just as though you had received them from some army of yours you had sent to conquer
Asia. And after this army had gained some remarkable victory for you, you would be hailed " Asiatic" by your legates. So indeed, you, after your good fame had been overthrown, after you had triumphed by some kind of profligate honor where you were considered most incestuous of all, then you especially congratulated yourself among your friends. Oh, how mournful a deed to all good men! How pleasing, however, to Satan! Any one hearing these things would think God had given you over to Satan. Only Satan could allow such mockery and illusion concerning the divine law. Certainly now these words of the Prophet concern you and Satan: "And princes shall be his laughing-stock" (Hab. 1:10). With what kind of disposition do you think those who truly cherish your honor receive these things? Indeed they receive them in the same way that I now write about these things. All the crimes you have committed scarcely lead these to consider you deserving of tears. They consider you worthy of indignation. But I can hardly write this because of my tears.

This is especially so when I recall how you were once the occasion of great hope to all in your youth. You gave great hope not only for your own happiness but for that of all who would be in any way associated with your kingdom. All proposed to themselves a certain happy life with you as King. They looked forward to a golden age during your reign. For what did your distinguished virtues not promise, what did not shine forth in you especially during your first years as Prince? Among all your virtues a certain devout piety displayed itself. To this were added those virtues men customarily hold in great esteem: justice, clemency, liberality, and such prudence as was befitting your youthful age. And beyond these was added a certain innate modesty, as if given by nature to guard your other virtues. This modesty marvelously adorned that age and truly preserved your virtues at that time. It confirmed the certain hope of all concerning your future happiness. And all these qualities seemed proper to your natural inclination. Besides the care of your very wise father, literary studies were added. They served as streams directed into a carefully planted garden; these literary studies irrigated your virtues with their streams; they caused your virtues to increase and grow and finally to spread themselves out like the branches of a tree. Thus Ezechiel spoke concerning the King of the Assyrians: "The cedars in the paradise of God were not higher than he . . . no tree in the paradise of God was
like him in his beauty . . . And when he had spread forth his shadow, all the fowls of the air made their nests in his bough, and all the beasts of the forest brought forth their young under his branches’ (Ez. 31:6–8). Plainly of all other princes who were your contemporaries, not one could be considered happier than you. A most secure and orderly manner of life was promised to all who lived under your rule.

Thus far, however, I have not even mentioned that greatest token of public prosperity that was hoped for in the future during your reign. Though it is something that might be included among those things happening in an extrinsic manner, yet nothing greater could be given you by God. I refer to the fact that all causes of sedition had, in you alone, been extinguished. If previously there had been other controversies concerning the lawful right to the kingdom, if there had been titles that might occasion the rise of sedition, all of these were so joined together in you that all said with the highest degree of justice that you were King. No factions now flourished; all titles of every kind appeared to be bound together harmoniously in you. Throughout your whole reign God had conferred upon you no greater profit than this. Thus, there was nothing that brought greater joy to all the people than this. This was all the more pleasing to the people because they recalled that before you became King the realm was so divided by dissensions of this kind concerning titles of different factions, that for almost 40 years they had lived in civil war or in the greatest fear of war. Princes contested the right to the kingdom; the nobility themselves together with all the people were engaged in many battles. Hence, there was no one who could not rejoice exceedingly when finally all titles of these factions were joined together in one person, when all were in agreement in their minds, when God had cut short the cause of all sedition. No more gratifying announcement could be made to the kingdom; no more gratifying spectacle had ever occurred in all Britain.

Whoever saw him [Henry VIII] thought that he beheld his own security. He manifested so many gifts of mind joined with those of the body. He promised security for many years and continual and permanent happiness for all who would be under his rule. At that time there appeared to be no enemy either at home or abroad who could interrupt or interfere with this continual happiness; no one could suspect
that there would ever be such an enemy. The sources of all factions were removed. The general consensus of opinion conferred everything on you and your posterity.

Then they beheld an heir to the kingdom, a daughter born of a most noble wife and worthy of her parents [Mary Tudor]. For this daughter you might wish to be able to choose from all the world a noble husband; she would be a solace to your weary old age and a certain hope of succession. The tranquillity of your kingdom would be preserved by her. And all the people hoped you would act in this manner; nor indeed was there any reason why they should doubt this. Did anyone ever think that this most beautiful and firm bond would be broken asunder by you yourself?

Did anyone ever think that you would be the instigator of this disruption of the tranquillity of your realm, that your daughter would be driven away from her inheritance of the kingdom by your own hands? As I shall show afterward, you yourself did all these things.

But now we shall consider only this. Let us enumerate the benefits that God conferred upon you. He adorned you most abundantly with all the goods of body and soul. He gave you the most wealthy kingdom. He directed the minds of all toward love for you on account of your virtues and also on account of their most certain hope for happiness. Could He not say to you the same things He said to the chosen people of Israel? “What is there that I ought to do more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it? Was it that I looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it hath brought forth wild grapes? . . . and I looked that he should do judgment, and behold iniquity; and to do justice, and behold a cry” (Is. 5:4–7). Do not these words of the Prophet properly apply to you? But hear what the Prophet says here in the person of God concerning the same vineyard: “And now I will show you what I will do to my vineyard. I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be wasted: I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down. And I will make it desolate: it shall not be pruned, and it shall not be digged: but briars and thorns shall come up: and I will command the clouds to rain no rain upon it” (Is. 5:5–6). Do you not hear, my Prince, the threats of God? Do you not hear the words of punishment for the vineyard, such as He makes for you? Do you not realize that all of these things with which He threatens Israel for abandoning His law, will also happen to you?
The only difference is this. With your own hands, you have heaped upon yourself the penalties He threatened Israel would receive. You yourself have taken away the hedge of your kingdom, you have broken down the wall, you have filled it with briars and thorns. You yourself, lest they should prune the corruption that is in you, have given it every nourishment. You have so withdrawn yourself from the heavenly dew that it cannot fall upon you.

Pole's Plantagenet Ancestry

But are we speaking in enigmas? Are not these things evident to the eyes of all? Can there be any greater or more certain hope for your whole kingdom and your private security than the concord of the citizens concerning you and your succession? Who, other than yourself, attempted to abolish this? Have you been doing anything other than this during these three years when you were subjecting your reputation to every disgrace? For what do all your efforts show except that you would deprive your only daughter of her inheritance to your realm? You would declare as spurious this daughter who for almost 20 years has been considered by all without controversy as the true heir. And, Immortal God! Such a daughter! There is no prince or king now living who would not desire to have her for himself as wife. Oh! Natural laws of parents! The father does not want such a daughter to succeed him! And this, especially when he has only one daughter! He wants her to be the daughter of a prostitute! Oh! Your father, the King [Henry VII] was in other ways perhaps too prudent. When he suspected that someone blocked your succession to him, too zealously he removed this person from life. In this deed, he was not cautious, since he made no provision that you yourself would be succeeded by your children without trouble. Who, however, could make such a provision? Did he not think that such provision was sufficiently made by the natural law? Only one completely lacking in the common sense of humanity would ever suspect that a father would take the side of the enemy against his own daughter and thus deprive her of her succession to the realm.

Oh! If only your father the King were now alive and could see me, the son of the sister of the man whose death he had planned!
This man, as everyone knows, was most guiltless of all. He appeared, nevertheless, to be too close to the royal name, and later some impediment to the King’s own succession might arise from this fact. If your father, I say, could come back to life and behold me, a descendant of that family from which he feared an impediment, now defending his own position, if he could see you his own son opposing his own posterity, what a monstrous thing this would seem to him! How clearly he would see that human prudence itself is of too little avail in removing all the impediments of continual succession.

There was certainly only one thing that impelled your father to the murder of my uncle who was, in the general opinion of all, as innocent in his whole life as an infant of one year, as the Scriptures are wont to say. This one thing was the fact that he was the son of the brother of King Edward [Edward IV]; he was the sole male descendant remaining in this branch of the family. Your father saw how easily my uncle might be the occasion of new seditions, concerning the right to the kingdom, that might arise against your father’s house. Even while your father lived he had experienced some of these dissensions. For the people, on several occasions, were in arms on behalf of my uncle and they were often accustomed to be tumultuous. When your father had disposed of this man, he thought that he and his heirs could live securely and reign without fear. He thought all impediments had been removed. He then thought that God’s providence took no part in the succession of kings, that human prudence did everything. But how differently events actually turned out, contrary to what his very great prudence had foreseen. Where he would have feared the greatest danger for his own succession, there now exists no danger but rather a very strong defense; where there would have been, according to his plans, safety for all his affairs, instead the greatest danger has been created for himself, that is, for his house.

For your father would certainly not have been able to suspect that his very own son, now bearing God’s very great punishment, would attack him and his succession. On the other hand, he held my own family in very great suspicion. Behold, however, that I am a descendant of that family. Indeed I am the son of the sister of him whom your father murdered because your father suspected that this man would interfere with the succession of your father’s children. I am defending your father’s grand-daughter against the attack of his own
son! His own son is now most carefully planning the death of that grand-daughter! What, indeed, am I now doing, my Prince? What else am I doing but defending the succession of your legitimate daughter? I am defending the succession of that same daughter. To perpetuate her succession your father inflicted many evils and brought very serious wounds to my family. And, indeed, I am defending her at the risk of my own head and all my fortunes. What a new kind of struggle this is! One unheard of up to now! How strange, how very strange! Though, indeed, I am a son of that family from which so many hostilities were feared, yet I am defending the right of your daughter against her father. I am not unmindful of the injuries that my family received on account of this very succession. I am, however, mindful of the divine and human law that now confirms this very succession. I am mindful of the concord of the citizens that you, as a very remarkable person, publicly conferred upon us. You should now render an account to your native country for this gift conferred upon you by God. Actually, you are striving to demolish it in every possible way. You are attempting to hurl your kingdom, which you received most peacefully, into the tempests of sedition greater than any we can remember up to this time. Who does not see what great storms of sedition will be aroused if the right of your daughter, whose cause I now defend, is denied? For if you think that the daughter of a prostitute can reign in the midst of so many families of nobility, you are certainly far removed from the prudence of your father. But perhaps just as he killed the one man, my uncle, whom he saw standing in his way, so also you are planning to dispose of all the nobility. For is there no individual that would not think he himself had a more just right to rule than the daughter of a harlot?

Henry VIII Weakens the Succession and Sows Sedition

When you remove the succession with which all men of every rank—except you the parent—are now marvelously in accord, you are arming all for mutual slaughter, to the utmost of your power. When that succession is removed, who will be quiet among all those who might find even a pretense of right for an invasion of your king-
On the Unity of the Church

dom? How many, however, will there be who have such a pretense? It certainly seems to me that if you do not make better plans for your affairs when you depart from this life, these men will be so numerous that the legend of Cadmus will become a historical fact. They say that Cadmus, when he had killed the dragon, planted the teeth of the dragon in the ground like seed. The armed men who sprang up from these teeth killed one another with mutual blows. You are now like a new and real Cadmus, not a legendary and shadowy one. Like the teeth of a slain dragon, the sources of arguments are now sown by you, arguments that were entirely suppressed at the beginning of your reign. From these there will later spring up men who are armed with mutual internal hatred. They will kill one another with their blows and will destroy your kingdom. Is this the kind of benefit, my peace-making Prince, that you from whom all hoped for a golden age of peace, will leave to your posterity? But why do I say will you leave this? Even now you are stirring up a greater and much more cruel sedition than the one from which you freed the people amidst great rejoicing. Before you became King, the people were harassed by continual slaughters within the confines of the kingdom, as if in their very entrails. Whichever side triumphed, the opposite side continually lived in the greatest misery. Those seditions, however, cannot be compared with the ones you are currently enkindling.

The sedition you are now stirring up threatens us with a condition of much greater misery than any other cause could produce. How pestilential is this dissension concerning religious worship that you are now attempting to sow in the souls of all as you lead them away from the ancient, established rites! You create uncertainty about whom they should be in especial agreement, in the midst of so many varied opinions—uncertainty about whose judgment they should depend upon, whom they should obey. You consider the custom of the Church to be of no value. You not only do not acknowledge this but you actually hurl every kind of violent reproach against the one whom the Church has always recognized as the sole supreme judge in matters pertaining to religion, the one who should decide all controversies. What a great amount of pestilential sedition threatens us when you call into doubt whom one shall obey, whom one can trust, whose words one shall listen to! You snatch away knowledge of the cause of the Church of God, of the Church that is governed by the Holy
Spirit, of the Church that cannot deceive or be deceived. I say that you make use of the opinions of individual men, of passionate longings and unfounded opinions that are often open to deception. You do this rather than defend in every way that which judges truly, that which is always prepared for what it first sees. The serious strife that now exists is not similar to external affairs where an army struggles against an army, a nation against a nation. In the existing strife, individuals wage war against individuals so that each one might defend his own opinion. They are not fighting among themselves as much as they are fighting against God. They are revolting from the Church from whose side God certainly would never desert. Thus, this battle of the minds that you have now stirred up is far more cruel and dangerous than a battle of bodies. If previously, as the Prophet says, you seemed to take down the walls of your kingdom and to remove the hedge of your vineyard—when you created uncertainties about the succession, you now lead an enemy against the Church when you create uncertainties about a dogma of our faith, a dogma that should also be most certain since it is most true. And in acting thus, to the utmost of your power you would hand over the minds and bodies of your people for plunder and destruction.

On account of these very great benefits in your people, you would demand from them new titles of honor whereby you would make them even more liable to punishment of the divine wrath. You demand that they should call you head of the Church—in fact, not only head but supreme head of the Church. You alone have plundered, pillaged, and harassed the Church in ways more cruel than all others who ever reigned before you in this Island since it received the faith of Christ. On account of these merits, you desire to be called not the head, but the supreme head of the Church. You maintain that this title of honor has been conferred upon you by the common agreement of all ranks. Though I was not present while these things were being decided, I most firmly affirm that no order of rank agreed to this title of honor of yours. I myself free both the nobility and the people from the very great disgrace of having undertaken such a very grave crime. I say that if you have any approving votes at all, you extorted them from the people unwilling to give expression to them. This new honor was not conferred upon you by the common consent of all ranks. Since I was not present, how can I know these things?
Indeed, I not only was not present, but I have not learned from anyone who himself was present by what desire and what general agreement this honor was conferred upon you. And nevertheless I dare to affirm that I know, because I have evidence more certain than testimony of eyes and ears that declares to me the manner in which this whole affair was conducted. This evidence cannot be false. In the first place, the norm of nature that can never err, moves me. For men of their own free will are not accustomed to confer new titles of honor upon those from whom they expected the greatest benefits but from whom they have actually received not only no kindly deeds but even many evil deeds.

There can be no advantage in asking whether any benefits were expected from you, since there is no one who can indicate this with his countenance, eyes, or spoken words. There is no one among the people whom you might ask in this matter whether anyone actually had endured many disagreeable things in place of benefits. He would conceal this out of fear. But if you want to penetrate their thoughts, if you want to perceive the truth itself and to know completely what each one’s feeling is, do not look upon them. Rather, look upon those deeds that you yourself performed during the 20 years from the first instant of the beginning of your reign down to the very day you assumed this title. Ask those deeds! They cannot lie. When they are carefully examined they will openly and truly proclaim everything. And what, I beseech you, will they say? They will be silent so far as the subject of benefits is concerned. They cannot speak about something they do not have. Truly indeed, less benefits were expected from your father, the King, as the Britons often incited him with seditions. They never showed such indication of benevolence from him as they especially displayed concerning you. Nevertheless, in his reign, certain royal benefits clearly existed. He provided for the building of quite a few public roads at his own expense; with great lavishness he constructed lodging accommodations to receive the poor; he erected monasteries. Now, however, those wishing to speak about your benefits say that you built I know not how many houses devoted to pleasures. When questioned concerning other benefits, they are either silent or of necessity they invent something. For you have no public works. None at all, that is, unless perhaps we wish to enumerate among your works the many monasteries you destroyed and the lands you alienated
from the Church and converted into your royal treasury. Many things indeed of this kind might be shown.

But you imposed no new burdens upon your people; you made no financial demands upon the people harsher than those established by your predecessors! These are your benefits. Granted that this might be so, nevertheless the people are not accustomed of their own free will to confer new titles of honor except for some deed much more remarkable than something done by others. Even if you had done no injury, if you were not severe with the people, nevertheless this would not be sufficient reason why they should give such extraordinary honors far exceeding those ever held by one who reigned before you. Your benefits would have to be pre-eminent, far in excess of the merits of other princes.

Then, finally, that would seem to be adequate reason for the people to do this. What if you were more severe than all others? What if you alone gave orders more harsh than those of all others? Can anyone then doubt that the people would of their own free will confer upon you the highest honor that had never previously been bestowed upon any king? Rather would not the people be filled with great grief and mourning as they permitted you to snatch this title—since they could do nothing else?

Indeed, I remember that I was present when a calculation was made of all the revenues and financial demands exacted by the kings who were your predecessors for the last 500 years. Since this calculation was made by those who were most experienced in these matters, they diligently examined all the public records in which each individual's debt was mentioned and noted down according to custom. When, therefore, they had gathered all these into one group and when they had compared them with your demands on both the people and the clergy during a period of 26 years, they discovered that you had exacted more during the brief period of your reign than all these other kings had exacted during these many ages. What, therefore, about the very many reasons you offer as based upon the zeal and general agreement of the kindly disposition of all ranks? You say you preserved these men during most dangerous and most difficult times. But I ask you, my Prince, who assailed them? Who attacked them? Against whom have you defended them? You never had an enemy whom you did not also exasperate. You never had a war that you did
not complete in the space of a few months. Your predecessors never exacted from their people a thousandth part of such great treasures during war or peace; during many years they waged great wars for their native land and abundantly and lavishly furnished supplies and equipment. Since you, therefore, treated your people in this manner, can I doubt what their intentions were in seeking this new honor and conferring it upon you?

What about the nobles? What should we think their intentions were? These nobles faithfully yielded to you in everything. We cannot recall, in all the recorded accounts of our history, that greater zeal and fidelity in submission was ever displayed toward any other king. You nevertheless so treated the nobles that they were held in lower esteem than during the reign of any other king. You were most severe toward them if they were found wanting in their duty in the slightest degree. You never overlooked any of their faults; you considered them all with contempt. You permitted no one to hold a position of honor or favor in your presence. In the meanwhile you always had most strange men chosen from the lowest ranks of the people associated with you. You offered them the best of all things. Therefore, what now? Only the class of the clergy remains and I have already spoken about the manner in which you treated them. Do you desire that we summon all these classes of men who have adorned you with this newly conceived kind of honor? Or rather, since they have now been summoned together to adorn you, do you want us to inquire what their intentions were—as if there were any doubt? But what if they say that they decreed these new honors for you—honors that were never conferred upon any king before you—against their own will and only because you so commanded? How great a tyrant you would then make yourself on your own testimony! For you so hold all your people oppressed by fear that they would with reason decree such an unaccustomed honor for you contrary to their own convictions.

However, for a little while, let us pay no more heed to this honorary title of yours. It could be that there is something in this title that does not appear at first glance. It might be because of this that they were led to grant this title freely to you. What then? What did they decree? They decreed that you were the supreme head of the Church. But there is a twofold church. One is the Church of Christ, the Church of those who bless Christ; the other is the assembly of the malignant
as the Prophet David says: "I have hated the assembly of the malign-
ant" (Ps. 25:5). This same assembly may be called the assembly of Satan. Therefore, they were not able to grant that you should be called the supreme head of the Church of Christ. Not even if they were most capable, can it be shown that they wanted to do this. Since you, for this reason, gave them the assurance of very remarkable favors, what was left for them but to appoint you head of the church—the assembly of the malignant? Just as Satan is called the Prince of this world because he despotically pursues it and is master there, so also you are called head of a Church that you, taught by the tricks of Satan, persecute and harass. In this manner, indeed, you have many favoring you in their minds and voting this honor for you. I might easily be led to believe that thus this title was decreed for you by the harmonious agreement of all classes of people. But what are we doing? Are we reproaching the King when we say that if he is the head of any church it is the assembly of the malignant and not of those who praise God? Is that the way the matter really stands? But let the deeds come into everyone's view; let them speak for themselves. Some faith can be put in deeds rather than in words.

Eulogy on John Fisher, Thomas More, the Bridgettines, and the Carthusians

People of London behold the head of Fisher, that most holy man! Severed from his body, it was affixed to a pike in the public view of all in London near the bridge of the Thames. Behold the head of More, that most guiltless of men! It was set up in the same place and given the same honor. Oh! What a mournful sight not only for the city of London alone but for all England! Oh! What a miserable spectacle not only for the country of England but for the whole world wherever the Christian name extends. Were these not the very men from whose virtues and literary talents England derived such great enjoyment? By their lives they provided England with a singular, saintly example. By their literary genius and talent they afforded their country able assistance in both private and public affairs. The judgment and testimony of the finest men clearly proved that no more useful men had existed in our native land for many ages. These are
the same men, however, who defended ecclesiastical affairs with their
learning, religious devotion, and written works. No one during all
these years spoke out more strongly with the voice of the whole
Church, no one fought more bravely in defense of the dignity of the
Church against the insults of heretics.8 Oh! What a frightful thing,
not only to behold but also to hear! We cannot recall, not merely
from recent memory but even from history, any men who were more
loyal than these. And yet their heads are seen affixed in that place
where customarily are affixed the heads of traitors to their native land,
thieves and men convicted of nefarious crimes. Should we now doubt
which Church he headed since he commanded that their heads be
cut off and set up in this location?

But let us listen carefully here for a moment, for not yet have we
covered this complete history. It did not even have its beginning in
the most cruel slaughter of these men whom I have just mentioned.
Therefore we wish to relate other deeds that were done whereby this
renowned head of the Church raised his shamelessness to Heaven. By
comparison, all that we in our security from violence have just related
concerning these two most holy men, will now seem trifling. Theirs
was not exactly a cruel punishment. Rather was it a punishment con-
ferred upon them as a favor, as a proof of great mercy pleasing to
God. For you could also see others endowed with no less sanctity.
Not only were the heads of these others chopped off, but their bodily
members were cut up in a wretched manner and exposed for view as
a spectacle in different parts of the city. Here the head, and there,
in one place and another, another part of the body might be seen.
Thus they could not be said to have been granted the favor of leaving
this life merely having one bodily member cut off. Nor did nature
permit these miserable men to die one death. But what kind of a thing
is this that I am saying? Can any kind of cruelty be discovered that
exceeds a single death from bodily torture, if nature has ordained
death alone as the end of misery?9

Though the extreme cruelty of this manner of death could not be
achieved, it was nevertheless attempted. And thus it happened. Others
are punished by different kinds of death for their various crimes.
Thieves are condemned to the noose. Those convicted of more serious
crimes are condemned to fire, and others perish by the sword. The
greatest crime of these holy men was their refusal to betray their belief
in Christ and the Church. For this they were then dragged and torn asunder through every kind of punishment, so their deaths would not come until a climax had been reached in a triple death that snatched away their lives. First, their breath was stopped short with a noose, but only up to the point where they felt the harshness and torment of death without the effects of the final fatal force. They were then seen to be in the embrace of death, to be struggling with death itself rather than to be dying. And in this struggle, as soon as the hangman perceived that they had become weak, the most merciful judges ordered them to be freed from this death and lowered from the cross to the ground. They were then carried on to another kind of death even more harsh and more cruel. For, seizing a sword, the hangman exposed their hearts and breasts to view. But this combat with death was more savage since they, with their entrails now exposed, saw them torn out and hurled into the fire before their very eyes. When they had perceived with their intimate senses their own most bitter sorrows, then they could enjoy this pleasant spectacle with their eyes! They could behold themselves as they were dying and they could see their own bodily members being consumed in flames. This, however, would certainly be the last struggle with death. For what body could be so adamantine as to still retain its soul, to still hold any part of life after so many bitter, sorrowful torments? Indeed this second death would have consumed them had not the marvelous agility of the hangman prevented. He remembered that they were to pay the penalty and to be punished in their bodies. Whatever penalties he had not exacted from them—for the judges were so infinitely kind!—he was now so prepared to tear them into pieces that he quartered these breathing and living men before the eyes of all.

Oh! The faith of men and God! Where in the world are we? What monstrous things unheard of up to this day am I relating? They were plainly monstrous deeds and every one of them has actually happened! I say they were the greatest of monstrous deeds. For one who knew that men such as these had paid this penalty of death by so many torments, one who knew the ancient fable of the giants who they say wanted to cast down the gods from the heavens, would judge that this could now be told most truthfully. For all these men who endured such cruel torments throughout their bodies had lived their lives far removed from the respect and fame of men. They might
On the Unity of the Church

be considered to have lived in the heavens more than they dwelt upon the earth. When these men, therefore, were driven out by these giants, they made the fable come true. But what are we doing? Indeed, if we are seeking in fables to make some comparison with the authors of such great savagery, we should find others besides giants who are remembered as having human figures and human natures. Thus it does not seem that we can truthfully imagine them thinking of such savage cruelty, especially against those who never harmed them. This very great savagery would be more fitting for Cerberus, the three-headed watchman of the lower world, as the poets relate in their fables. It might truthfully be said that Cerberus would delight in the torment of the most holy men. He would not devour them immediately but would grind them around in his triple mouth for a long time, since he would want to kill them with the greatest pleasure to himself. But to abandon this fable, however, there is no one who does not know that Satan himself, the Prince of the lower world, was present at the trial whereby these men were condemned. He plainly presided over it.

Finally, what accounts for the summoning of such judgment? Was some crime charged? Was opportunity given for a defense? Yes, indeed. But everything was carried on in the presence of Satan acting as judge and pronouncing sentence in the court of this assemblage over which he presided. The crime was that men dedicated to God did not wish to acknowledge something contrary to their own opinion of soul, contrary to that opinion first received from the very ancient and continual custom of the Church of Christ. The writings of most learned and saintly men confirmed this opinion. They did not want to acknowledge that the Church was without a head, that the person of the King possessed a twofold head. Rather, they did not wish to acknowledge that the Church had many heads, as is pictured in the Hydra. They did not want to acknowledge that the King had two heads, that he was surpassed only by Cerberus who is pictured with three heads.

Did not these cruel judges demand this and many other things from these most holy men? They knew that the Church had always recognized that Christ as man was first of all head of the Church He founded, and that Christ wanted a man to be present to govern the Church at all times. They knew that when Christ left this earth He
left the position of head to Peter and that He appointed Peter as His successor. They saw, finally, that all the Roman pontiffs who succeeded to Peter, in the judgment of the Church, held the position of head and continually confirmed the greatest unity of the Church. Nevertheless, they denied that Peter or anyone else who was a successor to the position of Peter was this sole head. And they so denied this that they would not permit this honor to remain in the power of any person of this rank. Nor did they desire to attribute this honor to any priest. They did not desire that there should be one head of the universal Church on earth. They wanted this office of head which the Roman pontiff fulfilled in place of Christ, in the judgment of the Church, to be divided among many. These judges wanted this honor of governing the Church that we indicate by the name head to be more appropriate for the secular rather than for the spiritual power, more appropriate for kings rather than for priests. Thus they wanted this power to be snatched away not only from this one priest but from the whole order of priests. They wanted it to be dispersed and divided among kings as plunder.

These holy men refused to subscribe to such an impious and nefarious decree that was repugnant to the continual custom of the Church and opposed to all the decrees of the Councils. Therefore, they were condemned and endured the final punishment on behalf of the Church. Those holy men refused to violate all oaths and become blasphemers of God and the Church. They refused to withdraw from the decrees of the Church and from the death proposed to them. They were condemned in a public judgment, though that judgment should rather be called a wicked conspiracy of the most criminal men against Christ and the Church. But what kind? If they were summoned to judgment, were they not given opportunity for a defense? It was given, indeed, but it was a very subtle opportunity. It was the kind of opportunity that Satan would willingly and freely give if the case were being tried before his tribunal. The only opportunity for a defense given them was for them either to deny that this decree existed, or if they could not do that, to promise and swear that they would recognize the King as the supreme head of the Church in England. Thus they would have to repudiate the authority of the Church and all the decrees of the Councils where the Church recognized Peter after Christ, and all the other successors of Peter who
followed after him as heads. They would have to promise to obey this new decree ever afterward. But how could these most holy men do this? From childhood they were trained in faith and the decrees of the Church. They would even pour forth their lives on this account.

How far removed from the divine law and will did it seem, to their minds, for the King to be head of the Church! How strange this was, when it occurred to them that the duties and functions of the head included those of binding and loosing the sins of men and—that I might say it in a word—of administering the sacraments of the Church. How strange, when it occurred to them that among other sacred things these duties included the consecration of the sacred Body of the Lord! For in the first place they judged that it would be contrary to all reason for more authority in matters of the greatest importance to be conceded to inferiors rather than to the superior. They judged that the supreme head of the Church would be excluded from those functions that are of the highest importance in the Church. They judged that if the King, the supreme head, was not allowed to handle the sacraments, that this would be permitted to the priests, the inferior members. Then, indeed, to grant to kings the power of handling sacred matters, of administering the sacraments, of consecrating the most sacred Body of Christ would appear to be abhorrent to the divine will. For as the Scriptures testify, the divine will scarcely conceded that kings might build the temple in which the priests would minister to God. Even though he was a Prophet and had most resolute intentions for building a temple and had gathered much precious material for his task, King David was nevertheless not able to obtain from God his request that he himself might build it, because he had stained his hands with blood in many battles. But he asked this as the most important function that might be conferred upon kings in matters pertaining to sacred affairs. However, it was reserved for Solomon, the son of David, to have permission to build the temple. God promised David that the temple could be built by his son who would indeed be peace-loving and would keep his hands free from all blood. No one reads in the Scriptures that the divine will ever permitted anyone not a priest to perform any sacred duty in the temple. But if any, of their own will, should assume this function for themselves, we know that God would take measures so that he would be punished more severely and vehemently than all others who
had neglected the will of God. This may not be sufficiently evident from God's most effective punishment for Ozias the King. God instantly struck him with leprosy, because by offering incense he had usurped the function of the priests. Or it may not be sufficiently evident from God's most severe revenge against Dathan and Abiron and their companions in crime and sacrilege who, with their wives and children, were swallowed up by the earth because they had usurped the function of priests. Certainly, however, the example of Oza can make this especially clear. For he was instantly struck dead before the sight of all for no reason other than moving his hand toward the ark of the Lord merely to prevent it from falling. This may be read in the Book of Samuel. "Oza put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it: because the oxen kicked and made it lean aside. And the indignation of the Lord was enkindled against Oza, and he struck him for his rashness: and he died there before the ark of God" (2 Sm. 6:6–7).

Those holy men could recall these and similar things from the Scriptures. They could recall especially, as I have just said, that those who had not received this function from God should not put forth their hands in sacred matters even for the purpose of assisting. Therefore, what death would they not undergo willingly rather than subscribe to a decree that was so manifestly at variance with the will of God and the established testimony of the Scriptures? For they saw in particular that to destroy the unity and to break the bond of all peace and concord could only effect the ruin and destruction of the Church. Therefore, rather than do this, they were willing to undergo the most severe punishment and even a most cruel death.

In what way, however, were the authors of such savagery better able to declare themselves enemies of Christ and the Church, and contemptuous of the divine will, than by compelling these holy men—whose lives up to that date had never had even the slightest suspicion of any crime—to endure the most severe of all penalties, the ultimate of all punishments? And they did this for this reason alone. These holy men merely refused to subscribe to this one decree that had lately arisen from a few men. Lest I might say anything more, these holy men refused to act contrary to the many decrees of the Church. They knew they were the same as the decrees of God, and that they would always defend them with the most holy zeal. As if this were
not enough, the author of this savagery led these most holy men to their punishment clad in the very garments in which they were recognized as having Christ for their Ruler and as serving as soldiers of Christ. Thus the authors of this savagery testified that they were the enemies of Christ in all things and that they were waging war with Christ. Thus they testified as though they were victors in battle with the commissioned army of God, as if from these wretched forces they had taken captives whom they desired to lead in triumph for the insult and derision of the enemy. For what could be a better sign of the soldiers of Christ than the very robes that they wore?

For the kind of robes that they wore showed that they who possessed them were sacred to God. Laws had been made concerning such men who might be apprehended in manifest crime and who, in the opinion of all, were judged worthy of being afflicted with capital punishment. Before they were to be led to this punishment, those in authority were bound to remove them from their sacred order. They were also to be stripped of every dress and robe before they should be seen publicly by the people. And, indeed, this custom was always observed in England until this new head of the Church—or rather, because of his passionate desires—this new enemy of Christ became the first to ignore every example and law, the first to sacrifice most holy servants of Christ clad in their sacred robes, as if he were sacrificing victims to his god, Baal.

Wherefore, if there seemed to be some privilege of priestly rank whereby priests should not be led to death before they were stripped of their rank and sacred robes, who does not see that this was arranged as more appropriate for the wicked and the guilty? Or should we think it would be suitable that some greater infamy be added to the punishment of each one? Finally, it was arranged as more suitable for such men to be stripped of their sacred robes by which they might retain some appearance of dignity even in their most despised fortune. Clad in strange garments of insult, they were ordered to be led to punishment tied to the tails of horses. Indeed, for their greater shame, a special law was imposed on them whereby they should pass before the face and sight of men before they met death. Thus they were deposed from their order and were deprived of all sacred marks of distinction of which they were deemed unworthy.

Therefore, if any indication of honor belonged to anyone—as
it assuredly did—it undoubtedly belonged to Christ. The early holy lawmakers thought it unbecoming that anyone bearing the marks of distinction of Christ should be treated so ignominiously, or that they should be seen by Christian people as they underwent a wicked and disgraceful death. But those who held the law of Christ in contempt would scarcely require that these men observe any human law that had reference to the law of Christ. Thus no law, no justice was employed in that judgment, no more so indeed than if Satan himself, the enemy of Christ and all good things, had presided. Actually he certainly did preside! For even if the laws might have had some weight, there was neither opportunity nor tribunal where the priests of God could be conducted to plead their case. Nor, indeed, was there anything in a case of this kind wherein judges of evil affairs might understand or render an opinion. For in what way does the question concerning who should be the head of the Church according to Christ’s law, pertain to the judges of human affairs?

Before you seized possession of this name of head, can we recall priests ever being summoned before the tribunal of alien judges? Have we ever heard this concerning others? Indeed your father was victorious in that war which was entirely enkindled by the crime of some priest¹⁰ This priest had aroused I know not what boy, and produced him in the assembly of the people. He falsely pretended that he had the name of my uncle. He persuaded this boy to escape from prison where he knew the people would protect him. When your father knew that this priest was the author of such great sedition and strife in which thousands of men were killed, he received this one living instigator into his own hands. He punished all the other associates in this conspiracy most severely. Nevertheless he did not dare touch this man because of one reason alone—the man was a priest. But he handed over this priest to his own judges, that is, to the priests. They were to punish him according to their own laws. Certainly he never appeared before the tribunal of alien judges.

What will you say here, I beseech you? Was the crime of those monks, who did nothing else but supplicate God night and day concerning your safety and that of your kingdom, greater than the crime of this priest who was not only discovered in the camp of the enemy but who alone was convicted as the hostile instigator of sedition against the King? Do I recount things too ancient as I present to you
none other than the example of your father observing the laws of the Church? Did your father have too little intelligence and prudence since he observed the laws? Indeed, do you wish to be considered more prudent because you do not observe any laws? However, let us return to the monks. What a novelty it would be for them when they were summoned to defend themselves before a tribunal of judges. Some of these monks lived the greater part of their lives within the walls of the monasteries; they were scarcely able to know what these tribunals were. They had almost forgotten the state itself. Once they had withdrawn into the monastery, they never planned to leave it. Never even in their dreams did they suspect indeed that they would ever see the state again, that they would face a tribunal other than the one they believed would be the Judge of all. Therefore, they were men unaware of any crime or indeed of the least crime that pertained to human thought. They were priests not aware that they would hear themselves first summoned thither where customarily only parricides, robbers, murderers, and traitors were brought up. These men about whom I have been speaking were condemned for the crime of lese majesty before those same judges who gave sentences for wicked men. These men were far removed from forming plans for dishonoring the majesty of King or native land. Rather, scarcely a thought about King or native land entered their minds unless it were the one that was always present when they commended the security of both King and native land to God in their constant prayers. For they dedicated themselves completely to this task. Since they held all other business of their native land and their friends of less account, they were themselves prevented from engaging in all human business.

At first glance how strangely this new thing would seem to have happened to them! It seemed incredible that this happened to them so strangely. Equally incredible did a messenger come to them unexpectedly. This messenger came to them as they dwelt in their places far removed from the social contacts of all men. They were in their cells at prayer and intent on meditation of divine affairs. Here they received the report that the King had adopted for himself the name of the supreme head of the Church of England, that this had been conferred upon him by the opinion of a public council and had also been confirmed by an enacted law. Manifestly, if we wish to conjecture what was most likely the truth, they would have been stupefied
at this report. They would have inquired who this King might be, what this public council was. They would have had grave doubts whether the monarch they thought was reigning had departed from life, or whether some new enemy of God and man had usurped his position. They would have doubted whether the Englishmen had been driven out and some new nation from distant shores of the earth had occupied the realm, as once the Angles had done when they drove out the Britons. Only with difficulty would anyone think it likely they would believe such a great crime was entered into by the opinion of a council of Englishmen. For they always knew Englishmen as a most religious people. Certainly no one could imagine that they would judge that the King did all these things. For the King always had a great reputation for devout religious observance toward Christ and the Church. In fact, no one in the annals or memory of anyone gave more certain indication of this fact. They could not then think that he had undertaken this deed. For they knew that this King—and this was something never heard of in the case of another—had most accurately defended the ancient ordinances and decrees of the Church in a written book, when some new dogmas began to be introduced into the Church.\textsuperscript{11} On this account the illustrious leaders of the Church deemed him worthy to be the first to hold the title of "Defender of the Faith." This title had never previously been conferred on any king since the founding of the Church. Furthermore, they had heard that he had received this name with such great joy of soul that it was just as though he thought it had been conferred upon him by Christ Himself.

The Roman pontiff, whom he recognized as Vicar of Christ in accord with the general judgment of the Church, conferred this name upon him. The King's first vigorous courage had been exerted in defense of the pontiff's authority. The King never seemed armed in any war except for defending the cause of the pontiff. He displayed such talent, learning, and eloquence in defending the decrees of the Church that he gained the great admiration of Christian people. The King, finally, was considered as a certain beloved object, not as Titus was for mankind, but as Constantine the Great was for the Church. How could any of these men immediately believe or sincerely think that this King had decided to attack the authority of the pontiff or
to depart even a nail’s breadth from things agreeable to the Church?

Even were there nothing else, at least his deeds, his writings, and this title of honor recently received were given as tokens and pledges to the Church of God. They would retain the King in office, unless he were completely forgetful of his honors, his deeds, and himself. Thus these men never would have thought such a thing could readily happen to such a Prince, since they knew his virtues of soul from the deeds he had done. They were, however, men ignorant of almost all that went on outside. They did not know that these virtues had been attacked by artifices. Wherefore, before they could suspect all the things that I have said concerning this King, they were assiduously praying for his salvation. Clearly they might have suddenly thought that the same fate had befallen them—in regions far removed from the customs of men—that is recounted befalling the seven who slept.¹²

While these seven were fleeing the ferocity of the Roman rulers against all who bore the Christian name, they hid themselves in a cave. By the divine will the seven were delivered up to sleep. While they slept, the ages of many rulers passed and many innovations were made in public and private affairs. The seven escaped all these things completely and when they were awakened one of them secretly went to the city to obtain certain necessities. There he found a new appearance of things. For the ruler they had long ago feared, was dead; many had since succeeded to his position; a great number of years had passed by. When he related all these things to his companions, they realized they had all been preserved in sleep by a very great miracle of God. Surely if the new appearance of things and the change of laws and customs could persuade them of something similar, I can hardly think those seven men would have found a greater change made in all the laws and customs during the many years in which they continually slept, than surprised these monks when they were dragged from their cells to the tribunals of judges. This would be especially so, if the age of these seven is compared with the age in which these monks fled the powerful and constant enemy of this external world to hide themselves in monasteries as in caves. Thus if the history of these seven men were brought to the monks’ attention, they might justly wonder whether during the period in which such change of affairs was made, they had not also been divinely lulled into a con-
tinuous sleep. They might think that the ruler they themselves knew, was no longer alive. They would recognize no trace of him in the laws and customs of the present age.

For what else could they believe or suspect? These men had carried on lives of extreme solitude in their monasteries. They were separated from all social contacts with men when they suddenly beheld such a great and wondrous change in all affairs in religion, laws, customs, and even men themselves. They did not see those men whom they had known as pre-eminent in the state meriting highest praise of all, men whom the state had proved to be the finest and most prudent. These men had been thrown into jails as traitors to their native land. The lack of religious devotion and the dishonorable lives of their successors were such that no jail would seem suitable for them. These men had long since excluded ecclesiastical laws from the assemblies of devout people. Whatever human laws there were, were even now demanding vengeance.

What else could these monks conjecture here before such great and unexpected changes in affairs? It is likely—may the Son of God love me!—that they would remain stupefied at their first glimpse of such conditions. In nothing could they find any similarity, unless perhaps they had heard about the Turkish fleet that had started out from Constantinople during these times. This fleet directed its course toward the Pillars of Hercules and had filled every Christian with great terror. From this they might have suspected that the Turks would overcome the narrow channel at the Straits of Gibraltar and make an unexpected landing on our shores. The Turks might have subjected this whole Island to their authority at this first attack. They might have suspected that the leader of this fleet, since he was so openly hostile to our religion, had been the author of such impious changes in all the affairs of England. Yet, surely, had they but known sufficiently the customs of the ruler of the Turks, they would not have thought such wickedness probable in his case. For when he had victoriously entered Rhodes, where all were Christians who had often been inciting his fleet during an attack of many months, no similar cruelty was ever heard of in the case of the Turkish leader. Indeed, in territories where the Turk was in power, no one was ever compelled to assent to anything contrary to his own opinion, at least in matters pertaining to religion. Indeed he knew what their lives were
like, such as those monks who I say had scorned the conveniences and pleasures of this life and consecrated themselves entirely to the worship of God. Whatever their religion might be, he held them in honor and esteem. Those Greek monks who dwelt on Mt. Athos gave proof of this. He sent gifts to them every year and commended his own salvation to these men even though they were of a different religion. One could not, therefore, think with any degree of probability that the Turkish ruler would have displayed such cruelty, even if his fleet had landed in England and had besieged London. But manifestly, the deeds of these times could only be those of Satan himself. For that judgment condemning these most innocent and holy men, and many other affairs over which Satan presided beyond this judgment, testify and declare that all these deeds were done through Satan’s plan and desire.

Even in the absence of these other events, would not More’s condemnation alone reveal in the clearest light the total darkness of this judgment, would it not reveal that Satan, the Prince of Darkness, presided at this judgment? Though Bishop and Cardinal Fisher was condemned most unjustly, they might have found some charge, even an unjust one, against him. They might have found something that would have had a specious form and appearance of justice. He was openly opposed to their law, as was proper for a bishop. In the case of More, however, neither a just nor an unjust reason could be offered that had any appearance of justice. They were not able to find anything, either by custom or example, that would justify his condemnation. Every charge that they might have been able to invent against him collapsed when his one reply was heard.

For a little while, however, let us explain the form of that renowned trial that condemned More, so that it might better be understood. Let us see who presided over that trial. The accusation, therefore, began in this manner. More was summoned to that trial for his life in the very place where just a short time previously he had sat as judge with authority and the extraordinary good wishes of all the realm. He so adorned this position of magistrate that those who saw him there were confident that they did not see a man. They thought instead that they saw religious devotion, justice, knowledge of all human and divine laws, and the greatest prudence. They believed that he possessed all these virtues and was prepared to use
them as aids in controversial affairs against force and injustice. They had never read in all the most ancient annals of the realm about anyone else who ascended to this position endowed with such great virtue and brilliant learning. They certainly never recalled anyone who by solitude and justice gave greater hope of victory over violence and injustice. They recalled no one who had been more pre-eminent in this regard. Truly this was the man who was brought as a prisoner into this place to speak his defense before such a judge. Attend now while not my words but the very acts of his trial make this clear.

A long and intricate accusation was read aloud against the prisoner. In this accusation, whatever might be said against a most criminal man, whatever might be said against a traitor to his native land and against a man who had overthrown all laws, was charged against him, though he had always lived most innocently and had taken constant care that the laws were most religiously observed by all. He who alone of all his rank would not permit the majesty of the King or his realm to be diminished, was accused of the crime of lese majesty. But, in order that he might not reply to all the things that were presented, that thus some suspicion of crime might be established against him, this accusation was concealed in lengthy and ambiguous words and sentences. They thus clearly had a scheme whereby—if they were not able to strike him down—at least they might surround this most innocent man with their lengthy circumlocution of crimes. Thus, they would surround a wild beast with nets from which he might not escape. The speech was so lengthy that More himself, whose memory surpassed all others, even though he listened most attentively, openly testified that he was scarcely able to remember a third of the charges brought against him. He said, nevertheless, that he would reply to a few of them, or rather to that one charge that was really the source of this whole accusation. This charge was that he did not approve of the new decree of the council. It was, finally, this decree of parliament that made it possible for them to charge him with lese majesty. For they had nothing else with which to charge him based on any degree of probability.

To this, however, More replied in this way. He said that the law, whatever it might be, was passed after all his possessions had been confiscated and after he had been given the punishment of continual confinement in jail where he would spend the rest of his
life. Therefore, whether the law was just or unjust did not in the first place seem to pertain to him in any way. He had been dead "as a citizen," as the laws would say. Nor should he make any reply concerning laws that he himself could no longer use. Then, indeed—and this pertained to him especially—he had never done anything by word or deed that might appear to disapprove this law. Briefly, he could not be condemned justly by a law that he could not be accused of opposing either in word or deed. Behold those renowned judges were at first silent before this reply! They had nothing that they might quickly oppose; nor indeed did More explain to anyone what he thought about this. They all looked at one another; they all were fixed to the spot; they all began to rage. For that long and intricate accusation, with all its perplexities, had accomplished nothing. The innocent man whom they thought they had surrounded like a wild beast, appeared to be escaping from the net. Finally, they all turned their eyes toward the King's advocate [Sir Thomas Audley, Chancellor]. They thought it was his special business to take care lest this precious prey should escape from their hands. But then the advocate, since he thought of nothing, declaimed—filled with that spirit with which this whole fable had been instigated. He said that though truly they did not have any word or deed with which they might charge More, at least they surely had his silence. At once the advocate reminded the court of the time that More had been questioned in jail concerning what he thought about the law. Then More had refused to reply; he said that since he was condemned to continual imprisonment, he should not think any more concerning human laws. More had said that it was now more his business to turn all his soul and thoughts toward the divine laws, toward the mercy of God and the death that Christ our Redeemer endured for us and upon which alone the salvation of all depended. He said he should do this rather than think about human laws he was prevented from using for the rest of his life, rather than reply to anyone inquiring from him. The advocate said that since words and deeds were lacking, More might be charged with his silence instead of a crime. And this very ingenious advocate added that this silence was a sign of a malicious mind. This word was so agreeably received by the other judges that they thought by this one word alone they might establish a trial, a trial that had almost appeared to have collapsed. Since none of the judges had any-
thing to charge, they all, nevertheless, cried out: "Malice, malice!"

No word or deed proposed this argument of malice, only silence. And in this way, like a wild beast almost escaped from snares, this most innocent man seemed to be hurled back into the snares of this accusation. They scarcely listened to More when he replied to these things by saying that no one, on account of silence, could be condemned as disapproving the law. He said silence was an indication of agreement with the law rather than of opposition to the law; this was confirmed by the well-known statement of those skilled in the law. For then it is customarily said: "He who is silent appears to be in agreement." But they scarcely heard this. Now the 12 men who, in our native land, have the power of judging over life and death, were summoned. Since these 12 men now had impressed upon their ears and minds this word malice that had resounded throughout the whole trial, they immediately—for there was no delay, and it was a wonder they could agree so quickly—pronounced the judgment in the English word Glyte. This then had the same effect as in the Hebrew manner of speaking death for the Son—Crucify! Crucify!

_Apostrophe to Pole's Native England_

Oh! My dearly beloved native England! Would you ever think that this sentence would be passed on the head of this man? For I now address and call upon everyone since such a great loss that occurred that day by the condemnation of such a man affects all equally, it affects all in common and it affects each one individually. Surely, England, I say, if you had known what a man you would lose by this judgment, if you had known what an adornment, what a protection in every kind of fortune had been snatched away from you by this judgment, surely your sorrow and continual grieving for your only son would have been greater than that of a widowed mother mourning the loss of her only son, greater than that of an army mourning the loss of its dearly beloved leader. For never before did you ever bring forth such a son. But you cannot be ignorant as to the kind of son he was. He died for your sake; he abandoned everything dear and pleasant to men that you might not grieve; he neglected his own security that he might avert destruction from you. He received, in-
On the Unity of the Church

deed, great things from you, and greater from God. Truly what did he ever receive from you that he did not return with the highest interest? For if you gave great talent, what native land ever received benefits of talent from anyone greater than you received from this son of yours? Indeed, you might truly call him a son, surpassing all others whom you have ever nourished. You might especially assume for yourself that glory which surely is not slight. His prudence was very great, he excelled in all other virtues and in learning and literature; he so surpassed all your other sons that you have no one with whom you might compare him. The preparation and development of all these personal qualities occurred within your own bosom and confines. He never left his native home, where he was first born and brought into this light. There he procured for himself the outstanding embellishments and helps for his life. Nor did he do this more for himself than for you. Afterward he so cultivated all of these things in you, that from almost each individual seed he received from you he returned an ample abundance of fruits—if they might be counted—even as does a good fertile field.

Recall all the time of his adolescence and some of his youth consumed in comprehending your laws. Was there ever such favorable and happy talent as this carefully cultivated by the best of literary studies? It could have filled all countries with the abundance of its learning; its affairs and business were devoted to your laws. These laws increased his liberal knowledge; they were surely fruitful for him. He was content to deserve well within the narrow confines of this Island alone. These talents might not be of use to others; they would not bring glory and dignity to those outside your boundaries. Truly his special care was always for you that he might be of special profit to you at home. He at once dedicated to you his talent and all that he had received from you. He thoroughly studied your laws; he himself reckoned many years in meeting lawyers and in always speaking with great praise about their integrity and uprightness. As soon as opportunity presented itself during this period of his life, he never granted himself any rest from carrying on your affairs. For he so devoted his efforts on your laws that there was no other training that he did not apply if it could be of assistance in obtaining this knowledge. Who ever enriched the knowledge of your laws by using so many of the arts as a means to this end? Who has made the prudence of your laws
illustrious by the knowledge of so many very admirable subjects? If your laws could speak and feel, they would confess that nothing ever amazed them more than the fact that so many embellishments together with the companionship of so many of the most distinguished arts existed in the mind of one man. They would never remember seeing such a thing in any other person. And they would never have hoped to have found it in one man, and truly, least of all in this man. Although his talent had the greatest capacity for all the arts, nevertheless, he was always very busy. These liberal studies were such that they did not permit one to be engaged in other occupations; they scarcely allowed any profound familiarity with anything that did not direct all his thought and attention toward these studies. When the laws recalled that this man's life had always been a most busy one, when they remembered that he never ceased his occupation with these affairs, would they not justly say that they wondered how he achieved such embellishments from so many and such great studies?

But what of you, England? While your laws were marvelling at this fact, you can see and at the same time admire the very great talent you produced. But above all things, consider the fact that these very great virtues of More's talent were employed with singular zeal, care, and solicitude to aid you in every way. That pleasantness which is accustomed to be received from such studies did not lead him astray, as it had often rendered many most distinguished men of no use to their native land. Nor did the delight and fruits of any leisure draw him away from pursuit of these affairs, since he was always occupied in your presence and before your very eyes. He never wanted either himself or his actions to be concealed from you. I now demand your testimony. Do you truly detect any sign of malice in this man? You best of all knew his character. Did you ever see anyone more straightforward, more truthful, more sincere, more absolutely lacking in deceit and treachery? Did you ever see anyone in whom such seriousness was combined and moderated with such great friendliness? Certainly if you wish to recall only his character, you might form the opinion that he was almost anything rather than malicious. His great urbanity and humor surpassed all others, lacked all absurdity, and his pleasantry was always in evidence. One might believe that there was a place for anything in his most congenial character except maliciousness. All looked upon him as your "darling." He was called
the "darling" of England, as he truly was. But let us leave his character that can be disguised and covered, although it can scarcely be hidden during the very many years that he lived in your sight.

However, let us come to the deeds themselves that are especially connected with this accusation. Was it "malice" when More held the rudder of the realm in his hand, when he was entrusted with the chancellorship in his native land, when he instantly saw his native land tossed about as if by the storm of the most unjust laws? Was it "malice" when he saw that his native land had been brought to such a turning point that unless he alone cast himself into the sea—as Jonas in the belly of the whale—all who were carried in this ship would perish? Was it "malice" for him to desire this above all things? Was it "malice" because he turned back again to the example of Jonas, because he abandoned the honor of governing and immediately cast himself into the hands of most criminal men—as if into the sea and into the belly of the whale—so that he might free you and yours? Truly, did not More do just this?

I call upon you, Oh! England! I say that you were the common parent of him and of all who were then sharing in this danger. For these things took place within your view. You first saw him enjoying his supreme magistracy, with the greatest joy you beheld him when he rose to a position that no one of his rank ever held before him. And you rejoiced over this all the more because here you knew that this most distinguished model would be presented and proposed to all, you knew that you would possess his virtue as the highest honor for yourself; you knew that his virtue would aid you more than all other things in obtaining the highest honors. He had never canvassed for votes to obtain this magistracy; he had achieved it by the commendation of his virtue alone. What could you suspect when you saw him divesting himself of the distinguishing marks of all honors in your sight? Did you suspect that he did not do this of his own free will, but that he was compelled by the command of another as if under suspicion for some crime? Even his enemies, although they were most bold and cruel, as the very death of More showed, did not dare say this. On the contrary, they openly testified that he would have been permitted to enjoy his magistracy forever if he so wished. They evidently did this in order to drive away from themselves the flame of popular hatred. For they saw that the minds of all would be inflamed with
passion against them if it should be spread abroad that this man was expelled from the helm of the state. For no one had ever handled the affairs of state more wisely and with greater praise for integrity and blamelessness than had More. And therefore the King himself publicly urged him to retain the magistracy, or at least he pretended to urge him so that the King would make an effort to preserve his reputation. And the man who succeeded More testified in a public council the same thing concerning the very renowned opinion of the King. He testified that More was always most worthy of this position; he testified that a great burden had been imposed upon him since he had been substituting for such a man as More.

What, therefore, could you suspect as his reason for abandoning this position? Could you suspect anything else but what the deed itself spoke? Could you suspect anything but that More realized he would not manifest the faith and religious devotion that he desired for you, by performing his duties to this office? As soon as he realized he could not be worthy of you as he desired, More himself cast away his honors since he measured all his dignity by its usefulness to you and not by his own honors. The realization that all the deeds he himself would have done suitably for your security and dignity were daily being rescinded by those desiring anything rather than the supremacy of the laws, first removed his intention of retaining the magistracy.

But this was not his only reason. Truly, when he saw not only those things that threatened upheaval in all other affairs but also threatened the ruin and destruction of religion being woven into the state, then he knew that he could have no part as an author of such a conspiracy of wicked men. Lest he might be compelled to take part in these criminal schemes against you—which he saw he could neither prevent nor retard—this reason alone seemed to him to be a suitable one for willingly withdrawing from such a lofty position of dignity. However, he saw that the storm, which he had previously foreseen would come, had arrived; then he spontaneously cast himself into the waves. At the most certain risk of his own life, he began to oppose those who were acting against you. He would be of some assistance to you when you were brought to this extreme crisis; he would help you as a parent whom he had always cherished with extraordinary devotion, as a parent for whose fortune, life, and security he had always
labored. If he could not do this, at least by his death he would make known his very manifest intention.

Oh! England! This very son of yours, this man who so loved you and who from childhood always was so zealous, above all other things, for your dignity and security, was now charged with "malice" deserving capital punishment! Where, I beseech you, was this very great "malice" concealed? In what hiding place? In what corner? Why did he not bring it forth? He deliberately lost and cast aside, first of all, his honor, then his wife and children, even life itself for your sake. He was dragged to death as a traitor, as one malicious toward you. Can any reason be imagined—I dismiss the probability—but can any reason be imagined why he would voluntarily abandon these things that were so dear to all? Can any reason be imagined other than the one he always kept foremost in his mind, his love and devotion for you?

That you might see this most clearly, England, come now and imagine this! For only in the realm of the fictitious could you conceive that he would be able—I do not say completely to abandon his devotion to you—but even give it up for a little while. You cannot picture him a leader in these wicked schemes against you, pretending he did not entirely condemn these things. Try to imagine, however, that he could have approved by voice, or at least by expression, that fatal marriage in which were implanted the seeds of all evils that would overthrow your state like chaos. If the seeds of this marriage might once grow together and sprout forth, they would then exhaust the fruits of your many years of peace and tranquillity. Imagine that others could have led him into this hideous chaos from which the only escape would be descent into a second and third chaos containing those things that would bring much greater destruction to souls than that first chaos had seemed to bring to bodies and external goods. These latter would bring contempt, to say it in a word, to all religious devotion. They would bring about the overthrow of all things divine and human. These evils would be the seeds not only of a civil war, but also of a much more horrible war with God and the higher powers.

Oh! England! I appeal to your conscience! If More had permitted himself to be led by others into this darkness, who now would have
been living with greater authority and favor in your gloomy kingdom? But here there is need for deliberation so you might discover what reply you might truly give. For who, as long as there was some hope of change, had a greater grasp upon the minds of those who were the authors of this upheaval in affairs? Does not the very outcome of affairs make it clear that he was made chancellor for the very reason that he might, corrupted as it were by this favor, be made to go along with these men? But upright as he was, and entirely intent upon your security, he showed that no reward or punishment could incline him toward these wicked schemes against you. He so deceived the hopes of your enemies that they were inflamed with hate and anger against him. Neither the daily filth nor the seizure of all his possessions nor the jail to which he was confined for the rest of his life was able to satisfy their wild cruelty against him. They wanted to imbibe his blood, and indeed, while you his parent looked on, they did imbibe it. But where is the "malice" of which he was accused? There was not the faintest trace of "malice" or hatred of anyone residing in any hiding place of his heart. Then it happened that he received words uttered most unworthily and most unjustly, he received the sentence of capital punishment passed against him contrary to all right and law. There surely he might have broken out with some word—if ever against anyone—against those who had especially treated him so maliciously.

Come now, Oh! England! These things that were done publicly cannot have been concealed from you. Speak forth your testimony now in a clear voice in these things that were done so manifestly before the eyes of all. Have you heard one word uttered by this man that—I do not say showed "malice"—but which was even a sign of his indignation and angered soul over such a very unjust sentence? Did he reproach you with his benefits? Did he complain? Did he assail anyone? He did none of these things. He was constant in that devotion of his which he always religiously cherished from boyhood. He at length spoke what he judged pertained especially to your salvation. He did not then abandon your care, when he saw that for your sake he had been sentenced to death.

For then he first revealed his opinion concerning the law by which the King had been appointed head of the Church. He had not done this previously because it was undoubtedly his intention—since it would avail him nothing—to give his opponents, who were also your
On the Unity of the Church

enemies, an opportunity for further raging against him. But he was, however, mindful of your care. Lest you should imprudently and ignorantly favor this law that was against your own self, he spoke to declare this law to be in contradiction to all human and divine laws. He threatened that the law would be more pernicious for those who assented to it than it would be for himself who had been condemned to capital punishment, because he had been proved to have disagreed with it. When he had made this explanation, he turned to his opponents. But what verbal attack did he employ against them? He spoke in the same way as He who was led as a lamb to the slaughter. He spoke in the same way as the very Son of God who accepted the infirmity of our flesh and suffered Himself to be offered as a saving victim for the salvation of the world. He also prayed for those who were in like manner the authors of His most terrible and unjust death. For thus More died for your salvation. Oh! My native land! He did not pray for disasters for his enemies any more than for his friends. He said this was now indeed a place of discord, dissensions, and tumult. He said, however, that he would now proceed to places where the root of all strife and dissension had been removed, where love, peace, tranquillity, and concord would live in all. He also hoped that they would come there with minds changed for the better. He prayed from his soul that this might be so.

Oh! Kind soul! Oh! Gentleness always praised! What greater sign of his just soul did Stephen give who prayed for those who were casting stones at him? The Son of God revealed the heavens opened for this man, and Himself standing at the right hand of the Father for his consolation. The words More uttered here on this occasion appeared to be those of a man who had been driven hither and thither and now beheld a port of safety, rather than the words of one who would soon perish at the hand of the hangman. What consolation indeed could anything beneath the heavens bring him? He had been abandoned by you, his native land. He had been deserted by your laws. He had been handed over to the hands of most cruel enemies. He had had the sentence of capital punishment passed against him. Why is it that he was not terrified at this sentence, the greatest of all natural evils? Even the bravest of men flee from this sentence, filled with horror. Why is it that he was not terrified, why did he speak courageously, more resolutely? From what source did such great
strength come into his soul at that time? Does not the event itself tell us sufficiently the source of this strength? Would he not have been instantly disheartened had not some strength of divine virtue and consolation appeared upon which his soul might rest? He remained resolute against the fear of death by which the bravest of men are always disturbed. And there was even more cause for wonder that such strength existed in this struggle because his nature was endowed with such gentleness, with such a common sense of human feeling, with love for his own native land. A struggle of this kind might have crushed the adamantine strength of his heart. Nevertheless, throughout all this he remained invincible; not the slightest movement away from his position of constancy could be discerned.

For when the most noble woman, [More's daughter, Margaret], a daughter most worthy of such a father, a daughter bearing with her all gifts of nature and all signs of devotion, one who possessed all things that parents are pleased with in their children and with which they are accustomed to soothe their souls—then this daughter heard the announcement of the cruel and unjust sentence against her father, she was at first breathless with grief. However, she revived sufficient strength to visit her father while he was confined by the judges in jail. Hurrying, she now arrived there while her father was passing by, surrounded by a crowd of guards and royal attendants. Instantly this woman broke through the midst of the guards and armed attendants, and hastened to embrace her father. The strength of many men had now been added to her devotion. Her grief restrained her from speaking. However, with tears filling her breast, she displayed her affectionate spirit by embracing her parent. For some time she could scarcely be torn away from him. What kind of force of soul enabled these enemies to so resist the devotion of this girl, as not to be dissolved at once in tears with her. It was not human. It was rather the ferocity of wild beasts. How sharp and bitter was the grief of her father, especially of such a father! For though he loved all his own, he had loved Margaret with special affection. In Margaret all things that a parent finds most pleasing in his offspring shone forth. He had a special love for her above all. How sharp was his grief when he perceived with his most intimate feelings the devotion of such a daughter! In a place where it seemed that scarcely any person could enter and before he had seen his daughter approaching, he felt his
daughter clinging to his breast! What could equal the eloquence of his grief when he could say absolutely nothing as long as she was in his embrace? What grief was his when she could hardly be torn away by force? What, indeed, were his torments and torture of soul when, after his daughter had been torn from him once, she was again impelled with this same devotion and returned with the same impulse? Only with greater force and difficulty could she be torn away. What great strength of soul was needed here! Even the very consolation of nature offered him only sorrows greater than death. Truly, who would be able to withstand these assaults that were, finally, like those endured by a martyr for Christ? But More so withstood them all that he might be said to be invincible. No one ever heard him utter a word of sorrow.

But just as though he had returned from Heaven where he was hastening, and had brought with him Christ who conquered all the sorrows of nature and in whose presence no word of misery could be uttered, so also More by voice, expression, and gesture showed he had triumphed. He had triumphed over all the insults of nature; he had conquered all things that customarily make men grieve beneath the heavens. He did not forego any of his resoluteness in speech. He replied to his daughter that whatever he was suffering, although he was suffering innocently, he was nevertheless suffering by the will of God. He told her that she knew the secrets of his heart, that he should truly be congratulated that God had considered him worthy to suffer on behalf of devotion and religion. She herself should employ her devotion in accord with the will of God; she should use only the greatest good in supporting her father’s cause. Oh! The greatest strength of divine consolation! Oh! Christ! You are the only Consoler of souls greatly oppressed! You are the Leader and most perfect Model for our life! Has not your disciple followed you in your own very footsteps? Do not these words show that this man was your disciple? That your spirit was present to console him?

Oh! England! What do you say here? Even if other things were lacking, do you not sufficiently understand from these few words that Margaret was not deprived of her most beloved father? Rather do you not know that you were deprived of your own parent in this finest and most loving citizen of yours? Furthermore, if anyone ever deserved from you the name of “Father of his country,” it was this
man. I would rather like to know how you were able to see and hear these things that I have now related at great length concerning the condemnation and punishment of More. I would like to know how you were able to hear them when they were recalled or to behold them when they happened.

But you, Oh! City of London! All of these things happened within your view. You saw him when he was led out from jail to plead against this charge of treason. You recall that a short time thereafter he was convicted of treason before your tribunal. You beheld him as a boy, a youth, a man and finally in his later years as he advanced up the steps of the highest honors with the very great praise and approval of all, due to his most unusual virtues. Finally, you saw him ascend to the most renowned position; and because he was your citizen and your native son you witnessed this with a certain feeling of joy. You recognized your own praise and glory in him. You saw this man sordid in appearance as he was led out of jail. You saw him now become an old man—not by the number of his years but by the filth and foulness of the jail—for the jail showed him grey-haired for the first time in your sight. You saw him weak in his whole body, broken in strength, leaning on a staff and even then scarcely able to sustain his sick body. You saw him dragged instead along a very long and famous street not to plead his own case, but rather to certain condemnation. When you saw these things with what eyes did you behold them? When you saw him returning along this street a man condemned to pay the penalty of traitors, when you saw this man whose loyalty to you could not be attacked by any reward or punishment offered, with what eyes did you behold these things? I know that you beheld them with tearful eyes. For I surely know that it could not have been otherwise, since I see that men from outside our country, men who never knew him or received any benefit from him, have received such grief from his death that when they read the written accounts of this affair they are not able to restrain their tears. Just as though they had heard that one of their own citizens who had merited well by them had been most cruelly and unjustly put to death, so do they weep for More though he was a foreigner whom they knew only through reputation.

Though I myself write these things concerning his death, separated by such a great distance, I have not only many private reasons
for loving him but I have rather loved and cherished him especially because of his virtue and uprightness, on account of which I knew him to be most useful to his native land. Nevertheless—God is my witness!—my tears so rise up against my will that they greatly hinder my writing and often blot the words themselves, so that I am scarcely able to proceed. Wherefore, I do not doubt that you wept most profusely as you beheld these things happening in your very presence, since I who only heard of them cannot recall them without tears. For you have not given birth to men of souls so savage that they would not be deeply moved at happenings of this kind. But I would like to know from you whom you think you should lament. Should the father of Margaret, one of your innocent citizens, be condemned? Should your father then, your parent I say—lest, perhaps, you should be ignorant of this—your glory, your most innocent and distinguished man be led to death? Though, indeed, by nature he was your son through his citizenship, by his benefits, however, he was your father. He displayed more signs of paternal affection toward you than a most indulgent father showed toward his one and dearest son. But in no greater way did he show that he was your parent than by his death. He lost his life for the very special reason that he would not betray your security.

Wherefore we read in the histories of the Greeks that Socrates was assailed in an unjust trial by the Athenians, even as it is now well known that More was condemned to death by you. A short while later, in a theatre where people had assembled for a spectacle, these words were read aloud from a certain tragedy: "You have killed, you have killed the best man of all the Greeks!" Immediately at these words the bitter memory of the murder of Socrates went through the minds of all. Although the poet when he wrote these words was thinking least of all about Socrates, nevertheless the people were so stirred by compassion that the whole theatre was filled with their groans and tears. A short while after this a search was made for the authors of his death. And those whom they could find, they killed. The others were treated roughly by exile. A statue of Socrates was set up publicly in the market place. If, therefore, they had a reason why they should be inflamed simultaneously with just anger against the authors of the crime, and with compassion for a most innocent man who was renowned for his virtues—only those words that I have just quoted were
read aloud in the theatre—by how much more just anger and compassion should you, the City of London, be stirred? You did not hear these words uttered by chance just once in a theatre in your own country by some actor, but you were compelled to hear this charge: “You have killed, you have killed the best of all Englishmen!” brought against you by the most serious men at a time when they were speaking most seriously in every place now Christian in name.

But why do I say you make use of these words concerning only one man? You have killed many Socrates, you have killed many who were more useful to you than Socrates was to his people. Regardless of the number killed for the same reason as More was killed, they surpassed by far all the virtues that can be implied to Socrates. For what did Socrates have that could be compared—I do not say with the many virtues of More or of that great Bishop and Cardinal, Fisher—but with the many virtues of the least of those monks that I mentioned above? If life and death be given first consideration, these men were certainly not as remarkable as Socrates was, but they clearly seemed to be heroes and citizens of heaven, for they seemed to show by all their acts and deeds that they were in heaven even as they led lives on earth. But why do I now recall these things? Why do I recite them? That I might provoke you to tears? Least of all for that, indeed. For I seem to know, if you have not cast aside all sense of human feeling when you were bereft of such men, that you could not restrain your tears for such a very painful mishap to your own. For I see that the tears of men outside our own country break forth even at the recollection of this wretched affair. Why, therefore, do I now recount these things? Certainly I do it especially for the purpose of admonishing you that the will and plan of God is greatly made known by the deaths of these men.

For what do you think, England? Do the lives of these men—led most virtuously and harmoniously with death—show that such men so dear to God died in vain, in your presence? You certainly are in error if you think so. You are not only ignorant of the providence of God and His care for His own, but you are also ignorant of your own highest advantages, your honor and your joy. God conferred all these things upon you by the deaths of these men. I desire to admonish you to perceive and welcome these things.

Oh! England! My dearly beloved native country! Beware lest
you think I have called upon you especially by name in order to renew your tears and your groans and to excite again your wounds with the greatest sorrow to yourself and to myself. I have called upon you to explain to you how you might bring forth security from your wounds, joy from sadness, honor from disgrace. Relying on divine assistance, I shall surely do this. You indeed have received a serious wound. I do not know whether it is not most serious, if this can be called only one wound which has snatched away from you so many outstanding men, all distinguished members of the body. Nothing more serious than this could ever happen to the city or the kingdom, especially since you seem to have come into the hands of those who inflicted these wounds upon you. This calamity is certainly greater than any that could result from war or pestilence. Since these wounds have happened, they cannot be undone, they cannot be changed. However, if it pleases you, you may derive benefit, honor, and your security from these wounds. Regarding what follows next, see that you listen attentively to one who promises to show you the manner in which you may attain this.

For I am that person. And I hope that you will see this most clearly, if only you will consider as absolutely certain something that is most true, something that no one who is even moderately experienced in human affairs can doubt. Nothing more dangerous can happen to a city, a kingdom, or to all mankind than an erroneous opinion concerning those matters that pertain first to the security of the soul and then to the security of the body. For all our life is directed, as by a certain norm, by the opinions that we have formed in our minds. If they are correct, they render us happy not only in this but in the future life. If they are perverse, unhappiness and misery will follow of necessity. Though this might not be very evident because of the shadowy prosperity of wicked men, yet nothing, however, can be more certain to a Christian man. This perversity of opinions in mankind seemed to be of such importance to the compassion of God that we needed His desire to send His Son from heaven who would remove this disease from our minds and implant healthy opinions. He would scatter the darkness and bring the light, and once and for all He would show Himself as Teacher of us all. We know that while Christ was engaged here on earth as man that He was occupied with this one object: first to teach us by example and then to teach us by
word. The whole mystery of the passion of Christ is contained in this. Who can contemplate Him hanging on the cross, who indeed can have eyes so enlightened by faith that he knows that He whom he sees is the Son of God, the author of our happiness and this same teacher, who can contemplate this without perceiving from this contemplation—more surely than could be perceived from all written books—the fact that the path of our salvation is not that which the error of man imagines? The path of our salvation is not through abundance of all things that are commonly called "goods." These things hinder and delay our path to happiness rather than discover a path to this happiness. Obedience to the divine will is the only way for us to obtain happiness without error. One who seeks happiness should not withdraw from bodily torment, from any cruel, hostile kind of death that might be presented. At one glance, the very author of our salvation and happiness manifests all these things, by the compassion of God, in that book of life as He hangs from the cross. Thus it pleases the compassion of God to explain His will to us. He writes His will for us in the blood of His Son. In the blood of His Son all our laws are inscribed, the will of God is declared and the most certain path to happiness is made clear.

But after Christ, God and man, had been taken to glory through death by the compassion of God, this same way of declaring His will to us was obtained in the other members of His body. I refer to the holy Apostles and disciples of Christ who were all members of Christ. Whatever contains the doctrine of Christ was written in their blood flowing from the wounds of Christ. They were living books in which learned and ignorant, wise and foolish, and finally all mankind might read what was the will of God, what was the path to happiness. The origins of our religion are written down accurately in these men. Through these men the Church can know more about the will of God than through any books written by hand. These things written on paper were dictated by the same spirit, for without doubt the written memorials of the Evangelists and the Apostles that we have written in the New Testament were inspired by the Spirit of God. Nevertheless, as the original always has greater authority than all other things that are then described in books, so also these books written in the blood of martyrs are to be preferred to all others. These were the original books in which the finger of God appeared. The hand of man
appears in all others that were written with ink on paper. Although the hand of man followed the hand of God and could not err, nevertheless it has less dignity and is subject to more accidents. The books can be distorted by the perverse reasoning and interpretation of men and can be imagined in many forms. Those that are written in the blood of martyrs cannot be adulterated. These indeed are uncorrupted and are always asserted strongly in the collected writings of the Church; by their means the Church greatly increases knowledge of divine things. For God, by His compassion, never ceased from writing in books of this kind until the Church would abound with a knowledge of all things necessary for salvation. Afterward there were many other ways in which the most excellent God carefully declared His will for us. But, indeed, the particular method of teaching this was always through the blood of martyrs. In the beginning, Christ, the Son of God, was first; then this teaching was continued in His other members so that the most kindly God always produced His holy martyrs in concluding all great controversies. These were originals written in His own hand; they could not be contradicted.

Oh! My native land! So now God has provided and produced martyrs at this time when so many great storms of dissension have arisen to surround the Church. Indeed, I wish to admonish you concerning this so that you might know God’s kindness toward you. If only you would recognize this, if only you would not repudiate it when it is offered to you, it would yield you the greatest perpetual advantage and would give you honor before all Christian nations.

Since it is not evident to all, I believe that you see how grave and dangerous a dissension occupies the minds of many Christians concerning those things relating to religion. Since this is the source of all seditions, of necessity it causes more serious evil. Wherever it finds freedom to protect itself, it brings greater danger to the city and the kingdom than any other pestilence. First of all, this very great evil invaded Germany, a country formerly most distinguished and faithful in retaining religion. Then the contagion of this evil so wandered through other countries that it finally arrived with you. It came to you much more easily than to other countries because of nearness of places and the very steady commerce with the Germans. Your young men brought back from the Germans a new profit in doctrines that would destroy souls no less willingly than they looked to other affairs for profit. When
you had been greatly infected with these doctrines you first sought protection in laws that would put under very great penalties those dealing in matters of this kind. Thus the authors of these laws, very holy men, determined that these doctrines should be attacked. Therefore, these laws were now put into force. Not only laws, but as remedies, written works prepared by men of healthy doctrine were also added. Because this evil itself was apparently being spread abroad and propagated by writings. But these two remedies were unable to remove the evil completely. Nevertheless, they had the effect of limiting the wide diffusion of this evil. With these two remedies this evil was neither able nor sufficiently daring to express itself openly. It lay hidden within itself, nourishing itself and always looking forward to the time when it might break forth with even greater violence.

However, at first this hope in the minds of wicked men was very weak. The intentions of the ruler [Henry VIII] more than these two remedies informed these wicked men that their influence would be very slight. For he not only prepared appropriate laws to guard against these new doctrines—which was a duty of all good rulers—but he did something that no ruler before him had ever done. He bound himself by obligation, he gave a public pledge in his own writings, he seemed to confirm the fact that he would never be a protector of those who were disseminating the new doctrines. He himself wrote a remarkable book against them. Wherefore, there was little these men could hope for while that King was alive.

But they were not destitute of all hope. For where the ruler had placed his loves, there also were the seeds of all these evils. Although in the beginning they were hidden, nevertheless they were so fertilely implanted that they had to increase with time. They would in time produce the greatest fruits. They would finally kill the very soul of the Prince unless he immediately disentangled himself. But surely he was not able to free himself. For Satan held him entangled in nets of love and enticed him with his sweet poison knowing full well what sport and pleasing spectacle he would shortly display for him. The Prince himself did not even think about ways of escaping. He even thought days and nights of better means of becoming involved. Unless he might obtain the loves he so greatly sought, it seemed he would plunge both his reputation and his kingdom into every crisis.

Therefore, he finally obtained his loves, although with the greatest
injury to his reputation and the almost complete destruction of his kingdom. He had scarcely embraced his mistress when suddenly, as if he had received some poison in the very marrow of his bones, he burst forth with great daring. Thus he not only rescinded all his deeds of previous years; he overthrew and destroyed the laws of the kingdom and of all his predecessors, the laws of the Church, and finally the laws of Christ. Nothing in either human or divine laws was now revealed as certain. He referred everything to his own will, or rather to his passionate longing where his aroused love and desires had carried him headlong. He filled everything with turmoil and confusion.

My native land! Since you were in such a wretched condition, who except God could bring you any assistance in such great evils? He truly brought it. But do you know about this remedy up to the present time? You know, indeed, but you refuse to accept it. I shall explain immediately the kind of remedy this is, if only you will first consider these two greatest of evils that surround you.

The first of these, especially directed to your eyes and your senses, is the love of a harlot. You see this love has produced an occasion for a civil war; the succession of the kingdom is now called into doubt. You see what great might of foreign war now threatens since you have offended the man who is currently the most powerful among Christian rulers. You have made him your enemy for two very special reasons: the reason of religion which is most important to him, and the very serious reason of disgrace. This marriage of a most noble woman of his family has been branded as adulterous. His own aunt, a most distinguished woman, has been repudiated with the greatest injury. Though she was a most just wife, she is now repudiated as if she were incestuous. This, therefore, is one evil. It is the greatest, indeed, that hangs over your neck, for it is an occasion of wars.

This dissension and diversity of opinions in matters relating to religion comprises the second evil. This evil gravely and dangerously afflicting you is the source of all evils. But do you desire to hear a remedy now? I only wish that you so desired. I only wish that you would indicate your grasp of the great crisis into which you may be hastily led unless God comes to your assistance.

I notice that you, indeed, perceive the annoyance from these many evils. You complain that you have been reduced to a position in which
you know not where to turn, whom to trust, with whom to agree in such a crowd of men professing to be teachers of religion and truth. There is dissension, strife, and a variety of opinions. But no evil greater than this can occur. For this doubt makes clear your own uncertain hope concerning your eternal salvation. He who vacillates concerning this, will certainly never obtain it. For this doubt differs from that which makes possession of your own affairs uncertain. This reason involves a doubt concerning marriage! You are fearful lest most serious seditions and internal disturbances might arise on this account. Or do you fear something that is even more immediately evident? Do you fear lest some foreign enemy will invade you imminently? But the evil involving religion is greater in endless ways. It brings with it those things that you fear at present; it inspires the fear of losing a greater good.

Wherefore, let us first deal with the remedy for this. But here, my native land, I take counsel for you; I inquire your opinion. If this evil has been entirely contracted for these reasons and is implanted there, if doubts have arisen concerning many things formerly held as most certain, does it not occur to you what you should think most firmly? If a reason might be shown that might lead you from this upheaval of mind into the certain and firm persuasion of truth—as into a port—would you submerge it completely? I believe not. But who, will you say, might show this reason? In such a great variety of men confidently asserting contradictory and opposing things, all seem good men to you. All of them are learned and all say finally that they are true teachers of the doctrine of Christ. What can be said to persuade you to believe this one rather than that one? Rightly, indeed. Now here is the explanation of the cause of all your storming.

But now listen to the other side. Who can remove this doubt better than Christ Himself? If Christ would give you some sure sign from heaven whereby you could recognize these as His true disciples, and these as not, would there then be any reason why you would doubt further? Since you profess to be a servant of Christ, clearly there would be none. But where are these signs? Wait just a moment. If you wish a sign of this kind, Christ will give you the power to send to Him those who might learn His opinion and report it to you. As cities doubting about some very important matter sent legates to the oracles, even so you might choose legates to send to Christ. But here
perhaps you will think that I am making sport over a matter of the greatest importance. I speak about sending an embassy to Christ as if He were not in heaven now, but somewhere here on earth, just as those demons once presided over their oracles. However, restrain yourself a little. Consider whom you would send, were they truly to take care of this matter. Thus you will immediately perceive that I am not speaking jokingly, but very seriously.

However, I shall present to you those who, in my opinion, should be sent. I would not wish, indeed, that you send only priests who might, perhaps, falsify the legation on behalf of their own benefits. For so you have often accused them. I think you should choose the best person from each rank of society. Then you should entrust this business to those so chosen. But if someone should be sent from the ranks of bishops, whom would you take as most capable among them? Indeed, I nominate Fisher alone from among them all. And surely if there were any plans for sending a bishop, I know that you would anticipate my nomination with shouts of absolute assent. If a bishop were to be sent, you would cry out instantly in a loud voice: "It is pleasing that Fisher be sent"! For whom else have you or have you had for many ages, who could be compared with Fisher in sanctity, learning, prudence, and care and assiduity in performing the duties of a bishop? In whom are you able to have such glory? Is there anyone even among foreign countries, if all the countries that in this age are Christian by name be examined, that might easily be found who so fulfilled all the functions and duties of a bishop?

If you doubt this, consult your merchants who sail to many most distant countries. Consult your ambassadors who have visited foreign nations. Let them tell you whether they ever heard of any other bishop who so cared for his flock that he never departed from its care. By word, by example of his life, he always fed his flock and aided it with all his powers. Nothing in his life was ever done rashly. He was always conspicuous for his remarkable praise; he was distinguished for his sanctity and learning as well as for his devotion to his native land. Of many other things that prove this, indeed, the clearest proof is in the fact that he always had the greatest care and solicitude for all ranks and ages but especially for the youth of England. By his zeal and his favor, since he had very great influence with that most holy woman, the King's grandmother, he made it possible
for two very distinguished universities to be built. Here youthful students might be educated in literature and proper habits. Here very justly he would be a father for all who would give their efforts to virtue and literature. He was always at their service with care, solicitude, assistance as a very dutiful parent. Likewise he was also a tutor at the very celebrated University of Cambridge. Then they chose him as Chancellor. In that office he maintained the care of all the philosophers. He watched out for their security and needs, even as he did for his own flock.

But what need is there for saying many things concerning the virtues of Fisher, since I know that by the name of Fisher alone you recognize all prosperous and abundant things that might be desired from the best bishop? From the whole number of priests, however, you have no one in whose faith you might desire to place or entrust such very great things.

Come, however, let us add a colleague of Fisher. Let us add one who might be as similar to him as possible. But from what class of people will he come? I judge that he will come from the class of laymen, but will be the kind of man who does not seem able to fall into superstition easily. This is almost solely to be feared in those possessing a continual fame for sanctity. Some kind of superstition might exist in that sanctity and through error they might bring back a superstitious opinion to us on behalf of the oracle of Christ. Wherefore, let us think about the kind of man that will be in accord with the uprightness and learning of Fisher. He should be furthest removed from any suspicion of superstition. If, indeed, we desire to find a man of this type, we must of necessity go to those who have displayed the greatest prudence in their experience with human affairs. For there can be little fear that such men will fall into superstition. But if all the things that I have named are to be beheld in that man whom we might send on such an important business as legate with Fisher, whom can you find more suitable for this duty than More? But I certainly know that you yourself need not pay heed to others. Once the name of this man has been presented to you, you will not seek for any other. For you know his talent was greater than any you have known in all your other men. And, indeed, you know this from his long administration of your affairs. Concerning this man, therefore, how can you fear any superstitious reply might escape him? You know that immediately
from his earliest youth he was associated with the most experienced men in the state. Nevertheless, just as you can certainly assert that just as no one was ever deceived by him, so also he himself was never deceived by anyone. Up until now at least, did he appear to lack talent or any prudence? He has, furthermore, all other things so apt and appropriate for using this talent properly. He, almost alone among laymen, possesses uprightness, scholarship, prudence, and zeal for your salvation, all joined together. He certainly so excels in all these that no one can be compared with him, even at a great distance. Why are we delaying, therefore, when he offers himself to us? Why do we not immediately send forth these two legates to Christ? They will report back to us the certain opinion of God in this confusion of doctrines that surrounds us at the greatest peril to our souls.

I now speak openly when I say that even now, when you were thinking of it least of all, these men have spontaneously undertaken this duty. They have accomplished their embassy; they have reported; they have brought back the most certain opinion of Christ. But you, surely, doubt this, since you do not fully believe these men speak the opinion of Christ. However, how shall I prove these things? Truly, with yourself as witness. Fisher was very weak in body and diverted with many cares of his bishopric and his flock whom he never ceased to feed with words. However, do you not remember that he was then employed in his duties at the University of Cambridge? Since he was a tutor, he was not able to be absent. Nevertheless, he wrote many painstaking volumes against the doctrines of the heretics with which he knew that you had been infected. Then he actually reported the legation, then he brought back the oracles of Christ so that he might restrain you by the anchor of most certain truth, as you were fluctuating in matters of greatest importance to the soul. If, therefore, you recall these things that surely you can never forget, I know you will recall now these events that occurred equally openly at the same time. For then More held the helm of the state in his hand. This would surely have turned anyone else away from all other thoughts. Nevertheless, in the midst of the waves of public affairs, More himself never ceased to complete volumes against these doctrines. Now realize that he also did these things under the pretext of a legation to Christ, which More in common with Fisher undertook on your behalf, that they might inform you of His will! Since you, in the meanwhile, did not
suspect any legation of this kind, neither did you sufficiently believe that the reports of these men expressed the opinion of Christ.

But now, finally, recognize the kindness of Christ toward you. He made it certain to you that these men were then speaking His own opinion. You distrusted their words; you cannot ignore them any longer without destruction for yourself. In the same way that Christ sent His Apostles who had received the first fruits of the spirit, in the same way that He manifested Himself especially to the world, in this same way I say He wanted to make clear to all who were not restrained by mental blindness that these men born in your land were His disciples. He wanted to make it clear that they had been taught by Him, that they were filled with His Spirit, and that they were equipped with His weapons. For He permitted Satan to open up all the gates of Hell against them, to send forth all his forces against them, to sift them both as wheat. By making it possible for them to resist the efforts of Satan, He would make it manifest to all that they were true disciples of Christ. He made it clear that everything they spoke was uttered as the opinion of Christ Himself. Thus I say that they were able to resist and to endure every attack of all the forces of Satan in full view of you and the universal Church. Not only men but also the Angels were spectators. Thus since apostolic times none is found in the memory of annals who triumphed so gloriously over Satan for the greatest honor to the name of Christ and the celebration of His virtue.

What about this, my native land? Were you not present when all deceits were plotted, when all devices were brought out, all snares provided by which the human soul can be seized? On the one side the favor of the ruler, power, honor, and everything else that can be pleasant and cheerful in this life was presented; on the other side jail, torments, disgrace, and death, or rather deaths, were stretched out in view. With these two gates of hell the army of Satan made an attack on the two soldiers of Christ. It tried to cast them down from their opinion of truth as from a citadel. You, indeed, were certainly present. You remember at that time they were not exhausted by fear, they were not driven back by those forces. When they had most gloriously repulsed the enemy and torn asunder and dispersed all devices, they later remained even more firm in the possession of truth.

Truly, when you beheld these things, were you not filled with
admiration? Did you not infer from this very admiration, did you not think within yourself how firm and true this opinion must be, how much in accord with the will of Christ? It could not be wrested away by any violence, nor by any attack of a most vigorous and powerful enemy. Since everything was attempted, since the weapons of the enemy were directed toward them with the purpose of casting them down from their protecting defense, who but one who had God Himself dwelling in his heart would have been able to maintain the opinion of truth against so many very powerful attacks?

What, indeed, do you think, my native land? I am not speaking about the fear of death that miscreants occasionally despise. In short, I am speaking about honors, power, favor with the ruler, and riches. By contrast, on the other side are disgrace, torture, and the fear of death. Therefore, these two gates of hell are thrown open at the same time. In these gates all the forces of Satan are seen drawn up for battle. Can we believe that those who despise all wealth, honors, and the favor of the ruler and even death—can we believe that they do all these things unless they know that some power and strength surpassing that of nature is present with them. They know that Christ’s assistance—which we have not seen—is present. Certainly, if you think otherwise, you do not sufficiently understand the greatness of the attack of Satan’s forces, you do not understand especially what that gate of avarice and ambition is accustomed to let loose. But consider for a moment how difficult it was for one man, Adam, to withstand this. Though he, indeed, was our first parent, the new work of the fingers of God and vigorous with all the strength of nature, yet he was not equal to doing this. Why do I say that he was not equal to this? Because, immediately at the first hostile occasion, when hope of obtaining greater honor had been introduced, he withdrew from his position. Rather, he so fell down that we, his posterity, realize the gravity of his fall after this very long interval of time. We give proof of it by the perpetual weakness of our nature.

Therefore, see to it that you ponder this. If a vigorous nature could not withstand such violence of Satan, what a very great attack was made against this first man since as yet he had not known terror and threats. Though you see that men of the same origin, with a broken and weakened nature, were so able to receive these attacks that they were not only unmoved at the sight of all honors and pleasures
offered to them but that they did not yield at all even though torments and torture threatened them on every side. But in that far more difficult encounter than Adam’s with the demon, it is evident that Satan was not able to accomplish this. For in this encounter, these men [More and Fisher] conducted themselves so courageously that neither by any allurements nor by any threats could they be caught or deterred from maintaining their true opinion to the last. How do you consider this? What do you think? What else can you think other than what I have said just now? They had the assistance of God present with them, surpassing human nature. They were able to be secure against these attacks that human power alone would never have been able to withstand. I say, what else was this? Just as the Apostles and martyrs, they had the virtue of Christ present with them. Relying on this, they could crush and destroy every hostile power. But if you recognize the virtue that Christ gave them in common with that of the Apostles, do you not also recognize that the very opinion they defended with this virtue was in agreement with that of the Apostles?

For, after the experience of so many years in your most important affairs, you have beheld the devotion of these men toward God, their kindness and love toward you, their temperance, prudence and, finally, their remarkable and admirable learning in all things. This all results in very weighty testimony of the divine virtue in favor of the opinion they were defending. In a matter of such great importance, are there any youthful men you would trust more? In the young men you now recognize there is neither evidence of any virtue or learning, nor, indeed, any sign of divine favor. Do you prefer the opinion of these young men? Will this help your reputation, to say nothing about care for your salvation? Or, if we must speak about this matter, do you believe that these young men who have only recently sprung up are more desirous of your salvation than those older ones whom you have known by their great deeds in your behalf?

Oh! My native land! How truthfully this can be said of you! Your youths are making sport with you. More truthfully, they are making most dangerous sport with you and with themselves. They have practice in learning only in the sport of sophists. They show this by reaching absurd conclusions through a malicious method of argument. They speak absurdities of this kind: Man is not man; man is
an ass; every man is one man. They attempt to transfer their nonsense from school to the Church. They attempt to transfer it from ludicrous matters to serious matters of the greatest importance. They attempt to prove things that common prudence rejects. They attempt to prove that the pope is not the pope, that the King has everything, that the King has two heads.

Therefore, do you place any trust in these men who are not even insignificant sophists but only little apes of sophists? Do you trust them concerning the most important matters relating to your salvation, after you have rejected the opinion of most learned old men? Will you follow these leaders? But they offer reasons! What if they do offer reasons? Do you think reason has deserted old men and fled to young men? But, finally, what do they offer? To be sure, they say that the pope has corrupt habits and therefore he is not the Vicar of God. Are these habits more corrupt than those of certain kings? Are these habits more corrupt than those of this King to whom these men would transfer the pontifical dignity?

Finally, what is the life of this King like? Am I to believe that his life is holy and free from fault? If we can believe the King himself—to say nothing else—an abominable, incestuous stain has sunk into his life for all of 20 years. Did he prove himself holy when, on the very threshold of this new power, he cruelly killed the most holy men? If the most wicked deeds of all pontiffs are recalled and brought out in the open, would anything be found in them more wicked than this?

But what if he were a good pontiff? Would this be a sufficient reason why we should venerate him? Are we not accustomed to venerate the person of Christ in the pontiff rather than the uprightness of any man? If no Christian can say that he bestows honor upon the uprightness of a man and not upon the person of Christ alone, of what concern is it to me whether that man is good or bad in whom only the person of Christ is honored? When I say "to me" I speak also of you, my native land. If an image of Christ is to be venerated, does it matter whether that image is beheld portrayed in gold or wood? Will you honor an image made from gold or ivory? Will you bestow insults and confer less honor upon an image fashioned from wood as if from something cheap and rotten? How does the wickedness of pontiffs pertain to me, since I know it cannot impede me unless I so desire? For all their power is for edification; none of their power is a
hindrance to anyone's soul. But what if the wickedness of one man who is pontiff is truly not a hindrance to Christians but instead a benefit? What if it displays even more the glory of Christ? For what great and remarkable thing would we do by bestowing honor upon a good pontiff? As if even the pagans themselves do not do this! By the very fact that we seem not to be deterred, however, by human vices; by the very fact that we, nonetheless, venerate the image of Christ in him who sits on the tribunal of Christ and maintains the unity and harmony of the Church; by this very fact we show ourselves to be truly Christians. In this way the glory of Christ is especially demonstrated.

But then the pontiff is bad. He is even the worst. He himself may be bad, but not as far as I am concerned. Thus spoke Paul, to whom the duty of preaching the Gospel was entrusted: “For woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel” (1 Cor. 9:16). Similarly, woe to the pontiff to whom the duty of feeding the flock of Christ has been entrusted, if he does not feed it. Even if his wickedness is not confined within these limits, even if he also offers insults to Christ, remedies are not lacking whereby the Church might easily be cured of this evil. However, so long as nothing like this is seen, there is no more need to fear that his wickedness might be a hindrance to the Church, than there is to prove that his person has been entrusted with maintaining unity. This unity has been torn apart and of necessity everything is involved with tumult and confusion.

However, these young men of yours who have such influence in throwing things into confusion, have exposed your great loss and your greatest danger up to this time, unless it should be counteracted. They present the example of the Greeks of this time who, oppressed by the intolerable tyranny of the Turks, are wretched slaves. These young men deny that the Greeks recognized the Roman pontiff as the vicar of Christ. However, unless they wished to deceive most openly, they could not present the ancient Greeks, since there exist so many proofs of their reverence for the Roman pontiff. They could not do this indeed with regard to those who, in the memory of our ancestors, were in Constantinople at the time when Christians were in power.

For the acts of the Council of Florence, at which the Emperor of Constantinople was present, are extant. These acts give remarkable testimony that it was the general agreement, not only of the Greeks
but also of the Armenians, to recognize the authority of the Roman pontiff in every Christian cause. But these young men do not present the example of those Greeks. They present the example of those Greeks who are now suffering under the very burdensome yoke of the Turks. They attempt to lead you to this most wretched manner of living, since they are the authors who urge you on to embrace the opinion that drives you to these dangers. For what is left except for them to persuade you by the example of Jews now living, to deny that Christ Himself was the Messiah? And, indeed, they are certainly not far removed from this impiety. For they will shortly arrive at that, since they are now denying that the successor of Peter is the vicar of Christ. But, I beseech you, what nations under the heavens lead a life of greater misery than these two? One denies that Christ is the Messiah; the other does not recognize the vicar of Christ. They pay the penalty for their impiety through the most just judgment of God. Though they, above all other nations, were enlightened by the gift of knowledge to know the will of God—and many did this—afterward, they repudiated this knowledge. Now they scarcely know about the other nations that they once despised as servile and barbarous; they endure the harshest servitude.

Behold these remarkable examples that your youths propose to you! They propose that you should direct your opinion in accord with the norm of their knowledge. Truly, their own deeds make this matter clear. For they who propose that the King should follow the Turkish type of discipline, also offer you the necessity of slavishly obeying the Turks. For what the King now usurps for himself is in greatest agreement with this Turkish domination. By a nod, he may have greater influence than all laws and all ancient and established statutes. He has rescinded the privileges of all; he has transferred the rights of all to himself. By holding a sword in his hand, he decides all religious controversies. But this is manifestly something for Turks and barbarians. For thus the Turks say that they cherish religion, while they hold forth the sword. But this is no different from what I have just said regarding the King changing everything solely at his own passionate desires. When has one ever heard that one person might have everything so subject to his power and passionate desire that no one could find any protection in the laws, against his will? Has one heard this in England where the people have always been more free under
the rule of their kings, or in any Christian kingdom? Now, all things are governed at the nod of the King.

Oh, England! If you have not completely forgotten your pristine liberty, see to it that you now place before your eyes that time when kings themselves, who appeared to have administered your affairs badly, were brought up on charges, to render a public account according to the authority of the laws. What great grief as well as indignation should exist in you as you ponder these things! You see that no one calls the King to render an account; you see a King who destroys without any right, who devastates, who condemns and slaughters! He violently attacks all your possessions. After all these blows, as is more customary with children, he leaves you nothing but tears. The very best men have only recently been slaughtered within your view. They defended your law and liberty. And, what makes their deaths the most disgraceful, they defended the cause of Christ and the Church. Tears and empty pity were the only assistance you could produce. These are customarily not denied even to the most abandoned men who are expiring.

But will your tears, indeed, be safe for you after this? I am not sure but that they are now most dangerous for you. Your mouth is now sealed so you cannot speak. What else remains, unless your tears and even your sighs are forbidden? If you are wretched with tears, if you groan, if you give even any evidence of grief, you will be flogged and you will receive many more serious blows. Though your other fortunes are intact, when all the goods you consider most important have been seized by force, then even the power of weeping and groaning will not be left to you.

But what am I doing? I promised consolation; now I am able to speak of nothing but tears. I have assumed for myself these duties of addressing my native land so that I might console and dry tears. However, am I drying tears when you present a very miserable condition for any life, when you show in words and speech that you are especially miserable? Am I drying tears when I say your liberty has been snatched away from you? It seemed that no one could take this away. What could be imagined that would be more wretched? What could be more deserving of tears? Did I promise to reveal you cast in such misery? Least of all, indeed. However, I shall not desert you, my native land, unless you yourself desire to be deserted.
First, however, relying on the mercy of God, I report to you that it is within your power whether you grieve continually or you exchange your very great sorrow for the greatest joy. Did I not show this very thing before, when I presented God's kindness and clemency toward you? I said that the compact between you and God was renewed by the death of these very holy men, as by animals slain in sacrifice. If you will scrupulously observe this, God shall wipe away every tear from your eyes. As the Prophet says, He will thus remove all cause of mourning; He will leave only the occasion for joy and happiness. But why do you not observe this, since there is nothing new in this compact? All these things have been handed down by custom. No new conditions have been included, but only those same things that you willingly recognized a short while ago. Although they were not written with ink on paper, they have been related in the tablets of your hearts. They have been vouched for by the blood of martyrs, lest those desiring to lead you away from God should falsify them, lest by your cunning and malicious genius you might divert them toward your own wicked profit, lest some new interpretation discovered by you might divert them to your and their destruction. All your evil has its origin in these things, and, indeed, it increases more and more day by day. Unless the mercy of God should come to assist your ignorance, the evil will not stop until it occupies you completely, and manifestly subdues you. God prescribed His will in this manner to each one, the unlearned no less than the most learned. Thus they might read and discover His will; no other skill is needed. A devout and Christian mind is sufficient. One may lack all literary education and still give evidence of this. He will not in any way be inferior to the most learned in understanding and recognizing God's will from the writings mentioned above.

Furthermore, if anyone shall attempt to falsify and attack God's will with artifice, regardless of the literary talent he may boast, he will be firmly refuted. He will have no place to which he may turn. For what, I beseech you, could one puffed up and impressed with his own learning say against one not so well endowed with literary talent? In these very matters wherein Christ desired the death of His saints, I believe such a person would cite several passages from Scripture. From these he would make up some cleverly thought up explanations against Fisher and More.
However, what will the simple Christian, knowing as he does what kind of men these are, reply? Undoubtedly he will reply that Fisher and More, as is strikingly evident, did not lack reason but were pre-eminent in reason. In the judgment of all they were inferior to no one. Fisher and More gave evidence of their talent in the schools and in important public affairs of the kingdom. They were versed in all training whereby talent is customarily nourished. For many centuries, no one had greater renown in literary ability and talent. If “reason” has any influence in discerning the meaning of Scriptures, these men are deserving of greatest trust, since they possessed very convincing evidence of their learning and their talent. What unlearned person could ever have said these things to Fisher and More while they lived, or could have said them to any very learned person holding opinions contrary to these holy men? Had any unlearned person said these things, in all England everyone would have approved this response.

Now, however, after these very learned and holy men preferred to depart from life rather than desert their opinion, how would an unlearned person reply to passages cited from Scripture attacking the opinion of such holy men? Evidently thus: “We have abandoned your books which you so readily reject. It is clear that the depravity of your genius with paper and ink has perverted their meaning and twisted it around to exactly the opposite of what was written. We are not paying attention to words, although these words contain the will of God which is perceived by those who have clear insight of the mind of the Church, through the light of the Holy Spirit. However, by using malicious interpretation as a deceptive lattice placed over a window, they can offer error to the eyes of more simple people. We now see you attempting to accomplish this in every way. The first command of God given to the author of mankind, although it contained the simplest truth, was nevertheless evaded by the deceit and cunning of the serpent who actually burned with hatred of man, though he pretended, as he offered suggestions, to be zealous for man. Similarly, we recognize that your prudence is none other than the prudence of the serpent. It is not far removed from the prudence of Satan. We recognize your persuasions have only your ambition and your cupidity in view. We know how very great they are. You are not giving advice for our benefit, in which you were never interested. Therefore, for a long time you have deceived us under the pretense of
kindness toward us, even as the serpent deceived our first parents. However, you have deceived us who are men especially unskilled in learning, while you employ words of pretense and allurement to persuade us. Finally, the mercy of God has revealed to us what kind of men you are. He has sent us books against your deceitful wisdom. All of us can read and understand these books.

"Thus it happened that we should hear words no further; now we might behold things themselves. Indeed, we have these writings from the finger of God, the very holy martyrs of God. The life and death of these martyrs is in continual harmony with the precepts of God and of the Church. As often as we behold them, they show us more about the will of God at a single glance than all the written or spoken words of men can show. Among many other things, we may read in their deaths that we should pray for our enemies. It can scarcely come to pass that we should restrain our hands and violence from you, as though from wolves that we have seen scattering the flock of the Lord and devouring many from this same flock. For thus are you preparing snares for the lives and security of others. Perhaps, however, we should give you a little space in which you might read these books with us. If you refuse to do this, you may expect the same clemency toward yourselves that we show to wolves and common enemies of our souls. Away with you, truly, lest after this you pour out new explanations of the word of God!

"Oh! How great was our blindness! Only now, so late, have we seen things that were most manifest. These authors of new doctrines were preparing them. Oh! How incredible was our inconstancy! We have placed great trust in I know not what kind of youths—in whom we see no example of virtue or learning—as they present us new doctrines and new explanations of the Scriptures. We have trusted less those very holy old men who were adorned with every kind of literary talent, and who have proposed to us the Church's opinion, confirmed as it is by the continual custom of many ages. How great was this blindness! How great was our inconstancy! Surely, however, their deceptive artifices carefully presented to us the wicked character of priests. Thus, after these devices had beclouded our minds in darkness, we might disapprove their doctrines. Then we might see that their lives were especially contaminated with all wickedness. But how great was this blindness! As if these doctrines themselves were
first truly betrayed by those priests whose vices we execrate! As if the
fact that we knew those priests were wicked, would have been suffi-
cient reason for rejecting the doctrine of those priests! If we were
offended by the character of the priests, would we not all the more
embrace their doctrine? If, indeed, we desired to correct their habits,
they themselves would have been especially obligated by their own
principles. For, when these principles were once removed, not only
these men but all people were granted more license for every bolder
and baser crime. But such was our blindness! If God permitted us to
be blinded for a time, how much greater a light will He afterward
offer us? Now, certainly, we should thank God for His mercy. For
He, Himself, has shown us an original book as interpreter of His will.
Our eyes should always be directed toward rejecting everything that
is first offered by men who are desirous only of altering things. We
should believe and embrace the ancient doctrines that can never grow
old."

Oh! My native land! If there are any among you unskilled in
literary studies, they would say these things to those literary men of
yours, swollen up with pride as they are in their new doctrines. All
these things have been written by the finger of God in the blood of
those who defend the ancient doctrines. How quickly they would
seize the opportunity of projecting their voices in these matters! But
if only you would feel and say the same thing, how quickly God
would wipe from your eyes all cause of tears! All would be filled with
joy and delight instead of grief. I dare to say that the applause of
each one would ascend up even to heaven. But if you wish to preserve
your quiet, tranquillity, honor, and salvation—not only for the present
time but for the future—you must feel and profess this same thing.
You must give greatest thanks to God who desires the great example of
these very holy men to heal your blindness and perverse hesitancy in
these most important matters relating to your salvation. Such an
example had not previously been seen for many ages. If God desired
to make known His will to you by means of men, whom could you
choose as being more appropriate for expressing the will of God?
Who, but those who showed His will written in their blood?

Now, indeed, I am not speaking about Fisher and More. Without
any contradiction, you have never known men better or more learned
than they were. Now, however, I am not speaking about individual
men. I present to you all the orders by which God wished to announce His will to you. Even in your judgment, these orders comprised many of the best men. For thus I say that if you should desire to send orders of religious men as legates to God, ponder, I beseech you, for a moment, which ones would be most powerful to send. But what need is there at this time to deliberate?

Behold the Bridgettine Order! Behold the Carthusian Order! And I cannot do this without calling by name upon one whom I knew intimately. His name was Reynolds.¹⁹ In the sanctity of his life he should be compared with the most pre-eminent among those who professed a manner of living in very strict accord with the norm of Christ. And he possessed something found in very few men of his kind; he possessed a cultivated knowledge of the liberal arts derived from their very own sources. For he had an excellent command of the three particular languages in which all the liberal arts are contained. He was the only one of all the English monks who knew these languages. He seemed to lack nothing that would confirm the praise of his sanctity and learning for all time. He lacked nothing that would confirm the height of his devotion to Christ and would show his love for you, my native land! All that was lacking was for him to give the necessary testimony of truth at that time, together with other heroes of your embassy. He gave this testimony with his life’s blood, and he gave it among the first. Indeed, he had such great constancy of soul that a person who was a witness at this spectacle said that he observed most attentively everything that was done. He related to me that when Reynolds inserted his head into the fatal noose, he appeared to be putting on a necklace of royal distinction, rather than to be putting on an instrument of punishment. Very great was the eagerness of his countenance. Oh! Happy man! And a man whom you, indeed, my native land, should believe most worthy!

I do not know the names of the others,²⁰ but they are written in the book of life. Let us, however, enumerate the orders that gave testimony of the cause of Christ. We have mentioned two that surpassed all others in England for their sanctity. There remains one more; that is, the Order of the Observants of St. Francis. For whom do you have that might compare with these three? Or, rather, whom have you separated from these, who did not become entirely unworthy of the authors of their rule of life? I know that you will in-
stantly agree with me in this, if you only ponder thoughtfully, for a single instant, the other orders.

Now, do you not see God's goodness toward you? He desired to give proof of His opinion by the death, blood, and banishment of these men. For God is banished from your presence just as the observance of all ancient law is banished, just as all the Order of the Observant Friars is banished. What else do you expect? Do you expect that Christ Himself will descend so that He might again give testimony to the truth by His death? If you do not expect this, since Christ being once conquered by death cannot die again, certainly you cannot expect greater and more weighty testimony than that which has now been given. For these are living members of Christ and in them, in a way, Christ also suffers. Through them He desired to announce to you, my native land, the knowledge of truth and your salvation.

What then? Do you not recognize your highest honor? Foreign nations praise this honor. They are filled with admiration at the firm and solid faith found in your midst during this most corrupt age. They scarcely hoped it would ever be found. But why do I say foreign nations admire the virtue of these men? The very angels themselves are filled with admiration. The Prophet, beholding Christ returning to glory after His passion, and speaking in the person of the angels says: "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bosra?" (Is. 63:1). You might imagine these angels filled with the greatest admiration, saying this same thing about the members of Christ coming to Christ after their martyrdom. Who are those who come from deserted parts of the world, with dyed garments from Bosra? Nothing like this has been seen in many ages, neither in heaven nor on earth. No miracle of this kind has ever been performed. This is certainly greater than opening the eyes of the blind, than straightening the feet of the crippled, than raising up the dead. Here those very souls themselves that were blind, crippled, and even dead now enjoy life with divine senses. Wherefore, England, recognize this very great kindness of Christ toward you, although up to now you have not known how great this might be! For who knows whether this kindness of Christ that first appeared to you, may so penetrate to all parts of the Christian world that it might cure the corrupt members there?
Renowned Germany, formerly indeed most famous for its reputation for religion, now drinks the goblet of error from the hand of the wrath of God. Who knows whether Germany will herself drink from the cup of salvation that God first offered to you to drink. You might be said to be a colony of Germany herself. For your people derive their origin from the Germans. How do you know, therefore, whether God will offer the daughter's cup of salvation to the mother to drink? Whatever might be, my native land, your very honor now consists in this favor of Christ. All provinces are filled with admiration over the fact that the treasures of God were first revealed to you in this most corrupt age. And, indeed, histories tell us that you were the first of all nations publicly to receive the faith of Christ from Eleutherius, the Roman pontiff, when Lucius was King. Thus, Christ then conferred this honor upon you so you would be first to accept knowledge of Him. Now, next to this honor, He has desired the certain and firm conviction regarding His vicar to be first revealed to you.

Although this was not unknown previously, nevertheless we do read that up to the present time it had not been proved finally in the same manner Christ chose for making Himself known to the world. Wherefore, England, this is also your special honor conferred upon you by Christ. Do not be ungrateful for this.

He was willing that the head of your Fisher, the head of your More, and the bodily members of other very virtuous men should be scattered around to be beheld as a spectacle. Nevertheless, you can now witness this not only without tears, but even with joy, pleasure, and thanksgiving. You should give very great thanks to God that He desired that such men should exist in this Island. They were not brought here from foreign shores, but they were born and nourished here. Their lives were a continual example to you for right thinking and action. You can always read in their deaths those things that pertain to your dignity and your salvation, as if in a certain book written not with ink but with blood.

Now here, my native land, I leave you. Here I conclude my appeal to you. For I now wish you to perceive in the blood of these men the things that I cannot sufficiently explain in any words. Therefore, I shall not any longer summon you forth with these words. I would admonish you only regarding this one thing. Remember the last words
of Fisher and More. You will not find them written in their blood. For their blood cries out for vengeance against the authors of that crime. But Fisher and More actually prayed for the salvation of the King. They implored God on behalf of the head of the man who had ordered their own heads to be cut off! Thus did all others act who died for the same reason. You, my native land, do likewise! Implore God that He might give the King good men for advisers who will, among other things, pray both for his and your salvation. Implore God even more ardently that He might make these advisers know, even though they do not speak eloquently, that He might give the King a soul capable of hearing good advisers. For the King never lacked good men whom he might have consulted and who could furthermore have offered themselves as advisers. But undoubtedly the cause of all misery and misfortune depended on the fact that though he had good advisers, he more conveniently listened to evil advisers. He listened attentively to those who whispered into his ear what he would most willingly hear, namely: “All things are the King’s.” How much better it would have been, and how much more honorable for himself, had the King rejected these advisers and listened to those who spoke the truth thus: “All things are the commonwealth’s; all things, Oh native land, are yours!” Nothing pertains to the King except the fact that he should administer and obtain for the utility of the commonwealth those things that are the common property of all.

Oh! What great honor, what genuine security, what a great treasure is contained in these words, if only the King would listen to them attentively. But you, my native land, make sure you remember the words that those holy men poured forth almost with their blood! Implore God on behalf of the salvation of the man who led you into such a very great crisis. What then? Do you despair of ever being able to call back to sanity one who has perpetrated such things? Indeed, you have reasons for despairing. Recall, however, that the mercies of God over all His other works are admirable. Will not He Who, at the incessant prayers of two women, called back to life a man who was dead for four days and buried in a sepulchre and who had a bad smell—will not He raise up your ruler who is dead because of his sins and who smells bad in the nostrils of the Church? With an entire country praying together in this supplication, will He Who died
On the Unity of the Church

for our sins deny so many prayers of supplication? The devout prayers of Mary and Martha on behalf of their brother not only were pleasing to God but also so prevailed that, after the greatest of all despair, Lazarus was brought back from death to life. Behold a second Mary, behold a second Martha! For Catherine is the wife and Mary the daughter; the former prays for her husband, the latter prays for her father. Nor can any injuries draw them away from their prayers. To whom do they pray? They pray to Him who has life and death in His hands. They pray to Him who does not desire the death of the sinner, but who is more anxious to have the sinner converted and live. They pray, finally, to Him who put into their minds the necessity of praying assiduously, to Him who gave them strength surpassing human nature that they might pray.

Why, my native land? Do you think it surpasses the ability of our human nature afflicted with so many terrible injuries to persist in praying assiduously for the salvation of the man who inflicted these injuries? If this cannot be said, who but Christ gave such great kindness and patience? Who but Christ suggested to them this act that surpassed natural inclinations? Who but Christ can grant them that for which they beg? But if it could be done, who impelled them to make this petition, who sustained their strength so that they might persevere? Do you doubt that He also desired this with His will? Would you not have despaired there where the women would hope? If examples can inspire you to hope, what a great example you have in Scripture concerning King Achab whose wife drove him on to impiety and the slaughter of Prophets! We read thus that: "Now there was not such another as Achab, who was sold to do evil in the sight of the Lord: for his wife Jezabel set him on. And he became abominable" (3 Kgs. 21:25, 26). The Scriptures say these things concerning Achab whom God so threatened, according to the Prophet: “If Achab die in the city, the dogs shall eat him: but if he die in the field, the birds of the air shall eat him” (3 Kgs. 21:24). And nevertheless, the Scripture speaks in the following manner concerning the same Achab whom the Prophet had warned of the punishment due to his sins, even after Achab had been converted to penance: “And when Achab had heard these words, he rent his garments, and put haircloth upon his flesh... and slept in sackcloth, and walked
with his head cast down.” These words were spoken, therefore, by God to the Prophet concerning the same Achab: “Hast thou not seen Achab humbled before me? Therefore, because he hath humbled himself for my sake, I will not bring the evil in his days” (3 Kgs. 21:29).

Behold this great example of the mercy of God! For at the time the mercy and favor of God was not so visible to mankind. Christ has now opened up its sources to us. If Christ should see this King of yours walking with his head cast down, I say, with his wicked title of “head” cast off, if He should see him humbled, would He who has died for our sins and our injustices reject him? For this King Achab, concerning whom we may speak plainly, was sold for sin as no other ever was in the Church. His wife, Jezabel, set him on. Would not Christ receive this King in His embrace? Would He not favor him? Would He not wipe away his filth? Would He not restore the King a better person both to himself and to you? If He should restore him, He would manifestly restore him to a better person. For one who had escaped after so many crimes could not be content with mediocre virtue. You would expect heroics from him.

What hope is there for this humility? If he would only recognize his sins! Knowing upon whose power I rely as I speak, I promise that he would be humbled and then he would be exalted above all other kings. However, I only treat of this now that I might show his sins to him. Christ wants me to do this. He has not yet desired that I should be worthy of that very great honor of vouching with my blood for those things that pertain to your salvation. He conferred this honor on those with whose opinion I was always in complete accord, while I was in their company. While He has spared me from murder, He has, however, in place of this, appointed me to rebuke the authors of these very great crimes, with pen and ink in my written volumes. He has appointed me especially to show the Prince the magnitude of his own sin, with greater freedom.

I am now doing that, my native land! And I shall continue to do so, since this is the will of Christ. Our King cannot help but see what I present to him. Only you, pray that he may finally recognize and acknowledge these things! Wherefore, I shall dismiss you. I shall return to my duty of addressing the King. I shall continue to show him the very grave sins he has committed in God’s presence.
Another Direct Appeal to Henry VIII

These men were ornaments not only of this kingdom alone, but of the whole world. After a very wicked trial they were condemned by the King's authority and afflicted with cruel death. How shall I address him? What words shall I discover? Shall I use the words of Ezechiel the Prophet addressed to Sedecias, speaking in this manner after a similar deed: "But thou profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come that hath been appointed in the time of iniquity. Thus saith the Lord God: Remove the diadem, take off the crown: is it not this that hath exalted the low one, and brought down him that was high? I will shew it to be iniquity, iniquity, iniquity: but this was not done till he came to whom judgment belongeth, and I will give it to him" (Ez. 21:25–27).

You, my Prince, are not satisfied with one head and one crown. Shall I be compelled to denounce you in this same way, in the words of Christ, until the appointed day of your punishment arrives and your diadem and crown will be taken from you? He will not cry out again against your iniquities, once, or three times as Ezechiel did against Sedecias. You will then be permitted to share more frequently in these exclamations of iniquity. But I shall not do this yet. I shall not warn you now of the divine judgment. First I shall speak about the judgment of men, about your own judgment concerning yourself.

Is it actually true that you were able to condemn such men to death merely because they did not wish to give approval to your impious laws, contrary to their own consciences? These men, in our own judgment and in the judgment of all who knew them, were formerly considered pre-eminent in innocence, virtue, and learning. Did you not stand in awe of the judgment of others about yourself, even as you gave your own judgment concerning these men? Did you not know that the memory of these men would always be most pleasing and venerable to all good men? Could you have killed Fisher? Could you have killed More? Could you have conceived such a great crime? Could you have admitted such a disgrace? Though I myself was not present when these events took place, as I think about them now, they come into my mind as some terrible dream. And they who report these things to me appear to be narrating their own dreams. Thus, beyond my expectation and beyond the expectation of all con-
cerning you, it happened that you were guilty of such a great crime not only against men whom you knew to be the finest in the opinion of all, but also against the Church of Christ to which these men were most useful.

Nero and Domitian were enemies of that most troublesome name of Christian. But certainly if they knew these men as I well know you knew them, they would never have been so harsh and severe. I would even dare to affirm on oath that Luther himself, indeed, had he been King of England in your place, would not have decided to avenge himself by murdering such men. And Luther had experienced these two men, above all others, as his most bitter adversaries. They were constantly assailing him every day in their writings. What grave deed, however, did these men commit against you? By word or deed they never injured anyone. Perhaps they did not desire to subscribe to such an impious decree? What if they did not so desire? Was not the punishment of perpetual imprisonment you inflicted upon them sufficient? They had endured the filth of the jail for all of 15 months at the time they were led to their deaths.

Oh! Immortal God! What barbarian or cruel man would not have been amply satisfied in his mind with this great punishment for such men? This punishment was imposed upon them for no fault of theirs, but rather for a very distinguished deed. Indeed, it did not satisfy you. You demanded that your dead enemies be dragged forth from jail again, as if from the sepulchre, so that you might feed your terrible and savage soul as their bodies were torn apart. For they had been sentenced to permanent imprisonment, as if they were men now dead and handed over for burial. What new thing had happened, I beseech you, to cause you to want them dragged forth again as if for another death? What new thing had those monks done? On their own accord, for Christ’s sake, they had hidden themselves in isolated and inaccessible places as if in perpetual prisons. What, I say, was done by these you commanded to be dragged forth not for one death, but to be tormented with many deaths? What, finally, was the reason for this? Truly, there was no reason. Once you had conceived this impiety in your mind, you would not permit yourself to be satisfied with one impious deed, you would not allow it to rest there. But one crime urged you on to accumulate other crimes. If you were not entirely led by the furies and a certain blind cupidity as you did
these things, at least you would have offered some reason for your deed. I pass over a just reason, since one cannot even imagine that the law they refused to obey was a very just law. It was certainly unjust and manifestly impious. Probably, however, some kind of reason might have been conjured up to have had at least the appearance of right.

What kind of reason could possibly have been presented against them? Before the law was promulgated they had been confined to perpetual bonds by the sentence of your judges. Now they were no longer included in the number of citizens; they should not have been questioned whether they approved or disapproved of the laws. That is what More, most skilled in the law, responded when he was pleading for his life in his own trial. And furthermore, no one has ever been known who was condemned because of his silence, though he had committed no crime against the law in word or deed. One who was neither a part of the state, nor had resisted the state in any way, especially should not have been questioned. However, let us pass over your injustice that God wished to be a lasting sign of your disgrace before everyone. Now I am not speaking about the justice of the deed; I am speaking only about its purpose. What, therefore, did you propose to yourself when you killed the most innocent men who were ornaments of your kingdom? What profit did you hope to attain? What evil did you hope to turn aside? For these things often lead the minds of tyrants away from justice. Finally, therefore, tell us what convenience you hoped for from the death of these men.

But now I see this. Undoubtedly you openly killed these renowned men so the mouths of others would be closed, after this terror had been presented. You killed these men so that no one would mutter anything against the law, so that, as Isaias says: “There was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or made the least noise against the tyranny of the Assyrians” (10:14). Who that had seen More and Fisher punished by death for this very reason, could have hoped for any clemency were he to speak anything opposing your law? Was this the prudence of the head of the church of the malignant? It surely was. There could have been no other reason. The only one was the possibility that, once the minds of all others had been restrained by fear, then they would venture even less to disapprove the law. But see now how this diabolical prudence of yours yielded the contrary.
Clearly this was the same way whereby all things flowing from the
demon himself were cursed by God. They always yielded something
contrary to what was expected. Thus, Scripture teaches us concerning
the earth that was cursed; it brings forth thorns instead of expected
fruit, evil instead of advantage. If you have ever allured men to revile
in any way, you have certainly allured them by the slaughter of such
men. For all good men whom alone you feared, all good men who
filled you with terror, have not now been deterred in any way. I do
not know in what way they might have been more greatly incited
to all words and deeds for hindering your efforts. For, indeed, did
you think you would deter them by fear of death?

Who that had any regard for himself, and who properly believed
with faith in Christ, who knew either More or Fisher, and who had
seen what these men of learning and virtue endured—who would
doubt, in the event of such things happening, that he would himself
endure them? For those who disapproved your cause were not pre-
viously silent because they were restrained by fear. As long as these
two men lived, however, they were not without a certain hope they
might be able to restore you to sanity. Wherefore, they did not want
to irritate you at this premature time with their words or writings,
especially since they themselves had not been summoned. Now, how-
ever, after this deed, indignation fills the minds of all against you.
Despair for you is so complete that I do not know of anything, since
the death of Christ Himself, more widespread among all Christians
than your very great shame and disgrace. But indeed, it certainly is
clear that no Christian king was ever more willingly wounded with
insulting words. Truly, I see no one whom you will deter.

Quite the contrary happened to me. What I was experiencing
with the greatest astonishment, you were unable to know at that time.
For previously I had kept silent, as fear was always present before
me. But now you see that I do not withdraw from speaking what I
feel. Indeed, I now say what happened to me, with God as my witness.
At the very first moment that I learned of the murders of these men,
I was left speechless and stunned for about a month, shattered as I
was by the wonder and novelty of such unheard of cruelty. Neverthe-
less, as soon as I had composed myself, I considered that I had always
agreed with these men and should no longer keep my opinion hidden.
But I was also convinced that if previously I was accustomed to
On the Unity of the Church

whisper my opinion in the ear of a friend, now I should preach it upon the housetops as though by the command of Christ. Then I judged that those words of Isaias pertained to me no less than they did to the Prophet himself: “Lift up thy voice like a trumpet” (58:1). Thus my voice would be heard not only in the kingdom, but if it might be possible, throughout the whole world wherever the name of Christ is cherished.

What for? Why, we see by the laws of nature that the son of Cyrus, who had always previously been mute, had the bonds of his tongue loosed and that he cried out: “Do not kill Cyrus, the King!” when he perceived a hostile hand advancing to slaughter his father. I see that you have killed those who were dearer to me on account of Christ than parents themselves; I see that you move your hand and all your efforts to destroy the harmony of the Church of Christ. I see that you have even now destroyed it, as much as lies within your power, to a great extent. This harmony of the Church is dearer to me than are my parents, my native land, or even the universal nature of all things. When I see these things, I say that I cannot be entirely silent. Instructed to speak by my mother the Church, in such a great crisis and injury to the Church, should I not send forth my voice? Should I not cry out? Should I not also oppose your impious efforts to the best of my ability? Should I not resist all your devices? Indeed, I shall! I have as witnesses those renowned souls now enjoying themselves in heaven. I shall speak. I shall write. I shall endeavor to resist you in every way. And I hope that the means will not be lacking whereby I might attain this.

For who is there having solicitude for the name of Christ who will not assist me in this cause? You send to the Most Christian King [Francis I, King of France] so that he might show himself as your protector and assistant in your impious efforts in attacking Christ. Does not the very title “Most Christian” especially frighten you from asking this favor? If the name does not move you at all, what do you see in his actions that gives you any reason for hoping that you might obtain from him what you desire? Rather, what do you see that is not directly the opposite? What do you see in this man that is particularly religiously scrupulous? What is there that does not make evident his very remarkable disposition of mind toward both Christ Himself, and because of Christ, toward His Vicar, the Roman pontiff? Of kings
now living, or of earlier kings, who ever gave greater evidence of the veneration of Christ in the character of His vicar, the Roman pontiff, than the Most Christian King Francis? You now implore his assistance in attacking the Church and the authority of the Roman pontiff. He has recognized this authority with so many renowned deeds that it would be folly to hope for any alienation of his feeling. However, even in this regard, you and those associated with you in your plan, show that you were so blinded by this absurd prudence that you understood neither what you were asking nor from whom you were asking it, nor on what occasion you were asking it.

The Most Christian King, in the latter part of his reign, came to Marseilles to meet the Roman pontiff. He came to meet him for the sake of honor, and also that he might bind the pope to himself by relationship through marriage. For the daughter of the pontiff's brother was given in marriage to Francis' son, the Prince of Orleans. At this time, indeed, the King omitted no kind of honor that could be conferred upon the vicar of Christ; he omitted not the slightest duty of intimacy that should be bestowed upon one who was now also a very close relative. You then sent legates to this same place who were to reproach the pontiff and even use threats unless he would yield to your most unjust demands. In that respect, you then hoped you would have the Most Christian King as your protector. How great was this blindness, I beseech you! Even later, you showed no less blindness. Certain acts of the Most Christian King, subsequent to that meeting, can readily give testimony to all that he was most zealous for the ancient decrees of the Church. He was their keenest defender and would confirm them all by his authority. You are preparing to overthrow and destroy all of them in every way. Then, indeed, you were not able to see what you were doing. Even then, through your spokesmen, you insisted all the more on stirring him up to conspire with you in destroying the harmony of the Church.

How, indeed, could he do this without greatly disagreeing with himself, without contradicting himself, his continual custom, and the most renowned and glorious established tradition of the kings of France? For these kings, as though they held their special sections of the Christian commonwealth divinely bestowed upon them, took counsel to defend especially the right of the head of the Church in the universal body. Thus, they always shone forth among rulers, especially
in defense of the Roman pontiff's authority in the Church. Each one of them would not only maintain possession of the hereditary surname "Most Christian," but would also gain possession of its fruits from the pontiff. Yet you are now striving to have this King join you in attacking the authority of the Roman pontiff. What else are you asking but that the very special adornments of his predecessors should be surrendered to you? You are asking that he should withdraw from them, that he should finally hand over to your whim the distinctive title his predecessors acquired, a title which he himself had most reverently preserved up to this time?

Finally, what kind of prayers are these? What type of mind do they indicate? A friendly or hostile one? Certainly you manifested less hostile intentions when you were in armed strife over the kingdom of France, when you were endeavoring to snatch away the name of king and confer it upon yourself. Now you are eagerly trying to make the King Himself, through a very great disgrace, lose that most admirable name that has been inscribed in heaven. For certainly to boast of depriving the King of France of his name through violence is not the same as to boast of his losing the title "Most Christian" through the most wicked fault. The name signifies only an earthly kingdom; the title "Most Christian" signifies a heavenly and perpetual heritage. As long as the King defends his title, "Most Christian," God will never desert him in protecting his other name of "King." Consider, therefore, the justice of your demand. You ask him on your behalf to attack the authority of the Roman pontiff, the vicar of Christ. By defending this authority most courageously, his predecessors have always merited this title of "Most Christian." They have left it as an inheritance of the realm for their posterity. Surely, more than anything else, should not the words of King Francis himself cut short any hope you might have of obtaining anything from him contrary to the custom of the Church? Christian people never responded with greater applause to anything as they did to his reply to your spokesmen implored his friendly aid and assistance for changes in ecclesiastical affairs. He replied that in all other matters he would show the dispositions of a friend and brother to you; however, he was neither desirous nor able to gratify you in activities that would be contrary to religion. Finally, he replied that he would be your most faithful friend, even to protecting your altars!
Oh! How worthy of him was this reply! He was "Most Christian" not only in name and title, but in actual fact. Even had his predecessors never received this title, now surely by the highest right it ought to be conferred upon and granted to him. In what other way, or with what other response, could he make more clear that his dispositions were "Most Christian"? With what hope might someone else now approach him requesting him to defend the functions of the pontiff! How hopeful I myself would be, even as I now am, in approaching such a ruler! I am suppliantly beseeching him in the name of the Christian commonwealth not only to refuse assistance to you in undermining this very first foundation, contrary to the custom of the Church, but to be mindful of his predecessors and their continual custom of defending the harmony of the Church. I am beseeching him to oppose you in every way and suppress all your endeavors.

Do you really think he will reject my requests in such a cause, even if my person has no authority before him? Does not the cause itself, no matter who pleads it, bring with it sufficient authority for persuasion before all Christian rulers? Especially before the "Most Christian" ruler! Certainly, were I only to know that King Francis was endowed by nature with the most magnanimous feelings I have ever heard universally praised, I would scarcely hesitate to make such a request of him. Your great cruelty toward those men who possessed such innocence of life, sanctity, and learning cannot have been unknown to such a king. They were well known throughout the whole Christian world. The honors of his predecessors, the very remarkable deeds he himself has performed, and those very signs evident in him, all bear witness to his magnanimous spirit. For these reasons I would not hesitate to request him at least not to assist you, even though he might prefer merely not to attack you or oppose your impious endeavors. And I would certainly obtain this from him, because I see that long ago his magnanimous nature achieved this, even though no request was made.

Since you have been deserted by this man, for how long do you hope to deceive God without punishment? Can you anticipate anything less than the greatest scourge of the wrath of God? Even now do you place your hope in those lies that fill the books containing a defense of your cause? Do you now place faith in threats of death and torture for those who dare to think the opposite? Do you not hear
On the Unity of the Church

Isaias as he speaks briefly about these remedies that will come to you? As he explains your schemes, he is speaking in the character of God, to you and those like you: "Wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, who rule over my people . . . For you have said: We have entered into a league with death, and we have made a covenant with hell. When the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come upon us: for we have placed our hope in lies, and by falsehood we are protected" (28:14–15). Behold Isaias explains all these things as if he had been aware of your plans! For who does not know that these were your plans thus far, first to defend your cause in deceitful books, then also to enter into a league with death. Anyone who resisted your lies would be punished by death. Do you now think that if you should be deserted by all, these two guards will be sufficient fortification for you in your realm? Now hear what Isaias adds immediately: "And your league with death shall be abolished, and . . . shall not stand: when the overflowing scourge shall pass, you shall be trodden down by it" (28:18). Indeed, are not your lies revealed? Are not your threats of death despised? Are you not summoning forth souls whose open resistance will be even greater, though you hope you are casting even greater fear into men? How, therefore, will your covenant stand? How will these plans defend you? Even without the Prophet, will it be difficult to foretell this? Can you not see that the enemy of your cause and all your mighty efforts holds the same scourge in his hands for you that was threatened and spoken of by Isaias? "Your league . . . will be abolished . . . the overflowing scourge shall pass," and the other words of Isaias that followed!

Do you not see that you have the Emperor as a powerful enemy? He can only be a very troublesome enemy to you, unless he wanted to despise completely the laws of nature and abandon the cause of religion. You have provoked him in every way. If even a spark of his magnanimous nature remains in him—and he excelled in this—or if some religious devotion to which he has always been dedicated remains, then certainly he must oppose your efforts. For how great is that disgrace you are now preparing to brand upon his family? Horrible as it is to say it, you reject his aunt, the daughter of the King of the Spaniards, as an obsolete public prostitute! She was renowned no less for every kind of virtue than she was for the splendor of her family. Though for 20 years she was joined to you in matrimony, you
have dispossessed her from your home and marriage couch. You deny that she was your wife. You say that your intimacy with her during these many years was abominable and accursed. Can the most magnanimous spirit of the Emperor permit such an exceptional injury done by you to his family to go unavenged? He often prevented foreign enemies from doing even lesser injuries by exerting all his effort and risking great danger? Will he now desert this most noble woman? Will he confess that he is unable to assist one related to him by blood, in such a terrible wrong? Though one can scarcely imagine anything more serious, you have reckoned this very lightly. You have done this by adding even greater injury. For what are private injuries when compared to public ones? For how great and how public is that other injury? This affects not one or two kingdoms, but all kingdoms that are obedient to Christ.

Indeed, you began with a private injury to your wife. However, it was such a private injury that at the same time it cast a stain of very abominable and most wicked ignorance upon the names of two renowned kingdoms, Spain and England! It established the wisest men of these realms as the authors, through error, of a wicked and incestuous marriage. Indeed, it almost brought this present complete destruction upon England at home.

But it could not stop there. It did not seem to you enough to have treated your wife, the aunt of the Emperor, most insultingly. You also had to act most injuriously against the spouse of Christ, against the mother of so many kings, against the parent of so many nations of universal Christian people. Without this mother, no commonwealth could in any way stand. Finally, however, how great was the injury against the Church! No injury against the spouse of Christ can be slight. Everything done against the Church must be serious. The deed you perpetrated, however, so excels that it manifestly declares that you had in mind the overthrow of the foundations of the Church itself. For what else were you doing when you attempted to take away from the Church the spirit of God, the pledge of love for the spouse, the pledge of life and eternal duration? What else but this were you attempting when you now called into doubt, after such a long period of time, so many of the decrees of the Church that had been established by the authority of the spirit of God? These decrees had long been established by uninterrupted custom. But do I say that you
called them into doubt? You rescinded them completely and established contrary ones.

Doubts alone, concerning those things the Church has approved, would by your own judgment be depriving the Church of the spirit of God. Now, truly, since you have decided and decreed the contrary, how little of the spirit of God have you left for the Church? Do you not openly show that you are the enemy and adversary of the Church? Do you not desire to extinguish her authority in every way? How can anything else be thought, as you attempt to snatch away the teacher that Christ promised to leave it? Christ entrusted the care of his sheep to Peter. When He did that, He entrusted His Church to him. The Church accepted him as shepherd, willingly. For more than fifteen hundred years the Church recognized him. Now you are eager to tear away this shepherd from the Church. Nor, indeed, are you only anxious to tear him away. You see his authority waverering in the minds of many. You see him walking upon the sea without sufficient faith of soul after Christ called him and confirmed his authority. And you are eager to submerge him. You are eager to extinguish his authority entirely and to substitute yourself in his place. And not only this, indeed! Surely it might have been borne with a more stable mind, if you had at least appointed one head and one teacher for the Church. However, you have torn it apart into many heads, you have imposed many teachers upon it. Obviously, this points toward the destruction of the Church. You, however, appoint yourself alone from among pre-eminent ones. You see that the Church rejects you. It abhors and is averse to such a teacher. Nor is it any wonder!

After your disgraceful treatment of your wife, a most holy woman who gave so many indications of the spirit of the Church dwelling within her, you could scarcely hope the spouse of Christ would accept you as a teacher. Believe me, you will never attain this. You, nevertheless, try this in every way. Indeed, you were previously acting with flattery and promises among the sons of the Church, so they would accept you for herself. Your flatteries accomplished nothing. These men were not persuaded. You then advanced against them with terror, threats, violence, and every kind of cruelty. You demanded from Satan that he should open up all the gates of hell for the sons of the Church who resisted you. What further? They have been opened, for God permitted it. You see that they have not prevailed any more
against those than against the teacher himself whose authority you attack. What about you now, therefore? To satisfy your very enormous anger, you selected the most distinguished sons of the Church who dared to oppose you. You torment them exceedingly as they are exposed to every kind of torture. Thus you might take revenge upon the Church. Indeed, I see you have done this and you now persecute the remaining ones.

But, now, what about the Emperor? For, without great personal dishonor, he is unable to ignore that private injury against your wife, his aunt. Will he allow this injury, cast at the universal Church, the spouse of Christ, his parent and the parent of all confessing Christ, to go unavenged? Furthermore, during these months, he has exposed himself to all dangers so that he might have revenge on those enemies of the Church who were infesting the shores of Italy with piracy. Will he permit you to advance with impunity against the outstanding and distinguished sons of the Church? You have vexed the Church in a way no foreign or domestic enemy has ever vexed it since the time the faith of Christ was first publicly received by kings. Will he permit this, particularly when he might repress and hinder all your attempts with less danger and greater ease? Surely these attempts are of far greater moment. Evils that attack the soul are greater than those that attack only the body and external things. Certainly the cruelty of the pirates whom the Emperor attacked at this time, never exceeded physical cruelty.

Even as far as bodily harm was concerned, these pirate attacks advanced only up to a point. Those that were seized were despoiled of their possessions and held as slaves. This was especially true for those whose assistance might be useful. They were also promised they might redeem themselves for a price. You, however, are second to none of the pirates in destroying the goods of the Church. You are not content, however, with thrusting captive bodies into prison where they would be of use to no one. You would also lead their souls into servitude. Even Satan, unless he had received the power from God, would not have dared to do this. You also assume for yourself power over all, so that you do not permit anyone to speak freely as he thinks. You do not even allow right opinions to be confined within the depths of their souls. No more miserable kind of servitude than this can be imagined. To everyone you appear more cruel than any pirate, more
bold than Satan himself. Truly, then, you were such a terrible enemy to the Church that you can be compared with no one except Satan. Does not the Emperor, most zealous for the safety of the Christian commonwealth, see these things? But if he does not see them, are men lacking who will speak? Are there lacking men who will relate these things? Who will place before our eyes this imminent destruction of the Christian commonwealth?

Or should I myself who write these things hesitate to do this, if others delay? Since love of my native land and love for the Church impel me to this, can any private reason or the fear of any personal peril restrain me? If, indeed, I should hear that the Emperor had sailed into the seas with all his fleet and had directed his course to the Turk’s royal Constantinople itself, I testify that I could not put out of my mind the love of my native land that nature herself has placed in me, nor the love of the Church infused by the Son of God. Although all dangers might confront me, I would never rest until I arrived in the Emperor’s presence. And should I then perceive him holding the straits of the Hellespont, at the first opportunity granted for meeting him I would break forth before him in these words:  

_Pole’s Address to the Emperor Charles V_

“Emperor, what are you preparing? What are you thinking? Where are you sailing with this abundant equipment? If love of the Christian commonwealth moves you to advance in war against the King of the Turks, the ancient enemy of the name of Christ, does not an even greater danger threaten our commonwealth? And should you not rather turn your course in that direction where evil is now present and where a new enemy, more terrible than the Turks, is oppressing? You consider the liberation of so many people remarkable because you see so many thousands of Christians oppressed with harsh servitude by the Turks. And it is, indeed, remarkable. However, if this is praise-worthy, is it not even more glorious to free from a present danger and to restore to the Church of Christ so many thousands of souls that have been snatched from the bosom of the Church and that have now been brought to a crisis in their salvation? Oh! Emperor! You cannot pretend not to know such a great danger threatens, that the enemy
attempting these things now exists, and that in great measure he has accomplished them. But is this more praiseworthy? Does it not seem even more essential to cure this evil now attacking us, than to make plans for a physical liberation? For unless you give immediate assistance against this evil, your attempt at what you are now doing will be in vain, even if you should return from Asia a victor after subduing the Turks.

“For, I beseech you, what would have then been accomplished if, in place of those whom you had expelled from Asia, new ‘Turks’ should have sprung up among ourselves? For what are Turks as far as religion is concerned except a certain sect of Christians that in times past deserted the Catholic Church? The Turks, indeed, do not hold the name of Christ in hatred, nor do they reject the Gospels. But, as the Arians once did, they take away from Christ the dignity of being the Son of God. They have, however, drunk deeply of many Arian sects. They say, indeed, that Christ was a great Prophet, and they hold His Mother Mary in no little veneration. Furthermore, the origin of the religion of the Turks is the same as that of all heretics. They first revolted from the Church after they had rejected the head that Christ had left there, and thus they gradually withdrew from the doctrine of Christ.

“What, therefore? Do you not see that this seed of the Turks has been widely sown among us? I wish only that it were so insignificant that you could not see it. But you have seen it in your Germany. How greatly we should mourn this! However, the seed of the Turks has not yet been completely sown there. Public authority has not thus far forced everything else to be dominated by the command of one man. For there is no reason for complete despair about the genuine Church of the Germans. It may blossom forth again and produce the true and beautiful fruits of Catholic truth after oppression by this deceitful seed. But this seed is now sown in England, where true religion was none the less flourishing, so that it now can scarcely be distinguished from the Turkish. It flourishes under the authority of one person. However, what has been sown that it might grow is defended by the sword. The sword is the answer for all who argue. But this is something completely Turkish, for in this way their sect increased. It differs from something Turkish, however, inasmuch as the Turkish sect never compelled anyone to agree with it. Anyone is safe among the
Turks, even though he professes a different religion, as long as he does not attack the religion of the Turks. For the Turks hold good men in honor and veneration, even though these men think differently. We have testimony of this in those Greek monks dwelling on Mt. Athos. The Turkish ruler himself held them in esteem. He often sent men to them asking the monks, in his name, to pray for him and to commend his salvation to God. No one, regardless of his sect, if he were silent, would be afflicted with any punishment during the reign of this ruler.

"But where this new and deadly seed has now been scattered, no less punishment has been appointed for him who is silent than for him who expresses great opposition. Behold one who greatly excelled in virtue and learning! Thomas More was killed for the crime of silence. Indeed, the more saintly and religious the monks are, the greater the danger that threatens them. However, the tongues of all are restrained by fear of the sword.

"What do you seek further, Emperor? Do not these remarkable attempts, this violence and cruelty toward holy men sufficiently show how great a danger threatens? Does not the rejection of the head of the Church make this evident? You are preparing for war against those very Turks who prepared to attack the Church of Christ at the first opportunity presented. For they rejected the authority of the head of the Church and substituted in its stead the power of the sword. They had so protected the Church for many ages that only recently the Church was recovering her sons who had become forgetful of their mother.

"Although, indeed, the sect of the Turks might not sufficiently show the magnitude of the peril that even now I am describing in this treatise, Germany herself, however, will accomplish this satisfactorily. Ponder within your soul how quiet, peaceful, and religious that country once was. Finally, it grew in every way, being strengthened in the unity of the Church. Again consider recent times when it was troubled with internal war after it had repudiated the head of the Church. It was so scattered about and divided into different sects that no end of evils could be seen, unless—may God grant this!—it would return again to the unity of the head. Certainly this recognition of the one head has always been the most firm fortification of the Church. Heretics have always first of all advanced against this.
Catholics always defend this. Caesar defends this. This was recently so defended in England by those heroic sons of the Church who preferred to offer their unprotected bodies to the spears of the enemy rather than to desert this defense. Once this has been attacked, the approach is laid open for the enemies of Christ to attack the Church more readily. But nevertheless it was attacked. The most courageous sons of the Church, who were in opposition, were killed. Is it any wonder that this happened, since the enemy had a King for a leader? Perhaps, in such great evils for the Church, this perverse contagion of thinking against the Church had not yet reached out to every king. Finally, it reached ours, who openly defends his sect in the same way the Turks openly defend Mohammedism. For he displays an unsheathed sword to all who dare to disagree with him. He desires nothing more ardently than to be given the opportunity for strength to inflict, at a later time, greater destruction on the Church than that brought by the Turks. And he will inflict even greater destruction if he obtains what he desires. Will you, O Caesar, give him this opportunity? You profess great love for the Christian commonwealth. You indicate that you would do everything on its behalf. Since this part of the commonwealth has been so sorely afflicted, it implores your hand, your strength, your protection. For this evil has grown so that remedies can no longer be postponed if they are to be of any profit. Turn back your forces and direct your assistance to another. After your long absence and a hazardous war against a most powerful enemy, can any hope remain that you will come to our assistance in time? We are laboring under greater dangers than are those whom you are now hastening to free from servitude. Will you disappoint the hopes and expectations of your own? This sole hope gives special help to their cause, since up to now they little desired to measure their own strength, to try to defend themselves with their own power.

"Do not think, Emperor, that the English are lacking in magnanimous feeling. Do not think that the sincere love of religion has been entirely extinguished. You can assure yourself of this through the deaths of those men who offered themselves to be consumed by the enemy for the sake of religion. God preserved seven thousand men whose knees were not bowed before Baal, in the days of Elias, when impious Achab, persuaded as he was by his wicked wife Jezabel, killed the Prophets (3 Kgs. 19:1). Therefore, do not think that this impious
Jezabel, though she is most keen-sighted where slaughter is concerned, can kill the followers of religion. For now, the grace of the Spirit is more widely diffused. Believe me, even now many whole legions of men whose knees have not bowed before Baal, are concealed in England. God Himself, who preserves you, will lead all of them over to your side if you should come. For these are the same Englishmen, Emperor, who, on behalf of more trifling cause, with no outside help, imposed punishments for kings who badly administered the government. These Englishmen compelled their kings to render an account of the money that had poured out profusely to the great loss of the realm. When the people did not approve these accounts, they compelled their kings to renounce their crown and scepter.

"If their feelings restrained them previously, nothing except their hope and expectation from you now withholds them from vindicating so great an injury by the King. For they believe this cause concerns you. They feel certain that you must undertake this cause. Otherwise you would be betraying your noble nature. Your numerous remarkable deeds have convinced them of this. Otherwise you would have to discard your love of religion, which you have defended most zealously. However, they judge that they can meet these very great evils with less difficulty and loss for the kingdom, through your assistance, rather than by attempting this same thing by their own hands. Indeed, they rightly think thus, and they justly expect you. Emperor, can you now desert them?

"What impels you to abandon a cause of such great importance at home, and to turn to a cause far removed from you and one that threatens less danger? Do your soldiers draw you in that direction? Is their will more inclined to settle affairs in the East where ancient enemies exist, than in the West where there are new ones? What soldiers, Emperor? Undoubtedly your Spanish soldiers, in whom you rightly place the greatest faith, for their glory has always especially shone in your wars. If only they might hear the noble offspring of Isabella, oppressed with misery and grief, imploring their aid and assistance in this most just cause! I know, Emperor, that the memory of this most distinguished woman has not been blotted from their minds. They would never allow a daughter worthy of such a mother to implore aid from them in vain. I know they would most willingly abandon any longing of theirs in order to assist this noble woman. The
honor of the Spanish kingdom alone would be sufficient incentive for them in this situation now under discussion, were they only to hear that the daughter of the King of Spain had been thrown out of the house where she lived in marriage for 20 years on the charge of public prostitution. This was done as though she were the daughter of some uncouth mimic or buffoon, who had crept to the royal marriage bed, and not the daughter of a most noble king properly given as wife from a most noble kingdom. Would they endure with an even disposition such an injury that men of the lowest condition could hardly bear? A man could scarcely be found with a soul so sordid that he would not seek in every way, even at the risk of his own life, to avenge so great a disgrace in his daughter. The continual series of their many victories during these years indicates their magnanimous feelings. Would they not avenge this injury against the daughter of their Spanish King?

"Would, I say, the most noble nation of Spaniards be able to ignore so great an injury occurring in the midst of their victories? Or will it consider anything of greater importance than this which so manifestly seeks for your honor, Emperor, and the glory of Spain? For what could be more ignominious for you than for other nations to think Spain neither desirous nor able to vindicate such an insulting injury conferred upon her? But surely this cannot be thought. However, Emperor, that you might understand this clearly, permit me only to address your soldiers. When they hear that the daughter and granddaughter of Queen Isabella are in peril of their honor, their fortunes and the inheritance of the kingdom, you will see that they will turn their ships around. This they will do with your permission, as soon as they hear their aid implored, as soon as they hear mention of Isabella's name.

"Truly, Emperor, I am not asking you nor your soldiers to do anything on behalf of Catherine, your aunt, for she does not desire any such request on her behalf. She does not complain at all about her undeserved lot. She easily endures the injustice of her fortune that rages fiercely against her, when it should be especially prospering even as yours is prospering. Her condition is the most wretched of all. The more prosperously your affairs advance at home and abroad, so much the more unjustly is she treated and tried with grievous oppres-
sion. Privately she is in no way troubled. She complains about nothing. Finally, she asks nothing on her behalf.

"Oh! Emperor! She asks on behalf of England, to whom she was given. As a noble plant, she was transplanted into England which she sought to love as a second native land, and which she certainly does love. Wherefore, she asks that her cause might be joined with the cause of this very noble and most beloved country in every way. She asks that her own cause, even to her detriment, might of necessity hold the lowest position. Should this not happen, injury would come to a very peaceful country and trouble it with seditions and civil wars. This could not happen without its own ruin and destruction. Her cause is so joined with religion that if she deserted it she would, necessarily, be deserting religion and wiping out the ancient faith of the Church. Not only would new sects spring up in that Island that she had found more religious, but their contagion would be scattered into other countries and would disturb the whole Church.

"This very great evil, exceeding all others in gravity, and containing all other evils in itself, is not a mere conjecture, as when one foresees an impending threatening storm. It is actually present. It can be seen gathering strength. Conditions in England are most perilous for those who are very religious and who retain the ancient faith and custom of the Church. For who can be safe there, in the presence of examples of such great cruelty against such holy men as Fisher and More?

"Finally, Oh! Emperor, all these things are such that the minds of all rulers who hold the name of Christ dear and venerable are greatly moved and aroused to bring assistance. Then, she begs, let aid be speedily brought to a Christian realm. This common cause pertains to her personally. She is the daughter of Ferdinand, King of Spain. Isabella was her mother. She is your aunt, Oh! Emperor! She asks this especially since she has never done anything unworthy of her ancestors, nothing unworthy of such noble relationships or of so noble a kingdom from which she came. She never used any bold force or daring against her wicked enemies, Oh! Emperor! Now, then, she asks this. God has given you sufficient resources not only to restrain further attack from the powerful and hostile Turkish ruler, holding authority over many realms, but also to subdue him into quieting
down. She begs that you will come first with assistance where an even greater evil threatens the Christian commonwealth. There is not the slightest doubt of victory. Clearly there is no danger. She begs this of you through her very close relationship with you and through the honor of the Spanish kingdom involved in this matter. She suppli-
antly asks this through the most worthy salvation of the Christian commonwealth. Even as you might be able to care for the honor of your family and the glory of your kingdom that has rendered you so many renowned victories, so also she asks you to avert such destruction from the Christian commonwealth. She begs that you prefer some-
ting so holy and so publicly useful, to even most glorious private plans. She asks especially, since whatever you may accomplish here will become a means and help for you to achieve what you are now at-
temting prematurely. For when you have collected these resources, your forces will be increased rather than diminished. More oppor-
tunately and with less difficulty will you be able to undertake those other affairs."

Summary of Questions Directed to Henry

But what am I doing? I seem to have been carried away by fervor, I seem to have completely forgotten with whom I was conversing. For here I have addressed my treatise to the Emperor as if I was dealing not with you, my Prince, but with him. Therefore, I shall return to the point where I digressed. I think that you realize in what special way you were planning to take counsel in these matters. If Fisher and More became your staunch adversaries, many more enemies also have been stirred up against you. All Christian rulers in general are aroused against you. Indeed, even the Emperor himself has more serious reasons than anyone for being aroused against you. And at the same time you made him your enemy, he was successfully evading his enemies. His strength had so marvelously increased during these few years, he was now a firm protection to his friends. Though he had received no private injury from you, nevertheless, on behalf of the commonwealth, he could not avoid being your bitter enemy. However, I am not speaking in this manner solely about the duties and devotion of the Emperor. I refer, rather, to the other Christian rulers and in
On the Unity of the Church

279

particular to that "Most Christian King." You were not ashamed to ask him for aid in this cause, contrary to his honor. The "Most Christian King" was, indeed, worthy of his name. He was outstanding in his obedience to the vicar of Christ. If the Roman pontiff, by virtue of his authority over the universal Church, received from Christ, should command the Christian King to undertake the task of repressing your efforts and subduing you by arms, he could not refuse this charge. Were he commanded to pacify the Emperor and turn his activities toward strengthening other parts of the commonwealth; were he to be desirous of remaining faithful to his own remarkable achievements and those of his predecessors, he would not refuse. He would have to acquiesce immediately even if you were his own brother. After he received this charge, all good men would praise him no less for suppressing your attacks against the Church in your own country, than they would praise the Emperor himself for rescuing Constantinople from the tyranny of the Turks. I am not certain but that your current oppression of the Church is even more insidious than all the evils that might possibly be feared by any country anywhere, dominated by Constantinople or by the Turks.

Behold, therefore, how the counsel of your advisers has led you astray. The things you have undertaken without custom or precedent, and with the greatest injustice and impiety, have necessarily made you an enemy of all rulers cherishing the name Christian. For what can you say with even an appearance of justice, either concerning your marriage or this present question being proposed against the unity of the Church? You have removed Peter and all his successors from the government of the Church. What can you say in either of these cases?

But I know what you will say concerning the marriage. You will present the written authority of many universities that have decreed that your first marriage was not licitly contracted according to the divine law. They then decreed that the pontiff was not empowered to give a valid dispensation. But here I reply to you that aside from this you have nothing to say, nothing that is not obvious to all. For even if this reply were very just and correct, the Church is not accustomed to having such questions decided by those who study in universities. Therefore, I say that their judgment was of no importance. I say, moreover, that all who favored your cause were liars. They deceived you and they deceived themselves. I now say this.
However, see to it that you listen attentively to my reason for saying this. Have no desire to reproach me for saying, without reason, that so many men were liars. For I now affirm that God Himself deceived all who favored your opinion, and He permitted them to speak a falsehood instead of the truth. But on what argument do I rely as I say these things? Namely, on one beyond deception. For the true Prophets of God have taught me that all who have favored your cause were pseudo-prophets. And here again I desire to state that you should not reproach me in any way. But if God Himself, through His true Prophets, says the same thing, I cannot help but speak what He has most certainly shown me. Listen to me now, however, and you shall hear the way in which not I, but the Prophet himself speaks. For thus speaks Ezechiel, explaining your case: "Man, man of the house of Israel, that shall place his uncleanness in his heart, and set up the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and shall come to the prophet inquiring of me by him: I the Lord will answer him according to the multitude of his uncleannesses: That the house of Israel may be caught in their own heart, with which they had departed from me" (14:4, 5). And after this there follows immediately: "And then when the prophet shall err and speak a word: I the Lord have deceived that prophet."

Do you hear, my Prince, the judgment of God concerning all whom you have consulted and concerning the opinion of God in your case? When He had seen your uncleanness, He replied to you through them. Because you, as you questioned them, concealed the truth from them, God also concealed the truth from them. He allowed them to give you a false reply to your false question. Will you truly deny here that you had uncleanness in your heart when you inquired about these things? Will you say that you acted with sincere intentions in all this question, that you did not deceive them when you inquired the opinion of learned men concerning the divine law? You inquired what was licit for you according to that law concerning marrying the wife of your brother. And what is this reckless arrogance that dares to pronounce about the intent of and the desire of another, against a person whose thoughts are concealed in his heart? They can be known only to God alone, and to him who had these thoughts! But, my Prince, others can also know them if God wants to reveal them, if they are the thoughts of one who cannot keep them secret. I now
say, however, that God did not allow you to conceal what you had within. Because you pretended to Him, He made known your pretense to all. He has manifested to all what you had hidden in your heart.

How has God done this? During that very time when this question was being discussed, you had this woman not only in your home, but also in your bosom. You had expelled your wife, since you desired to lead this other woman to your wife's marriage couch. Nevertheless, you so had her in your bosom that the eyes of all beheld your passionate longing. Your intentions could not be hidden. And you married this woman as soon as the opinions of the pseudo-prophets were spoken. You did not await the authority of the man whose place it was to render an opinion. May we doubt what you had in your heart during all the time you professed to be seeking the opinion of God and justice? Concerning your intention, therefore, we assert without any arrogance that you had uncleanness in your heart when you were seeking the opinion of learned men concerning your marriage. Were I to think that anyone knowing even a little about your case would doubt this, I might present so many proofs that even a blind man, if he could not see, certainly would be able to sense your thoughts and intimate feelings in the matter. Therefore, there can be nothing more certain than the fact that you asked this question with a most unclean mind. God's opinion concerning your prophets follows in the words of Ezechiel: "According to the iniquity of him that inquireth, so shall the iniquity of the prophet be" (14:10). The same thing is expressed in the Book of Kings. Jezabel, the impious wife of the impious Achab, alienated his mind from the true worship of God just as now it is clear that a new Jezabel has turned your mind away from the truth in this question. When he desired to consult God through the Prophets, the Scripture in the person of God says: "Who shall deceive Achab . . . And there came forth a spirit. And stood before the Lord, and said: I will deceive him. And the Lord said to him: By what means? And he said: I will go forth and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And the Lord said: Thou shalt deceive him and shalt prevail: go forth, and do so" (3 Kgs. 22:20–22). But did he prevail only over the Prophets of Achab, or also over all who follow the deeds of Achab? Since you especially express these things, we see that the same spirit also prevails in your
prophets; since they are deceived by you, they also deceive you. But Paul gives best expression to this permission of God when he speaks of those who preferred not to hear the truth. You so abhorred the truth in this question that you first judged those who persisted in defending the truth, as deserving of your hatred, your indignation, and finally even of death. Paul speaks thus of such men: "They received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. Therefore God shall send them the operation of error, to believe lying: That all may be judged who have not believed the truth, but have consented to iniquity" (II Thes. 2:10–11). But let us return to Ezechiel who first warns us about the divine judgment for those who question the oracles of God. Furthermore, let us see what he says about that man who has uncleanness in his heart as he questions the Prophets of God. For all these things seem to pertain to you. Ezechiel seems to have foreseen everything that afterward happened to you in this case, including the scourge of the wrath of God you are now enduring. He speaks thus to one who questions with such a mind: "And I will set my face against that man, and will make him an example, and a proverb, and will cut him off from the midst of my people: and you shall know that I am the Lord" (Ez. 14:8).

Dwelling as I am in these places since I left my native land and your realm, should I tell you that you are the object of common talk in the conversation and speech of everyone? Should I tell you that even people who never before heard of you are now very familiar with your name because of the very great injustice and impiety of your royal title? Should I tell you that no word is mentioned more frequently in conversation than your tyranny and impiety? Should I tell you that not only in barber shops but in every gathering of men you are reproached in the words of men of high and low rank? If I should tell you that I know these things, that I hear them daily with great grief of soul, you would not believe me. However, if you believe this, you know that wicked and infamous men have spread abroad reports of your very great injustice, impiety, and tyranny so they might better know with greater certainty these things concerning you. For they have been publicly presented in written works that may be read by all throughout the Christian world. Indeed, they show the very great vengeance of God against you. First He desired your glory and reputation to be extinguished in the minds of all. Then He also
expelled you from His people and rejected you completely. However, if you are able, consider for a moment how God wished that these things pertaining to your disgrace should be done and accomplished.

First He permitted Satan to come to you. Satan planted in your mind the idea of increasing your power and glory in your realm. He persuaded you that this would happen if you would assume for yourself the supreme title of all powers here on earth. For such is the title of supreme head of the Church on earth. However, this was the straightest path by which you would be cast down to become the lowest of all men upon the earth. But how did Satan persuade you to this? Why, indeed, do we ask how, when we have Sampson's book? This was an instrument of Satan to lead you into this. But was there something truly concealed, something that Sampson and the other instruments of Satan spoke into your ears, something that they did not wish to commit in writing? Indeed, the way in which Satan took you up into a very high mountain was concealed. They concealed the fact that Satan showed you not only all the kingdoms of the world, but also all the goods and possessions of the priests. Thus had Satan acted toward Christ whom he was not able to influence, by offering Him all these things, since Christ on His own testimony pronounced Himself the Son of God—as He truly was the Son of God. Satan influenced you and prevailed upon you to call yourself the supreme head of the Church. Satan promised you that he would give you everything if you would profess yourself to be the supreme head of the Church. He entrusted to Sampson the duty of proving the rest by Scriptures. For it is written, as Sampson says in the character of Satan: "Honor the King." This was the theological persuasion of Satan! Afterward he placed you on the pinnacle of a temple. And, indeed, he did not tell you to cast yourself down, if you were the head of the Church. But when you beheld the prospect of all the possessions of the priests, you willingly and promptly appropriated this title for yourself. Satan then cast you down headlong so that you who formerly sought two heads, now appear to be without any head. For the head you imagine you possess so securely on account of your royal title, that it cannot be taken from you, can scarcely be called the image of the royal head. Indeed, it is so very weak that now, whatever kind it may be, it cannot cling to you much longer. All those virtues and natural goods that you received from Christ, which were the vital force of
the head you now possess, have by this event slipped away from you. Now there is no one who can recognize the remnant of any virtue in you.

How could God more manifestly make known to us that everything in you having even the appearance of virtue was destroyed and dispersed? He made this known by permitting you to rage furiously against More and Fisher and against those other vessels of the Holy Spirit. I refer to those monks! Did He not thus clearly show us that not even the faintest trace of justice or virtue remained in you? For had even the slightest virtue remained, certainly you would have manifested it in some way toward these men.

By all these events, the prophecy of Ezechiel was fulfilled foretelling, among other things, your disgrace and that of your followers. You have uncleanness in your heart and you inquired through the priests for the opinion of God and the law. Behold this particular time! Or rather, behold the very remarkable virtue of that man [Emperor Charles V] that shone especially at that time. For most unjust reasons, you yourself had rendered him most hostile to you. Of his own free will, he would always have been most friendly. Your deeds alone, however, sufficiently made known your every disgrace. They were further spread abroad to the eternal infamy of your name and exposed to ridicule by the mouths of all. With unsurpassed devotion and at great personal risk, the Emperor was carrying on activities against foreign people and enemies of our religion in Africa. He returned victorious with twenty thousand liberated Christians who had been captives. This was of greater renown than anything a ruler had done through many ages for the honor, glory, and security of the Christian name. At that very time you were concerned with your prostitute’s cause. You yourself, bearing the name of defender of the faith, under false pretenses, were demanding the torture and slaughter of every outstanding defender of the true faith in your realm. You showed not the slightest degree of humanity as you killed all you were able to find. But like a wild beast that had lost all feeling for humanity, you tore them into pieces. Indeed, you hold many in chains. You threaten them with everything horrible and treat them more unmercifully than the savage enemy of our religion treated captives recently liberated by the Emperor in Africa.

Fisher, indeed, lived during those days even though he endured
the misery of a very long imprisonment. Who would have thought that he could have endured even one month in prison? He was then very old. His health was always weak. He was known to have been physically feeble. Three years before my departure from England, I realized how nature had afflicted him. I judged that he would not have more than a year to live, even if he employed the most admirable care in preserving his health in his own home. But I also heard afterward that when he was summoned to London to be confined in prison, his diminishing strength had made him very weak for some time during the journey. Now, however, since it is clear that he was able to remain alive for 15 months in the filth of that offensive jail, does not everyone recognize that it was the hand of God surpassing nature that extended his life in order to make your very great disgrace more evident? Thus he might not die a natural death but would perish by your sword as a most holy man. And in order that this crime might be added on top of your greater iniquity, God permitted him to be numbered among the cardinals even while he dwelt in jail. Thus, when you later killed him, all would know that not only had you killed a most excellent bishop, whom you had no reason to punish, but that you had also killed a cardinal along with other most distinguished men who professed our religion.

And at this very time the Emperor had acquired for himself an eternal crown of victory before God, and lasting fame and glory before men, since he had liberated twenty thousand Christians from harsh servitude and cruel death at the hands of the most abandoned enemies of the Christian name. Thus, when your deeds are compared with those of the Emperor, your rival in these actions, his deeds are far superior. At the very time when the walls of all temples are adorned with votive tablets of captives, to the very great glory of the Emperor, and at the very time the supplications of Christians far and wide are awaited because of such a distinguished victory, dire curses await you in front of all temple entrances. The Emperor is called upon by the voices of all good men to turn his armed strength against you, not only as against an enemy of religion, more cruel than barbarians and the Turks themselves, but as against a man more destructive to the Church than were all others who ever attacked the Church. The prayers of almost all mortals demand, finally, that the pontiff cut you off from the body as a putrid and dead member.
Let us not postpone these things any longer. Behold what happened, not by any chance but by the action of divine providence. Beyond the expectation of all, the Emperor was brought to those places where he might most appropriately enter into deliberations with the pontiff for curing the wounds that you, for the most part, had inflicted upon the Christian commonwealth. For the Emperor arrived at Rome at a time when he was free from all other obligations. He might thus give all his attention to the removal of internal evils. What will you devise, however, against all the divine and human powers striving to deliver you from your crime? Where will you flee? Whose assistance will you implore? That of foreigners? But surely nature herself did not separate this region from the rest of the world when she made it an island surrounded by an ocean, more completely than your passionate desires and unholy schemes against the harmony of the Church have separated you from all who are Christians, or who desire to be considered Christians. Therefore, in what can you place your trust? Can you rely upon your authority over your people, upon the assistance of your subjects? Your consideration for their needs has been such that, whereas they have until now been accustomed to have their commerce with foreign nations protected, and their trade, necessary for livelihood, carried on, they may before long be prohibited from this commerce with all other nations on account of you. This, indeed, will then be the case if you deprive them of their fortunes and also their necessary sustenance.

How will you persuade them that they should be willing to sustain so great a loss? I say nothing further about the disgrace. They will be considered enemies of religion like the Turks! They will be considered without faith, like the Jews. They will be despised by all. When, therefore, they shall be excluded from all the markets where they are now accustomed to exchange their merchandise at great profit to themselves, with what kind of words will you persuade them to adhere to you? Will you remind them of your benefits to them? But then they will not attend to mere words; they will also examine things. What then? Throughout the many years during which you reigned at peace, without an enemy, will you be able to show them any benefit you have given them, even a mediocre one? Certainly you will be able to show them none. But they, on the other hand, will be able
to show many injuries and losses. Therefore, what will you do? Where will you turn? Will you implore the observance of the oath by which they are bound to you? Will you really do this? You never observed your pledged faith with them. You alone have deceived so many thousands. You have never fulfilled any of the things you solemnly swore you would do at the beginning of your reign. Do you now expect that their pledged faith can oblige them to come to your assistance in your disaster?

But though God is the bond of every pledge and sworn promise, you, however, have openly declared war against God and Church. You have broken your pledged promise. Do you demand that conscientious scrupulousness should hold others to keep their faith pledged to you? Who does not see that God has truly deprived you of all human assistance? He has completely undermined the foundation of your kingdom. Why? Since He has snatched away your reputation for justice, honesty, clemency, and liberality, has He not overthrown the foundations of your kingdom together with all hope of assistance? Are there any more firm foundations of kingdoms than these? Are they not the only ones? Can any kingdom exist without them? Can men assist anyone whose soul lacks these and clearly possesses the opposite?

During the 27 years of your reign, have they not had sufficient experience in observing nothing but your plundering? However, if in the meanwhile you had given any sign of liberality, they would have recognized this in all other matters, as well as those pertaining to the public good. For in the first years of your reign you carelessly poured out large sums of money. To repair your inroads on the treasury, you afterward despoiled all kinds of men! You always considered the nobility with scorn. You never loved the people. You plundered and molested the clergy in every way possible. Most recently, however, more like a raging wild animal than like a man, you have torn to pieces some most worthy men. These men had lived very long lives. They were a credit to your realm, pillars to the Church of God, flowers of mankind. They merit these titles, for they showed themselves outstanding among men not only in their lives but also in the way in which they left this life. You tore them to pieces most cruelly, for no reason at all, not even for a false reason of some kind that might
have an appearance of justice. Do I not seem to have sufficiently recounted the sum total of your deeds in the administration of the kingdom?

What else, I beseech you, could anyone truly say if he wished to place upon your tomb, when you are dead, an inscription that would sum up all your deeds, other than those I have just related? Unless, of course, it pleased one to add that you had poured out massive treasuries in accomplishing this, that you had borne an incestuous title conferred upon you by the public authorities of all the universities. Indeed, you acquired this eulogy at great expense and with very great strife. With the ruin of your kingdom, with the slaughter and murder of the very best men, finally with the upheaval of the whole Christian commonwealth, you had made a clear path for yourself to the title of supreme head of the Church in England. Nothing more ignominious could ever have been imagined than this pretentious title. Are there other renowned things among your deeds that should be inscribed upon your tomb? Indeed, I see none. This was the epitaph of Sardanapalus: "I have those things that satiated my passionate desires." Aristotle said it might better have been inscribed on the tomb of a cow rather than upon the tomb of a king. You should not only possess this epitaph as King, but you should desire it lest something more disgraceful might be inscribed and other things no less true might be included.

But who dares to promise you a tomb? The proud King of the Assyrians said: "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will sit in the mountains of the covenant, in the sides of the north . . . I will be like the most High" (Is. 14:13, 14). Would not one who knew the judgment of God against this, and the other proud sayings Isaias attributes to the King, expect the same sentence of God against you who imitate this pride? However, Isaias expresses it thus: "All the Kings of the nations have all of them slept in glory, every one in his own house. But thou art cast out of thy grave, as an unprofitable branch defiled, and wrapped up among them that were slain by the sword, and art gone down to the bottom of the pit, as a rotten carcass. Thou shalt not keep company with them, even in burial: for thou hast destroyed thy land, thou hast slain thy people" (Is. 14:18–20).

But why do we inquire from Isaias concerning God's sentence against you? Are not the laws of the Church of any avail? They are,
on the Unity of the Church

indeed, of some avail among all devout people. Indeed, even now this sentence of God has been brought against you who have slain men of the clergy sacred to God, you who have slain a cardinal from among the priests. You treated this cardinal violently. His whole life was no less innocent than he was venerable in his old age. You condemned all these men through a wicked judgment. Does not this one fact, not to mention others, banish you from all things sacred, from the assembly of the devout in Churches, and, in a word, from all things that are customary in the Church? Should some accident now snatch you away in death, you would not have the right of lawful burial.

Nevertheless, because you have little or no concern, let us omit what will happen to you after death. Let us speak only of the danger that threatens you while you are now here in this life. For, indeed, there certainly is such a danger, especially since the pontiff and the Emperor have come together for this purpose. Even now they are deliberating together concerning the method for healing these evils of the Church. You, for the most part, were the author of these evils, so that now it would seem that “the axe is laid to the root” (Lk. 3:9). What about you, therefore? Where will you find refuge, now that you have been so publicly censured with every ignominy and disgrace? Hatred for you burns in almost all mortals, especially since the powers of Christian and all human and divine resources seem to be conspiring now to cut off so destructive a member from the rest of the body. What help will you prepare for yourself? As you are seeking everything, you will find nothing. Can assistance be found anywhere from some friend of yours? Can help be provided against so many simultaneously oppressive dangers? Indeed, it might be provided, if only you would recognize the magnitude of your danger! Truly, your greatest evil is the very fact you think you are secure, when actually there has never been a king, during many ages, who was nearer complete destruction.

You put your trust in your great wealth that you have accumulated even more abundantly from the spoils of the Church. However, you should know that throughout the entire histories of tyrants who had wretched deaths, we have never read of any who perished from want of gold. They all abounded in the very things in which you place your faith. They all perished for lack of friends. Their unjust possession of riches and gold made them hated by all. It rendered them more liable to punishment through the snares of their enemies. But if,
besides gold, you also hope to have faithful friends, certainly you are strongly mistaken and you are ruinously deceiving yourself. For you will not have them.

However, do not inquire from those who now sell themselves to you whether you will have friends. Rather, consider, consider your own deeds and the benefits you have had from friends who have now departed this life. You may discover that some whom you once had as intimate friends have been rudely rejected by you and have approached their deaths with grief of soul. York and Compton can give testimony of this to all. Others were most unjustly put to death by you just as were More and Fisher. You certainly never had more loving and devoted friends than they. If deeds such as yours secure friends, then consider that you will have many! If, however, they alienate even those who were beloved, realize at last with what a crisis you are involved!

If these examples, however, move you not at all, then ponder the examples of others. First consider that King whom your father killed when fighting a victorious battle against him [Richard III]. For this King realized the small number of your father's soldiers. He thought that although his own great forces had been so diminished, there would still be many faithful friends left him among those over whom he had ruled tyrannically. He decided to put this to a test in battle with your father. But then he was so deserted and betrayed by his own, that he was conquered with scarcely any difficulty by a very few. If you should happen upon some calamity of this kind—consider that this is spoken to you as from an oracle!—would you, indeed, find anyone to whom you could safely entrust your security? You distrust all. The Prophet foretold concerning similar events: "Without, the sword . . . and terror within" (Dt. 32:25). They so oppress you that if you should entrust this affair to a war, you could not but die wretchedly.

Where, therefore, is there any assistance? Where is there any cure for your many ills if there be no hope left for you either in your riches or your friends? Is everything hopeless? Indeed, I hardly think so. Behold where I am progressing! If only you would not deceive yourself, if only you would be willing to recognize the destruction that is imminent, if only you would not think everything safe and free from danger, I say there is a cure. Indeed, I say this though for a long time now I seem to have left nothing whereby you might hope for your
salvation. I not only say that there is a cure, but I also say that I have it. I avow that it will be applied unless you refuse. Finally, however, what kind of cure is this that I have mentioned? Is it the triviality of your ills or the greatness of my power that makes possible my offer of salvation? Have I so quickly forgotten either my own weakness or the seriousness of your malady? Indeed, I am aware of both. I know that I can do absolutely no more than others can do. I know that you are oppressed with an evil more serious than any that ever oppressed a king. Nevertheless, relying upon the assistance of God, I moreover declare that I have a most effective cure. What it is like, however, I shall explain in the next book, since this one seems to have grown almost beyond measure.

NOTES TO BOOK III

1 This is a conflated text based on several verses in Romans 11 and Galatians 3.
2 This inconsistency in Henry VIII’s “divorce” plea arose from the fact that on his own admission he had previously had illicit relations with Anne Boleyn’s sister, Mary. On the basis of grounds that Henry was using in his request to Pope Clement VII, Henry VIII was actually asking Pope Clement to admit that Pope Julius II had no authority for granting the very same request that Henry was asking Pope Clement to grant.
3 In May, 1536, Anne Boleyn was beheaded and two months later the Imperial Ambassador, Chapuys, presented this interesting reaction to the whole affair: “... the statute declaring the concubine’s daughter princess and lawful heir has been repealed, and she has been declared bastard... because the King had carnally known the said concubine’s sister; on which ground the Archbishop of Canterbury, one or two days before the said concubine’s execution, pronounced the sentence of divorce—of which, as you know, there was little need when the sword divorced them absolutely.” Letters and Papers, XI, 41, p. 25.
4 Late in 1529 while searching for likely sources of approval for his “divorce,” Henry had requested Pole to conduct negotiations with the University of Paris theology faculty. Pole begged to be relieved of this responsibility, and Henry appointed Edward Foxe to be in charge of this assignment. However, in May, 1530, Pole wrote to Henry reporting some progress. He told him that the absence of five University doctors was causing a delay. After their arrival Pole promised to “inform the King of the speed made in publishing his cause.” In July the theologians gave a favorable decision for Henry. Pole’s part in this episode may partially be explained by his reluctance to antagonize Henry openly and unnecessarily at this date. Any slight suspicion of wavering of conscience on Pole’s part was immediately dispelled upon his return to England and the subsequent stormy interview with Henry, described supra, Introduction, p. xiv.
5 In view of Pole's own royal descent, this is a significant statement. Catherine of Aragon reportedly was in favor of a marriage between her daughter, Princess Mary, and Pole. Cf. Calendar of State Papers, Spanish, Vol. IV, Pt. 2 cont., 1130, p. 813; Vol. V, Pt. 1, 109, p. 323.

6 Edward, Earl of Warwick and son of George, Duke of Clarence, was beheaded in 1499.

7 Cf. James Gairdner, Lollardy and the Reformation, Vol. I, 1908, p. 469: "The imprisonment alike of Fisher and of Sir Thomas More was not only unjust but absolutely illegal."

8 Cf. Letters and Papers, Vol. VIII, 975, p. 386: "Defensio clarissimorum virorum Fysherii Episcopi Roffensis et Thomae Mori baronis et cancellari Angliae, adversos Richardum Sampsonem Anglum per Joannem Cochlaeum." This defense of Fisher and More was published in 1536, and in 1545 Pole wrote to Cochlaeus telling him that this defense had been read by Pole and that he had great affection for Cochlaeus ever since. Cf. Letters and Papers, Vol. XX, Pt. 2, 497, pp. 232–33.

9 Pole refers to "Reginaldum monachum," i.e., the Bridgettine monk, Richard Reynolds, and his five Carthusian companions who were executed at Tyburn, May 15, 1535. Reynolds was a Cambridge University graduate and a friend of Pole during his student days at Sheen. Later Pole wrote that Reynolds possessed perhaps the keenest intellect among religious of his day and that as a theologian he was rivalled only by John Fisher. From his window in his Tower cell, Thomas More watched as Dr. Richard Reynolds was conducted to his death. More turned to his favorite daughter Margaret and said: "Lo, dost thou not see, Meg, that these blessed fathers be now as cheerfully going to their deaths as bridegrooms to their marriage." Cf. W. Roper, "The Life of Sir Thomas More," in Two Early Tudor Lives (ed. R. S. Sylvester and D. P. Harding), 1962, p. 242.

10 Richard Simon, the unscrupulous priest who conceived the idea of passing off Lambert Simnel as one of the princes murdered by Richard III.

11 This was Henry VIII's Assertio septem sacramentorum, or Defense of the Seven Sacraments, written in reply to Martin Luther's On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church, 1520. For this work Henry had been honored by Pope Leo X with the title "Defender of the Faith." Henry admitted, in the second chapter on the defense of the papacy, that all the faithful in the Church acknowledge and venerate the most holy Roman See as supreme and as a mother. The complete Latin text for Henry VIII's Assertio together with an English translation and related documents, including Pope Leo X's letter to Henry in acknowledgment of his treatise, may be found in Assertio septem sacramentorum (ed. L. O'Donovan), 1908.

12 This reference is most probably to the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, martyrs and heroes described in legendary tradition relating to the resurrection of the body. They are named in the Roman Martyrology on July 27.

13 A summary of the trial of Sir Thomas More at Westminster, 1535, is found in Letters and Papers, Vol. VIII, 974, pp. 384–386. In writing to John Fisher concerning the indictment, Thomas More said: "The Act of Parliament is like a sword with two edges, for if a man answer one way it will confound his soul, and if he answer the other way it will confound his body." Sir Thomas Audley, Chancellor, presided at the trial.
Both contemporary and more recent writers seem to have endeavored to rival one another in their esteem and adulation for Thomas More. "It is abundantly clear," wrote Erasmus, 'that More and Fisher were guilty of no ill-will towards the king, but, if they erred, it was by following their conscience in all sincerity... But More's death is deplored even by those whose views he combated with the greatest possible vigour... I myself have seen many shed tears who had never seen More nor had any intercourse with him."

"Now, to conclude, let us consider why God culled this man out above all... to be an illustrious witness of the glorious cause for which he died; for, lest men should think that if only the clergy had died, they might seem partial in their own cause; behold God picked out this worthy layman, such as, I suppose, all Christendom had not the like, who should be as his especial ambassador for the laity."—Cresacre More, The Life of Thomas More, 1828, pp. 312–13. "More is one of the few men that have left their mark on our history, who have won the tribute of universal affection and esteem."
—Arthur Innes, Ten Tudor Statesmen, 1934, p. 68. "The Bishop of Rochester is gone, and Thomas More, the supreme judge of that kingdom, whose heart is whiter than any snow, and the like of whose genius England never had and never will have again," Erasmus cried out in a passage of sincere, poetic grief, worthy of the lamentations of a Hebrew prophet and quite unlike any other passage that came from his pen."—Christopher Hollis, Erasmus, 1933, p. 298.

Thomas More's daughter, Margaret. In one of his letters More noted with amusement Pole's amazement at the splendid literary style in letters composed by Margaret. Cf. Letters and Papers, VIII, 975, p. 386.

Cf. n. 11.

Pole suggests the uncertainty of the succession and tells Henry of the threat of subsequent foreign war. This passage is a foretaste of the rhetorical appeal for foreign intervention that Pole unleashes infra in this Book of the De unitate. It is important to remember here that these words were addressed to Henry VIII only. Also, the proposed intervention of the Christian Emperor, Charles V, was not first mentioned by Pole. For similar appeals from varied sources, confer: Calendar of State Papers Spanish, V, Pt. 1, 109, p. 324; Calendar of State Papers Scotland, 1509–89, I, p. 38; Letters and Papers, XV, 498, p. 215; 697, pp. 325–26 and pp. 336–37; XVIII, Pt. 1, 601, p. 347.

Before 1523, the influence of John Fisher on Thomas More's stand concerning papal supremacy had been strong. It was Fisher who brought to More's attention the decree of the Council of Florence, 1439, that affirmed the Bishop of Rome and that "in blessed Peter there was given over by Our Lord Jesus Christ full power to pasture, to rule, and to govern the whole Church."

Cf. n. 9.

Other martyrs of 1535 were: John Houghton, Robert Lawrence, and Augustine Webster, Carthusians, and John Haile, secular priest, at Tyburn in May; Humphrey Middlemore, William Exmew and Sebastian Newdigate, Carthusians, Tyburn, June 19. Cf. Dom Bede Camm, Lives of the English Martyrs, 1914, vol. I, p. viii. A report from Venice noted that the people there reacted strongly to the news of the death of the monks in England:
“All Venice was in great murmuration to hear it . . . I never saw Italians break out so vehemently at anything; it seemed so strange, and so much against their stomach.” Letters and Papers, VIII, 874, p. 344.

21 In the spring of 1534 the houses of the Observant Friars of the Franciscan Order were suppressed and the friars themselves sent either to other religious houses such as the Augustinians, or cast into prison where many died of their sufferings. Friar John Forest was intimately connected with the fate of his Order. With unsophisticated bluntness he had spoken out in defense of papal supremacy and by April, 1538, he was led to prison by Thomas Cranmer on charges of heresy. Friar Forest was burned at the stake, May 22, 1538. J. H. Pollen and J. Morris discuss disputed chronological factors in “Blessed John Forest, Observant Franciscan,” Lives of the English Martyrs, Vol. I, pp. 264–326. A printed marginal note in the text used for this translation notes the death of John Forest in 1538. This evidence strengthens the conclusion that this text was not printed until late in 1538 at the earliest. The point will be discussed briefly in the Appendix.

22 Pole on several occasions notes the early missionary activities of Englishmen in Germany. On June 20, 1544, he wrote to the Cardinal of Augsburg that the English nation was bound to the Germans “by yet closer ties of friendship . . . they received the faith and religion of Christ through the English Saint Boniface, which ought to be an external pledge between the two nations.” Calendar of State Papers, Venetian, 1534–1554, V, 901, p. 514.

23 Cf. n. 3, Book II.

24 Beginning here and continuing to p. 278, Pole presents his appeal to the Emperor Charles V. These few pages were first translated into English by Fabyane Wythers, 1536 (?) under the title “The seditious and blasphemous oration of Cardinal Pole. . . .” Wythers’ introduction refers to “the great and double dissimulation of this holy hypocrite . . . .” Other than occasional sentences and brief summary abstracts from the De unitate, Wythers’ contemporary sixteenth-century version of these few controversial pages is the only consecutive translation into English of any part of the De unitate previous to the present translation.

25 Pope Paul III created John Fisher Cardinal priest of St. Vitalis, May 20, 1535. He was beheaded on Tower Hill, June 22, 1535.

26 Sir William Compton, a knight who served in the 1513 French campaign and the Scotch war, 1523. Apparently he was also an unsuccessful suitor of Pole’s widowed mother, Countess of Salisbury. He died June 30, 1528. York: Cardinal Thomas Wolsey.
BOOK IV

Pole Begs Henry VIII to Listen Attentively

At last, my Prince, I have arrived at that place for which I have been yearning for a long time. I arrived at a port after having been tossed around for a great while. Thus, after I have described all the evils and dangers you have accumulated for yourself, I may finally show you the most expeditious path of salvation. If ever previously there was need for your attention, now especially is it essential for you to listen to me fairly and attentively. You will never hear a matter of greater importance from anyone, unless something can be imagined greater than the salvation of both soul and body. For what I shall say pertains to the salvation of both. Unless you hear these things from me now, perhaps too late will you listen attentively to the cures of others, too late will you implore assistance. For all evils so press down upon you that no one may be able to aid you or come to your assistance. Wherefore, if ever in any cause, now especially you should listen to all these things attentively. But in what way can you listen to me attentively while I speak concerning your salvation? If any verbal insults can show a hostile mind, I have spoken things against your name and your deeds, with which no enemy has ever reproached you. One who had the greatest hostility against you could not have hurled greater reproaches.

What, then? Should you pay attention to an enemy who reviles you so openly, and in words so free from restraint? Should you put any trust in him? Should you pay any attention if I shall speak later on concerning your salvation? Indeed, my Prince, nothing prevents
you from listening attentively even to an enemy. Nevertheless, though by my words and speech I seem to be an enemy, I have never been your enemy; nor do I ask for anything now except for you to hear me kindly on this question. Only afterward may you believe how much the matter itself will persuade you that this will be to your advantage. Now, only listen attentively!

Now you may hear a famous example of a man who willingly listened to someone judged to be an enemy. Listen to the voice of the great King whom God chose according to His heart. He was both King and Prophet. Therefore, when David’s enemy Semei attacked him with curses, wounded him with every kind of disgrace, called him the son of Belial and a man of blood, and also sought to stone him, David restrained his own soldiers and leaders who surrounded him. They could not endure this enemy; they wanted to kill this slanderer immediately. But David said: “Let him alone and let him curse; for the Lord hath bid him curse . . . and who is he that shall dare say, why hath he done so? . . . let him alone that he may curse as the Lord hath bidden him. Perhaps the Lord may look upon my affliction, and the Lord may render me good for the cursing of this day” (2 Sm. 16:10-12). He not only listened attentively to the words of his foe and enemy whom he could have killed instantly, he also prevented any evil from happening to this enemy. The enemy spoke nothing but reproaches; he promised no salvation. And now I beg only this endurance from you. I beg that you might listen to one who is speaking on behalf of your salvation. You judge that I am your enemy because of my words in this treatise. There is no one who has friendlier intentions. I beg this most of all, since I might most truthfully say the same thing that David believed about his reviler. The Lord has commanded me to curse you in my writing. He Himself will afterward render good for the cursing, if you will listen to me fairly and patiently.

Then what? Do you think I have acted of my own free will when I heaped upon your title and reputation the many curses that I have packed into my previous books? And when have I ever done anything like this? I have always abstained from curses and reproaches, even against men of greatly inferior condition; I have done this even when they have sometimes vigorously provoked me. Those who have lived with me intimately can give testimony of this. To many, my
gentleness seems to be a kind of apathy rather than a sign of an unassuming and humble mind. And, indeed, by nature, I have so abhorred curses that I would more readily permit myself to be reprimanded by everyone for an injury, rather than be forced by some iniquity to speak abusively of another, to avenge curses with curses. Therefore, why? If this has always been my nature and habit since boyhood, would I have ever brought myself to speak curses against a king, against this King, indeed, to whom I acknowledge that I am a subject? In no way has this King privately inflicted injuries upon me. He has bestowed exceedingly great benefits upon me. At the very time that he reproached others most bitterly for defending the same opinion that I hold, he favored my studies with his generosity. Could I have ever willingly uttered curses against such a man, had not one who has greater authority over me imposed this upon me?

But what mysteries am I now speaking? By whom have I been commanded? What master ordered me to speak such things? The same, my Prince, who is the common Lord of both you and me. Christ, I say, commanded me to write these things, not to reprove you, but to show you your sins. And, indeed, I have surely done this. Be satisfied with me, with God as my witness, that I am aware of speaking nothing against you that might deserve the name of curse. Truly, the things I have written refer to crimes that have a foundation in your very deeds. What I have said against you are not mere words, curses or reproaches. In what way did Christ command me to do this? In this way, my Prince. Christ saw that you had done many things contrary to law and right. He also saw that you had done some things properly and admirably. However, as His justice customarily vindicates itself for things badly done, so also His kindness cannot pass over reward and remuneration for good deeds. Indeed, He always bestows the reward with great interest. Truly, among your good deeds done with proper devotion, none rendered greater glory to Christ in every way than your interest displayed in my education. You chose me alone from all the nobility in England as one for whom you would provide from boyhood in assuring both virtues and learning. How much I accomplished makes no difference. If it were little, the fault is mine. Certainly your good deed is very great. Manifestly, a king who was a father could give no greater benefit to his son the prince. Nor could any man confer upon another anything greater or more pleasing to God. He did not
desire, therefore, that my gratitude to you for this very great benefit to me should vanish. As the benefit which you conferred upon me was the very greatest of all that might be bestowed by men upon men, so He desired that I should repay you by bestowing upon you the greatest reward that one man could give to another in return for so great a benefit.

Therefore, what is this reward? Is it not that I should indicate to you your mistake since you are seriously and ruinously in error, that I should lead you back to the straight path if you would be willing to follow? Finally, I should give you warning of your imminent danger; I should show you the most certain method of salvation. He who was greatest of those that arose among them that are born of women [John the Baptist] was not able to confer a benefit greater than this upon his native land and the citizens who were rushing into destruction. Now I have been summoned by Christ. I confer this benefit upon you and my fellow citizens. I have indicated your error to you. I am now prepared to show you the straight path. I have made known to you the very great danger in which you are living. I have declared to you that “the axe is laid to the root of the tree” (Lk. 3:9). Now I shall show you your salvation, if you will listen attentively. Only listen attentively and follow! And then I shall boldly dare to pronounce that we shall surmount all danger. We shall be victorious!

*Pole Appeals to Henry VIII to Repent and Do Penance*

I have in my hands the chief thing that Christ gave me for your salvation. I say that if you will receive from me what I have in my hands, we shall be victorious. What do you seek further? And, indeed, we shall be victorious with honor. I have the very special law of mankind. For there is need of this special law if you are to attain your salvation. This special law, however, is such that God did not even grant it to the angels who had sinned. But why do I delay in showing this? First of all, do penance! “Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” (Mt. 4:17). And, believe me, you should do penance, not only because you have fallen with such great disgrace, but also that you might rise up with great honor. This, indeed, is the
special law that Christ, with reason, granted to me; by it we may be called back from death to life. Indeed, it is so great that it was not even granted to the angels who had sinned.

Let a King teach a King what path, what way this is. You, however, listen to this King! Though he was most dear to God, nevertheless he was permitted to fall so that he might teach all others the way of rising up again, a way that he himself experienced. He who had gravely fallen promised God that he would do this if he might be lifted up from the earth. For he said: “I will teach the unjust thy ways; and the wicked shall be converted to thee” (Ps. 50:15). Are you ashamed, my Prince, to follow King David? You followed him in sinning; now see to it that you follow him doing penance. He also became wretched by his sin. You might well now say concerning yourself, what David said about himself: “I am become miserable, and am bowed down even to the end . . . For my loins are filled with illusions; and there is no health in my flesh” (Ps. 37:7–8). Although he was a Prophet, he did not acknowledge his sin any more than you do now. He was first fully informed about his sin by another Prophet whom God had sent to warn him. But as soon as he heard Nathan admonishing him, he said instantly: “I have sinned.” And at this word, he heard the Prophet say: “The Lord also hath taken away thy sin” (2 Sm. 12:13).

Oh! My Prince! If I who have admonished you concerning your sin, at the command of God, should now hear this same word from you, do you not think that I have a commission from God to say to you: “And God has taken away your sin”? I certainly have. Although you have sinned far more grievously than David, nevertheless you shall hear no less promptly that your sin has been taken away, even as was David’s. Indeed, in my commission from God, I am able to tell you this. And furthermore, I shall show you everything that might heal your sick mind, everything that might console it. I shall reveal to you the same path by which David attained all these things, if only you will not refuse to enter and to follow King David along this path.

But why would you refuse? Can this leader be displeasing to you? But consider him better! Turn back your eyes for a moment! Contemplate the kind of leader he is! Truly, Christ Himself did not scorn to be called the Son of this Prince. When the Prince, Himself the Son of God, assumed human nature, He desired to be called the Son of
David. Will you oppose David as a leader to your salvation? Without this confession of error and penance, there cannot be any hope of honor and salvation before either God or men. Does this confession of penance and error delay you? What disgrace or difficulty do you see in these things to warrant delay? He who was a very great Prophet was not ashamed to confess his error. When he committed his sin, he acknowledged that sin only after he had been admonished by another. You have committed very serious and terrible sins in the judgment of all the best men. Do you think, my Prince, that it would be considered a disgrace for you to confess that you did not know this until you were admonished? Or do you think it disgraceful, after you have been admonished, to say that you have sinned and to do penance for your sins? What do you think? For what do you hope? What impedes you from this confession of sin? Do you expect a more honorable path? Can not this very path be most honorable for you? In this path you have as a leader and example the most noble King of all ages. But I declare this to you. If all men who, from the very foundation of mankind even to the present day, were considered pre-eminent in prudence and understanding, should be gathered together in one place to deliberate concerning your salvation, they could show no path more expedient and honorable than the method of confession of errors through penance. Indeed, no genius could conceive of any other way. But why, my Prince, do you not consider this method considerably honorable? Do you not know what it means to do penance and confess your fault? Do you wish to be faultless? But no created nature, no matter how distinguished in its kind, has been able to attain this. The fall of man created with a perfect nature does not teach us this as well as does the downfall of the angels who excelled all others in natural dignity. Therefore, wretched man should not be expected to have the distinction of freedom from sin and error.

In what, therefore, do the dignity and excellence of man consist? Undoubtedly, my Prince, they consist in this very thing that you consider a shame and a disgrace. I say that they consist in penance. Human nature cannot be free from all errors. Therefore, as soon as it realizes that it is involved in these errors it should then immediately endeavor to disentangle itself. It should not rest at ease in the filth of sin like a pig rolling around in the mire. The more a pig cries out, the more deeply it submerges itself. For nothing defiles the nature of man
more than sin. Since sin is nothing but a kind of offspring of a degenerate and defective nature, in the sacred writings this is customarily expressed by the name of “flesh.” If the occasion arises for this to grow, so that it spreads out further, it then destroys the fruits of noble nature. The same sacred writings called this noble nature the “spirit.” Finally, sin consumes all the fruits. Briefly, we want to make clear by an example just what this kind of sin is like. Worms destroy the fruit in many noble plants. We often see that they destroy the fruits that have grown on some diseased part of a tree. If, indeed, this very plant afflicted with this evil had any feeling, it could only be that of serious displeasure. It would signify in every way its desire for nothing more than freedom from this very oppressive evil. Although it could not aid itself, it would implore the hand of a gardener to free it from the very great evil that was clinging to it and was deeply implanted in its inmost parts, for it could not cure itself.

Indeed, such recognition of evil in the soul is penance, just as though some feeling had been left in a noble plant so it might realize its own imminent destruction. Indeed, its displeasure would be great. Since it could not free itself, it would cry out for a farmer to take away the evil! And now you, my Prince, are a plant of God. Thus, indeed, the Prophet speaks just as though he were speaking in the person of God concerning you no less than others: “The branch of my planting... to glorify me” (Is. 60:21). Thus, surely you have been created by God like a noble plant, like a vine that will bring forth abundant fruits for the glory of God. In another passage another Prophet says: “Yet I planted thee... all true seed” (Jer. 2:21). And now these fruits are destroyed by a greater plague than could ever be feared from worms in trees. You yourself are not able to cure it. What, therefore, will you not cry out to the vine dresser? Will you not show that you are displeased with your evil? Have you so destroyed all seed of the noble nature within you that you do not, indeed, realize your own evil? But if there is the slightest seed of life left in you, you cannot but see what all others see and know. Does not the unfruitfulness of so many years now show this sufficiently? He sent you a vine dresser who would point out your evil to you, while the universal Church looks on. He, truly, expects only that you would implore His hand. At the sound of a voice, He is prepared to come. “Thou shalt cry, and He shall say, Here I am” (Is. 58:9). Oh! How great a kindness!
What shall I say here, my Prince, however, if your condition is such that you refuse to implore His assistance? What shall I say here? What would any man say? What will you yourself say, if you refuse? Will you say, indeed, the only thing remaining that can be said with any appearance of honesty? Will you say that you will not refuse penance, if only it is made clear to your mind that you have erred? Until the truth of this opposite view shines forth clearly, you will consider all mention of penance inopportune. But if my reasons should arrive at an inevitable conclusion and clearly show the truth, then indeed I would be acting rightly and opportune to warn you, as you cherish a contrary opinion, to do penance for your error. However, since thus far the truth I am confidently asserting has remained hidden in obscurity, it seems to you premature to deal with penance. Therefore, my Prince, when will it be timely? Shall we postpone it until there may be no further doubt left in your mind, while the truth in matters of this kind is being discovered through reasons? You have done many grievous things. Will the opportunity for admonishing you come when the falsity of your opinion will be evident? Indeed, you now acknowledge this.

The Need for Faith

But listen attentively, my Prince, while I say one thing. At first appearance this will seem, perhaps, to be spoken very haughtily. Nevertheless, it is absolutely true. If, in those questions concerning which there has been discussion in this book, my reasons have been unable to make you see the truth, I say that no man's reasons can make you see it. But why do I say this? Do I say this because I myself think that everything that can be said in this question has been expressed with such talent and so explained in this treatise as to leave no possibility for anyone afterward to deal more eloquently, more clearly, or more effectively with this question? Indeed, my Prince, I think this least of all. In no way do I arrogate this to myself. I acknowledge that many things regarding this question have often been done and devised more prudently by many before me. Likewise, I do not now doubt that they might be done with equal prudence by others. However, what I said was that if my reasons cannot induce your mind to comprehend the
truth of this case, then the reasons of no man will ever accomplish this. Indeed, in saying this I referred not so much to the ability of men using reason or talent, as to the force of reason itself. Although reason, indeed, perceives very many things toward which our senses direct their gaze in vain, nevertheless, reason is very weak. It is little able to understand those things that are divinely inspired by faith. Reason makes things clear through causes; it makes clear the proofs that arise from things. But the things that the Church approves with great agreement are scarcely of this kind.

Therefore, I say, in these matters there is no more place for reason than there is for the sense of sight in comprehending the magnitude of the sun or the moon. All things that are contained in the leading dogmas of the Church, my Prince, are above reason; similarly in the case of things derived from these dogmas. Although I do not deny that they may be dealt with by reason, nevertheless, in these matters, the clarity of truth in which the mind can rest cannot be searched out and investigated by reason. For they do not have a master by whom they are deeply implanted in the mind. They have God. And unless one learns these dogmas from God, he will never, my Prince, see the truth in them, no matter how great his reason and talent. In fact, if anyone desires to examine by reason the truth in those foremost dogmas containing the truth of lesser ones, the contrary will result. For the more one attempts this by reason, so much the less will he penetrate. The truth will only further elude him. One who desires to learn the dogmas of the Church and to perceive the truth in them should have recourse to the covenant of the Church. If he strives for this, relying on his reason alone, the result will never be favorable. For the covenant will immediately escape him. Thus is this expressed in the Canticle of Canticles: ‘Thy eyes... have made me flee away’ (6:4). One who seeks the truth from the covenant should not, therefore, use the eyes of reason that are the proper eyes of man.

But what should be done? You should do that which I cannot help but continually impress upon your ears. You should do penance. You should do this for the very fact that your reason approves of something else. The agreement of the Church during many ages shows this. You have despised the custom of the Church; rather you have yielded to reason. This reason should repeat to you that you should prefer the agreement of the Church. This, indeed, my Prince, is the greatest sin.
Many most grievous crimes have followed from this. If you would repent of these crimes, the Church will lead you to a true teacher who will teach you all truth. For as soon as you began to rely upon reason, this true teacher withdrew from you. From this teacher alone should you seek the truth in questions of this kind; this teacher alone can enlighten the mind. It will never return to you unless you do penance. Hear, however, what the Prophet Isaias said concerning this teacher, as he exhorted the people of Israel to penance and weeping, because through sin they had lost the knowledge of truth and had wandered away from the true teacher: “Weeping thou shalt not weep, He will surely have pity on thee: at the voice of thy cry, as soon as He shall hear, He will answer thee. And the Lord will give you spare bread, and short water: and will not cause thy teacher to flee away from thee any more, and thy eyes shall see thy teacher. And thy ears shall hear the word of one admonishing thee behind thy back: this is the way, walk ye in it: and go not aside neither to the right hand, nor to the left” (Is. 30:19–21). In the words of God, Isaias promised these things not only to the Jewish people but to all people who do penance. Behold the path, therefore, my Prince, if you desire to know the truth. The Prophet warns that one hoping to attain the truth should never depart from this path.

But what now, my Prince? We are now speaking about the Church and about the way in which the truth of the Church’s dogmas can be known. Have we therefore forgotten what we said in the beginning of this work concerning the origin and condition of the Church? Did not those things adequately reveal what we are now confidently asserting? Did they not reveal that the instrument of reason does not suffice for investigating the very clear truth in which the mind can rest at ease concerning the decrees of the Church? Indeed, reason has the greatest influence in that ancient condition, in that society which human prudence has collected together by nature. However, what should be done in that society which is above nature, in that society which is brought together not by human reason but by the spirit of God? Do you want me to say, my Prince, what should be done? Manifestly the same thing should be done as would be done by one who had nothing but feeling, by one who had no use for reason in human society. What, however, should one lacking in human prudence do in a well-organized civil
On the Unity of the Church

community? Surely he should do this: he should be obedient to those who excel in prudence in the management of human affairs.

Thus the governing in the Church comes from a power much superior to reason. Indeed, it is such that it is an infinite power. This power excels reason even as reason excels feeling. For the Spirit of God is so superior to human reason that there can be no comparison between them. Just as feeling cannot make a judgment nor perceive the truth in matters that are properly the objects of reason, so also reason cannot make a judgment in those matters wherein the Spirit of God truly judges. He who judges all things cannot be judged by anyone. For as Paul says when he is speaking of those who use only their rational soul in judging these matters: “The sensual man perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God; . . . he cannot understand” (1 Cor. 2:14). If he cannot do this, what else should he do? As I have said, he should act as a man living in a civil community established by human prudence. He should yield in obedience to the more prudent. He should act similarly in the Church that is governed by the Spirit of God. He should submit himself to the Church. Furthermore, he should assent to those matters established by the Church. He should not judge concerning them. For an inferior power cannot judge concerning a superior power.

And this, indeed, is what the first founders of the Church established by Christ the architect said. They said that they would preach the Gospel “for obedience of the faith” (Rom. 1:5). Human reason had only advanced this far; it availed only up to this point. It could not help but fall headlong if it assumed anything beyond this for itself; that is, if it desired to know and judge concerning those matters established by the Spirit. Thus our first parent fell. To make clear the foremost power of nature in man, he had been given the command to obey. Afterward he desired to be judge of this command. He fell immediately because, with reason as a guide, he dared to question the power of the divine command. When he lost obedience, he lost the excellence of his nature together with his salvation. No way can be imagined for recovering this except through penance. Penance carries obedience with it. Therefore, my Prince, you should do penance if you desire to see any light of truth in the things the Church has established. Even if you surpassed all others in reason, without penance you
would never be able to see what the Spirit of God has established. But, as I wrote above, if you follow reason as a guide, the more you excel in reason, the less you will perceive the truth.

If you still doubt concerning this matter, the argument derived from the outcome of events will easily make the whole matter clear. Further to clarify this, one should turn his thoughts to the beginnings and growth of the Church in which so many nations are now gathered together in the Spirit of God. For there he will see that those most lacking in human prudence, wisdom, and reason first saw the light of truth. I refer to ignorant and simple men possessing no amount of prudence or wisdom. The very last of all to see this light of truth were kings and those who were especially accustomed to rely on human prudence. Such were those philosophers who proposed to investigate and know these matters through human reason. Thus, therefore, they were the very last of all mankind in whose souls the light of truth appeared.

It might truthfully be said that all things were misty and buried in the darkness of ignorance for those who were able to attain these things through prudence in carrying on their affairs, or through wisdom in perceiving the causes of things. The truth of this is especially evident when these men are compared with those who afterward saw all these things most clearly when enlightened by this divine light. Likewise, in the case of each individual man it is customarily found that the more powerful his reason and the more he relies upon it, the more slowly will he arrive at the light of truth. Indeed, one will never arrive at it unless he abandons reliance upon reason and prepares himself, as a little child, with all submission and obedience, to learn the truth. It was for this reason that Truth itself gave thanks to God the Father when He said: “I confess to Thee, O Father . . . because thou hast hid these things from the wise and the prudent, and hast revealed them to the little ones” (Mt. 11:25).

There can be no preparation for perceiving this great light other than that taught by him who was sent for the very purpose of preparing men to receive the divine light. “He was not the light, but was to give testimony of the light . . . He said: I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord” (Jn. 1:8, 23). In explaining the significance of these words, he said only this: “Do penance: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mt. 3:2). Behold
now, my Prince, where you should seek for the truth! Why do you now delay? What will restrain you even a little from instantly embarking upon this path? Even now do you ask for guides? If you ask for guides, behold, you not only have David, the most noble King and one very dear to God, whom I have mentioned, but you will have the most distinguished guides among men. You will have all, finally, who have ever tasted some share of true happiness in this present life or who hope for this in a future life. Here it is not necessary to mention anyone in particular. All of them walk along this path. Surely there can be no other path to happiness.

But why do you delay? Does it seem harsh for you to do penance? Is it difficult for you to abandon your own reason? What if it is difficult? Should you, therefore, abandon it? Where will you find virtue, where will you find honor if you flee away from everything that is rough and difficult? Did anyone dear to God or renowned among men refuse the difficult? Indeed, are not men renowned because they have conducted themselves admirably in arduous circumstances? Has virtue ever had its source in any but arduous and difficult things? But for just a moment consider the reward. The loss of the greatest misery is promised as well as the attainment of the greatest happiness. And it is promised by Him who never deceives and who never is deceived. But if this path leads to such a goal, if hope is given for obtaining such a great good, embracing all other goods, does it appear to you to be at all harsh or rough? When you see the reward for this effort, will you not easily persuade yourself that all difficulties that surely cannot long endure should be borne so that you might afterward enjoy eternal happiness? Only persuade yourself of this, my Prince, and I will show you that the path is neither harsh nor difficult.

Human Reason and the Divine Light of Faith

For what is difficult about those things to which I am now exhorting you? First, I am urging you to abandon your own reason in those matters that are evident only through the divine light. I am urging you to make use of the divine light instead of the light of reason in perceiving the truth. Does the light of a little lamp, my Prince, please you more than the splendor of the sun? What do you think the
light of reason received from nature is, when compared with the light surpassing nature shining in our souls? This light shines through Christ, the splendor of the Father. Does not reason, indeed, deserve to be called a very obscure little lamp when compared with the light we have from Christ?

Reason cannot be compared in brightness with the light from Christ. Thus, assuredly, you can be persuaded that neither is the rising sun, breaking through darkness, as pleasing to the birds in the sky. Birds are aroused to voice and song at the sight of the rising sun, and every animal is made cheerful. Reason is a lamp to the human soul in obscure darkness anticipating a rising sun. Reason has just the slightest trace of divine light because it is indeed the true and natural light of the soul. It resembles the sun for all creatures endowed with sensible feeling. Our light from reason more closely resembles the light of the moon for living animals. Our reason is like lamplight in the absence of sun and moon. Though we cannot see some things through reason, it is not unpleasant. Although reason is actually a necessity in the absence of the sun and moon, it can never be completely satisfying to those who are offered the splendor of the sun's natural light. Truly, however, the natural light of the soul is God. It is Christ Himself who is the splendor of the Father. Therefore, what do you say now, my Prince? Do you prefer the dark light of the moon or even the light of a lamp to the light of the sun?

Is it difficult for you to let yourself be persuaded to set aside the light of reason and rejoice in the divine light? That, indeed, you will never say. But perhaps you will say this, even as have many others. You will say that the light of reason has proved to be of use to us; it is profitable for us in all our actions. You will say that you do not sufficiently understand this light that I call divine. You will say, however, that whatever it is, it should be hoped for in the future life rather than in this present life where everything is governed by the use of reason. If you say these things, they are not, indeed, spoken absurdly, as long as one understands the manner in which they should be received. What then? Does the fact that the power of reason is especially evident in the governing of human affairs remove what I have said concerning the divine light? Surely, not at all, if we wish to consider something that is no less clear. If reason follows the Spirit of God as a guide manifesting itself in the divine light, it can accomplish much in human
On the Unity of the Church

affairs. But if reason decides to abandon this guide, this divine light and Spirit, then it will accomplish no more than the labors of Adam were able to accomplish after he was cursed. God said to him: “Cursed is the earth in thy work . . . thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee” (Gn. 3:17–18). And so, indeed, it has happened. Whenever reason is left to itself and hopes to exert itself toward honor, utility, or pleasure, we see the opposite occur. Thus it procures disgrace, loss, and all things contrary to expectation.

Anyone whose reason is enlightened by the Spirit of God will find that this is true. The histories of all ages, of all states, or even of individual men, relate this. For here one will find that as often as men have abandoned the divine light and attempted to obtain peace for themselves or something useful in life, they have derived the opposite for themselves. Should I desire to use examples either of the present or of former times, I could make this so obvious that nothing would be clearer. And I surely would use these examples were it not for the fact that I would be led far astray from the subject about which I have proposed to speak—the affairs of the Church. For it is not my purpose here to speak about the action of the law of nature, such as I am now recalling. But should I wish to speak about these things, my Prince, with reference to your own deeds, since I previously made clear what you did when you abandoned the teachings of the divine Spirit and surrendered yourself completely to your reason and prudence—proofs would not be lacking. These proofs would make it manifest that while you were seeking a pleasant life with honor and security, everything to the contrary happened to you. Certainly no one can doubt this.

You obtained the greatest danger with the greatest disgrace. The outcome of this must become even harsher for you, unless you again join reason to the Spirit whom all should follow as a guide. Since there is an absence of other proofs, does not this one alone have special validity as testimony? With your very great power for undertaking most glorious affairs, with such great natural gifts, with such an abundance of external goods, with the people’s love, with resources of the most remarkable talents, with so many years of continual and remarkable peace, you have never accomplished anything in your own judgment that pertains to the glory of God. You have never accomplished anything that might be left to posterity for a grateful memory. And if you have ever done anything that might sometime have even the ap-
pearance of mediocre praise, you yourself have completely ruined it. You have been especially eager to blot it out from the memory of men. What was the origin of this? Did you lack reason? Indeed, reason was not lacking. But reason enlightened by the divine light was lacking. In the absence of this light, nothing can be imagined that can even be worthy of true praise.

But, let us enter the Church, my Prince. For we are inquiring about the dogmas of the Church, about the way in which the truth in these matters may be perceived. Here did you seek no light other than the light of reason? Will you say that here there is no use for the divine light since that is more proper for the future life? And how can we say this? Must we confess that the whole Church is governed by the Spirit of God? Why? From where did the Church derive that first dogma of the Church, the dogma that Christ is the Son of God? From where did Peter himself, who was pronounced blessed in the judgment of the Son of God, derive this dogma? Did not the Church receive this by the divine light through a revelation from the Father Himself? Did not He Himself sufficiently show to all others who were built upon as living rocks where to seek the light, the source of truth in the Church? Did He not show from what source those things flowed that gave the knowledge of Christ, the Son of God? Did He not show that the kind of things that are learned in the Church pertained to Him? But what now, my Prince? Since the Church proposes for belief those things that cannot be known by reason, does not this sufficiently show that this way of knowing is more proper for the sons of the Church than the way that relies on the use of reason?

But come now! I might point out, as with my finger, these different ideas in these very men. I do not follow the ancient examples or refer to the early and new-born Church in which the sons of the Church were abundantly supplied with gifts of the Holy Spirit. In these very corrupt times, many think that the knowledge that is derived through divine light is completely extinguished. However, if I might present certain men well known to you, if these men adhered most constantly to the decrees of the Church, if it cannot be said that they were persuaded by reason, do you still even now require other proofs?

What will you say, my Prince, concerning Fisher and More and those others whom we may truly call vessels of the Holy Spirit? Even
with the very last breath of their lives they defended the truth of the
dogmas of the Church. By what light had they seen this truth? For
whose love were they so inflamed that no reward or torture could tear
them away from this truth? What, I beseech you, can be said here?
What would one whose only desire was to attack with artifices say
here? Perhaps he would say that they did not see any truth at all by
divine light or by the light of reason. He would say that by some kind
of obstinacy from the very beginning their minds began to defend a
false opinion. He would say that it seems they decided to die rather
than abandon this opinion.

Truly, my Prince, I beseech you! Examine the record for a mo-
ment. Consider the words of those who spoke in this manner. But
first, you yourself who knew these men, examine them! See to it that
you consider what they were like during the rest of their lives. How-
ever, I ask only this of you; I ask whether you remember anyone who
ever accused these men of any imprudence prior to the time when this
question began to be discussed publicly.

Now I am speaking of More alone. Was anyone in all your realm
considered more prudent than More during his lifetime? Manifestly,
no one, in the opinion of all who knew him, can be mentioned as
comparable to him in talent and prudence. He excelled in prudence;
therefore, when it happened in his case that he could have avoided
all inconvenience and troubles, and also could have surpassed all
others in honors and in favor with you—if he would only withdraw
from his opinion—he deprived himself of these honors and your favor.
Can we believe that he acted imprudently? He not only deprived
himself of honors and favors, but he brought every kind of calamity
and the greatest of all evil that can be conferred by man upon man
not only upon himself but upon his wife, his children, and all his
family. He did this only because he would defend his own opinion, to
which he had been persuaded by the highest reason. Certainly, if you
desire to listen to your own reason, it will tell you that this could never
have been done. Had he followed nothing other than human prudence,
this most prudent of all men could not have done this out of obstinacy
in defending his opinion or contention, especially since there was no
reward. Yet he willingly ignored the many conveniences to himself and
his family. Furthermore, he prepared for his own death and the calam-
ity that would befall his family.
Therefore, my Prince, there was something beyond all reason and prudence whose splendor offered itself to his mind. This so obscured all things proposed by human reason as greatly desirable or as especially to be avoided, that they did not even appear. What I am saying about More, however, should also be considered regarding all the others. They preferred to die rather than desert the pleasing sight of truth. Undoubtedly they also had souls enlightened with divine light showing them the truth. Reason did not show it. Unless reason were enlightened by the divine light, it could no more give light in those things pertaining to faith than could a lamp that had not yet been lighted. Thus, my Prince, all divine words are ignited by the divine light. "Thy word is a lamp" (Ps. 118:105) said the Prophet. If reason is to be of any avail in investigating these virtues, it should then naturally borrow its light from the divine fire. Without that, it works only for its own destruction and extinction. Thus it happens that one who trusts reason alone as a guide often opposes himself. He often changes his opinion. What he formerly defended, he later attacks.

If I should search for examples, could not you yourself, my Prince, supply me with many? You could enumerate those whom you raised to the episcopate. Some deprived of the episcopate think one thing concerning the dogmas of the Church. Others who were made bishops think something else concerning these dogmas. Indeed, I recall hearing that you sometimes construed this as a crime for them. How many examples, indeed, this question of the authority of the supreme pontiff offers you, of those who thought differently about these same things after they had obtained an episcopate. There are now no more bitter opponents of the question of the authority of the pontiff than they who, immediately after they have obtained the episcopal position, attack the pontiff’s authority most fiercely! Although the cause of this fickleness cannot be free from malice, it is, nevertheless, malice coupled with ignorance. They rely upon a blind leader; that is, their reason. For thus, my Prince, although they who trust only their reason, see, they are none the less like those who do not see. Hence they are always changing their opinion.

However, those who adapt themselves to reason enkindled with divine light, always possess a single belief and opinion that no force can weaken or destroy. It is much more certain than those things perceived by eyes or ears. When desiring to examine and express this knowledge,
John the Evangelist, speaking about the word of life, says this: "Which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life" (1 Jn. 1:1). Surely the light of God offers such certain and manifest knowledge. But from this cause, my Prince, I say this light, the faith that we Christians profess has been enkindled by fire like a lamp. In no other way can it be enduring and permanent. By this light we believe and know that Jesus Christ, that Jesus is the Son of God and Savior of the world. For thus speaks John: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God" (1 Jn. 5:1). For this cannot be taught by the books written in ink nor by the testimony and voices of men. But if we seem to imbibe some knowledge from them, unless this knowledge were enlightened by the divine light it would be so weak that it would easily vanish for the slightest cause. Christ indicates this very clearly in the similitude and image of the use of seed. When, indeed, the seed was sown, part of it fell by the wayside and was trampled underfoot; part of it fell upon stony ground or among thorns. And it did not, indeed, produce good fruit because it was either choked by the thorns or became the prey of birds. Adversity, riches, or the pleasures of the world immediately extinguish such knowledge.

But if this matter is not sufficiently clear of itself, my Prince, with how many examples your own princely power supplies us, as in the case of those men who were removed from all knowledge of the truth through fear or love of the world! This was during the period when questions concerning the dogmas of the Church were being discussed. But now I propose to speak about these men who lost the knowledge of truth through a similar cause, to speak about those who could not be given any stable and firm knowledge of the truth in matters pertaining to Christ, either by any sense perceptions or by any great signs or doctrine comprehended by their ears, no matter how true these signs might have been in themselves. The disciples of John the Baptist manifestly show that they are included in this number. For these same disciples sufficiently define for us what our opinion should be concerning others who did not have such a teacher and who did not see so many signs. We read in the Gospel where it is written, therefore, that these disciples of John very often heard the voice of their master testifying that Jesus was the Christ and that He was truly the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. And though John often
pointed Him out with his finger, they were, nevertheless, unable to be persuaded by any of his testimony to believe this as absolutely certain. They often vacillated and wavered in their opinion. Finally, John, even as if he himself were doubtful, was compelled to send them to Jesus who would teach them that He was Christ. Unless this had been done in this manner, unless they had finally learned this from Christ Himself, surely they never would have had a sufficiently intelligent knowledge of Him. They would never have possessed a firm and certain faith.

While Christ was living here in the flesh, not even the disciples and Apostles imbibed the kind of knowledge and faith about which I am now speaking. But we read that after Christ was glorified through His passion, they then awaited the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ from whom they would learn all truth. This Spirit appeared to them in the form of tongues of fire. And it is this Spirit that confers a firm and stable knowledge and recognition of the faith that is the gift of God, of that faith which surpasses all that can be thought of by man. What then? Can it be thought, my Prince, that the writings of men, the testimonies of men, and even miracles have the greatest influence in confirming men’s minds in the faith of Christ and the proofs for Christ’s divinity? If that were so, the Jews, indeed, would be especially dedicated to Christ. They had more written testimonies, more spoken words, more miracles concerning Christ than any other people. Christ performed all His miracles in their presence. He taught only them. He was born and He died in their midst. When He left them He did not remove Himself to other nations. In their sight He ascended into the heavens. And nevertheless, no other people can readily be found who are so far removed from the faith of Christ as are the Jews. Therefore, our faith is not something that is formed by some external voice or sign.

Indeed, these things can persuade for a time, just as many are often moved by signs to confess that Christ is the Son of God. This happened in the case of the centurion when he heard the great voice of Christ speaking even as He was breathing forth His last breath. But unless that faith is enlightened by a supernatural light—for such is the light that we call the faith of Christ and catholic—unless this faith is received as a foundation for its form and perfection, it will vanish immediately. Surely it is not a cause for wonder that this should
happen. For that faith, or rather, that opinion, awaits its light from reason. When, indeed, reason has gathered many things from miracles, from testimonies, from the writings of trustworthy men—indeed, I do not deny that these things can enkindle some light of knowledge in the minds of men—finally it will accomplish only so much as one would accomplish in endeavoring to arouse a great flame in some wet material by means of a small candle. In such a case, either nothing will be accomplished or, certainly, at least the only result to be obtained will be perhaps some smoke as a sign of fire. And if he is not content with this, and if he hopes to produce a clear flame by means of the little fire of the candle, undoubtedly all his efforts will have this result: the candle will be consumed. And when the lamp has been consumed he will be in greater darkness than before.

Thus, indeed, it is, my Prince, that those desiring to enlighten the minds of men with the knowledge of the Son of God who is Christ Jesus, by means of miracles and external testimony assembled through reason, will indeed first arouse such smoke that men will recognize Christ as a Prophet. Their faith, however, will be similar to that of those concerning whom Christ questioned His Apostles: "Whom do men say that the Son of Man is? But they said: ... some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets" (Mt. 16:14). But if they should continue to inquire through reason, finally they would not believe that He appeared before all, as is foretold. They would consider as inferior rumors many things reported concerning Him. But if similar signs are related concerning others—as many miracles of this kind are told concerning Appollonius Tyaneus¹—their belief in Appollonius Tyaneus would be as great as their belief in Christ. Or they will judge that the things told about both are only fables. They would also consider as fables all things said about the providence of God in human affairs and about His governance of all other matters.

This, indeed, is the end of that knowledge and faith that recognizes no source above human reason, which of necessity will fall into the greatest treachery, impiety and self-assurance. But do you see, my Prince, what kind of an end this is? If you would look, you would see that it is the source of all misery and unhappiness not only for the life that is foretold for the future but also for this present one. No one can entirely avoid or flee from this misery in this life. Indeed, I might expand on this with many words, did I not fear that I would be carried
far away from the goal toward which I now desire to hasten you. For now I am trying to hurry you away to that faith by which we totally believe in and rely upon God through Christ. Though they who have attained this faith might have been previously miserable, they are now immediately numbered among the happy. I refer to that faith by which alone entrance is given to the understanding of the divine mysteries. If you seek in the Scriptures the light of this truth concerning faith, the Prophet tells us that unless you would believe you will not understand.

What else, my Prince, do you now want me to say about this faith? If I should wish to gather together everything that could be said about the excellence of this faith, and all the good it brings with it, I would, indeed, have to enumerate all the distinguished deeds that have been done since the very beginning of mankind. I would have to enumerate all the remarkable and happy things that might be done publicly or privately in the future, as long as mankind will exist. For all these things are the fruits of that faith toward which I am now urging you.

Concerning this faith, it can truthfully be said that if mankind has ever attained any shadow of happiness in this life led in conjunction with a body, the effective source of this happiness was the image of this faith, to which I now desire to turn your mind’s eye. Here is the original archetype that should be contemplated. Any greater and more enduring happiness that may be hoped for will ultimately come from this source; that is, from faith. However, without this faith or that imperfect faith, no one can promise himself any kind of happiness or even life itself. We have this faith either of itself or in its image obtained from nature. The latter faith always brings with it recognition of our weakness and helplessness. It truly fills our minds with a wholesome reliance and hope for what we expect to obtain through the kindness of God. By such faith, I say, no people will ever fail to attain whatever men might be looking for in human affairs.

And here, my Prince, if I might be allowed to digress into this field, if I might examine all the remarkable accomplishments of kings and people whereby they thought that they had attained the shadow of happiness in their deeds, I do not doubt that this would be made very clear to everyone: Whatever people were able to place their greatest hope and reliance on God, also attained that which they especially desired. On the contrary, however, whatever people decided that
their greatest protection was in their own strength, their own talent and human resources, were so abandoned by their hopes that they were unable to attain even the slightest share of the things for which they were striving. Indeed, the result of the impiety of these people was such that although they placed all hope in their own strength and in human resources, they were completely deprived of these things, not by men but by God Himself.

Thus we read in the histories of the Hebrews that the very mighty army of King Sennacherib who gloried in his own strength against God, was destroyed, not by the enemy but by an angel of God (4 Kgs. 19:35–36). Thus the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha were completely destroyed by the hand of God. They had placed all hope for happiness in themselves and in the fertility of their lands. Thus it is also clear that among other nations this impiety and complete reliance upon human powers—which, indeed, developed into contempt for the providence of God—was punished by the greatest destruction.

But now I do not propose to speak about this faith. Surely, my Prince, this is not the faith to which I am now urging you. I am speaking about the faith that exceeds this, about the faith that will bring us everlasting happiness and a kingdom with God. It elevates us an infinite distance above our nature. One cannot see even the slightest trace of this faith without instantly condemning and considering as of no worth every kind of happiness that might be felt by the senses or understood by the mind here on earth. This faith is such that if riches should be offered for the eyes to see, they would not only throw aside all these riches but would willingly even take pleasure in poverty. It easily persuades the wise to despise all their wisdom and to take no offense at being considered foolish. Indeed, this faith persuades those living in honor and glory to disregard all honors. It makes them hold these things in contempt so they even rejoice in ignominy.

What is this, my Prince? What is this? For it accomplishes nothing to show that some men are like these. There are so many that their very multitude prevents their being named. For the Church can present many legions of men of this kind. What, therefore, is this? What does it mean that so many men, not by compulsion but of their own free will, are often seen abandoning those things that the common sense of men judges to be pleasing to nature? These men choose and pursue things that common sense declares will be misery. Can men take
pleasure in misery? Does anyone freely choose misery? But this, indeed, cannot be imagined. What is it, therefore? No one, moreover, seeks for misery. Everyone sufficiently knows and experiences more than sufficiently the great power that pleasures of the body possess. However, men are found who willingly abandon these and all things esteemed by others as the greatest source of all happiness. What else can be said but that they have seen some greater light with the eyes of their mind; that this light shows them greater goods for themselves and greater happiness? But what kind of light is this? Some see it. Others do not see it. What kind of thing is this that seems to be appropriate to the happiness of some men and to the misery of others? Here I can only say what Christ replied to those who questioned Him concerning where He dwelt. He said: “Come and see” (Jn. 1:39).

Thus, if you would ask what kind of light this is by which some are so pleased that they seem to hold the light of the sun in contempt when compared to it, come, my Prince, and see. Come, I say, back to that place from which you have departed. Come into the Church, my Prince. There Christ dwells. There you will see that pleasant light for which you are asking. This is the same light, as the Scripture says “on whom the angels desire to look” (1 Pt. 1:12). It is resplendent in their countenances. Concerning this light Paul takes such glory, not so much for himself as for those who are in the Church. He glories in the fact that he saw this light surpassing that which appeared in the countenance of Moses. That light, Paul says, was made void. Concerning the light seen by Paul and all the sons of the Church, Paul speaks thus: “But we all beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image . . . as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18). Oh! My Prince! If only one spark of this light might break through this very dense darkness surrounding you and arrive at the eyes of your mind! There could be absolutely nothing in the natural order of the universe, no matter how powerful or how pleasant, that could restrain you from abandoning all other things and from breaking whatever chains are delaying you, so that you might seek for the source of this spark of light. Have you never heard that the “kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away” (Mt. 11:12)? This was spoken concerning those who abandon all the most pleasant things in nature and seek Christ through all harsh things. The sparks of His glory will come to the souls of these men.
Truly these things are seen only by those who bind themselves together in the Church. No light of Christ appears outside the Church.

All, therefore, who desire to taste any part of this very great good should approach the Church. And you, my Prince, should return there if you desire to participate in this. But why will you delay in approaching such a very great good? Have you forgotten the path to the Church? Do you not know that it is the same path that leads to Christ? Do you not recall the voice of him who is called the precursor of the Lord? He was sent to prepare the way for the Lord and to arouse men for His coming. “Do penance: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mt. 3:2). This is the path that leads to the Church, the path that leads to contemplating the glory resplendent in the face of Christ, the glory that makes heaven and earth cheerful. But the same precursor warns us to make straight the way of His path. Do not pretend! Do not seek an excuse for sin! For these paths are not in the least straight. Indeed, at first glance, they seem to lead to the Church where Christ reigns. But actually they lead straight to the gates of hell where the most raging and continual enemy of mankind exercises his tyranny.

Therefore, make straight the paths! Openly and without any disguise confess your sins! But, you will say, will I immediately see this great light that you foretell, if I shall return to the obedience of the Church after I have been led to penance for my past affairs? One who is truly penitent, my Prince, will never ask this. Indeed, he will judge himself unworthy of seeing this light. No one, even though innocent, was ever worthy through his own nature or his deeds to turn his eyes toward this light. Your words are truly those of a proud hired servant. Such a servant, as if for a reward for shedding his tears, would dare to question the Lord, as if he had a compact with Him concerning the time when he would share in the divine light. He would question whether this would happen as soon as he shed his tears. These are the words of that exalted Pharisee whose words the Lord reproached in the Gospel. The Pharisee, while praying in the temple, spoke thus: “I fast twice a week: I give tithes of all that I possess” (Lk. 18:12). On account of this he judged that God owed it to him to grant all he asked. But this is not the manner of one who is truly penitent. The speech and condition of one truly penitent is expressed in the person of the Publican concerning whom Christ said: “And the Publican, standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes towards heaven; but struck
his breast, saying: O God, be merciful to me a sinner. I say to you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: because everyone that exalteth himself, shall be humbled: and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted” (Lk. 18:13, 14).

Behold here, my Prince, the words of one truly penitent. Do you hear, I beseech you, that he did not dare to lift up his eyes? He cast them down to the ground. Do you think that such a man would have demanded that he be instantly given the power of contemplating that light more beautiful than anything seen in heaven? He, indeed, judged that he was not worthy to lift up his eyes to the heavens. Therefore, one who is truly possessed by penance would never in his mind contemplate demanding any gift from God in his own right. Rather he would recognize his indebtedness to God in all things. He could not maintain that anything was rightly owed him except scourges. He would not only not refuse scourges, but would even desire them. This, indeed, is the greatest sign of a penitent. If even here you desire to hear more distinctly the words of a penitent, because it especially pertains to you, listen attentively to the words of Sirach. He was seized with penance and grief for his counsellors; he seemed to have been abandoned by God in the plans of those who were the authors of wicked crimes, just as now happened to you. He thus directed his prayer to God and said: “Oh Lord, father, and sovereign ruler of my life, leave me not to their counsel: nor suffer me to fall by them. Who will set scourges over my thoughts, and the discipline of wisdom over my heart, that they spare me not in their ignorances, and that their sins may not appear” (Sir. 23:1–2).

Behold, here, my Prince, how he does not flee from the scourges of God but even longs for them! Nor does he desire to be forgiven for those things that he did in ignorance! He greatly desires others to rebuke him. How appropriately all these things might be said about you. You have sinned very gravely. Partly you were led on by wicked advisers, partly of your own accord, partly by ignorance. Now, truly, God comes before you. Before it occurred to you to desire this, God sent you one who would rebuke you severely, who in his treatise would spare you nothing for your sins. Why? Do you think, my Prince, that I did this of my own free will, that I rebuked you so severely and placed all your sins and your crimes before your eyes willingly? Indeed, I did this of my own accord. But—may God and charity itself be my
witness—I so did this of my own accord that only love for you and
eagerness for your salvation impelled me to do it. When I would
question your opinion concerning the dogmas of the faith, I saw that
it would indeed be vain to question you concerning these and other
matters pertaining to your salvation unless you first recognize your
criimes. You might surely think the same thing was said to you, that
God Himself replied to that wicked, though chosen, people who were
seeking the will of God from the Prophet. God replied to them, as if
He were ridiculing their desires, because they were inquiring the will
and commands of God even though they were oppressed with the
weight of sins. They did not know or recognize these sins. However, the
Prophet speaks thus, in the person of God: “For they seek me from
day to day, and desire to know my ways, as a nation that hath done
justice, and hath not forsaken the judgment of their God; they ask of
me the judgments of justice; they are willing to approach God”
(Is. 58:2).

I see, my Prince, that you are doing this same thing; I see that you
ask judgments of justice from God; I know that you have greatly
abandoned the justice of God. Nevertheless, you do not cease inquiring
the ways of the Lord. Therefore, could I do anything more appropri-
ately for your salvation—advised by the act of the Jews and the
Prophet foretelling your deeds—than what Isaias did in that same
passage through the command of God? He condemned a people op-
pressed by their sins because they inquired about these things. For
thus he speaks in that place: “Cry, cease not, lift up thy voice like a
trumpet, and shew my people their wicked doings” (Is. 58:1). I
judged that I should tell you entirely this same thing from God. As a
King who had done justice you were seeking for a judgment of God.
You wanted to know the ways of God. You could never know these
completely unless your sins were first placed before your eyes so that
you might recognize them. Then they might also be taken away. For
these sins take away completely the sight of the light; that is, of the
truth in the commands of God. Wherefore, the Prophet tells those who
abound in sins, while they are desirous of penetrating to the divine
light of truth, that they should remove their offenses and they will see.
By offenses, sins are to be understood. This is more evident where the
Prophet says: “But your iniquities have divided between you and
your God, and your sins have hid his face from you that he should
not hear” (Is. 59:2). First of all, therefore, you who seek the truth that shines in the face of God should acknowledge your sins. Then they should also be removed.

Since you are now seeking the same thing, I have appropriated the same method Isaias used when he was dealing with a sinful people seeking the commands of God. First he brought back the memory of their sins; then he showed them the way by which they might be removed. What, therefore, will you now do? Will you attack me as though I were your greatest adversary? I, before all other things, have devoted myself to the task of revealing your sins. However, the way for removing them is particularly clear. Will you plot against my life in every way? But here there is no need for plots. For if, indeed, there would be any profit for you, if this would be for your salvation, if it pertained to your honor, if it would yield you profit that I should die, not once but often, if that were possible—may God, the author of life, be my witness that I would die even willingly.

But now you should consider this especially. How could my death be of profit to you? Is this the way by which you would lift up your tumbled-down honor? For there is no one, except a blind flatterer, who can deny that the friendly disposition of men toward you has never been weaker than at present. Is this the way to strengthen it? Is this the way to turn aside so many dangers that are pressing upon you? If I myself should be removed from your midst, could you then recover even the slightest part of the things you have lost? If you should do this, would you not more likely increase your evils all the more in this way? If some accident should take me away, would you desire a more useful and more appropriate instrument for the recovery of all these things? Surely, if love for your salvation and your honor can be of any profit—indeed they must be of great avail—would I ever yield to anyone especially concerned in your affairs?

Indeed, I shall have only as much power as the very source of wisdom will give me, or as much as you yourself endeavor to appropriate from this source. Since you have removed yourself so far from this source, all these many evils have befallen you. Why is it—as the Prophet says to Israel as well as to you—that you have grown old in a strange land? You have been defiled with the dead. You have been cut off with those who descend into hell. You have abandoned the source of wisdom. By this one deed you have embraced the causes of
all evils. Furthermore, your own accomplishments make it clear that you have abandoned this source. If you would only return there, you would recover whatever you have lost, with greater glory and interest. The Prophet says you should learn what prudence and wisdom are. They are derived from no place other than the source from which they flow. Oh! My Prince! If you would taste this prudence, this wisdom derived from this source, how ashamed you would be of your old wisdom and prudence! You would be ashamed of all other things in which you ever placed any hope of honor and pleasure. Concerning all these things, the Prophet says: "You shall be as an oak with the leaves falling off. . . ." (Is. 1:29, 30). If you would approach this fountain from which you might imbibe honor, salvation, prudence, and wisdom, you "shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit, in due season" (Ps. 1:3). Here, indeed, you will begin to sprout forth amid the applause of men and angels. Truly you will acquire fruit in heaven.

But, my Prince, turn yourself back to this source. Do not devise evil for those who would strengthen and open for you the path to such a great good. Certainly those who are giving assistance and are chiefly occupied with making you acknowledge your sins are especially doing this. Truly, I now say this again. Beyond death, nothing of evil to man can be thought of by man. As far as I am concerned, though I have always lived pleasantly and willingly because that is God’s will, I trust that whenever God may call me, I shall die even more pleasantly and willingly. However, I say, whenever He shall call me. For unless He shall call me, unless indeed He shall permit enemies to devise this, certainly they will never be able to accomplish this. But if He will permit this, the recollection of this life alone—in which I certainly know I have prepared for such a death—will easily overcome whatever grief devised by an unfriendly mind. It would fill my mind with tremendous joy. Wherefore, as I have said, whether I shall live or die is of no concern to me. It concerns those especially, if there are such, who are devising these things. It concerns especially you, my Prince, if anything should happen to me through your fault. Since this matter concerns me least of all, it should also be left for you and your consideration.

Oh! How much more profitable it would be for your affairs were you to think about your own scourging. As I mentioned above in the
words of Sirach, you should more frequently make use of prayers to God that He might forgive your sins, rather than be thinking about a way in which you might balance with curses the good deeds of others toward you. You do this because these good deeds are contrary to your will, or rather, contrary to your passionate desires. How much more appropriately might the words in Sirach be said concerning you: "Give me not haughtiness of my eyes, and turn away from me all coveting. Take from me the greediness of the belly, and let not the lusts of the flesh take hold of me, and give me not over to a shameless and foolish mind" (Sir. 23:5–6). It would be more suitable for you to beg these things from God, rather than to revolt from the Church. While all the other Christian kings have remained in the faith and obedience of the Roman Church, you not only revolted from the Church, but you also attacked it in every way. With your unrestrained mind you have so rejected the custom of the Church and the decrees of the Church now confirmed during many ages, that you now greatly prefer the decisions reached by your own private council at home instead of the ancient decrees of the Church. You call these decrees into doubt, however. You believe in none of them sufficiently. I beseech you, who could sin with a more irreverent and unrestrained mind?

But do you take heed of the magnitude of this irreverence? Are you ignorant of the very great dignity of the Church? Is it inevitable for you to be ignorant of the very great reverence you owe the Church? But can you be ignorant of the dignity of the Church when you hear in Scripture that the Church is called the spouse of Christ? Christ died on behalf of the Church that He might bathe it in His blood. Indeed He presented it "that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27). But because you see, in your judgment, that the Church has been deformed and defiled to a marked degree in its foremost members, you, therefore, have all the less reverence for it. And hence you depart and withdraw from its decrees. Thus, indeed, you speak. That is the reason you present for your contempt. But listen attentively for a moment, my Prince. We are now speaking only of the decrees of the Church. We are saying nothing now about the men who govern the Church. They might be as wicked as you please.

If they disapproved the decrees of the Church no less than you did, if they disapproved even more since they spoke testimony against them not only in the presence of men but in the very presence of the spouse,
the highest judge, why then did you revolt from the Church? It condemns the same things that you condemn. What is this irreverence, my Prince, whereby you desire to be a judge of the dogmas of the Church? And now, after these many ages, as if you were summoning a debtor to render an account, you finally want to admit nothing that has not been approved by your judgment and that of your followers. Will you now speak thus? It is the only way you can speak! Will you say that you do not demand the decrees of the Church to conform to the norms of your judgment? Will you say that you ask that they conform to the norm of sacred Scriptures? But why? The Church herself gave authority and rank to the Scriptures. Does not the Church, through these many years through which she has been called the spouse of Christ, know what is suitable and what is contradictory in the Scriptures? Did not the Church herself know that He gave a measuring rule to apply to the rock, a guide as to what things in the Scriptures would maintain the name and force of rules? Did not the Church then apply this rule when it decreed what kind of books should be accepted and what kind rejected? Truly, how absurd it is that you should attribute more authority to those books to which the Church gave authority than you attribute to the Church herself. How absurd it is for you to admit the Scriptures although they have no authority except for a decree of the Church. How absurd for you to consider the Church that holds no authority except from Christ, the Son of God, to be of little value! How absurd for you to bring forth the Scriptures into honor and authority!

But, behold how Paul, the vessel of election, who was carried up even to the third heaven where he saw the secrets of God, did not consider the Church to be of little value. On the contrary, he held it in very great honor. In writing to the Corinthians, Paul wanted to decide something that pertained exceedingly to the good reputation of customs. He presented his reason for doing this, a reason that should have been sufficient for anyone justly estimating the worth of things. He perceived, nevertheless, that if the authority of his command was to depend on reason alone, there could never be any reason so firmly presented that some contentious mind could not sometime find something in it against which he might object. What did Paul do? Did he consider it sufficient to insert his authority alone? His authority, surely, would be of the greatest value, since not one of those to whom Paul was writing was ignorant as to who he was. His words should have been
considered stronger than any reason. But what did he do? That he might cut off all contention, silence the mouths of all, and finally, leave no occasion for dispute, he thus concluded in one word: "But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor the Church of God" (1 Cor. 11:16). Behold here how much weight he desires the custom of the Church to have! He makes this authority of the custom of the Church even more clear in an Epistle to Timothy where he calls the Church "the pillar and ground of the truth" (3:15). What is more, since all reasons may eventually collapse, all arguments and even Scriptures themselves, although possessing all the strength and name of a rule, must nevertheless of necessity rely upon his pillar of truth; that is, upon the Church.

The dogmas of the Church, therefore, and the decrees of the Church should be preferred by weight of authority to all writing and to all reason. You seem to take very little account of this now, my Prince, because as you say, you pay attention to those who govern the Church. They have departed very far from the decrees of the Church. For what else can you say? But for this very same cause you should admire all the more the truth of the Church in its decrees. It particularly condemns these same men. But if you would measure the strength and authority of the Church from those whom you see, you cannot but be exceedingly deceived. For the one who especially governs the Church is seen the least of all. He is Christ Himself. Though to you it appears that evil men govern. Not yet, my Prince, has the time come for all who are in the Church to be stainless in life and without scars. Indeed, we do look forward to this time. Now, however, the Church "is like to a net cast into the sea, and gathering together all kinds of fishes" (Mt. 13:47). The good and the bad come together in the net. The Church is like Noah's ark in which there were clean and unclean animals. Nevertheless, so many cannot be so unclean but that the Spirit of Christ will leave some who will always be resplendent in its dogmas. If the multitude of the Church would be as the sands of the sea, nevertheless Christ will always reserve some for Himself. The Holy Spirit will remain in their minds, although the multitude may be corrupt.

For what do you think, my Prince? If in the law of nature at a time when men were living most corruptly, both before and even after the flood and also at present, it can be said that "all flesh had cor-
rupted its way” (Gn. 6:12), nevertheless, no city could ever be found so corrupt and so lost to a sense of the laws of nature that it was completely unable to see the truth in these things. Christ died for the Church so that the Spirit of God would continually remain in it. Now do you wish to destroy this same Spirit? Do you think the truth should be sought from silent books always offering material for contention for man’s ingenuity, rather than from the agreement of the Church that never lacks the Spirit of God? Thus the Church teaches obedience that is especially pleasing to God. For the Church has the promise of Christ Himself that He would be with it even to the end of the world. And even to eternity He will always be present with His Spirit in the Church. He will never be absent from it even for a single moment of time. Therefore, the Prophet Jeremias speaks thus in the person of God: “If I have not set my covenant between day and night, and laws to heaven and earth: surely I will also cast off the seed of Jacob, and of David my servant” (Jer. 33:25, 26).

But this covenant of His between day and night has been set. Thus, if the laws of nature endure, if nature has never been so corrupt that it did not have this true feeling that God should be honored, that parents should be honored, that one should not do to another what he would not want anyone to do to him, how much greater will this covenant endure in the precepts of the Church? For all these are teachings of nature and although men through their depravity have often departed from them, nevertheless this feeling of truth remains in nature. Christ implanted in the minds of men this Church surpassing nature. Although men by their depravity of life have shown that they have lost a feeling for these things, nevertheless Christ will always reserve some men for Himself. Through these, He desires this feeling of truth to be made clear. These men do not possess this feeling of truth from nature. They possess it through the faith enlightened by the divine Spirit surpassing nature. Their clear knowledge cannot be compared with anything that we know by way of nature. These are the ones, indeed, of whom Paul says: “the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Cor. 4:4) shines in their hearts. Peter in his Epistle says that Christ called them “into his marvelous light” (1 Pt. 2:9). Finally, concerning them, the Prophet says: “The commandment of the Lord is lightsome, enlightening the eyes” (Ps. 18:9).
We have this knowledge through Christ who is the splendor of God. Indeed, our ancient fathers before Christ did not lack this although they did not imbibe it so abundantly. It was more as if it were promised them, than actually shown to them. But there was one at least who imbibed this abundantly. He was the first surpassing reason and nature who believed in God. This was Abraham to whose seed Christ was promised. Speaking of him Christ says: “Abraham saw my day, and was glad” (Jn. 8:56). This knowledge was truly imbibed abundantly by those after Christ who especially imitated the faith and obedience of Abraham. Paul calls this the faith and obedience of Abraham. Paul calls Abraham “the father of us all” (Rom. 4:16) who believe. God made him most renowned in obedience and faith. Truly this kind of knowledge through the Spirit of God was never so extinguished in mankind that not even a spark of it remained. Without this light, nature can never accomplish anything pertaining to its own protection. But then this light was poured forth abundantly when God gave what He had promised to Abraham, when the Son of God, the splendor of the Father, took possession of the seed of Abraham. When the light that illumines all men coming into this world was made flesh, then indeed human nature most abundantly imbibed this knowledge through the Spirit of God who always remains in the Church. All who are in the Church did not taste it in the same way. For as Christ made the members in the Church differing in honor, so some taste more, some less, but it is always the same. For it is not given to all “to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 13:11).

Truly, no one living outside the Church can taste this knowledge, but only those who imitate the faith and obedience of Abraham. However, all such men, no matter in what places they may be, are in the Church. For they who are outside the Church are apart from the faith and obedience of Abraham. Concerning them Paul says: “And if our gospel be also hid, it is hid to them that are lost. In whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of unbelievers, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine unto them” (2 Cor. 4:3, 4). However, one born blind can never be shown in any way what that light is like with which we understand all things falling beneath the sense of our eyes; so in the same way one who has been endowed only with bodily eyes and yet blinded in his soul cannot in any way be persuaded that there
is any light above that perceived by the senses. Indeed, he will judge
those to be foolish who speak thus.

But when you, my Prince, see the most prudent men willingly
seeking death on behalf of the dogmas of the faith—something that
seems to be foolishness to those who cannot perceive the same light these
men perceive—you could properly persuade yourself that the truth
shines in them in some way different from that in which it shines for
those who use only the light of reason. For indeed, the light of reason
is not absent in those things that they defend so constantly and firmly.
Rather it is abundantly present. This other light is something entirely
different, and right reason is not entirely repugnant to it. But they who
see this light cast reason aside completely, even as we are accustomed to
cast aside lamps at sunrise.

However, I might now more properly approach those men who
recently desired to lose their lives on behalf of the decrees of the
Church, rather than deny the light of truth that they had once seen. It
is clear that in the judgment of all no one was considered more prudent
and more learned in your whole realm, previous to the questioning
of the dogmas. Therefore, what else can be thought concerning these
men but that the light of truth shone for them more resplendently
than could be understood by others endowed with the same vision of
mind? They saw, my Prince, they saw. Nor, indeed, was this the light
of reason. For although the light of reason sees more than the senses,
nevertheless when it has drawn in knowledge from the senses—since
sense operations themselves vanish as soon as the objects are removed—
so all knowledge that is had in this way can never render the mind
stable and firm in truth. It can never result in repudiating life, the
most pleasant of all human things.

But these men saw through the medium of a light more pleasant
than all life. They saw by means of the light of Christ and His Spirit.
They saw by the Spirit of God, the life of our souls. And they now
eternally enjoy this light by which they saw. Therefore, my Prince, if
you desire to see and enjoy this light without which there is no life, and
with which there is the greatest happiness, you should reconcile your-
self to the example of the faith and obedience of Abraham. Your
return to the Church is imperative. Outside the Church you can no
more attain salvation and the knowledge of truth than could they who
were outside the ark of Noah be saved from the waters of the flood.
For in this age a flood is always threatening souls for whom the Church alone is a refuge. You, my Prince, should therefore return to the Church. For too long a time you have been separated from it. And if you are to return, you should do penance. For this path finally leads to the Church.

\textit{To Henry VIII: “Be Converted and Do Penance!”}

Behold, therefore, how often we revert to penance! How could it be otherwise? This whole treatise concerns your return to salvation. Without doubt this is the only path that leads to the Church where salvation is. This is the only path for perceiving the light of truth that is derived from the Spirit of God. The Prophet says: “But to whom shall I have respect, but to him that is poor and little, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my words” (Is. 66:2).

Since, even now, I have said some few things in this connection, here I shall now leave you as if on the threshold of the Church. However, could I have said anything other than the things that I have now said? Should I offer examples of the greatest and most renowned penitent men? Should I do this so that you might willingly place yourself in their number—as if grasped by the hand of one of them—and thus enter the Church accompanied by your greater dignity? Oh! My Prince! Thought of honor and dignity should be far removed from your mind if you are truly penitent for your error! You should seek no honors! You should recognize no honor, unless by rejecting all titles of honor and greatly casting yourself down and judging yourself unworthy of all honor, it could happen that these very acts themselves would become an honor.

To a very great degree this can be an honor, my Prince! For this is the true root of all honor. Of necessity, what might be called most splendid honor blossoms forth from this. For these are the words of Christ: “Every one that humbleth himself, shall be exalted” (Lk. 18:14). It also follows from this that he who especially humbles himself shall be especially exalted. Christ “humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, and even to the death of the cross. For which cause . . . God hath given him a name which is above all names:
That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth” (Phil. 2:8–10).

Indeed, no one ever tasted the fruit of true honor who had not previously tasted contempt for himself. Behold what great honor Abraham had before God and men! But he did not have this honor before he had acknowledged he was dust and ashes. For when God promised him an honor surpassing all dignity that could be thought of, he spoke thus: “I am dust and ashes” (Gn. 18:27). Indeed, David, after having been a shepherd, was raised up to a very great kingdom. He became illustrious in many victories over his enemies. But the more he was lifted up by God, the more he recognized his own indignity. He said: “Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that thou shouldst give such things to me?” (1 Chr. 17:16). But if your eyes cannot bear the splendor of this honor that blossoms forth from such a humble root, if you are still seeking a leader whom you can follow in penance and thus save your honor, whom could you follow with greater dignity for yourself other than him whom I have now mentioned many times? Whom but King David, the most distinguished of all, the one most beloved by God? His “tears have been . . . bread day and night” (Ps. 41:4); he watered his couch with tears.

However, if he seems to you to have so greatly excelled that you despair of following him, behold one much nearer to you, behold a most noble example of penance! Theodosius was the ruler of a most flourishing empire. He was a most fortunate Emperor. After he had admitted his very serious crime, for a long while he gave no sign of penitence. Indeed, he did not even acknowledge his fault. Finally he presented himself to all as a singular example of obedience and penitence with the greatest profit to the Church. Indeed, his crime was such that it carried with it a great appearance of right. It was not so much the deed as it was the method and the manner that should be reprehended. For thus we read the record of this event. At Thessalonica, magistrates of the Emperor were badly thrashed and beaten by the people. When the Emperor found this out, he did not want it to be unavenged for long, for such a great crime of the people could become a very bad example for the future. He immediately sent his armed cohorts into the city, not to seek out the authors of this crime but to slaughter the people at random without making any distinction as to
their punishment. Such was his guilt, such was the deed. Indeed, it cannot be denied that the people deserved severe penalties for the injuries that they had inflicted upon the Emperor’s magistrates. Nor was he actually rebuked for the fact that he judged that blame for such a bold deed should not be passed over. But he was rebuked because instead of searching out the authors of this crime, men who were certainly deserving of every kind of punishment, he had sent his soldiers against the people. There can be no doubt that many of the people were blameless; such a bold crime against the Emperor displeased them very much. But he had punished all; he made no distinction between the innocent and the guilty.

Ambrose, the Bishop of Milan, admonished him concerning this affair. Nevertheless, he did not recover his senses. At last the Emperor, surrounded by a very great crowd of his guards and leaders, approached the basilica to take part in the sacred rites. But when he was approaching, Ambrose commanded that the gates of the basilica should be closed. And Ambrose opposed him as he came up to the threshold. And in the sight of the Emperor’s followers, Ambrose rebuked the Emperor and reproved him with such great violence and verbal severity that this man whom both East and West obeyed was compelled to yield to the chastisement of one man. Therefore, when the Emperor returned home, he immediately sent messengers to the Bishop who were to tell him that the Emperor would place himself in the Bishop’s power. The Bishop should decide what penalty seemed best for this crime. No punishment so great might be decreed but what the Emperor himself would not willingly undergo it. Events later verified this, when the Emperor, as if he were the least of all, performed the punishment that had been placed upon him by the Bishop.

Oh! What a great example of penance! What an example that you especially, my Prince, should imitate! What great profit this one deed was for the Church! If we desire to confess the truth, this was surely of greater profit than anything any other Emperor had ever done. For up to this time we have never read that the boundaries of the Empire were fortified by the strong guards of Christ. In doing this the Emperor showed himself to all as an example of obedience and penitence. As a result, this one deed not only removed the enemies of the Church, but caused those who were in the Church to continue doing their duty more steadfastly.
Oh! My Prince! What great things you might bring forth if you would imitate this same act in these times! This indeed is the Emperor, who is praised by the voice of all. In a eulogy for his happiness, on account of his many prosperous accomplishments he is praised in these verses:

Oh! Greatly beloved by God, for you the heavens are marching,
The winds are allied to your fleet, and blow to favor your crew. . . .

And, my Prince, would you lack anything in happiness were you to set before yourself as a model, the obedience and penitence of this man? How rapidly Christ would change whatever sin now exists in the Church, into an exceedingly great good for the Church! Your obedience alone would confirm countless souls in the faith of Christ! Your desertion has caused many souls to waver. Just as the dragon carried with him a third of the stars when he fell from the heavens, so you, when you abandoned obedience, dragged down with you to destruction more than a third of the noblest souls of your kingdom, souls that were citizens of the heavens. If you will return to Heaven, all these souls will also accompany you together with many others who will be greatly strengthened. They will return, however, if you but turn back to obedience and penitence. For this is the path to Heaven. No one can wander completely away from this right path.

For, my Prince, although I am writing these things to you concerning obedience and penitence, especially on your behalf, nevertheless I am also writing them on behalf of all who fell with you. The same path stands open for their salvation as well as for yours. Truly, I especially desire the salvation of all. Indeed, I do not begrudge her [Anne Boleyn's] salvation whose love is clearly the cause of all these evils. In fact, I truly and particularly desire her salvation. If she will return with you to obedience and penitence, salvation will be hers and none of her honor will be lost. For Christ knows what nature cannot know. He can even restore the flower of virginity to those who have been corrupted. Following your penance, you will again receive this in place of your loves.

Oh! How far more sweet and delightful these loves will be. Then, shameful concupiscence will not arouse these loves. Christ, the measure of all sweetness, will arouse and unite them. Oh! My Prince! How
much more admirable and pleasing you will appear to all, after you have done penance for Christ and returned to the Church. What great sweetness you will feel, especially in your soul. Now, you are unable to feel this since the consciousness of your sins irritates you. Not only will you feel relieved of every burden, but you will feel completely reborn. “Thy youth shall be renewed like the eagle’s” (Ps. 102:5). Furthermore, after penance, how pleasing will you appear to all your people! These people, with the greatest solicitude of soul, now fear and expect infinite evils inevitably threatening them because of your departure from the Church. If you will return to obedience, they will feel that they have been freed from this very great worry and well-nigh certain destruction. They will also renew all the more their former love for you and their former hope conceived from the time you were a youth endowed with an inclination toward all virtue. Joyfully and cheerfully they will expect from you greater goods than they ever expected from any other king.

Nor truly, can their hope deceive them. For if you will return to Christ after your very serious sins, and after deeds harsher than any committed by any king of this realm, Christ will restore you nobler and more distinguished than any others who ever held power in this kingdom. Finally, what a pleasing spectacle this will be for the universal Church as it will look upon you, a new and most admirable work of Christ! Your return to obedience—this cannot be ignored—will be of great importance in settling all the controversies now miserably shattering the Church. Therefore, the Church now prays for your restoration to life, no less assiduously than did those holy women pray for Lazarus, the friend of Christ. At their prayers, Christ called him back to life. Truly, with enthusiasm similar to that of the Jews who gathered to behold and see Lazarus as a very great miracle of God, all peoples and nations will flock together at this spectacle of your restoration. With the greatest joy they will come to behold you now aroused from the dead. For a much more serious death has destroyed you. The death of the soul, indeed, is much more serious than the death of the body.

Truly, I dare to say that there will be neither friend nor enemy who will not be affected with the greatest joy at your repentance. All will desire to be joined to you with greater bonds of friendship than
ever before. But why do I speak about the joy over your salvation that all Christian people will share here on earth, when even the heavens will be sharing in this joy? For as soon as you even gird yourself with silent thought of penitence in your soul, this immediately becomes known in Heaven. If, however, you will recover your senses with good faith, I now say this. The angels on earth in giving testimony of their joy at Christ's birth, sang the praises of the Lord. Similarly they cannot now restrain their joy, should they recognize that Christ who has been dead in your soul is now reborn and brought back to life. They will make use of the same canticle they sang at the nativity of Christ: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men" (Lk. 2:14). First of all you will feel the benefits of this canticle and its fruits for yourself, when, as Paul calls them, "the hidden things of dishonesty" (2 Cor. 4:2) have come to light. You will feel it when every disgrace lying deep within your soul and appearing evil and shameful without, has been taken away. Indeed, you will hear Christ say the same thing that Josue their leader said, in the words of God, at the second circumcision of the people of Israel after the crossing of the Jordan: "This day have I taken away from you the reproach of Egypt" (Jos. 5:9).

You will know that this has been taken away. For instead of the earthly and human desires you had as a slave of Pharao far beneath your dignity—in a state no better than that of brute animals—you will feel the heavenly and divine desires that have been implanted within you by Christ alone: "Who satisfieth thy desire with good things" (Ps. 102:5). And from these heavenly desires, peace and tranquillity of soul will follow. Now you will enjoy the sweet perfume of another kind of happiness in the kingdom of God eternally together with His angels. For these goods will follow true penitence. In the first place Josue, the leader of the chosen people, allowed the priests to go ahead. He commanded the priests, in the words of God, to go before the people as they crossed the Jordan to the promised land flowing with milk and honey. So you who are the leader of the people of God in this crossing to the longed-for eternal kingdom, should not then in any way give preference to yourself before the priests. For Josue did not act thus. And then he heard this from God: "This day will I begin to exalt thee before Israel" (Jos. 3:7). And He promises
the same thing to you, if you will follow Josue's example in this. Even as He did to Josue, so also will He make you victorious over all your enemies.

At last, however, I see that I must sometime place a limit on this treatise. But you should not think that this discussion has exhausted me. Especially since I am speaking about things pertaining to your salvation, I can certainly no more discover a conclusion for this treatise than I can discover a conclusion for my love for you. This whole treatise is derived from my love for you. As the saying goes, my love for you knows no bounds. Here, therefore, I shall break off in the midst of this discussion and I shall conclude. For in each and every individual thing which I have written in this book I have attested that I have spoken my opinion in these matters about which I was asked, exactly as I would have done had I been obliged to speak before the tribunal of Christ.

Nevertheless, these things will be just as you will receive them. For if you will receive within your soul any of the things I have written, I now dare to affirm that Christ will change them into the greatest salvation for yourself and for your whole kingdom. But if you will have interpreted them otherwise, truly this perverse interpretation cannot injure me, except in so far as such an interpretation would be fatal for the one whose salvation I desire above all human affairs. I have more than adequately performed my duty. As Ezechiel says concerning those who warn men of the calamity and punishment of God threatening them on account of their sins, I have sounded the trumpet. But if you will refuse to listen attentively, the words of the Prophet follow upon you. "Then he that heareth the sound of the trumpet, whosoever he be, and doth not look to himself, if the sword come, and cut him off; his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and did not look after himself. His blood shall be upon him" (Ez. 33:4–5). Truly, I have revealed the truth of God's opinion. I have shown your sins. I have warned of threatening calamity. I have warned you to flee from whatever might happen in the presence of God. I am now withdrawing my faithful protection. And here, at last, relying on the mercy of God through Christ, I shall conclude with the words of the Prophet on your behalf: "Be converted, and do penance for all your iniquities. And iniquity shall not be your ruin" (Ez. 18:30),
NOTES TO BOOK IV

1 Apollonius Tyaneus: a celebrated magician and neo-Pythagorean philosopher, born in Cappadocia, 4 b.c.


3 Cf. Ambrose: Migne PL, XVI, col. 1041–42; and De obitu Theodosii, col. 1495.

4 These lines actually appear in a panegyric from the Carmina of Claudius Claudianus, in praise of Theodosius’ son, Honorius: “Panegyricus de Tertio Consulatu Honorii,” Claudii Claudiani Carmina (Teubner), 1893, p. 106.

Acknowledgments

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Note on Texts of the “De unitate” and Manuscripts and Sources

The Latin text upon which this translation is based is in the Rare Book Room of the New York Public Library: Reginaldi Poli Cardinalis Britanni pro ecclesiasticæ unitatis defensione, libri quatuor, Romæ: Apud Antonium Bladum, c. 1536. Other copies of this first edition known to be extant in the United States are at the Library of Congress; the H. E. Huntington Library in San Marino, California; the Yale University Library; the Houghton Library, Harvard University; and the Chapin Library of Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts. This first edition appeared, without Pole’s permission, most probably 1537–38. It was based on a manuscript copy of the De unitate that Pope Paul III seems to have acquired from Cardinal Contarini. The original manuscript of the De unitate, preserved in the Rolls House, London, does not exactly parallel the version of the printed copies. Certain more vehemently critical passages are omitted in the manuscript form. The accusations concerning Henry’s intimate relations with Anne Boleyn’s sister are not found in the manuscript intended for Henry’s perusal.

Pole did everything possible to prevent this first publication of the De unitate, and endeavored to withdraw from circulation all copies of the “pirated” 1537–38 edition he could lay his hands on. Pole cannot be held responsible for his “friends’ ” zeal in preparing this premature edition. Pole insisted that the De unitate was originally “to be read by one person,” Henry VIII, and that he had written the De unitate
"without the slightest thought of publication." Only in January, 1555, did Pole reluctantly give his approval for publication of his work. By coincidence, in the very year Pole finally gave unrestricted permission for the publication of his work, the 1555 Strasburg edition of the *De unitate* appeared under the editorship of Petrus Paulus Vergerius. This edition differs from the 1537–38 edition only in minor spelling, punctuation, and textual variations. Put forth under Lutheran inspiration, the 1555 volume includes, following the complete text of the *De unitate*, pertinent writings from Martin Luther, Mathias Franco-witz (alias Flaccus Illyricus, a disciple of Luther and founder of the Centuries of Magdeburg), Franciscus Vilerius, Philipp Melanchthon, John Calvin, M. Bucer, and Wolfgangus Musculus—all directed against the supremacy of the Roman pontiff. All the selections are directed toward interpretations of the famed verse from Matthew 16:18 on the primacy of Peter. This was odd company for Pole. The editor had originally planned to include Stephen Gardiner's *De vera obedientia* against the supreme authority of the Roman pontiff, but a complete text of Gardiner's work was not available. Pole's *De unitate* was substituted, and only Pole's work was given credit on the title page of this volume. The Protestant contributors remain nameless on the title page and are referred to almost casually, as merely a few other writers on the Roman primacy. Surprising though it may seem, Pole's *De unitate* appeared in this magnificently printed edition, under Protestant auspices, in the famous year of the Religious Peace at Augsburg, 1555. At least one more sixteenth-century edition of the *De unitate* appeared in 1587, from the press of Paul Manutius at Inglostadt.

Essential sources consulted in preparing and editing this translation include the numerous and invaluable volumes of the *Calendar of State Papers*, preserved in Her Majesty's Public Record Office, London, 1856 to the present; the *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII*, London, 1864–1920; Cardinal Angelus Maria Quirini's five-volume collection of Pole's letters: *Epistolarum Reginaldi Poli . . . et aliorum ad ipsum*, Brescia, 1744–1757; and other writings of Reginald Pole: *Admonitio atque hortatio legatorum sedis apostolicae ad patres in Concilio Tridentino . . ., Cracow, 1546; De concilio liber Reginaldi Poli Cardinalis, et, Reformatio Angliae ex decretis Reginaldi Poli Cardinalis . . ., the first
Aldine Press book printed in Rome, 1562; De summo pontifice Christi in terris vicario . . ., Louvain, 1569; Consilium delectorum cardinalium . . . de emendanda ecclesia Romana, jussu Pauli III Papae conscriptum, London, 1609; A Treatie of Justification Founde among the writinges of Cardinal Pole of blessed memorie . . ., Louvain, 1569. Manuscripts of many of Pole’s letters are in Codices vaticani latini, Knights of Columbus Vatican Film Library, St. Louis University.


Abraham, 327–330
Adam, 165, 243–244, 309
Allen, William Card., xxxviii
Ambrose, St., 332
Anacletus, Pope, 79
Andrew, St., 147
Arianism, 272
Aristotle, 288
Articles for Priests Unlearned, 90
Audley, Sir Thomas, 219
Augustine of Canterbury, 106
Augustine of Hippo, 83–84, 145–148, 155
Basil, St., xxxvii
Becket, Thomas à, xxxv, xxxvi, xxxviii
Bembo, Pietro, xxxvii
Bernard, St., 77
Boleyn, Anne, xiv, xxi, 185–189, 236–237, 281, 284, 333
Boleyn, Mary, 188, 291n.
Bonner, Edmund (Bishop of London), xxxii–xxxiii
Bowes-Lyon, Lady Elizabeth Angela, xl
Bridgettines, 204, 213–216, 232, 253, 259
Cambridge University, xix, 240–241
Canterbury, Archbishops of, see Cranmer, Thomas; Parker, Matthew; Pole, Reginald; Ramsey, Arthur
Canterbury Cathedral, xxxv
Caraffa, Gian Pietro, see Paul IV
Carthusians, xiii, 204, 213–216, 232, 253, 259–284
Catholic restoration of England, xix, xxii, xxvi, xxx–xxxii, xxxvii
Cervini, Marcello Card., xxix
Chichester, Bishop of, see Sampson, Richard
Churchill, Sir Winston, xxxv
Chrysostom, St. John, xxxvii, 38, 135
Cicero, xxii, 54, 165
“Citizen of London,” xxxv
Clarence, Duke of (George), xiii
Colet, John, xxxvii
Colonna, Vittoria, xxvii, xxxvii
Compton, Sir William, 290
Constantine the Great, 45–49, 214
Contarini, Gasparo Card., xvi, xxiv, xxv, xxviii, xxix
Cornelius, Pope, 150, 154
Cranmer, Thomas, xix, xxxiii
Cromwell, Thomas, xv, xxiii, xxiv, xxvii
Cyprian, 150–155
Cyrus, 263
Damasus, Pope, 157–158
David, King, 26, 35, 69, 164, 204, 209, 296, 299, 327, 331
Domitian, 22, 70, 260
INDEX

Ignatius of Loyola, xxxiii, xxxvii
Isabella, Queen, 275, 277
Isidore of Seville, xxii

Jerome, St., 155–160
John XXIII, Pope, xxxiv
Julius II, Pope, xiv, xv
Julius III, Pope, see Monte, Giovanni
Card. del
Justification, Lutheran teachings on,
xxviii, xxix, 235–236, 254–255, 272–
273

Lambeth Palace, xxiv, xxxi, xxxiii, xxxv
Latimer, William, xxvii
Lily, George, xxvii
Linacre, Thomas, xxxvii
Linus, Pope, 79
Liranus, 161, 174n.
London, Bishop of, see Bonner, Edmund
Longolius, Christopher, xxxvii
Lucius, King, 106n., 255
Lucius, Pope, 154
Lupset, Thomas, xxxvii
Luther, Martin, xxi, 260

Macaulay, Lord Thomas Babington, 
xxv
Machiavelli, Nicolo, xxiii
Marsilius of Padua, xxiii
Mary Tudor, xvii, xix, xxiv, xxvi, xxx, 
xxvii, 186, 194–199, 257, 276
Mascarelli, Angelus, xxix
Melanchthon, Philip, xxi
Michelangelo Buonarroti, xxvii
Milan, Bishop of, see Ambrose, St.
Montague, Lord, see Pole, Henry
Monte, Giovanni Card. del, xxix–xxx
More, Margaret, 228–229, 231
More, St. Thomas, xvi–xvii, xx, xxv, 
xxvi, 22, 25–26, 37–38, 43, 65, 161,
163, 176–177, 204–205, 217–232,
249–250, 255–256, 259, 261–262,
273, 278, 284, 290, 310–311
Moses, 59, 68, 80, 83, 123
Musso, Cornelio (Bishop of Bitonto), 
xxix

Nero, xx, 24, 260

Durham, Bishop of, see Tunstall, Cuth-
bert
Edward, Earl of Warwick, see Warwick,
Earl of
Edward IV, xiii, 196
Edward VI, xiv, xxiv, xxxii
Eleutherius, Pope, 98, 255
Elizabeth I, xxiv, xxxvi
Elizabeth II, xi
Erasmus, xxxvii, 156
Evaristus, Pope, 79

Felton, John, xxxvi
Ferdinand, King, 276–277
Fisher, Dr. Geoffrey, xxxix
Fisher, John Card., xvi–xvii, xxv, 22,
25–26, 36–38, 43, 65, 161, 163, 176–
177, 204–205, 217, 232, 239–242,
249–250, 253–256, 259, 261–262,
277, 284–285, 288–290, 310
Flaminio, Marc-Antonio, xxvii
Florence, Council of, 246
Foque, Edward, xxiii
Francis I, xxvi–xxviii, 13, 262–266, 279

Gardiner, Stephen, xix, xxiii, xxxi–xxxii
George, Duke of Clarence, see Clarence,
Duke of
Gregory I (the Great), Pope, 77, 79,
106

Harvel, Edmund, xvi, xxiv
Heenan, John Card., xxxix
Henry VII, xiii, 196–198, 290

Henry VIII, xv–xvii, xxvi–xxviii, and 
passim; 1–25, 40–50, 97–101, 196–
204, 256–266; dispensation: 187,
190–191, 279–280; divorce: xiv–xv,
xix, xxiv, xxiii, xxxii, 183–186, 188,
190, 194–195, 225, 267–270, 279;
offenses against Church: xiii, xv, 8–
11, 13–14, 37–38, 47, 64–65, 69–70,
202, 216, 233, 251, 268–270, 272,
277, 287–288, 324; martyrdom
under: 2–6, 8, 22, 26, 37, 44, 65,
68–70, 72, 176, 204–208, 211–212,
232, 235, 244, 249–250, 259–263,
Horace, 35
INDEX

Newman, John Henry Card., xxxviii
Nicaea, Council of, 46
Norwich, episcopal see of, 98

Observants of St. Francis, 253

Pace, Richard, xxxvii
Paris, University of, xiv, 192
Parker, Matthew, xxxix
Paul III, Pope, xxv–xxviii, xxx
Paul IV, Pope, xxviii, xxxiii–xxxiv
Paul VI, Pope, xxxviii
Philip II, King, xxx–xxxii
Pilgrimage of Grace, xxvi
Plato, 59–60
Pole, Henry (Lord Montague), xxvii
Pole, Bl. Margaret, xiii, xv, xxiv, xxvi, 197
Pole, Reginald Card., Intro. and passim; gratitude to and love for Henry VIII: 1–2, 5, 8, 16–19, 191, 296, 320–321, 336
Pole, Sir Richard, xii
Prince, The, xxiii
Priuli, Alvise, xxvii

Ramsey, Most Rev. Arthur Michael, xxxviii–xxxix
Ratisbon Conference (1541), xxviii
Reform Commission (1536), xxviii, xxxv
Reynolds, Richard, xxv, 253
Richard III, 290

Sadoleto, Jacopo (Bishop of Carpentres), xxxviii, xxxvii
Salisbury, Lady Margaret, see Pole, Bl. Margaret
Saul, 65, 73, 85
Seymour, Edward, see Somerset, Duke of
Socrates, 231–232
Somerset, Duke of, xix
Starkey, Thomas, xv–xvii
Strathmore, Earl of, xl
Sylvester, Pope, 79

Theodosius, Emperor, 331–334
Theophrastus, 57
Throckmorton, Michael, xvi
Titus Vespasianus, 70
Tower Hill, xvi, xl
Trent, Council of, xxvii–xxx
Tunstall, Cuthbert, xxiv–xxv

Valerius Maximus, 53
Viterbo, Papal States of, xxvii–xxviii, xxxiv

Warwick, Earl of, 197
Whitehall Palace, xxxi, xxxv
Wolsey, Thomas Card. (Archbishop of York), xiv, 290