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Infallibility

Defended By

Protestants



Our Sunday Visitor Press
Huntington, Indiana



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INFALLIBILITY DEFENDED

I.

If there be a "Church of the living God" upon earth; if it has been commissioned "to teach the nations," then it must be able to speak with *infallible authority*.

The Church's voice must be God's voice, her teaching must be His teaching, her authority must be His authority; what is this but infallibility? Deny Infallibility to the Church, and no man can be certain of the correct answer to the all-important question: "What must I do to possess eternal life?" There can be only one answer, and the authority behind it must be as weighty as that of St. Paul when he said: "If anyone, even an angel from Heaven, preach a gospel besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema" (Gal. i., 8).

II.

Reflect a bit, and see if you could really believe that the Church of God could teach error in matters bearing on what man must believe and do to save his soul. Can you really believe that the Church has been commissioned to teach the nations, and yet may err in matters pertaining to faith and morals? Can you con-

ceive of God commanding man to hear the Church, and yet allowing him to be taught falsely? I am afraid that you did not quite understand the meaning of Infallibility, for nothing is more fundamental to the unity, the stability and the perpetuity of the Church.

Prejudice against "Rome" and the "Pope" is what prevents the non-Catholic from seeing clearly the necessity of Infallibility. These are words which afford no music to their ears, but on the contrary, are bugbears synonymous with usurpation and associated with all that is vile, and cruel, and tyrannical. They try to believe in an unscriptural and unhistorical Church which has no visible head on earth. They do not see the necessary connection between an infallible Church and some living voice to speak for her. They would rather believe in an infallible BOOK, not considering that the Bible's infallibility rests on the infallibility of the voice which declared it to be the word of God. And whilst deprecating the infallibility of one representative of Christ in the Church, they go to the extreme of ascribing infallibility to every Bible reader.

"No one is incapable of sin," one will say; "if the Pope knew everything, he would be a God," says another; "revelation ended with Christ and the Apostles, and hence I do not believe in an inspired Pope," avers a third. "You are all talking about something that Infallibility does not mean," answers the Catholic. Of course the Pope may sin, which is nothing more than to use his free will to break a law of God; assuredly, the Pope's knowledge, though usually extensive, is limited; and most emphatically, revelation ceased with the last of the apostles, and hence the Pope is not inspired.

Infallibility, as applied to the Pope, is nothing more than freedom from error in his teaching, wh-

in the name of God, he defines for the people of the whole world what the precise revelation of God has been.

The infallibility of the Pope, as defined by the Vatican Council, limits infallibility and so hedges it with conditions that infallible decisions in the past are hard to find, and not likely to occur in the future except in great emergencies.

Infallibility is not *for* the Pope, it is nothing that the Church glories in for her own sake; it is *for the people*. A lawyer will recognize its necessity at once.

III.

Different passages of Scripture would prove the infallibility of the twelve Apostles; in fact, no Protestant could attach weight to New Testament teaching and deny infallibility to the Apostles. "*Go, teach all nations, and I am with you.*" "*He who hears you hears me.*" Yet they were not to go to work independently, but were to constitute the teaching body of the primitive Church under the leadership of one who would be spokesman in the Church. Just as Christ addressed himself to the *twelve* as a corporate body, so He addressed Himself more emphatically to the one whom He constituted the first visible Head of His Church.

"Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I shall build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; and I shall give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven" (Math. xvi., 18, 19). Whilst there is only one interpretation of "Peter and the Rock," we shall not press it here, since the last half of Christ's utter-

ance furnishes conclusive proof of the primacy of Peter in Christ's Church. The phrase "Kingdom of Heaven" used by St. Matthew means the Church. Now he speaks of scandals existing in the Kingdom of Heaven; now the Kingdom of Heaven is compared to a net containing good and bad fish; now it comprises wise and foolish virgins, etc. Hence, St. Gregory says that the Kingdom of Heaven often refers to God's Kingdom on earth, the Church. To one alone Christ handed over the keys of this kingdom, or in other words, committed full authority. "To *thee*" has converted many a non-Catholic.

Christ frequently referred to His followers as sheep, and called Himself the Shepherd. Now, in John xxi., 15-17, Christ tells Peter to be the shepherd in His place: "Feed MY lambs, feed MY sheep," preside over MY whole sheepfold.

Satan would use all his power to defeat the Apostles, "but I have prayed for THEE, that THY faith fail not....confirm thy brethren" (Luke xxii., 32).

Christ went to that ship "which was Simon Peter's" to teach the multitudes; He ordered the same tribute to be paid for Himself and Peter.

IV.

Is Peter the acknowledged head of the infant Church? The Protestant says: "No, Paul was a greater Apostle; Paul worked harder than Peter; Paul resisted him to his face; Peter denied Christ." He is not talking to the point. Caiphas, who assisted in bringing about the condemnation of Christ, was the High-priest of the Jewish church. The Scribes and Pharisees were condemned severely by Christ, yet He tells the people their authority must be respected, for "they sit

on the chair of Moses." Peter and Paul were not disputing about a question of faith; nor was Peter speaking in his official capacity when alone his verdict is regarded as infallible. Peter had repented of his denial before he was actually told to be the Shepherd. St. Paul might just as well be accused of being a persecutor of the Church only a few years previous.

In listing the Apostles the evangelists give the names of all others without order, but are careful to head the list with Peter. After the reception of the Holy Ghost on Pentecost, Peter is the first to address the people. Peter works the first miracle. In the first twelve chapters of the "Acts of the Apostles" Peter's name occurs fifty three times, far oftener than all the other Apostles taken together. Peter presided at the Council of Jerusalem, a sure evidence of his acknowledged position. When Peter was imprisoned, all prayed for him. From the very first centuries the Primacy and Supremacy of the Bishop of Rome has been recognized, but whether Peter or his successors lived at Rome is a matter of no consequence.

None of our readers need to be convinced that Peter and the other Apostles were to have successors until the end of time. The gates of hell were not to prevail against the Church; Christ would send to His Church the Spirit of truth, to abide with her FOREVER; He Himself would be with her all days, even unto the END OF THE WORLD; "Of His kingdom there will be no end."

Deny a Supreme ruler to the Church here below, and how are disputes to be settled?

Deny Infallibility to the head of the Church on earth, and there is no possibility of a man knowing whether he believes right or wrong.

Deny divine protection to the voice that speaks in

God's name, and the Church has no right to command submission.

If I were a member of no church, and wanted to know the truth, none but an infallible Church would have any attraction for me; to disclaim infallibility would be equivalent to an admission that the Church might teach me wrong.

The following from Cardinal Gibbons is relevant:

"Whenever Bishops or National Councils promulgated doctrines or condemned errors, they always transmitted their decrees to Rome for confirmation or rejection. What Rome approved, the universal Church approved; what Rome condemned, the Church condemned.

"Thus, in the third century, Pope St. Stephen reverses the decision of St. Cyprian, of Carthage, and of a Council of African Bishops, regarding a question of baptism.

"Pope St. Innocent I., in the fifth century, condemns the Pelagian heresy, in reference to which St. Augustine wrote this memorable sentence: "The Acts of two Councils were sent to the Apostolic See, whence an answer was returned: *The question is ended.* Would to God that the error also had ceased."

"In the fourteenth century, Gregory XI. condemns the heresy of Wycliffe.

"Pope Leo X., in the sixteenth century, anathematizes Luther.

"Innocent X., in the seventeenth, at the solicitation of the French Episcopate, condemns the subtle errors of the Jansenists; and in the nineteenth century, Pius IX, promulgates the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.

"Here we find the Popes in various ages condemn-

ing heresies and proclaiming doctrines of faith; and they could not in a stronger manner assert their infallibility than by so defining doctrines of faith and condemning errors. We also behold the Church of Christendom ever saying Amen to the decisions of the Bishops of Rome. Hence, it is evident that, in every age, the Church recognized the Popes as infallible teachers.

“Every independent government must have a supreme tribunal regularly sitting to interpret its laws, and to decide cases of controversy likely to arise. Thus we have in Washington the Supreme Court of the United States.

“Now the Catholic Church is a complete and independent organization, as complete in its spiritual sphere as the United States government is in the temporal order. The Church has its own laws, its own autonomy, and government.

“The Church, therefore, like civil powers, must have a permanent and stationary supreme tribunal to interpret its laws and to determine cases of religious controversy.”

CONFESSIONS OF PROTESTANT LEADERS.

CALVIN.

(Calvin, Inst. 6, par. 11.)

“God has placed the seat of His worship in the center of the earth, and has placed there only one Pontiff, whom all may regard, the better to preserve unity.”

BEZA.

(Ep. ad A. Dudit.)

“I have also been long and greatly tormented by the same thoughts which you describe to me. I see our people wander at the mercy of every wind of doctrine, and after having been raised up, fall sometimes on one side, and sometimes on the other. What they think of religion today you may know; what they will think of it tomorrow you cannot

affirm. On what point of religion are the churches which have declared war against the Pope agreed? Examine all, from beginning to end, you will hardly find one thing affirmed by the one which the other does not directly cry out against as impiety."

GROTIUS.

(Riv. Ap. Disc.)

"The dogma of faith should be decided by tradition and the authority of the Church, and not by the holy Scriptures only."

PUFFENDORF.

(Puffendorf, de Monarch, Pont. Roman.)

"The suppression of the authority of the Pope has sowed endless germs of discord in the world; as there is no longer any sovereign authority to determine the disputes which arise on all sides, we have seen the Protestants split among themselves, and tear their bowels with their own hands."

LEIBNITZ.

(Posth. Work.)

"In all cases which do not admit the delay of the convocation of a general Council, or which do not deserve to be considered therein, it must be admitted that the first of the Bishops, or the Sovereign Pontiff, has the same power as the whole Church."

DR. DELBRUCK.

(Phil. Melancthon, der Glaubenslehrer.)

"The Protestant church, taking Scripture alone as doctrinal base, is founded on the sand."

DR. VON SCHELLING.

(Vorlesungen uber die akademischen Studien, p. 54.)

"Why did we replace a living authority by a dead letter, if we must study the languages of the dead past to understand the Scriptures? The burden is beyond all reason!

"Long since, it was foretold that we (Protestants) should yet be forced to admit the utter insufficiency of individual interpretation of Scripture."

HUGH MILLER.

("First Impression," Chap. xiii.)

"In every form of Christianity there must exist an infallibility somewhere."

DR. E. C. MOORE.

(Professor at Harvard.)

"It is too simple to say the Scripture says thus and thus. What does it mean by that which it thus says? And the moment we have asked that question—What does it mean?—we have passed out of the realm of the eternal, out of the sphere of the letter and of the written oracle, into the realm of the inward and the spiritual. The only question is, Whose inward and spiritual estimate is to prevail?"

GEORGE BARKER STEPHENS.

(In his "Theology of the New Testament," p. 137.)

"It is quite certain, and is now generally admitted that the words 'this rock' refer not to Christ, nor to Peter's confession of faith, but to Peter himself."

DR. W. BEYSCHLAG.

(In his "New Testament Theology," p. 173.)

"Undoubtedly the Protestant exposition of this text has not been happy. There can be no controversy amongst reasonable men in view of the words, 'Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build My Church,' that Jesus, by the rock on which He will build His Church, did not mean Himself nor the confession of Peter nor even the faith which Peter has just confessed, but the man himself, to whom He has given the name of rock, and to whom He now confirms it as deserved."

DR. BRIGGS.

("Whither," p. 21.)

"If there had been no divine authority in the Church, there would have been no divine canon of Holy Scripture."

RT. REV. E. F. FAWCETT (Prot.)

(Quincy, Ill., Apr. 30, 1911.)

"Take the subject of respect for authority, for instance. We Americans have our virtues, but I venture to say that obedience to constituted authority is not one of them. As a nation we do not sufficiently distinguish between individuality, which may be a virtue, and individualism, which is always a cure. There may be individuality without egotism and its inseparable selfishness, but individualism is ever the exaltation of self-preference and self-will."

REV. F. J. HALL, D.D. (Epis.)

(At Norfolk, Va., May 4, 1916.)

"The Holy Spirit is pledged to afford the Church such guidance as will insure to the faithful sufficient knowledge of saving truth to keep them in the way of eternal life. The basis of the Church's authority, is primarily the Commission given her to disciple the nations. The guarantee of her success is partly her organic relation to Christ, as His Body, and especially the promise of the Holy Spirit's guidance."

W. H. MALLOCK.

(In "Doctrine and Doctrinal Disruption," p. 144.)

"Rome is the only Church representing itself as an ever-living and articulate individual, which at no period of its existence has lost any one of its faculties, but is able every day to reaffirm, with a living voice, every doctrine which it has ever authoritatively enunciated in the past—to reaffirm it now in virtue of the same supernatural knowledge; and to reaffirm it, moreover, with an ever-deepening meaning."

REV. R. R. YERKES (Epis.)

(Philadelphia, Apr. 17, 1914.)

"Is There an Expression of Authority in Our Church?"

"A stranger, seeing a strange church in a strange town, does not know what kind of service to expect in that church the next Sunday morning or what kind of religion will be taught in the sermon he may hear.

"If he would send his children to Sunday school he knows not what kind of lesson they may be taught. They may be taught that there are two Sacraments, or they may learn that there are seven. They may be pressed to go to confession, or they may be warned to stay away. They may be instructed that Christ is present in the elements of Holy Communion or they may learn that He is absent from them.

"They may be taught to genuflect, or they may be told that it is wrong to genuflect. They may be told that they must receive Holy Communion fasting or they may be told that this is nonsense, and that they should eat their breakfast first. They may be told that there are certain celebrations of the Holy Communion where they should not think of receiving, or they may be taught to absent themselves from the services unless they expect to receive.

"They may be taught to visit the reserved sacrament and

there to say their prayers, or they may be told that this is idolatry. They may be prepared for confirmation at ten years of age or they may be told to wait until they are seventeen. They may be taught that eucharistic vestments are necessary to a proper celebration of Holy Communion or they may be told that these are rags of popery to be avoided by all good Christians.

"They may be taught the invocation of saints or they may learn that there is no such thing. They may be taught to say a Rosary or they may be encouraged to laugh at this devotion."

REV. DR. CHARLES A BRIGGS.

(In the North American Review, in His "The Real and the Ideal in the Papacy.")

"The Papacy is one of the greatest institutions that have ever existed in the world; it is much the greatest thing now existing, and it looks forward with calm assurance to a still greater future. Its dominion extends throughout the world over the only oecumenical Church. All other churches are national or provincial in their organization. It reaches back in unbroken succession through more than eighteen centuries to St. Peter, appointed by the Savior of the world to be the Primate of the Apostles. It commands the great central body of Christianity, which has ever remained the same organism since Apostolic times. All other Christian organizations, however separate they may be from the parent stock, have their share in the Papacy as a part of the Christian heritage, and are regarded by the Papacy as subject to its jurisdiction. The authority of the Papacy is recognized as supreme in all ecclesiastical affairs, by the most compact and best-organized body of mankind; and as infallible in determination of doctrines of faith and morals when it speaks *ex cathedra*. The history of the Papacy has been a history of storm and conflict. About it have raged for centuries the greatest battles in all history. The gates of hell have been open in Rome, if anywhere in this world. * * * And yet these forces of evil have always been driven back. When the conflict has subsided, the Papacy has stood forth stronger than ever. If zealous Protestants, in their antipathy to the Papacy, picture it in all the imagery of the Biblical Antichrist, can we blame the defenders of the Papacy from applying to it the words of Jesus to St. Peter? Is there not historic truth in saying, 'The gates of hell have

not prevailed against it?" Are not the words of Jesus to St. Peter equally appropriate to his successors? 'Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat; but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not; and do thou, when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren' (Luke, xxii, 31, 32). * * * We shall have to admit that the Catholic Church from the earliest times recognized the primacy of the Roman Bishop; and that all the other great Sees at times recognized the supreme jurisdiction of Rome in matters of doctrine, government, and discipline."

Was Not St. Peter Pope of Rome?

Our enemies, who leave no subterfuge untried in order to weaken the claims of the papacy, have gone to the extreme of denying that St. Peter was ever in Rome. Such denial is ludicrous in the face of the abundant and weighty testimony we have that Peter had his seat in Rome for some time and died there.

Bishop Merrill, of the Methodist church, who made his studies years ago when any accusation against the Catholic Church was accepted without proof, made the charge that St. Peter was never in Rome, and the *New World*, of Chicago, offered \$1,000 to any worthy charity if the name of one famous impartial Protestant historian could be cited who positively holds that St. Peter was never in Rome.

Listen to some Protestant historians of note: Dr. Cave declares: "We intrepidly affirm with all antiquity that St. Peter was in Rome and for some time resided there." Protestant Archbishop Bramhall declares (Works, page 628, Oxford edition): "That St. Peter had a fixed chair at Antioch, and after that in Rome, is what no man who giveth any credit to the ancient fathers and councils of historiographers of the Church can either deny or will doubt of". The great Protestant historian, Grotius, discussing the word "Babylon," says: "The ancients understood this Rome, where

that Peter was, no Christian will doubt." Canon Farrar asserts that it is a reasonable certainty that Babylon was used as a cryptograph for Rome. Dr. Lardner was a famous Protestant writer, yet he accepts St. Peter's residence in the Eternal City. So does Dean Milman in his "Latin Christianity." Gibbon, certainly not a partial witness, distinctly admits St. Peter's residence and martyrdom and attests that the Vatican and the Ostian road were, 150 years after the death of SS. Peter and Paul, marked by the tombs of those spiritual heroes. Canon Robinson, formerly professor of church history in King's College, London, declares: "It is not so much a spirit of sound criticism as a religious prejudice which has led some Protestants to deny that the apostle was ever in Rome, where all ancient testimony represents him to have suffered, together with St. Paul, in the reign of Nero."

Eusebius, who wrote in the year 170, says: "Peter and Paul were martyred in Rome." Origen (second century) writes: "Peter was crucified in Rome, head downward." Tertullian speaks of the martyrdom of Peter in Rome as a universally known fact. (Adv. Marc. 4-5). Here is a list of Protestant historians who claim that Peter was in Rome and that "Babylon" meant Rome: Grotius, Cave, Lardner, Whitby, MacKnight, Hales, Cladius, Mynster, Schaff, Neander, Steiger, DeWitte, Wieseler, Credner, Black, Meyer, Renan, Mangold, Hilgenfeld.

WHISTON.

(Memoirs, London, 1950.)

"That St. Peter was at Rome is so clear in Christian antiquity that it is a shame for any Protestant to confess that any Protestant ever denied it."

THE "SPEAKER'S COMMENTARY" (Prot.)

"We find an absolute consensus of ancient interpreters

that there Babylon must be understood as equivalent to Rome."

CAVE.

("Historia Literaria," Vol. 1, p. 5.)

"That St. Peter was at Rome, and for some time had his seat there, we affirm without hesitation, with the whole body of the ancients."

