

IS THE POPE INFALLIBLE?

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PART I.

THE NATURE OF INFALLIBILITY

IN this paper we treat of what is technically called the infallibility of the Pope. As another pamphlet of the Dogmatic Series treats of the infallibility of the Church, we can take as already sufficiently explained much that otherwise would have to be dwelt upon. Hence, when in order to clear the ground a few preliminary remarks are found necessary, we make them very briefly, as they will elsewhere have been more fully set forth.

INFALLIBILITY DISTINCT FROM INSPIRATION AND FROM REVELATION

First, a word on the nature of infallibility. This gift is not to be confused with that of inspiration. We should be safe in saying that the essence of inspiration at least implies that man's intellect and will are supernaturally moved by God to express what He wishes to be stated in His name. But infallibility, as we shall see, does not demand such an action on the part of God; and hence an *ex cathedra* definition cannot be said to be the Word of God in the same sense in which the Scriptures are so called: for God is not the author of what the Pope says; He only guarantees that the statement is true. Much less is an infallible pronouncement to be regarded as a new revelation made to the Pope. For revelation requires that the person to whom a revealed doctrine is manifested should not only be conscious of its truth, but should also be aware that it is God Who declares it to him.

INFALLIBILITY IS A SAFEGUARD

In what, then, does infallibility consist? It consists in a divine guarantee of assurance on the part of God that the Pope—in certain well-defined circumstances—will not teach error. This could be the case though God did not either reveal the truth to him or even give supernatural assistance to aid him in coming to a decision. We may indeed conjecture that God does give special help, but that He should do so is not included in the notion of infallibility. We conceive of God standing by, as it were, and watching to see that the final decision is correct. He does not guarantee that an authoritative statement will be made whenever one would be useful, but merely that, if such a one is made, it will be true.

A rough analogy will illustrate what is meant by the promise of infallibility: —I am an accomplished mathematician, and I promise a pupil that he will not give a wrong answer to a problem in arithmetic. I fulfil my agreement if, when the boy is at work, I stand over him and prevent him setting out the wrong answer; I may even let him go wrong at one or other point in his calculations and balance it by making another error elsewhere; I may tell him the answer, but I need not. All that is required is that the solution be correct. Note, therefore, two things: Firstly, if I stop him when I see him about to go wrong, I carry out my promise, even though he comes to no decision. Secondly, if the boy arrives at the right answer, though at fault in some of the steps which lead to it, I have even here been faithful to my word; for the answer is correct.

AN OBJECTION BASED ON A MISCONCEPTION OF THE NATURE OF INFALLIBILITY

This preliminary exposition robs a common objection of its force. Our adversaries contend that in reality the Church does not claim infallibility, either for herself or for her Head. They appeal to certain disputes amongst orthodox Catholics, when feeling ran very high and much bitter controversy ensued. The classic example given is the marked difference between the theories adopted for reconciling free-will with the action of divine grace; each side defended its case with great acumen and sometimes with considerable bitterness. And it is urged that the Pope cannot claim to be infallible, since he gave no decision: instead, he adopted the tame middle course of imposing silence upon the contending parties; and, as a result, the controversy has been left undecided to this day.

The reply to this objection is obvious. The claim to be infallible does not imply that a decision will be given every time that it might seem fitting for us to have one; if it did include this implication, then it would follow that God is not infallible. Infallibility only means that, when a final and authoritative decision is given, such decision will be true; it is

left to the prudent judgment of the Pope to decide whether or not the time is ripe for an infallible reply. In the historic case we have referred to, the Pope had in point of fact taken it upon himself to settle the disputed question, and was engaged in the laborious task of examining the debated doctrines when he died. His successors thought it wise not to refer to old quarrels; they have allowed the contending parties to continue their speculations upon this abstruse subject, always on the understanding that mutual charity be preserved. And we can honestly say that the fact of the debate never being closed has not been without good result; for it is the aim of every student of theology to grasp thoroughly the two conflicting views; and this has been no small stimulus in examining questions concerning the operations of grace.

INFALLIBILITY DISTINCT FROM INERRANCY

In the next place, infallibility is not synonymous with inerrancy; it does not mean that the Roman Pontiff is prevented by God from privately holding views which are unorthodox. Thus, if the Pope published a theological work, as did Benedict XIV, we do not believe that error is necessarily excluded. Such a book would contain merely the expression of private opinions; and though naturally paying more deference to them than to the views of other theologians, we should be under no obligation to receive them as true. For, as a child who knows his catechism would remark, the Pope in this case is not imposing upon the whole Church the duty of assenting to a particular doctrine of faith.

THE SPHERE OF INFALLIBILITY

We have next to state the ambit of infallibility. It extends as far as and no farther than the infallibility of the Church. That is to say, the question which the Pope decides must, in some way, affect the substance of Christ's teaching. The Vatican Council is explicit on this point: "The Holy Spirit was not promised to Peter's successors that by the aid of His revelation they might proclaim new teaching, but that by the aid of His assistance they might sacredly guard and faithfully expound the revelation or deposit of faith handed down through the Apostles."

One naturally asks, what must be the connection between the doctrine taught infallibly and the original tradition. The connection must be one of three: First, the doctrine defined may be a truth formally and explicitly revealed—as, for example, that Christ Our Lord has a human and a divine nature; secondly, it may be a truth likewise formally revealed, but not in clear and precise terms—as, for instance that Jesus Christ has a human and divine will which are distinct from each other; this is part of the revelation that He is truly God and truly Man; and thirdly, it may be a truth which is logically deduced from, and is so closely bound up with what is formally revealed, that were it rejected, this body of revealed truth would be in danger.

We have limited the sphere in which the privilege of infallibility can be exercised. But at the same time we must ever lay great emphasis upon the fact that quite independently of his infallibility, the Pope can exercise his supreme authority and may decide whether a doctrine may or may not be taught, or he may condemn opinions and censure those who hold them. For without acting as an infallible guide, he may use the authority which belongs to him as the Head of the Church. Being the legitimate head of a society which is hierarchial, he has the right to enforce such decisions as he may deem fitting, and this not merely in external matters but also in those of conscience. We have a fairly close parallel in the relations of a parent towards his child: it may be very inadvisable that a boy in his early teens should hold some of the doctrines of evolution or of modern eugenics; his father is justified not only in forbidding him to read books favouring these views, but also in obliging him to reject these opinions. This the parent does without claiming that his judgments are infallibly correct. He is the teacher appointed by God to instruct the child, and has, therefore, the right to claim obedience.

From this we make an important deduction. When, even on matters of faith or morals, a decision is come to by the Pope and its acceptance is made binding upon the conscience of some individuals, we have not necessarily got an infallible pronouncement, since, as we have seen, he could act in this way from the mere fact that he holds a position similar to that held by a father in relation to his children, i.e., the Pope can claim obedience because appointed by God to teach. For a decision to be infallible, it is further required that the Pope exercise his privilege of infallible teacher; and when he does this he intimates clearly enough that this is his intention. Our reason for stressing this point is that it gives us a satisfactory answer to some of the strongest objections urged against the Catholic position.

PART II. PROOF OF OUR DOCTRINE

(A) THE VATICAN COUNCIL.—We now advance our proof for papal infallibility. For a Catholic who believes in the infallibility of the Church there is little difficulty, since the Vatican Council (1869-1870) has authoritatively taught the doctrine. ". . . We teach and define that it is a divinely revealed dogma that the Roman Pontiff, when speaking *ex cathedra*—that is when exercising his office of pastor and teacher of all Christians and when employing his supreme apostolic authority—defines that a doctrine on faith and morals is to be held by the whole Church, then because of the assistance of God promised to him in the person of St. Peter, he enjoys that infallibility with which Our Divine Redeemer wished His Church to be furnished in defining a doctrine on faith or morals; and that, therefore, these definitions of the Roman Pontiff of themselves and not through the consent of the Church, are irrefragable."

(B) THE DOCTRINE FOUND IN TRADITION.—The objection that this doctrine is new and was not always believed in by the Church, is met by the Vatican Council itself. Before formulating its teaching, it is at great pains to show that from the very earliest times, the Church not only acted on the supposition that the primacy of the Roman See included the infallibility of the Pope, but that the Pope actually used his personal authority and received unquestioning obedience from the Councils. We find cited the following general synods of the Church: The Fourth Council of Constantinople (A.D. 869); here it is stated that the Apostolic See has never erred in its teaching, and as a reason for this the Council cites Our Divine Lord's promise to St. Peter: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church." The Second Council of Lyons (1274); here the Greek Bishops assert: "If any questions arise concerning the faith, it is by his judgment (the Pope's) that they are defined." Finally, the Council of Florence (1438) states: "The Roman Pontiff is Christ's true vicar, the Head of the whole Church, and the Father and teacher of all Christians; and by Our Lord Jesus Christ there was given to him, in the person of St. Peter, full power to feed and rule and govern the universal Church." We may add one historic case where a general Council admitted in a very marked way that the Pope can make an infallible pronouncement independently of the Bishops assembled in Council. Pope St. Leo (440-461) sent to the Council of Chalcedon a masterful exposition of the doctrine of the Incarnation; he further enjoined the Council to accept this as an authoritative decision which they were to make their own and were to promulgate by incorporating in their acts. The Council not only accepted the position assumed by the Pope, they accepted his doctrine and went on to state that it was divinely guaranteed as true. They passed their vote by the acclamation: "Peter has spoken through Leo." Several other instances could be quoted where a Pope dictated to a General Council what doctrine it was to define; in each case he met with no opposition on the ground that he was usurping authority that belonged to him only as a member of a Council, or on the ground that his decrees were infallible only when accepted and confirmed by such a body. Thus the Vatican Council taught no new doctrine when it defined the dogma of papal infallibility; it gave us in precise and explicit terms a doctrine which was always held by the Church.

The pretended aim of not a few Protestants and High Church Anglicans is to return to the doctrines of the early Church, wherein, they tell us, the powers now claimed for the Pope were unknown. But from the facts we have stated, it is clear that these religious bodies cannot claim to hold the pure teaching of the early Church, unless they can disprove our contention that from the earliest times this prerogative of the Pope was admitted. We assert that we have history on our side.

It may be of interest to note in conclusion that the Lutherans and Protestants who deny papal infallibility really claim for each individual far more than the Catholic Church claims for its Head. Luther denied the Catholic doctrine and put in its place the principle of "private interpretation of the Scripture." He asserted that the Holy Ghost inspired each devout reader of the Scripture with the meaning of what he was reading. Luther thus substituted for one infallible teacher a host of infallible interpreters, each of them with far greater privileges than Catholics claim for the Pope—for every reader is not merely prevented from error, he is inspired as well!

(C) PROOF FROM SCRIPTURE.—Can we show from Our Divine Lord's words in the New Testament that the promise of being an infallible teacher was made not only to St. Peter but also to his successors in the Apostolic See? Yes. Three passages are commonly adduced—St. Matthew xvi. 18, St. Luke xxii. 31-32, and St. John xxi. 15-17. The first gives us the proof which is most easily grasped. But in the meantime we turn to the 22nd chapter of St. Luke's Gospel; verse 31 reads:

"And the Lord said: Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you that he might sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not: and thou being once converted confirm thy brethren." Now, it is clear that this prayer of Christ is not merely the expression of a conditional wish, such as we find in the account of the Agony in the Garden; there Our Lord prayed that the chalice might pass from Him, but on the condition that this was His Father's will. In the passage we are considering, the whole context shows that there is, no such proviso intended: the prayer is nothing less than an explicit promise that Peter's faith will not fail; that after his conversion (Our Lord hints at a fall) he would, because of this unerring faith, be the mainstay of his brethren. At least, then, this much is clear, that to St. Peter was given the promise of unerring faith which would make him an infallible teacher of the other Apostles. This interpretation of the passage is greatly strengthened by tradition; the text is one upon which the Fathers of the Church lay much stress when they are setting forth their arguments for their belief in the Pope's right to teach with authority; for they make constant reference to Peter's gift of infallible faith. We could, moreover, show that this passage in St. Luke also proves the second proposition, viz., that the promise of infallibility also extends to Peter's successors. But this latter truth is more clearly seen from an examination of St. Matthew xvi. 18 : "Thou art Peter and upon this Rock I will build My Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." If the Church once teaches heresy and commands her children to entertain false notions about God, the divinity of Christ, the nature of the sacraments, etc., hell' certainly wins a victory. Hence from the clause "the gates (or power) of hell shall not prevail against it," we conclude that the Church is guaranteed against making any such mistakes.

We have now to show that this promise extends not only to the Church as a teaching body, but also to the Head of the Church. Let us again examine the passage: "Thou art Peter and upon this Rock I will build My Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Does Our Lord here state any reason why the power of hell shall not gain a victory over the Church? Yes. The rock foundation is to account for the stability of the building; because of this foundation the superstructure will endure unimpaired by the assaults of the powers of darkness. Now, this foundation must endure as long as the Church itself, otherwise it cannot be the cause of the Church's stability. Christ, therefore, is not restricting His promise to St. Peter, but is extending it to his successors. This is our ground for contending that the Pope, who is in St. Peter's place, is heir to the promise made to the Prince of the Apostles.

FOUR OBJECTIONS AGAINST THIS INTERPRETATION

FIRST OBJECTION.—It is urged that when Our Lord says "upon this Rock," He means "upon Myself," in that He is the "corner stone" mentioned in the prophecies. But such an interpretation does open violence to the text. In the first place, from the context it is clear beyond all doubt that Our Lord is rewarding St. Peter for his superb confession of faith in the divinity of his Master. But the mere statement that Christ Our Lord is to be the Founder of His Church is no reward to St. Peter. Secondly, the Greek and the Latin words used in the passage are against this unnatural interpretation. There is intended a play upon the words "Petros" (netpos) and "Petra" (netpa): clearly the same individual is meant by each of these names. This is more clearly shown by the Aramaic, which Christ spoke; for here the word would be the same in both clauses—Kepha—and the sentence would sound like this

Thou art called Rock; and upon this Rock I will build My Church. Lastly, on the view which we are rejecting, Our Lord's statement is peculiarly disconnected and obscure. He would say in effect: "Blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jona (Son of Jona), because flesh and blood hath not revealed it (My divinity) to thee, but My Father Who is in heaven. And I say to thee that thou art Peter ('the Rock') and upon Myself I will build My Church." This last sentence is at least illogical; Our Lord is contrasting the blessing Peter has received from the Father in Heaven and that now about to be bestowed upon him; yet Our Lord bestows nothing!

SECOND OBJECTION.—The same answer applies to another forced interpretation, according to which the Rock on which Christ will build His Church, is the faith of Peter. It simply ignores the identity between Peter (Kepha) and the Rock (Kepha). Let us suppose that an officer named Head is being rewarded for gallant service and that the Field Marshal thus addresses him: "No ordinary man could have acted as you did, but only one endowed with conspicuous bravery. Thou art Head, and under this head I place the army." Could it be urged seriously that the Marshal means that the officer's bravery will be the mainstay of the army? Surely the play upon the words identifies Head with the man who is to be the leader of that army.

THIRD OBJECTION.—It is urged that, if we are consistent, we should also claim that the Pope is incapable of sinning, or at least must never sin. For, if hell is not to triumph over the Church, her holiness must be as certain as her infallibility. Therefore, if we base the Church's infallibility upon that of the Pope, we ought in like manner state that the cause of her holiness is the sanctity of her Head. But we make no such claim and could not, in the face of history.

This difficulty rests upon the misleading parallel drawn between infallibility and holiness. Holiness is not communicable between man and man, except by prayer and good example; in itself the fact that a Pope is holy or wicked does not necessitate that the members of the Church are like him. But if a Pope teaches error and has authority to enforce it, then the faithful necessarily follow him in believing falsehood about God. Hence when we allege as one of the causes of the Church's infallibility the divine assistance promised to its Head, we are not, in consequence, bound to say that the Church, if holy, must have a saint for its Pope. The sacraments and grace—not the moral qualities of the Roman Pontiff—are the main causes of the Church's sanctity.

FOURTH OBJECTION.—Finally, an example is brought forward to show that Christ's promise of victory to His Church is compatible with occasional lapses into error on the part of the Pope. A general sends an officer on an expedition against the enemy. He promises the officer that the hostile forces will not prevail against him. Does this imply that in no single engagement will the officer be worsted, or only that the campaign will finally be triumphant? This latter result suffices. In like manner, it is urged, Christ promises that because of Peter being the rock foundation of the Church, the powers of hell will not prevail against it. Why should this imply that hell will never gain a victory in that the Pope once teaches heresy? Is it not enough that the Church will finally triumph over error?

The analogy is misleading; the results of partial failure are not the same in the two cases. With the officer, a partial failure or temporary defeat does not spell total disaster; but it does spell total disaster in the second case; for if the Pope on one single occasion teaches heresy, how are we to be sure that he will not do so again? We are then in a position just as deplorable as that of the non-Catholic sects who have no ultimate authority to decide their controversies. Clearly we are playing with words if we contend that Christ's promise merely means that at the Last Day there will be no error taught in the Church, while for centuries there have prevailed discord and contradictory doctrines and perverse views on matters as important as the nature of God, the Incarnation, the sacraments, the immortality of the soul, etc.

PART III.

A.—POPE HONORIUS

We now mention an historic case which our adversaries never tire of quoting. It is alleged that one Pope in particular so egregiously erred in his authoritative teaching, that a General Council condemned him in the most open and vigorous language. From this the conclusion is drawn that papal infallibility is weighed in the balance and is found wanting; and secondly that the Council in condemning the Pope clearly showed that it did not admit the doctrine that he could not err. We refer to the case of Pope Honorius. Much ink has been spilt on this famous question. Here we can give only the most meagre outline of the facts: For the preceding half-century Our Lord's sacred divinity in relation to His humanity had been warmly discussed. There arose in quick succession two heresies which were sharply opposed to each other. First, Nestorius (427) asserted that as, according to Catholic teaching, there were two natures in Christ—the human and the divine—there were also two persons—the one the Son of God, the other the son of man. He held that Christ Our Lord first existed as man and was, later, united to God by a union of affection and dignity; God dwelt in Him as in any other saint, but in a more perfect way, so that there was a complete harmony between the actions of this man and the Will of God. This could be expressed by saying that there was a unity of operation. This phrase, "unity of operation," we must carefully bear in mind, as it played a conspicuous part in the controversy that followed.

This heresy was condemned by the General Council of Ephesus (431) and the unity of Christ's person was affirmed in the clearest terms. About the year 441 Eutyches, a monk of Constantinople, while vigorously opposing the heresy of Nestorius, erred in the opposite extreme. He pressed for a union which made the two natures of Christ fuse into one, whereas he should have maintained, as was later defined by the Council of Chalcedon (451), that the two natures remained distinct. Thinkers now began to ask whether these two natures each retained its power of acting, and in

particular whether Christ Our Lord had two distinct wills. They were faced by the fact that He could not sin, and they sought to explain it. Some said that Our Lord had no human will; others that He had such a faculty, but that its functions were held in suspense and that only the divine will acted in Him. The theory of both could be covered by the formula that in Christ there was only "one operation." We see at once the ambiguity of this phrase; it may have three distinct meanings: (a) Christ had only one will, the divine; and therefore only one principle of volition. This is heresy. (b) In Our Lord only one of His wills acted, viz., the divine. That is also incorrect. (c) The human will acted in complete harmony with the divine—a perfectly orthodox assertion.

Now, at this time great efforts were being made to win back to orthodoxy the heretical sect which claimed that Our Lord had only one will. In the course of this attempt the expression "one operation" was used by certain theologians at Constantinople. Some thought the formula quite orthodox, and had hopes that the heretics would admit it, and so be reconciled with the Church. Sergius, the Patriarch of Constantinople was of this opinion. Others were suspicious of this use of words, and felt that a false construction could easily be put upon them. In point of fact, heretics of Alexandria, putting their own interpretation upon this phrase, agreed to the formula, and were re-admitted to the Church by Cyrus, Patriarch of that city. Disputes broke out afresh, and it seemed that the recent reconciliation of the heretics would be undone if there were more discussion upon the fittingness of the term "one operation." Accordingly, instructions were issued by the local authorities forbidding either one or two operations to be spoken of. It was thought wiser to squash the controversy and wait for a more fitting time to decide the question.

Sergius of Constantinople now writes to Pope Honorius. The Patriarch relates how the heretics have accepted the formula "one operation"; how he himself is chary of the expression, because of its novelty, and had accordingly issued instructions to permit of no discussion upon the use of the term; he is much in doubt, and wants the Pope to clear up matters for him. (Whether or not Sergius was in good faith does not concern us here). The answer sent by Honorius are the famous letters upon which the opponents of papal infallibility lay such stress.

Two answers, or, rather, copies of them, are extant. Their main points are as follows: (i.) Sergius is quite right in closing the controversy by forbidding further discussion upon the appropriateness of the expressions "one operation" or "two operations." (ii.) It is "quite silly" to quarrel over the question as to which of these formulae is the more correct; for in Christ Our Lord there are many operations; does not St. Paul tell us, "There are diversities of operations of the Spirit, but the same God who worketh all in all"? (1 Cor. xii. 6). Should we not, then, say that all these operations—prophecy, the gift of healing, the word of wisdom, etc.—are found in Christ, rather than limit them to one or two? (iii.) Let Sergius maintain that in Our Lord there are two natures, each complete and distinct, but that there is only one person who operates by means of them. This manner of expressing the truth is safe, and cannot be suspected of favouring either Nestorianism or Eutychianism. (iv.) "I myself profess there is one will in Our Lord Jesus Christ." Thus states Honorius in one place. He would have been more careful in his choice of words had he foreseen how often this phrase was to have been cited against him in after times. But, as we shall see, the accusation made against him because of this sentence, is an unfair one.

The upshot of this answer caused trouble. Sergius drew up an exposition of doctrine which was later claimed to be based on the teaching of Honorius. This exposition, or "ecthesis," as it was called, was published in the Emperor's name: all his subjects are to confess there is one will in Our Lord, but are not to state whether there are one or two operations.

THE FIRST PHASE OF THE OBJECTION.—It is urged that Honorius both held and taught heretical views; for he believed there is only one will in Our Lord—a doctrine which, later, was explicitly condemned by the Church; his words are cited as being clear and unambiguous: "I profess there is one will in Our Lord Jesus Christ."

We reply that the context in which this sentence is found makes it practically beyond all doubt that Honorius was quite orthodox. For what did he mean by "one will"? Did he mean to exclude either the human or the divine will? No. He asserts that Christ had not what we call "the lower will of man," or what St. Paul calls "the law of the members," i.e., the ungoverned clamouring of the sensitive part of our nature for satisfaction. Honorius is showing how in Our Lord the impossibility of sinning and the possession of a perfect will are quite compatible—for there is only one, i.e., only one human will in Christ (whether his argument is convincing or not does not concern us here).

Others defend Honorius on different lines, e.g., they note that we have not got his original letter: that it was never

produced: that the objectionable clause we have cited shows signs of having been interpolated. Be this as it may. We prefer to say that an unbiassed and careful examination of the letters, as they have come down to us, prevents us from asserting that Honorius ever stated that either the human or the divine will was not found in Christ. The sentence, "I profess one will in Our Lord Jesus Christ," must be read in its context—and in its context it bears quite an orthodox meaning.

THE OBJECTION PRESSED FURTHER.—If all this is so clear, how came it about that the Sixth General Council and Pope Leo condemned Honorius? Had not these a better chance of judging him than we have, some thirteen centuries after the event? We answer the question by inquiring, "On what charges was Honorius condemned?" And we answer, "On the following: He concurred efficaciously in the spread of heresy, for he failed to oppose it with the truth: he expressly permitted the use of an ambiguous formula which the heretics employed in an incorrect sense: he asserted that the discussion on the relative propriety of the expression 'one operation' or 'two operations,' was futile and childish." None of these various condemnatory sentences can be shown to mean that he was thought to have held one will or the "one operation" in the heretical sense. Hence his condemnation does not prove anything against the infallibility of the Pope.

We establish this position by citing briefly the words used by those who condemned him. (i.) After listening to the reading of several letters of Sergius and two of Honorius, the Council states: "We have found that these letters concur in one and the same impiety"; it then orders the writings to be burnt because they "are profane and dangerous." No mention is made of Honorius's doctrines; he is guilty of "concurring" in heresy, and we have seen how he did this. (ii.) The Council mentions Honorius as being one of those whom the devil uses, "finding them suitable instruments for carrying out his wishes." Honorius is not a heretic; he is a useful, though unwitting, instrument. (iii.) To Pope Agatho the Emperor gives an account of the proceedings of the Council. He includes Honorius in a list of heretics who are condemned, put him in a class apart, as "the man who confirmed this heresy"—not, it must be noted, as a man who held heretical views. (iv.) Pope Leo, after the death of Agatho, writes to the Emperor and confirms the acts of the Council. He, too, condemns Honorius, but for a special reason, viz., "Because he did not attempt to sanctify this Apostolic Church by the teaching of the Apostolic tradition; but with base teaching permitted the unspotted faith to receive a blemish." Thus Leo deliberately omits to approve of the Council having put Honorius's name in the middle of a list of heretics, as though he was guilty in the same way in which they were. (v.) The same Pope Leo relates to the Bishops of Spain the decisions of this Sixth General Council, and again gives a list of those there anathematized as heretics; he includes Honorius, but states the ground of his condemnation, viz., "He did not extinguish, as the Apostolic authority should have done, the incipient flame of heretical doctrine, but nourished it by his negligence." Thus, even supposing these two letters cited in (iv.) and (v.) are genuine—which is by no means certain—they do not prove that Pope Leo condemned Honorius for holding or teaching heresy.

BISHOP GORE URGES THE OBJECTION FROM ANOTHER STANDPOINT.—It is further objected that the Fathers of the General Council had no notion of papal infallibility; else how could they have branded a Pope as a heretic on the ground that he had taught false doctrine? Our answer is brief. It is already contained in what has been said before, viz., Honorius was not condemned for holding unorthodox views, but for failing in his duty to crush heresy, and for being, in consequence, largely responsible for the disasters that followed.*

THE OBJECTION ANSWERED ON ALL POINTS.—Now, let us give what is a final answer. Let us suppose which we do not for a moment grant—that it is proved to the hilt that Honorius really was a heretic, and, moreover, taught heresy. Would it follow that those who condemned him thereby avowed their disbelief in papal infallibility?

**We might add here, in mitigation of his offence, that he does not seem to have been clear on what the heretics meant by the phrase "one operation." They used the formula to signify that in Christ there was only one active faculty of volition—either because there was only one will, or because one or other of Christ's two wills did not function. Honorius took "one operation" to mean one kind of effect produced, and was consequently at a loss to see why men should quarrel over the limitation to be made in these kinds of effects. He accordingly dismissed the controversy as being merely a verbal discussion which should be "decided by grammarians."*

No, not unless Honorius as making an *ex cathedra* statement, and there is not the slightest ground for believing that he made such a pronouncement. For (i.), In no less than four places in his letters he rejects all idea of defining doctrine in favour of one side or the other: (a) "We must not wrest what they say into Church dogmas"; (b) "We must not define either one or two operations"; (c) "We leave the matter to grammarians"; (d) "We must not, defining, pronounce one or two operations." (ii.) Secondly, he imposed no obligations upon the faithful to hold any of the doctrinal opinions expressed in his letter: the customary grave penalties for refusing to assent to the doctrine taught, receive no mention: he makes no reference to the use of Petrine authority nor to the traditional teaching of the Church. In other words, Honorius did not claim to be speaking with the mouth of Peter nor to be exercising that Apostle's privilege of infallibility. Therefore, in face of all this it cannot be asserted that an *ex cathedra* statement was made, or that that Council thought that such a definition had been pronounced. Bishop Gore's objection accordingly loses its force.

THE CASE OF HONORIUS IS ALL IN OUR FAVOUR.—But now that our adversaries have cited this condemnation pronounced by the Sixth General Council upon Honorius, they should themselves bear the consequences of their appeal to history. For the proceedings of this very Council furnish a flat denial to the statement that the doctrine of papal infallibility was unknown in the early Church. The reigning Pope, St. Agatho, wrote, through the Emperor, to the Fathers assembled in Council. And we stress very strongly the tone and contents of this letter, and still more the manner in which the instructions were received. The salient features of this long epistle are as follows: St. Agatho begins by making it clear beyond all doubt that he is about to state no mere personal opinion, but is declaring the faith of the Church. In this the nature of his letter differs *toto coelo* from that of Honorius's letter to Sergius. Next he asserts that no successor of St. Peter had defiled the Petrine tradition by teaching error to the Church of God. Lastly, he imposes upon the Council the obligation of receiving the doctrine of two wills and two operations, as expounded by himself; the assembled Bishops were to accept his ruling at their peril. They had not, in this instance, the office of defining faith, but the duty of accepting it from the Pope, and of publishing it abroad to the world. They might, indeed, examine his arguments—as they did—and verify his citations from the Fathers; but they might not dissent from his final and authoritative decision upon a question which had so long vexed men's minds.

Now what would be the answer of such a Council if it had not—as Bishop Gore asserts it had not—even a rudimentary idea of the doctrine of papal infallibility? Would it tamely and without protest admit the Pope's right to dictate to a General Council of Bishops? If it disbelieved the right of Rome thus to take precedence of the See of Constantinople, would it not be at pains to reject this claim, even though it fully agreed with the doctrinal teaching concerning two wills and two operations in Christ Our Lord? But the Council made no such protest. It accepted not only the doctrine proposed to it, but also the principle so explicitly stated in the letter of Pope Agatho. For the Fathers address the Pope as one "standing upon the firm rock of the faith"; they "freely admit his true doctrine" expressed in his letter, and profess that it is "divinely prescribed by the supreme Head of the Apostles"; they relate that they have refuted the heretics by means of his teaching; and finally they ask him to confirm the acts of the Council because they have carried out his instructions and "have not changed a particle of the traditional teaching" he had expounded to them. Thus we have a full and whole-hearted acceptance of Agatho's letter, and, therefore, a clear proof that the assembled Bishops acknowledged both that the Pope's infallibility was independent of a General Council, and further that he had the right to dictate to a Council what doctrine it should define. Thus the history of the condemnation of Pope Honorius, far from showing that early Councils knew nothing of papal infallibility, really gives striking evidence to the contrary.

B.—GALILEO

Galileo Galilei has been disinterred, times without number, by the opponents of papal infallibility, and made to pronounce judgment against all such pretended claims. He has been portrayed as a martyr championing the cause of science against the Vatican obscurantists, as one tortured by the Inquisition, cast out of the Church's pale, and refused Christian burial. For these and other mythical reasons we Catholics are expected to feel nervously uneasy when the name of Galileo is mentioned—much as though a skeleton was in danger of being dragged from the cupboard to cast a shadow upon our good name. Of these various accusations we are here concerned only with one, viz., that the sentence

passed against Galileo and against the orthodoxy of his opinions is a glaring instance of science having proved that the infallible guide blundered.

THE STORY OF THE CASE.—The answer to this well-worn fable will become apparent from a brief statement of what occurred. Galileo lived from 1564 to 1642. In many branches of science he was justly famous, but here we are interested only in his then novel theory that the earth moved round the sun. This theory was first mooted by Copernicus, and found additional arguments in its favour from the discoveries which Galileo made with his telescope. (*It is undeniable that the arguments of Galileo for the heliocentric system were not by any means conclusive. He had not found evidence for what was later found to be true. Even Huxley who examined the case, states that the opponents of Galileo "had rather the best of it." The medieval astronomer had merely put forward an hypothesis that squared very satisfactorily with the facts.)

In spite of all deficiency in his arguments Galileo asserted as indisputable the truth of his opinion. He wielded an able pen; and, as we shall see, this partly accounts for the treatment he received.

For four years he had been proclaiming his theory, convincing some, and finding others who detected the weak points in his argument. In 1615 the ecclesiastical authorities took alarm. Up to that time the letter of Holy Scripture was taken to express the final judgment in all matters, scientific and religious. On this principle it seemed that Scripture clearly taught the opposite of Galileo's theory—for Scripture spoke of the sun staying its course at the prayer of Josue, and of the earth as being for ever immovable. How then, it was asked, could Galileo, in the face of this, assert that the earth went round the sun?

Hearing that he was in disfavour, Galileo, in 1615, presented himself at Rome, and was courteously received. But meantime the official machinery was set to work. The experts, or "qualifiers," of the Inquisition were called upon to give their opinion on two propositions taught by Galileo: first, that the sun is the centre of the world and does not move from its place; and, secondly, that the earth is not the centre of the world and has a diurnal motion. The Qualifiers reported that the first statement was outright heresy, because in open contradiction to the explicit teaching of Scripture; and that the second statement was, at least, theologically, incorrect. Cardinal Bellarmine was instructed to inform Galileo of this decision, and to tell him that he must renounce these opinions and promise not to advocate them either by word or by writing. This Galileo promised to do, and so avoided further trouble.

This report of the experts of the Inquisition inspired a decree of the Congregation of the Index, which forbade the publication of works advocating the Copernican system, and which gave as its reason that it was open to heresy to declare that the sun did not move through the heavens.* On this point it is to be noted that Cardinal Bellarmine, the most influential member of the Sacred College, writes to one of Galileo's ardent supporters:—"I say that if a real proof be found that the sun is fixed and does not revolve round the earth, but the earth round the sun, then it will be necessary, very cautiously, to proceed to the explanation of the passages in Scripture which appear to be contrary, and we should rather say that we have misunderstood these than pronounce that to be false which is demonstrated." This admission is important in the light of after events.

Galileo paid no attention to his promise made to the Inquisition, and again loudly and constantly proclaimed his system true beyond all doubt. In 1624 he visited Rome again and was treated with lavish hospitality by the Pope; but he failed to secure the withdrawal of the decree against his works. In 1632 he employed a method of defence which was of rather questionable morality. He submitted to the Church authorities a work in which his view was treated all through as an hypothesis. The book was a dialogue between a Ptolemaist and two Copernicans, in which the Ptolemaist was completely routed. The censors gave leave for the work to be published. Having obtained this permission, Galileo now changed the setting of the work by advancing his view not as a theory but as a fact, and made the routed Ptolemaist closely resemble the reigning Pope, Urban VIII. This was published in 1632, and was

**We may note in passing that this decree seems to have been a clumsy compromise between the more conservative theologians and those who saw that perhaps it was not necessary to hold that every expression in Scripture was scientifically exact; for the decree allowed the Copernican system to be held as an hypothetical explanation of the movements of the heavens, provided this was not stated as a fact. Clearly, if the doctrine embodied formal heresy, no Church authority could tolerate its discussion, even as an hypothesis.*

rightly regarded by the officials at Rome as a direct challenge. Being cited before the Inquisition, he protested that since his former condemnation he had never held the views of Copernicus. This insincere declaration did not save him; he was condemned, as suspected of heresy, to incarceration at the pleasure of the tribunal, and to recite the seven penitential psalms once a week for three years.

The story of his torture and severe imprisonment is fiction. In no true sense was he a prisoner. His Protestant biographer, von Gebler, tells us "he spent altogether twenty two days in the buildings of the Holy Office, and even then not in a prison cell with barred windows, but in the handsome and commodious apartment of an official of the Inquisition." He was then allowed to live with his friends, first at Rome, and later at Florence, in a delightful place amongst the suburbs. When he was dying he received a special blessing sent him by the Pope, and, so far from being refused Christian burial, he was interred in the church of Santa Croce at Florence.

THE OBJECTION RAISED.—Our adversaries take their stand upon the decree which was published by the Congregation of the Index when it first condemned Galileo's theory. They assert that the question was one of faith, for a doctrine is condemned as heretical; and, moreover, that the Pope had full knowledge of the doings of the Congregation and sanctioned all its proceedings. Hence they conclude that there is here another instance of the infallible guide blundering, and this time being corrected by science.

COMMENT ON THE CASE.—We frankly admit that this decision against Galileo was most unfortunate, in that it asserted, an opinion to be heretical which was later allowed to be orthodox; its finding was reversed when, years later, a proof for the heliocentric system was submitted which was as cogent as Galileo's was defective. The principle of biblical interpretation, upon which the decision was based, was a false one, although it was current at that time. It was thought, for instance, that Scripture must always speak in scientific terminology and with scientific accuracy, even when using the language which men ordinarily employ when conveying their ideas to one another; thus when it spoke of the sun rising or going to rest, it meant that the sun went through the two operations of rising and sinking. Whereas we now admit that the Scriptures, when describing what appears to our senses, may and do use the ordinary terms which we employ. For the sake of accuracy the Scripture is not obliged—any more than was Newton—to avoid using the expression "the sun rose," or "the sun was stayed in its course through the heavens."

THE OBJECTION ANSWERED.—Did the Pope err as an infallible teacher? Surely not, if he did not assume the role of such a teacher. It is simply misrepresenting history to say that anyone, even the Pope himself, thought an *ex cathedra* statement had been made. As a matter of fact, the Pope's signature is not appended to any of the documents connected with Galileo's condemnation, and even if the signature were appended, it would merely be a guarantee of the authenticity of the document—unless clear indication were given that much more was intended. And, further, though the Pope was present at some of the deliberations of the Cardinals, and was aware of what steps were being taken, that fact alone does not constitute the decisions arrived at infallible pronouncements. The same answer applies to the objection that a Papal Bull was issued accompanying a later edition of the list of books proscribed by the Index, amongst which books were included any that advocated the Copernican system. Such a Bull merely gives the list a guarantee that it is official.

CONFIRMATORY EVIDENCE FROM PROTESTANT WRITERS.—Fair-minded Protestant writers are as explicit on these points as any Catholic could be. Thus, for example, the astronomer Proctor writes: "The Catholic doctrine (of papal infallibility) is perfectly definite; and it is absolutely certain that the decision in regard to Galileo's teaching, shown now to have been unsound, does not in the slightest degree affect the doctrine of infallibility as defined by the Vatican Council" (Knowledge, vol. ix, p. 274). And again, another Protestant, Karl von Gebler, in his work, *Galileo and the Roman Curia*, writes to the same effect: "We grant that the two Congregations of the Index and the Inquisition, with the two Popes who sanctioned and promulgated their decrees, were in error; but not one ever held that the decisions of the Roman Congregations were in themselves infallible, even when approved by the Pope, unless specially set forth by the Pope with all the conditions required for an *ex cathedra* definition."

We note further that the action of Cardinal Bellarmine clearly shows that the answer of the Congregation was not intended to be final; for he admits that if science can show which at that time it could not do—that the earth moves round the sun, the principle then in use for interpreting Scripture will have to be carefully readjusted.

THE FATE OF KEPLER.—In conclusion, when we are taunted with the condemnation of Galileo, we may reply with a *tu quoque* argument. For Protestants as well as Catholics, held to the views of Galileo's judges; e.g., Luther called Copernicus a fool, for turning astronomy upside down, and Melancton and practically all Protestant professors strongly condemned the system as contrary to the teaching of the Bible. And more remarkable still, just thirty-seven years before Galileo got into trouble, the Protestant Theological Faculty of Tubingen condemned Kepler for teaching the identical scientific truth which Galileo favoured. The divines unanimously decided that Kepler's book, *Prodromos Disserationum Cosmographicarum*, contained a deadly heresy, because it contradicted the teaching of the Bible in that passage where Josue commands the sun to stand still. Now, these divines held the doctrine of "private interpretation of Scripture"; are they not then in difficulties, when science has proved that on one occasion this interpretation was erroneous—and if on one occasion, why not on others? The condemnation of Kepler by the Protestants tells far more against them than does the condemnation of Galileo against us; for in the one case, science gives the lie direct to a fundamental principle of a whole religious system—the principle of private interpretation; while in the other case a defined dogma, that of papal infallibility, as in no way affected.

THE OBJECTION PRESSED FURTHER.—It is urged that the case of Galileo at least shows that the Church was itself mistaken in matters of faith; for it held a wrong canon of biblical criticism, viz., that the expressions in Scripture which describe physical phenomena are always scientifically exact. We answer that the Church never even considered this question—much less did she believe with the assurance of faith that this principle was correct; it was merely admitted by the majority of the theologians as a commonly accepted rule, and as yet no convincing reasons had been adduced for rejecting it. No one ever asserted that it was a doctrine of faith; as we have twice remarked, Bellarmine was prepared to give it up; and, moreover, other orthodox theologians explicitly rejected it, maintaining, in defence of Galileo, that "the Bible taught us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go."

PART IV.

Obviously we cannot here catalogue and answer every objection made against our position. From what has been already stated, we summarise the chief points which must be borne in mind when we are examining the assertions of adversaries:-

(i.) A definition is *ex cathedra*, or infallible, when it is a decision regarding faith or morals: when it is solemnly propagated by the Pope acting as teaching head of the Church when it is intended to bind the whole Church to acceptance, in such way that this acceptance is a condition of membership. Such decrees are irrevocable and irreformable.

(ii.) Infallibility and inspiration are quite distinct. A safeguard against error is not an inspiration of truth. Hence, it is utterly false to say that "the doctrine of papal infallibility gives us a perpetual organ for making new revelation."

(iii.) Though a new dogma, e.g., that of the Immaculate Conception, is not a new revelation, yet such a dogma of the faith need not always have been present in the consciousness and explicit teaching of the Church. "He will bring all things to your minds, whatsoever I shall have said to you"—which implies that the whole of Christ's teaching had not always to be before the minds of those who teach.

(iv.) Infallibility does not imply that we may not examine and discuss and verify *ex cathedra* pronouncements. It is a common taunt that Catholics must stifle all intellectual life if they must accept undoubtingly every such decree as final and irrevocable. The thousands of volumes written by Catholic theologians is surely sufficient answer to the charge of intellectual suicide. We do not doubt Euclid's first principles, but we may build a system upon them.

(v.) Violent disputes have arisen within the Church, and have not been settled by an infallible pronouncement. This does not prove, as is at times contended, that the Church was unconscious that it possessed the power to frame such an answer. We surely hold God to be infallible; but if we judged Him by the principle underlying this objection, we should assert that He was unconscious of His own infallibility.

(vi.) We have evidence more than sufficient to show that the doctrine of papal infallibility was not invented by Rome. In the early part of this pamphlet we have cited cases where Eastern Councils have accepted, without a dissenting voice, the position of the Roman Pontiff, when he commanded them to accept his doctrine as being the authentic teaching of the Church. In our examination of the case of Pope Honorius, we found that the tables were

turned upon our adversaries.

(vii.) When facts of early Church history are cited against us, they need to be carefully sifted. For the difficulty is generally due to the case being inaccurately stated. This refers in particular to the charge brought against the Popes Liberius and Vigilius, which we have not space to discuss here.

Nihil obstat:

MICHAEL CANONICUS CRONIN. S.T.D.,
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