Part of Pope Hadrian's Letter

Council of Nicaea (AD 787) (AD 787)

SermonIndex.net / Church Fathers

Part of Pope Hadrian's Letter

[As written by the Pope.] (Migne, Pat. Lat., Tom. XCVI., col. 1217.) If you persevere in that orthodox Faith in which you have begun, and the sacred and venerable images be by your means erected again in those parts, as by the lord, the Emperor Constantine of pious memory, and the blessed Helen, who promulgated the orthodox Faith, and exalted the holy Catholic and Apostolic Roman Church your spiritual mother, and with the other orthodox Emperors venerated it as the head of all Churches, so will your Clemency, that is protected of God, receive the name of another Constantine, and another Helen, through whom at the beginning the holy Catholic and Apostolic Church derived strength, and like whom your own imperialfame is spread abroad by triumphs, so as to be brilliant and deeply fixed in the whole world. But the more, if following the traditions of the orthodox Faith, you embrace the judgment of the Church of blessed Peter, chief of the Apostles, and, as of old your predecessors the holy Emperors acted, so you, too, venerating it with honour, love with all your heart his Vicar, and if your sacredmajesty follow by preference their orthodox Faith, according to our holy Roman

Church. May the chief of the Apostleshimself, to whom the power was given byour Lord God to bind and remit sins in heaven and earth, be often your protector,and trample all barbarous nations underyour feet, and everywhere make you conquerors.For let sacred authority lay open the marks of his dignity, and how great veneration ought to be shewn to his, the highest See, by all the faithful in the world. For the Lord set him who bears the keys[As read in Greek to the Council.] (Migne, Pat. Lat., Tom. XCVI., col. 1218.)

If the ancient orthodoxy be perfected and restored by your means in those regions, and the venerable icons be placed in their original state, you will be partakers with the Lord Constantine, Emperor of old, now in the Divine keeping, and the Empress Helena, who made conspicuous and confirmed the orthodox Faith, and exalted still more your holy mother, the Catholic and Roman and spiritual Church, and with the orthodox Emperors who ruled after them, and so your most pious and heaven-protected name likewise will be set forth as that of another Constantine and another Helena, being renowned and praised through the whole world, by whom theholy Catholic and Apostolic Church is restored. And especially if you follow the tradition of the orthodox Faith of the Church of the holy Peter and Paul, the chief Apostles, and embrace their Vicar, asthe Emperors who reigned before you ofold both

honoured their Vicar, and loved him with all their heart: and if your sacred majesty honour the most holy Roman Church of the chief Apostles, to whom was given power by God the Word himself to loose and to bind sins in heaven and earth. For they will extend their shield over your power, and all barbarous nations shall be put under your feet: and wherever you go they will make you conquerors.

For the holy and chief Apostles themselves, who set up the Catholic and orthodox Faith, have laid it down as a written law that all who after them are to be successors of their seats, should hold their Faith and remain in it to the end. of the kingdom of heaven as chief over all, and by Him is he honoured with this privilege, by which the keys of the kingdom of heaven are entrusted to him. He, therefore, that was preferred with so exalted an honour was thought worthy to confess that Faith on which the Church of Christ is rounded. A blessed reward followed that blessed confession, by the preaching of which the holy universal Church was illumined, and from it the other Churches of God have derived the proofs of Faith. For the blessed Peter himself, the chief of the Apostles, who first sat in the Apostolic See, left the chiefship of his Apostolate, and pastoral care, to his successors, who are to sit in his most holy seat for ever. And that power of authority, which he received from the Lord God our Saviour, he too bestowed and delivered by divine command to the Pontiffs, his successors, etc.[The part which was never read to the Council at all. (Found in L. and C., Concilia, Tom. VII., col. 117.)

We greatly wondered that in your imperial commands, directed for the Patriarch of the royal city, Tarasius, we find him there called Universal: but we know not whether this was written through ignorance or schism, or the heresy of the wicked. But henceforth we advise your most merciful and imperial majesty, that he be by no means called Universal in your writings, because it appears to be contrary to the institutions of the holy Canons and the decrees of the traditions of the holy Fathers. For he never could have ranked second, save for the authority of our holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, as is plain to all. Because if he be named Universal, above the holy Roman Church which has a prior rank, which is the head of all the Churches of God, it is certain that he shews himself as a rebel against the holy Councils, and a heretic. For, if he is Universal, he is recognized to have the Primacy even over the (Church of our See, which appears ridiculous to all faithful Christians: because in the whole world the chief rank and power was given to the blessed Apostle Peter by the Redeemer of the world himself; and through the same Apostle, whose place we unworthily hold, the holy Catholic and Apostolic Roman Church holds the first rank, and the authority of power, now and for ever, so that if any one, which we believe not, has called him, or assents to his being called Universal, let him know that he is estranged from the orthodox Faith, and a rebel against our holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

[After the reading was ended (col. 120)] Tarasius the most holy patriarch said: Did you yourselves receive these letters from the most holy Pope, and did you carry them to our pious Emperor? Peter and Peter the most beloved-of-God presbyters who held the place of Hadrian, the most holy pope of Rome, said: We ourselves received such letters from our apos-

tolic father and delivered them to the pious lords. John, the most magnificent Logothete, said: That this is the case is also known to the Sicilians, the beloved of God Theodore, the bishop of Catanea, and the most revered deacon Epiphanius who is with him, who holds the place of the archbishop of Sardinia. For both of these at the bidding of our pious Emperors, went to Rome with the most reverend apocrisarius of our most holy patriarch. Theodore the God-beloved bishop of Catanea, standing in the midst, said: The pious emperor, by his honourable jussio, bid send Leo, the most god-beloved presbyter (who together with myself is a slave of your holiness), with the precious letter of his most sacred majesty; and he who reveres our [sic in Greek, "your," in Latin] holiness, being the governor (strathgoj) of my province of Sicily, sent me to Rome with the pious jussio of our orthodox Emperors.

And when we were gone, we announced file orthodox faith of the pious emperors. And when the most blessed Pope heard it, he said: Since this has come to pass in the days of their reign, God has magnified their pious rule above all former reigns. And this suggestion (anaforan) which has been read he sent to our most pious kings together with a letter to your holiness and with his vicars who are here present and presiding. Cosmas, the deacon, notary, and chamberlain (Cubuclesius) said: And another letter was sent by the most holy Pope of Old Rome to Tarasius, our most holy and oecumenical Patriarch. Let it be disposed of as your holy assembly shall direct. The Holy Synod said, Let it be read. [Then was read Hadrian's letter to Tarasius of Constantinople, which ends by saying that. "our dearly-loved proto-presbyter of the Holy Church of Rome, and Peter, a monk, a presbyter, and an abbot, who have been sent by us to the most tranquil and pious emperors, we beg you will deem them worthy of all kindness and humane amenity for the sake of St. Peter, coropheus of the Apostles, and for our sakes, so that for this we may be able to offer you our sincere thanks." The letter being ended (col. 128),]

Peter and Peter, the most reverend presbyters and representatives of the most holy Pope of Old Rome said: Let the most holy Tarasius, Patriarch of the royal city, say whether he agrees (stoikei) with the letters of the most holy Pope of Old Rome or not. Tarasius the most holy patriarch said: The divine Apostle Paul, who was filled with the light of Christ, and who hath begotten us through the gospel, in writing to the Romans, commending their zeal for the true faith which they had in Christ our true God, thus said: "Your faith is gone forth into all the world." It is necessary to follow out this witness, and he that would contradict it is without good sense. Wherefore Hadrian, the ruler of Old Rome, since he was a sharer of these things, thus borne witness to, wrote expressly and truly to our religious Emperors, and to our humility, confirming admirably and beautifully the ancient tradition of the Catholic Church. And we also ourselves, having examined both in writing, and by inquisition, and syllogistically and by demonstration, and having been taught by the teachings of the Fathers, so have confessed, so do confess, and so will confess; and shall be fast, and shall remain, and shall stand firm in the sense of the letters which have just been read, receiving the imaged representations according to the ancient tradition of our holy fathers; and these we venerate with firmly-attached affection, as made in the name of Christ our

God, and of our Spotless Lady the Holy Mother of God, and of the Holy Angels, and of all the Saints, most clearly giving our adoration and faith to the one only true God.

And the holy Synod said: The whole holySynod thus teaches. Peter and Peter, the God-loved presbyters and legates of the Apostolic See, said: Let the holy Synod say whether it receives the letters of the most holy Pope of Old Rome. The holy Synod said: We follow, we receive, we admit them. [The bishops then give one by one their votes all in the same sense.]

Source. English translation: an older public-domain translation as collected in the Writings-Database (HistoricalChristianFaith), mostly from the Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers and similar nineteenth-century editions. SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Square brackets, Greek or Latin words and footnote-free text are as the source file prints them, and a transcription error may remain. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.