

Resolution of the Katholikentag in Aachen (1862)

Abstract

The September 1862 declaration of the Katholikentag, the annual assembly of Roman Catholic clubs, organizations, and societies from across Central Europe, addresses concerns that the exclusion of Catholic Austria from a German nation-state would leave Catholics as a minority in a nation-state dominated by Prussian Protestants. Founded in 1848 in Mainz, the Katholikentag provided a forum for the public discussion of issues affecting all German Catholics.

Source

- 1) The Catholic Church does not commit anyone to any political party position; it is compatible with every form of government and every political system that does not contradict the commandments of God and the principles of justice;
- 2) the Catholic Church is not a supporter of despotism and not an enemy of political freedom and autonomy. As in all centuries, it rejects—also today—any arbitrary rule, be it by princes, by parliaments or by political parties;
- 3) Catholics are not opponents of political progress; they welcome all political reforms that serve the welfare of the people; but they conscientiously reject any breach of law and abhor every revolution, whether it is based on universal suffrage or on the principle of nationality or on the so-called principle of *faits accomplis*;
- 4) the Catholic assembly reiterates the protest raised against the dispossession of the Holy See. It demands that the Holy Father be returned to full possession of his temporal dominion, as divine providence has given it to him and as it is due to him by the power of international law and sacred treaties, and solemnly confesses the principles that the bishops assembled in Rome expressed in their address to Pius IX;
- 5) the assembly sees in the existence of the so-called Kingdom of Italy a revolutionary victory that threatens the entire European order; it therefore deeply deplores the recognition that the very same has partly obtained, and thanks all the princes and men who have opposed this recognition;
- 6) imbued with the most ardent love for the German fatherland, the Catholics assembled here protest against the slander that they, cast under the suspicion expressed by the catchword “Ultramontane,” are not good patriots. They invoke the great German past of Charlemagne onwards as a testimony to the fact that devotion to the Holy See has at no time impaired the greatness and glory of the fatherland;
- 7) although unity of faith is the surest foundation of political unity, Catholics do not see the schism in belief as an insuperable obstacle to German unity, provided that the principles of justice and genuine toleration are applied in all states and in the fatherland as a whole;
- 8) the Catholics assembled in Aachen, the old German imperial city on the borders of the fatherland, declare every attempt to dismember Germany—whether to the advantage of a German or a foreign power—to be a sacrilege. They protest against the exclusion of the Catholic imperial house from Germany and abhor any indulgence of foreign ambition;
- 9) the Catholic general assembly, in light of the ongoing distress of the Holy Father Pius IX and the

need—which grows daily—to maintain his dignity, freedom, and independence, declares the payment of the St. Peter’s Pence [*Peterspfennig*] to be an exquisitely good work under the current circumstances, in which a Catholic not only practices the duty of Christian charity but also reveals his zeal for holy belief and his love of church and of freedom; it therefore calls upon all members of Catholic associations not only to continue payment of the Peter’s Pence themselves, but also to work towards this among others as much as possible.

Source: H. Schultheß, *Europäischer Geschichtskalender*, no. 3, 1862, p. 89 ff; reprinted in Ernst Rudolf Huber, ed., *Deutsche Verfassungsdokumente, 1851–1900*, vol. 2, *Dokumente zur deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, 3rd ed., rev. and enl. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1986, pp. 132–33.

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