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Papal infallibility

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PAPAL INFALLIBILITY

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Church Seminar

Dr. James Whitehurst

June, 1964

PREFACE

This paper has as its purpose to promote understanding of one of the great misunderstandings within and without the Roman Church...Papal Infallibility. While the writer does not presuppose to be qualified to pass "judgement" on the subject, it is nonetheless hoped that the readers will find the paper of interest and will come to a better understanding of Papal Infallibility even if they find they are not able to "accept" it as a part of the "genius" of Roman Catholicism. It seems to the writer that the Doctrine of Papal Infallibility has become as controversial as the problem of scriptural inerrancy versus modern science.

Understanding will not mean that the contributions of the papal tradition to the religious life of mankind will become any less distinctive than they are now. It is certainly not regarded as a preliminary to, or as a means for, Protestant acceptance of this tradition. This acceptance indeed would be undesirable if it were furthered by one such reading.

Understanding will mean, however, that the contributions of the papal tradition might be effectively maintained without clashes of animosity among the adherents and opponents of the tradition. Clashes do often occur now, and are one of the many causes which limit the leavening influence of religion in our contemporary society. Responsibility for these clashes

rests upon both the adherents and opponents to any such tradition, and the Ecumenical Conference seems to be one way, as well as becoming familiar with major ecclesiastical traditions, toward a long-range solution of the many problems and disagreements within the churches. An advocate often stresses points which involve separation and antagonism, while the opponent fastens his chief attention upon minor matters of particular difficulty. Both alike thus tend to overlook the distinctive ideas and vital aspirations which, embedded in such a tradition, could animate men's minds, in favorable circumstances, and prove their actions fruitful.

Limitations of space are very binding in a paper such as this. It will be apparent to the reader that development of such a topic would entail much more than this paper could handle. For authoritative and adequate treatment of such a complex subject, a library of books would be required. Many of them are available, however, and should be consulted by any interested reader who wishes to go beyond this general treatment of the underlying ideas characterizing the papal tradition in the Roman Church today.

The bibliography of such a paper is bound to be incomplete, for the writer cannot trace the degree of indebtedness she has to friends and teachers whose ideas have served as a good source of "reference" for this subject. She can sincerely say that she owes much to the criticisms offered by

previous readers of this paper. She wishes also to offer special thanks to ~~The~~ Very Rev. F. H. O. Bowman, rector of St. Matthews Episcopal Church, Bloomington, Illinois, for his patience, his ideas, and for his help in securing appropriate resources; and also to Father Ephrem, St. Mary's Catholic Church, Bloomington, Illinois, for his help in securing resource material.



Judith A. Giffrow

June, 1964

INTRODUCTION

The new Pope Paul VI has said "The papacy seems a solitary, unique, phenomenon in the world of today...Upon the pope must depend the destinies of civilization, not because he disposes of riches, or means, or forces, or power, but because he is in sympathy with every human need, feels repunance for every human injustice, courage for every ideal principle, and keeps the humility and the dignity of the man of God."¹

Thus, in this light, the Roman Catholic world eyes their pope, to whom they look for infallibility in interpreting doctrines concerning faith and morals, vital to their lives.

It should be clear, at least to those close to the church, that there stands out a necessity for reform. The Roman Catholic Church is aware of the world, and the world is ever increasingly aware of that church. Those in the Church who stress its influence in the world expect a lot from their Pope, and rightly so, as they place on him the role of supreme power.

Since it is obvious that the papacy is playing an increased major role as a moral force in world affairs, the writer has chosen the papacy...that interesting aspect of its infallibility...as the subject for this paper.

¹ "We Open Our Arms, " The Saturday Evening Post, " Sanche De Gramont, July 27-August 3, 1963, p. 79.

One cannot fairly dismiss such a topic lightly, for it is one of great importance and influence. While this writer cannot agree with the doctrine of infallibility, neither can she ignore the great influence and good of such a man as the late Pope John XXIII. When one stops to think of this man's accomplishments, he cannot help but be awed by his character and significance.

While it is yet too early to judge the overall achievements of the Second Vatican Council, which John Called, yet it can be seen the significance of this call for discussion on reform, reunion, discipline, and liturgy.

On Easter, April 21, 1963, Pope John issued the encyclical Pacem in Terris, which epitomized his aims. This document summons to all mankind, not only to the faithful. Here Pope John called for an ending of the Cold War...he then states his program for peace.

It is for such reasons that this paper has come to be written. It is not an attempt to present a one-sided, naïf view of a debatable issue. Rather it undertakes to present an understanding of a current disagreement between the faithful in the modern churches. As Hans Küng says, "One must distinguish between the necessity of Peter's office and papalism."²

²"The Visits of Protestants to the Pope, -- What do They Signify?", The Ecumenist, October, 1962, p. 5.

The papal office is to represent and guarantee the unity of the total Christian family, in the service of charity and the strengthening of faith."³

³Ibid., p. 5.

A great dogma, proclaimed in 1870, namely the infallibility of the Pope, had produced those effects common to the promulgation of dogma by the Church. Roman Catholic faith was intensified and energized, and there was a confused outbreak of criticism. At this time the Church was experiencing one of her very dark moments in history.

Undoubtedly, Rome was the first Church center in the West. Three other eastern Patriarchates were of equal rank -- Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. All were of apostolic origins and were accorded special honors by the Church. Rome was left supreme in its own end of the Empire following the transference of the imperial capitol to Constantinople, causing a breach between the East and West. The three Eastern Patriarchates checked upon one another, and thus no one of them assumed an authoritative position over the rest. In time, though, a series of misfortunes seriously weakened the Eastern Church, while Rome rose to greater power.

The papal authority had begun in early times and went through a very complex evolution. In the second century, Ignatius had written strongly in favor of the importance of the bishop as a unifying influence. To him the bishop was a local authority, and he did not even mention a bishop in Rome at all.

With the beginning of Romanizing (Romanism is that character which the church acquired when it sought to succeed to the privilege of empire, to set in the minds of men its imperial power, and to use the instrumentalities of the state for the ends of morality and religion.), the

contention was that there had to be particular men to call ecumenical councils into session, to preside over the councils, to enforce the decisions of the councils. The enforcement of decisions followed along the lines chosen by the men who chanced to be in power. Catholicism may have been the aim of the development, but Romanism was its method of implementing it. Of course, Rome was the ancient capital of the Empire, and the Church at Rome was the largest and wealthiest of the Christian churches by the end of the second century. Church authorities at Rome felt a natural concern for the other Christian communities and assumed a burden of responsibility for their welfare. Particularly in the third, fourth, and fifth centuries, as we shall see, political and military power passed into the hands of barbarian forces, and the Bishop of Rome came more and more to be looked on as THE representative of imperial glory. But it was not until early in the fifth century that any Pope made clear that nothing could be done in the East or West, in doctrine or in discipline, without the approval of Rome, even though earlier bishops had anticipated a bold sovereign control.

History shows that Rome's prominence was naturally acquired. Papal supremacy was not the thought of the Church, as we can see, but rather only an ambition of certain individual popes. The title "Pope," was reserved for the Bishop of Rome only from the fifth century on... before that time, the term applied to all leading bishops of Christendom.

There were many attempts on the part of Rome in the following centuries to excommunicate the East. In the second-century disagreement over the observance of Easter Day, Victor I, then Bishop of Rome,

tried to impose his views on the Eastern Church. An episode in the third century furthered the development of "Catholicism." This was an episode that arose from the new heresy that was due to the high-minded idealism of noble minds. If nothing had been done, it would have destroyed the Catholic mission of the Church.

In the years 250 and 251 the Roman Emperor Decius ruled that all inhabitants of the Empire must worship the Emperor as a god. The purpose behind his law was to enforce loyalty to Rome. He had no intention to crush the many religions flourishing at that time, for Rome had always permitted diverse religious faiths to practice their cults without interference. The law really meant that among the other gods, the Emperor must be worshipped. To Christians, however, the new law spelled antagonism between religious loyalty and civil obedience. Persecution inevitably followed the enforcement of this new law. Some Christians obeyed the law, while others fled, and while still others defied the law and met martyrdom. Then, the persecution ceased, and those who had fled returned. But there was two schools of thought that disputed whether the Christians who had obeyed should be accepted back into the church or whether they should be shut out.¹

Under the support of Cornelius, Bishop of Rome, a moderate party led by St. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, opened the doors of the Church to all men. The strict party under the leadership of Novatian, thought that the Church should be kept clean of sinners, and was shown up for its false ideas of the Church. Novatian asked that men find their

¹Lamprecht, Sterling P., Our Religious Traditions, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1950, p.

salvation first and then afterwards be admitted to the church, or that they persevere without fault and be denied a second chance for salvation. But St. Cyprian made explicit the idea of Catholicity which was latent in the development of episcopal organization and in the formation of the creeds. He believed that the Church is one, and that it is based on the unity of the bishops. Although he regarded the bishop of Rome as first in dignity, he did not grant Rome a more general authority than the other episcopates.

Another and similar episode in Christian history soon came which further developed Catholicity in the Church. This episode, too, was connected with the persecution of the Church by the Roman state. In 303 the Empire again required political loyalty by worship of the Emperor. A similar course of events ensued. But then a new problem presented itself. Certain priests had obeyed the law, but the problem here was whether the laity should be readmitted into the church. Again there was both a strict party and a moderate party to argue the point, the strict party maintaining that only men of pure and unblemished character could VALIDLY administer the sacraments of the Church. The moderate party argued that if validity were allowed to depend on the character of the officiating priests, no Christian could ever be assured of salvation. They asserted that the validity of the sacraments was in no way affected by the character of the priests who administered them. The Church, because it wished to maintain its Catholicity, had to accept these arguments.

History continued to show digression between the East and West, and Roman attempts to excommunicate the East. In the fifth

century, Leo I, Bishop of Rome, revoked the action of Hilary, Bishop of Arles, for deposing one of his priests. But again, the Eastern bishop paid no heed, and retained his office for lifetime.

Pope Leo is credited with saving Rome by his heroic actions and wise counsel, even though the Roman Empire was to end in 476 under the onslaught of the Visigoths. After his political successes, Leo followed through by making Rome the doctrinal and administrative head of the Church. He was free to tell the bishops throughout Europe what to do, and he encouraged them to consult him on local problems. In 451, the Council of Chalcedon affirmed his authority in theological matters. He believed he received supreme power over men's minds and actions through his succession to Peter. Although he was not entirely successful, he nevertheless was undoubtedly the founder of the medieval papacy.

After Leo's death in 461, Rome suffered many calamities during the next century. The seat of the empire moved to Constantinople, and the emperors were no longer interested in Rome or in Italy. In 590, Gregory the Great became pope. He personally managed many of the affairs of Rome, and because of his strong moral and administrative leadership, Rome was recognized as the center and director of the Catholic world.

The Patriarch of Constantinople (John) in 587 A. D. gave to himself the title of "Universal Bishop." Gregory I, protested immediately by letter to John, to the Emperor, and to the other patriarchs. The Alexandrian Patriarch rigorously followed Gregory's commands and even

gave him the title of "Universal Bishop." However, Gregory did not wish to be referred to as such, for its effects on vanity, and no one had yet tried to be called "Universal" anyway.

In 539 A. D. still another controversy existed, involving Pope Vigilius and the Emperor Justinian. The Emperor was demanding all bishops to sign a condemnation of certain writings called "The Three Chapters."² Vigilius refused, and was imprisoned for nearly seven years. Then he made agreements at various times, but withdrew them. Finally, after severe measures were taken upon him, he retracted all his previous actions and changed his mind.

In 603, St. Augustine went to England with the intention of evangelizing England, and having the British Church recognize him as its superior authority. The reply of Abbott of Bangor-Iscoed is a good example of the majority's views on papal supremacy:

"Be it known to you, without any ambiguity, that we all and singly are obedient to the Pope of Rome and to every true and devout Christian, to love each in his own order with perfect charity, and to aid each one of them to become sons of God in word and deed. And I know not of any other obedience than this due him whom ye style Pope, nor that he has a claim and right to be Father of fathers."³

In the seventh century Serguis led in the doctrine of Monothelitism and was staunchly supported by Pope Honorius I. The sixth General Council was celled, and it condemned Monothelitism. Everyone supporting the doctrine, and especially Honorius, was

²Wilson, Frank E., D. D., S.T.D., The Divine Commission, Morehouse Barlow Company, New York, 1962 (4th ed., 15 printing,), p. 62.

³Ibid., p. 63.

anathematized as a heretic. For a long time thereafter, every pope had to pronounce his own predecessor, Honorius I, to have been a heretic.

Wilson states that it was along four converging line of development, then, that caused the Church to eventually be confronted with the sad results of its own creation: political, social, military, and ecclesiastical.⁴ The Church in history was very much manufactured out of the plots of scheming churchmen that were thrust upon the church by a great force of several circumstances.

A brief summary follows below of Wilson's ideas regarding the above four lines of development:

1. Political: In 330, Rome was left behind with the movement of the capital of the Empire to Rome. But Rome was still the object of affection of the forsaken Italian people who despised representative of the Emperor and the administration of Constantinople. With the removal of the political leadership of Rome, only the bishop remained with any prestige, and he was unavoidably elevated to greater prominence.
2. Social: In Rome, pagan aristocracy persisted in the social position of many of the people. The pagan interest continued until the Goths hit the country. They were Christians of a type, and when they came to Rome, they apared the Christian portions of the city. Pagan Rome was destroyed, while Christian Rome survived. Hence, the Church dominated society, and, of course, the bishop was its head.
3. Military: By the start of the fifth century, Italy was helpless in her military situation and was unable to meet with resistance the attacks of the barbarians. Pope Leo I was responsible for saving them from destruction. On several occasions he saved his people, and they were ready to pay him due honor.

⁴Ibid., p. 65.

By the eleventh century, the relations between these two powers had become strained as each tried to assert superiority over the other. Gregory VII was especially concerned to prove the spiritual power of the papacy greater than the temporal power of kings and emperors. He wrote the following to Herman, Bishop of Metz:

"Perchance they imagine that royal dignity is higher than that of bishops; but how great the difference between them is, they may learn from the difference in their origins. The former came from human lust of power; the latter was instituted by divine grace. The former constantly strives after empty glory; the latter aspires ever toward the heavenly life."⁵

Briefly, we could say that the pope here was asserting that there was no greater thing in the world than that of being pope, and that every issue in one way or another has to do with faith or morals. He claimed that the pope has authority directly from God through Christ over all these issues of faith and morals.

The issue concerning the spiritual authority of the Church and the political power of the state came to a head around 1075 with the struggle between Gregory VII and Henry IV of the Holy Roman Empire, which had been started by Charlemagne in the year 800. Pope Gregory prohibited the receiving of any church or abbey from a layman⁶, and King Henry reacted rather violently. Gregory was deposed at a regional council in Worms, but a priest appealed to Rome. A personal intervention of the pope prevented Gregory's murder. In turn, he deposed King Henry and released his subjects from their feudal oaths of obedience.

⁵Norwood, Frederick A., Great Moments in Church History, Abingdon Press, Nashville, Tennessee, 1962, p. 49.

⁶Ibid., p. 50.

Pope Gregory VII, then, is a perfect example of the papacy in the Middle Ages. This subject is illustrated farther back in this paper with Gregory the Great and Leo, and also farther forward in history. It is specifically illustrated, finally, in the Vatican Council of 1870, which proclaimed the infallibility of the pope in matters of faith and morals.

In 1682, the Gallican Articles were published by the French church and government, and stated "that the political authority of kings and princes were not subject to any ecclesiastical control."⁷ They also declared that the "Pope's pronouncements on matters of faith should have the consent of the Church."⁸

But Rome did not listen then either, to this protest. They could not believe that God would leave His Church without some infallible guide in matters crucial to man's salvation.

During the Baroque period, the strengthening of papal authority was very necessary. With the Church passing through bad times... Lutheranism, Calvinism, the Enlightenment, and Gallicanism (as mentioned above) , to have named a few stumbling blocks, along with the dawn of a new age, the French Revolution, secularization, the Napoleonic wars, atheistic materialism, liberalism, and socialism...the Roman Church was facing a multitude of new problems, questions, and needs. Masses of people were falling away from the Church . Küng

⁷Dawley, P. M., Our Christian Heritage, Morehouse-Barlow Company, New York, 1959, p. 154.

⁸Ibid., p. 155.

points out that rejection of the Church passed on to rejection of Christ, and finally of God Himself.⁹ There was a really great danger of the Church's falling apart. The strengthening of papal authority led to a growing centralization in the government and teaching office of the Church...a development and cause, however, that led to the definition of the primacy and infallibility of the Pope culminating in the Vatican Council. One does have to agree that there was a need for the Church, especially throughout these trials in Christian history, and also a need for this definition of papal infallibility...although we may not agree with the end results as defined in the Vatican Council. Nevertheless, there had reached a point where it was necessary to make clear this confusion.

In the later 1860's, the nature of the authority of the Pope had become the chief topic of controversy. The Vatican Council of 1870 had been called to define this dogma of Papal Infallibility, but this is not how the case turned out. The Pope's authority was discussed, but there was nothing about infallibility. The Pope felt that was not the place to introduce the topic...that if the Council chose to do so after it had met, it could go ahead. The Council did choose so, and a draft chapter on the Infallibility was in circulation by March 6. By the end of April, the Pope was pushing the debate of this chapter and said that it should be taken immediately and out of turn on the agenda. The president of the Council refused to alter the order of the agenda,

⁹Ku'ng, Hans, The Council, Reform, and Reunion, (Translated by Hastings, Cecily), Sheed and Ward, New York, 1961, p. 84).

thinking that the first ten chapters of the draft should be taken before the chapters on the papacy. Manning of Westminster was leader, and with his 200 supporters from the Council, he appealed directly to the Pope (Pio Nono). Pio Nono acceded to Mannings request, and although he had previously remained neutral, by March he had begun to make clear his own personal attitude favoring the Infallibility issue.

The controversy centering around the Infallibility was becoming a great menace to the Church, because both the Catholic and the secular presses stirred up passionate feeling about it.

There were some 140 supporters opposed to the introduction of this topic. The objection was, however, not concerned with the Pope's Infallibility concerning faith and morals...this was pretty well accepted. The anxiety, rather, centered around the question of whether so subtle a concept was capable of precise definition and whether it was opportune that it should be if it could. Many people had no difficulty at all in accepting the whole traditional infallible papal authority in matters of dogma, for it had been exercised throughout centuries, but at the same time, they felt that it was not the time to make a dogmatic definition here. The spiritual authority of the Pope at that time was not particularly in question.

The issue was also considered from the political viewpoint. Napoleon III was particularly sensitive on the matter. He was jealous, like previous French rulers of the invasion of Rome. The leading French bishops were very close to the Emperor. The Pope was very dependent, politically speaking, on the Emperor.

Hence, the lengthy debates in May and June, 1870, upon the papacy centered around 2 major issues: the primacy of the Pope, and and the Infallibility itself. Some of the minority, on the primacy question, argued forcefully that it was wrong to assert that the Pope held a universal primacy of jurisdiction, because in the dioceses, the bishops exercised ordinary jurisdiction, and they derived their authority from God rather than from the Pope. However, Pope Pius Nono's viewpoint was different. He encouraged appeals to Rome, and often reversed the decisions of the bishops, bringing them out of local ecclesiastical courts to direct papal jurisdiction. This was an old issue, and its settlement in the Pope's favor was a most important step in centralizing ecclesiastical authority in the hands of the papacy.

In dealing with the second issue, that of the Infallibility, the minority concentrated on defining the dogma in such a way as to make it clear that only a very limited category of papal pronouncements could be regarded as infallible and therefore, irreformable. The text that the Roman Pontiff is infallible only when speaking "ex cathedra," that is, when exercising the office as pastor and teacher of all Christians, he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the universal Church.¹⁰

"Faithfully adhering to the tradition received from the beginning of the Christian faith, for the glory of God our Savior, the exaltation of the Catholic religion, and the salvation of Christian people, the sacred Council approving,

¹⁰Hales, E. E. Y., The Catholic Church in the Modern World, Hanover House, Garden City, New York, 1958, p. 139.

we teach and define that it is a dogma divinely revealed; that the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when in discharge of the office of pastor and doctor of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the universal Church, by the divine assistance promised to him in blessed Peter, is possessed of that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed that His Church should be endowed for defining doctrine regarding faith, or morals; and that therefore such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are *irreformable* of themselves and not from the consent of the Church. But if any one--which may God avert--presume to contradict this our definition; let him be anathema.

"Given at Rome in Public session solemnly held in the Vatican Basilica in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and seventy, on the eighteenth day of July, in the twenty-fifth year of our pontificate."¹¹

However, many of the minority were still unsatisfied. They believed that the bishops should be included and also that the "full plenitude" of the judicial primacy should be removed. But when the majority accepted it as it stood, the minority, most of whom had left Rome, sent in their assent with the verdict of the Council.

It was found at this time, as in any other important issues, accusations against the Council, that is, that it was not a true Council of the Church because improper pressure was brought upon the bishops, especially by the Pope. But several things disprove these accusations. He did help the poorer bishops from greater distances in their expense, but they did not vote according to the Pope's "influence" on them. Nor did the Pope "pack" the committees; rather, he called for representation of all points of view. His attitude was, in fact, such that it played an important part in the outcomes. By 1870, his

¹¹ Document E. ***Principal Portion of the Vatican Decree Regarding Papal Infallibility as quoted in Phillips, J. A., Roman Catholicism Analyzed, Fleming H. Revell Company, Chicago, 1915, pp. 231-232.

prestige and popularity had become enormous throughout the Catholic world, and this endeared him even to his opponents. That is why many of them left Rome rather than to vote against him.¹²

Abundant proof, until the Vatican Council, that the new dogma of Papal Infallibility had been no part of the faith of the Church had been furnished by several outstanding Roman Catholic scholars at the time. As can be seen from the results of the Vatican Council, many opponents of the dogma accepted it anyway, even though previously they had openly made statements against it, arguing that they could not accept the idea.

These episodes in Christian history serve but to give a brief review of the many centuries of the formation of the Catholic Church and account for some of the complex character of the Church, thus giving us a better understanding of the organization leading up to papal organization and papal infallibility. They show the early people's regard for authority and some of its problems. We have seen the papacy's climb to absolute power. The ideal of a church-dominated society was a creation of ambitious popes, but was also a result of the continuously confused political and social and military pressures. The fact still remains, however, that it was an ideal that was a part of the people. They themselves, wanted and loved it, and provided the incentives for the popes to realize it as far as they did.

It occurs to the writer that a comparison between man in history and our contemporaries reveals striking similarities. Just as man in

¹²The reader is referred to Hales, op. cit., pp. 135ff. for information regarding the Vatican Council.

the past wanted certainty and security at any price, so does our generation want conformity...also at any price! As medieval man suffered poverty, disease, etc., yet he knew that certainly the Church would help him in the end. If he knew that certain documents were invented to elevate papal authority, he still conceded the right of the Church to gain and maintain her superiority by whatever means she deemed necessary, so long as she gave to him the security he desired and needed... and for the most part, she did. What a coincidental comparison to "modern" man!

BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

From the beginning, the Roman Catholics will claim, it was scknowledged by the Church that the successor of Peter as Bishop of Rome was, at the same time head of the entire Church. This successor of Peter is called the "Pope." Accordingly, they believe that he is also to be infallible.

Matthew 16: 16-19 is the biblical passage on which the Romans base their conclusions concerning Papal Infallibility:

Mt. 16: 16: And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed are thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. 18 And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

The Interpreter's Bible explains this passage by saying that "Peter's decisions regarding Old Testament law (e.g., in Acts 10:44-48) will be ratified in heaven" ...and that "Later Christian tradition extended

this principle to include the power to forgive or retain sins (18:18; John 20:23), but that "this was not its original meaning."¹³

This crucial passage is not included in Mark and Luke. Hence, many people feel that it was a later addition inserted to give sanction to the claim of priority made for Peter by the early Church. Others feel that it was a section taken from the document "Q."¹⁴

In the Abingdon Bible Commentary, Professor J. Newton Davies is of the same opinion as McNeile (p. 980)...that verse 19 is a later addition. He states that "if the words bind and loose mean 'to give moral and intellectual judgements based on the knowledge of the teaching of Jesus,' then there is nothing in the life and ministry of Peter to show that this important function was exercised in any unusual degree." Davies continues that even Peter "did not realize the full impact of this confession" ... "but the answer of Jesus, with the play on the word petros (rock), implies that he regarded this confession of his divine Sonship and Messiahship as the foundation on which the new

¹³Buttrick, George A., and others, editors, The Interpreter's Bible, Vol. VII, Abingdon Press, New York - Nashville, 1951, p. 453.

¹⁴Downey, David G., and others, editors, The Abingdon Bible Commentary, Abingdon Press, New York - Nashville, 1929, pp. 954-955.

"Q" is the first letter of the German word quelle, which means source. It is that extensive non-Markan material found in Mark and Luke which forms a very important part of these gospels. Many views are held concerning the nature and origin of this material. Many think that Mark and Luke have drawn from a common Aramaic source, the variations between them because of the different ways in which the document has been translated. Others, holding the more common view, think that Mark and Luke have derived their material from two different Greek sources of the sayings of Jesus, which would account for the variations we find in the Gospels. "Q" was written to supplement oral tradition.

Israel of God was to be built. The moral and spiritual content of the confession is more important than the intellectual. The second may change; the first is permanent."¹⁵

In the Marcan account, one might gather that Jesus was dissatisfied with Peter's confession, charging him strongly...probably because Peter "was not yet free of the old popular notions of Messiahship."¹⁶ This is proven in Mark 8:32. Mark includes only the reproach of Peter, while Matthew includes both the praise and reproach of Peter, and still Luke leaves out both the praise and reproach version of Jesus' address to Peter.¹⁷

John 20:23 should also be compared to the others. The general meaning seems to be that the Church, because Christ's spirit dwells therein, can continue Christ's ministry of declaring God's forgiveness and passing judgement upon sin.¹⁸

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 980.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 1011.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 1041.

¹⁸ The Holy Bible, The Westminster Study Edition, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1948.

At this point, it is fitting to present the more convincing arguments in view of the papal infallibility issue. Roman Catholics believe in papal infallibility because they do not think that God could allow His supreme teachers in the Church to teach anything that could be false. Otherwise, the Church as Christ founded it would have failed to preserve His teaching for all men. Christ must preserve the supreme teachers from error, just as He had entrusted Peter and his successors in His absence.¹⁹

Roman Catholics claim that Peter was the first bishop of Rome, but in reading and checking other sources, we can see that there could be some doubt as to the possibility of Peter ever being in Rome. In the Bible, there is no reference to Peter in Rome, but there is much mention made of Paul. It was Paul, not Peter, to whom the Churches appealed.

It is stressed over and over again in Roman literature that the term "infallible" applies only to the teaching of the Pope...not to his conduct, nor to his sinlessness. It merely means to "made disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."²⁰ Infallibility, then, is concerned with the doctrine of teaching. And when the Pope teaches "as supreme pastor regarding the truths of revelation, he cannot err...not because of any natural talent of his, but because Christ through the Holy Spirit will keep him from error."²¹

¹⁹The Infallible Church, Knights of Columbus, Religious Information Bureau, 4422 Lindell Blvd., St. Louis 8, Mo., 1959 (#56), p. 25.

²⁰Ibid., p. 26.

²¹Ibid., p. 26.

Romans refer to the New Testament to all the spiritual authority which Christ bestowed upon Peter in relation to the other Apostles and His whole Church, and that therefore, it must be admitted that Peter was infallible in a restricted sense, "as becomes a mere man."²² Their feeling is that Jesus was talking to the twelve disciples collectively, but then as turning to Peter and saying, "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith may not fail; and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, strengthen thy brethren."²³ They feel that Peter singly and individually received the office of headship or leadership, this being added to the powers given to the Apostles as a group.

In John 14:16, 17, and 26, Christ promised the assistance of the Holy Spirit. The Roman Catholics believe this to be an important promise...that the Holy Spirit will assist those who carry on His teaching. This divine guidance was to carry on to those who preached the Word of God to all nations.

It is clear to the Romans that Peter's office was meant to be continued, or that it would not have been instituted. Christ's promise was supposedly for a definite body of teachers. Hence, Peter's successors became heir of his job which would be carried on

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Let us Judge Catholics by the Bible, Knights of Columbus, Religious Information Bureau, 4222 Lindell Blvd., St. Louis 8, Mo., 1951, p. 14.

²³Ibid., p. 15.

with the assurance of divine guidance. This is what they mean by Papal Infallibility. Although the word "Pope" is not from the Bible, Roman Catholics think that it does not matter...that the important thing is Christ's promise to Peter and to his successors.

The Church does not ask that the people believe that the Pope is infallible as a man, a scholar, a legislator, or even as a disciplinarian. They recognize that in all other spheres of thought or action he is liable to error, but that he is protected from proclaiming error excathedra in his definitions of faith and morals. This does not mean that he cannot sin against faith or morals. When he speaks with this divine authority, he demands the obedience of all the faithful. It is their belief that he speaks as the visible basis and pledge of unity, out of the fulness of the Body of Christ, and in a completely intimate relationship to the whole Church.

"Excathedra" is a term which we need to understand. This is when the Pope bases his proclamations on the sources of faith and in his power as head of the Church and as successor of Peter, and pronounces a decision in matters of faith and morals, which embraces and binds the entire Church.

We see, then, that the pope is not infallible in everything he says or does. He can make mistakes in various realms, it is said, such as in science or other branches of human knowledge. Neither do the Romans believe that the pope is infallible in discussing other questions which may have a slight or direct bearing on religious truths. Nor can he, supposedly, make known new truths or proclaim new revelations. They

admit that his infallibility is not due in any way to himself or to anyone else. It is not the product of his abilities, his researches, or of his keen vision. Neither is it dependent on his character...as we can see from his papal lineage. One pope is no more infallible than another.

A solemn definition by the pope may be confused occasionally with what had been commonly taught, or simply by desire to honor God by a clear declaration of a truth. The Roman Church claims, for example, that the Doctrine in 1854 of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the 1950 Doctrine of her Assumption were teaching nothing new, but rather they were honoring God through his Mother, Mary.

Father Tanqueray presents an interesting view of the subject when he discusses the social nature of religion. He rightly feels that the religious society, like every other society, cannot continue without authority... 'supreme authority.' Therefore it is exceedingly probable that Christ established the Church endowed with social authority.²⁴ He continues that the creed, code, and cult, which is preserved by the Church, cannot be preserved entire and uncorrupt without authority. Otherwise it can be seen that creeds are difficult and easily changed; that precepts are subject to milder interpretation; and that cult is easily declined to various superstitions.²⁵

It is the belief of the Roman Church that this infallible authority has been and is available to all, whereas use of the Scriptures, upon

²⁴Tanqueray, Father (Translated by Rt. Rev. Msgr. John J. Byrnes), A Manuel of Dogmatic Theology, Desclee Co., New York, 1959, p. 100.

²⁵Ibid., p. 100.

which most Protestant faith rests, has not always been available to all. This is true when the Scriptures, for example, were not available for lay reading.

The Roman faith refers to the "imposition of hands" through which the Holy Spirit was bestowed to the Apostles. This imposition of hands is necessary in receiving a new pope in order to maintain apostolic succession, and yet is not apostolic succession broken, when this cannot be done until after the death of the acting pope?

Tanquerey continues that Christ wished Peter's primacy of jurisdiction to pass over to his successors, and that since Peter came to Rome and established his see (this point is discussed later), that his successors are Roman Pontiffs and therefore deserve the primacy.²⁶

Writing with a broad-minded viewpoint on a current debatable issue such as papal infallibility is a difficult thing to do. For example, it strikes the writer that most of us have a distorted vision of ourselves... one that includes an opinion that we are completely rational and correct. But if this is true, then doesn't it follow that the people who challenge our positions must, by the same definition, be irrational and wrong? We react with self-indignation, for people criticizing us expose our weakness, causing a natural reaction of fear on our part. Fear, in turn, can lead to pride, insult, and even hatred. Intelligent communication ceases. For this reason, historians can sometimes give a truer picture of debatable issues than can the contemporaries.

26

Ibid., p. 121.

History has already shown us that the Roman Church and its papacy of the Renaissance were in need of reform. But as we have seen, contemporaries then were exchanging angry viewpoints. Hence, today, in our Ecumenical Conference, we have Roman historians working to solve the controversy of the Doctrine of Papal Infallibility.

Küng suggests in his "The Council in Action" (p. 231), that we may be doing the papal primacy a 'disservice' by transferring such terms as "Head of the Church" to the pope. These have been reserved exclusively now to the pope, but were in earlier times applied to bishops, priests, and Christians in general.

The question still remains: Can the papacy be justified spiritually or theologically? There still needs to be proven that it was justifiable historically. Catholic theologians try to demonstrate the necessity of this office in the modern Church on a theological basis, with more profound insight into the Old and New Testaments and early Christian tradition. They claim that there is such an office, not because the Church could not do without it, but because it was the will of Christ. Hence, they understand it as a service and a supreme authority in, not over, the Church.

It appears, however, to the writer, that the Pope is not exercising any reserved rights, but rather has the right to take all the rights of the bishops and substitute his own authority if he feels it necessary. One would commend the episcopate and its structure...that is, if it has any power in itself. But the pope, supposedly, is no more an absolute monarch, by virtue of his infallibility than any other absolute monarch in the world.

However, one will have to agree that unlike a secular legislator, he is unable to alter some things of the Church, as his secular legislator can. The Constitution of the Church is such an example. Such a thing is exempt from human arbitration.

Thus far, several arguments against the infallible papacy have been presented, with an honest attempt to explain them fairly: that is, as it is presently used, "infallible" is interpreted as going beyond the teaching office and beyond matters dealing with faith and morals; the pope can lay claim to the rights of the bishops and substitute his own authority...hence, causing episcopal jurisdiction to be absorbed into papal jurisdiction; and the office itself can be disproved within its own historical context. Nevertheless, Romans point out that these are misunderstandings of the role of the papal office; that regardless of its history of human error, Christ simply would not have left the Church alone without some infallible ruler to guide it along its path.

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Wilson states several good reasons for not establishing the papal primacy when he tells about Archbishop Kendrick of St. Louis who attended the Vatican Council in 1870. Kendrick said it was a Scriptural impossibility because the Creed of Pope Pius IV provides that Scripture can be interpreted only according to the unanimous consent of the early Fathers of the Church. Everyone holding an ecclesiastical office must subscribe to this creed. Kendrick proceeded to show that there are five different interpretations of the first text alone. These will be dealt with later. Out of some 85 Fathers, only 17 teach that St. Peter himself was "the rock" upon which Christ built His Church. 44 Fathers teach that "the rock" means the faith expressed by Peter. (Again we refer to Mt. 16:16). Hence, the greater number of Fathers are not in agreeance with the Roman Catholic interpretation of this particular passage of Scripture.²⁷

Again, if it is Peter who is referred to as "the rock" in this chapter, it is certainly shocking to read almost immediately afterwards where he is likened to Satan (vs. 23).

John 21:17 reiterates three times Christ's question to Peter, Peter's answer, and Christ's reply. The present Roman doctrine interprets these to be a special commission granted to Peter, as we have seen, to exercise supreme power. But some noted early Fathers (St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, St. Alexandria define it as a "three-fold restoration to his place in the ranks of the Apostles which St.

²⁷

Wilson, The Divine Commission, op. cit., pp. 55-56.

Peter had virtually forfeited by his three-fold denial of Christ at the time of the crucifixion."²⁸ By Christ's words, "Feed my sheep," it seems that he was simply being renewed into Apostleship.

There are many reasons for doubting the assumption of papal infallibility. First of all, it strikes one as being senseless and impractical. It appears as if the Romans accept the doctrine naively, which does them little credit as rational beings. The decree itself had been understood various ways. Some think that in defining faith and morals, it is also necessary to include other matters, such as philosophy, and matters which have a relevance to the Catholic faith.

Then, if the pope is supreme and is declared infallible, what was to be considered (and who) infallible when there was, in several instances, a question as to who the pope really was...as in the case of rival popes?

When is the pope speaking ex cathedra? How can one be absolutely sure? Does he label some of his decisions as fallible and others as infallible; some as ex cathedra and others as not ex cathedra?

If one accepts the decrees of the pope, he still has to decide which are doctrines referring to faith and morals, and which are dealing with science, philosophy, or the church "government."

And most important, scripturally, it does not really seem very probable at all that we can build an argument with the passage on which the papal infallibility is based. Roman Catholic theologians state

²⁸
Ibid., pp. 56-57.

that there are five scriptural classes to sustain their claim to infallibility. These are said to teach:

1. That the Israelites had a supreme, infallible judgement in the person of the high priest (Deut. xvii, 8-13 and I Cor. x6).
2. That the inerrant teacher in the New Testament Church was predicted in the Old Testament. (Isaiah lix 21).
3. New Testament passages are brought forward to show that the Church is a final arbiter and inerrant in matters of faith and morals (I Tim. iii, 14, 15, and Matt. xxvii, 18-20).
4. That passages in the New Testament cite Peter as the principal speaker, the one preferred by Christ, and as the first in the lists of the apostles (Acts v, 28ff., Lk. xxii, 32, John xxi, 15-17, Acts xv, 1-32).
5. That the one verse very reliable on infallibility is Matthew xvi, 16-19, especially verse 18, "And I say unto thee that thou art Peter....."²⁹

Phillips' comments on the above scriptural references are told below. The reader is referred to his book, Roman Catholicism Analyzed, pp. 51-61 for further reading.

1. The high priest's functions were judicial rather than legislative. The scriptural texts cited are disproved by the history of the Jews. I Cor., 6, says "These things were done in a figure of us." It says, too, that "We should not covet evil things." This has no reference to the perpetuation of a certain form of judiciary, but rather teaches that we should avoid the evils into which the Jews fell.
2. Isaiah lix. 21 says, "This is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; my spirit that is in thee, and my words that I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith

²⁹Phillips, J. A., Roman Catholicism Analyzed, Fleming H. Revell Company, Chicago, 1915, pp. 50-51.

the Lord from henceforth and forever." Not until it is proven that to speak for God is to be infallible, can that Scripture be a foundation for the papal claims.

3. The third class shows that the Church is the pillar and ground of the truth and that Christ will be always with the Church. But does that necessarily imply inerrancy in the giving out of the truth?

4. Peter and his successors in office to have the peculiar prerogative of infallibility in giving definitions of doctrine... because Peter is first on the list? So Luke cites (xxii. 32), "I have prayed for thee"... "confirm thy brethren." But Jesus prayed for all of the disciples, and all of us are to confirm our brothers. Nor is the "Feed thy sheep" command peculiar to one. If it were, then other bishops and priests are to be disqualified as teachers or governors of the Church.

5. The only basic Scripture, "Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," is actually the only Scriptural passage which could possibly offer any debate...and it does. It is the only one which could possibly apply to Peter.

However, there are reasons why we cannot accept this passage which founds Peter's infallibility and that of his successors. Peter's nature was referred to as "rock." This could be because of his acceptance of God in his life and very being. This was his foundation. The successors of Peter would have to accept this foundation as part of their lives...that is, to be pure in heart. It is not likely that any corrupt pope could be counted along with Peter in this aspect...i.e., as a part of the "rock" foundation.

Peter's writings and decisions themselves were subjected to the decisions of the Church, just as were those of the others. Hence, we can see that this is not the same as Peter being declared "chief" with the power to give final definitions of faith and morals...nor his disciples either.

The fact that there are so many various interpretations of the Matthew passage is a very important factor to consider. Following are only a few of them:

1. The Church was founded upon Peter.
2. The Church was founded upon all the apostles, over whom Peter ruled with supremacy.
3. "Rock" can be understood as Peter's profession of faith, and this is the foundation of the Church.
4. "Rock" can be understood as that to which Peter had confessed his faith (Christ), and that the Church was built on Christ.
5. "Rock" could mean the faithful themselves...and the Church could be founded on the faithful.

It seems very likely that "rock" could mean the conviction Peter held...his faith...which would be the foundation of the Church. From all this, it is, in all probability, unlikely that we can build a real argument on this passage at all. The slightest possibility would be that interpretation which defines the "rock" as Peter himself.

There are many other factors to consider at this point. In the first place, Peter's authority was extended by Jesus to all of the apostles (John xx, 19, 21, 23). Peter also continued to be unstable, as noted in several accounts in the gospels. He was supplanted by James as the leader of Jerusalem, and was sent out in much the same manner as were the others. It was James to whom the people made their appeal at Jerusalem, not to Peter. However, Gibbons tells that when James was beheaded,

no efforts were made on his behalf, as there were when Peter was in danger.²⁹ And it was also to James that Paul reported. Peter was criticized by Paul as an unreliable disciple. And it was Paul to whom the local churches appealed, almost to Peter's exclusion.

There is always the question as to whether Peter was in Rome. Tradition has it that he was first in Antioch as bishop, and then suffered martyrdom under Nero in Rome. However, if this is true, then it is more likely that if his primacy was to pass on to his successors, it would be Antioch that has the claim to the papacy. But Antioch never claimed it. There is no mention that Peter was in Rome as bishop of the Church of Rome, as we would suppose that there would be.

Contradicting the above statements we have James Cardinal Gibbons who claims that Peter is called the first Bishop of Rome because he transferred his See from Antioch to Rome, where he suffered martyrdom with St. Paul. Gibbons also says that eminent writers testify to Peter's residence in Rome...Clement, St. Ignatius, Irenaeus, St. Jerome, and others, and that no ancient Church writer ever contradicted this fact.³⁰

If the Roman Catholic assumptions on Peter's supremacy and the papal succession are true, the question arises as to how these powers are transmitted when a new pope cannot even be elected until the death of his predecessor. This seems as if it is a new act each time, then, and not a "privilege of Peter." And isn't the Church without its infallible leader during the interval occurring between the death of one pope and the election of his successor? History has shown that there was such an interval of three years at one time.

²⁹Gibbons, James Cardinal, Faith of Our Fathers, 83rd Revised Ed., John Murphy Company, Baltimore, Maryland, 1917 (1st ed. 1876) p. 103.

As previously mentioned, shortly after the Matthew passage on which the Romans rely, Peter is rebuked by Christ. Does this mean that Christ's assignment to Peter regarding his authority is a conditional gift?

It seems, thus, far, that the Roman Catholic Church rests her claims not on the Scriptures, but on the truths she would have us accept on the hypothesis that she has laid down. Organization and structure are necessary in making God's plan universal and effective, but it is quite another assumption that this organization can be perfect and infallible, since it is handled through human means as well as the Divine. Will God's truth reach us, channeled through the Pope, because he is infallible? If salvation is necessary on the knowledge of someone else's definitions concerning faith and morals, then the whole plan of redemption, as defined by Christ himself, is pushed into an entirely different system. And to admit to only one meaning...is this sufficiently accurately in *itself*?

The presence of the Holy Spirit is also needed in the individual... not just in the head of the Church. In order to know God personally, we must have His presence and for guidance. This does not simply mean the physical dogmas found in the pronouncements of popes...but is also found in the light of the Scriptures. Nor does this imply that the individual is his "own Pope," for we do need the Church as a body for decision-making.

Perhaps the most convincing argument to be offered against the papal infallibility is a reference we can make to the Keenan Catechism.

It is quite a marvel that the Church, if it had previously possessed Papal Infallibility, should have taken 18 centuries to find it out. If, prior to the Vatican Council, the Church of Rome had known the Doctrine of the Pope's infallibility to be true, she had neglected to teach it, and her bishops and priests must have been ignorant that it was a part of the Church's teaching, as can be proven in the Keenan Catachism. This was a book published with the approval of the Scotch Roman bishops, and was recommended also by the Irish prelates. The following question and answer was contained in this book:

- "Q. Must not Catholics believe the Pope in himself to be infallible?
A. This is a Protestant invention: it is no article of the Catholic faith: no decision of his can oblige, under pain of heresy, unless it be received and enforced by the teaching body; that it, by the bishops of the Church."³¹

A few years later, the Keenan Catachism remained the same, except for one change...this question and answer was omitted. Something new was a part of the Roman Catholic faith which had been no part of her faith 20 years earlier.

³¹Salmon, George, D. D., The Infallibility of the Church, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 6, Michigan, 1959, p. 26.

Salmon's book here is a classical work on the subject from the Non-Romanist point of view.

CONCLUSION

It is interesting to read in Coulton's Papal Infallibility how he had written to seven leading Romanists on the subject of Papal Infallibility, challenging their position, and requesting a fair public debate on the issue. All seven refused, which immediately makes one assume that they could not defend their position. However, in his "Postscript," Coulton includes several letters which he wrote to The Rev. R. A. Knox of Oxford. Fr. Knox would not allow his replies to be printed, except for one courteous explanation, which can be read in Coulton, on page 292. At this point, Coulton leaves the readers to judge for themselves.

Since the Doctrine of Papal Infallibility, the bishops, although fairly content to go along with the issue, and the sovereign pontiffs have found themselves in a bind by the powerful curial bureaucracy. But John XXIII was really the first to do anything about it. His calling of the Ecumenical Council may yet prove to be a blow fatal to the curial system. It can be hoped that there will be further clarification at the Council on the issue, at any rate. The ambitious rulers and theologians, as well as the prejudiced people who are against the unity of the Church on this subject...all Christian people should make a determined effort not to be close-minded against a vital issue to the Church.

In the March, 1964, issue of The American News, an Anglican publication, we can read the opinions stated by various churchmen concerning the topic of infallibility in the Second Vatican Council.

One such churchman, Father Herbert A. Rogers, S. J., professor of theology at Fordham University said that "while the decree of papal infallibility promulgated in 1870 served a 'definite need' for the Church by opposing 19th century Gallicanism, the First Vatican Council did not touch on the importance of the collegiality of Catholic bishops throughout the world."³² Father Rogers continued that "the will of the Pope, insofar as he has the highest authority in the Church, is limited by a reality which, according to the very will of God, belongs to the constitution of the Church, namely, the episcopate..." "Not only is the Pope physically unable to abolish the episcopate--since in doing so he would rob himself of the means of administering his government of the universal Church--but he also confronts an episcopate which, as such, is not his civil service...for the episcopate itself is of divine right..."³³

It remains, therefore, to be proven (even if we could prove papal supremacy) that the Pope, in his capacity as teacher, is infallible. The theory, as shown in this paper, is utterly opposed to all facts of history and logical rationalization. The papacy should be understood as a humble, obedient service under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, rather than as an arrogant glorification of an office, as some non-Romans would believe. However, the doctrine of

³²American Church News, Vol XXXI, #2, March, 1964, p. 3.

³³Ibid., p. 3.

infallibility itself, was not promulgated until 93 years ago; it is a modern doctrine. Considering the factors mentioned, it seems that the doctrine has been one which is accepted rather naively.

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