

## THE NECESSITY FOR INFALLIBILITY.

THE subject of infallibility is one of commanding interest. It is difficult, if not impossible, for the intelligent theological mind to set it aside. The consequences resulting from it are so serious and far-reaching as to command the attention of all. If true, no one can afford to treat it with indifference, and if not true, all should know it to be so. It is the duty, therefore, of all earnestly to test it in every form in which this may be legitimately done, and not to endeavor to confuse and thus hide its true claims from the conscience. Though there has been, as we have reason to know, a good deal of earnest reflection by many Protestants upon this subject, the public treatment of the question by them has not been such as to do them full justice. Only here and there has it been allowed to make its appearance in their more elaborate publications, and even then, owing to some sort of indistinct or undefinable dread, it has always been more or less slighted or superficially run through, so as to create the impression that it is not worthy of a full, radical, and thorough examination. The question, however, is manifestly not thus to be quieted or put out of the way. It has called forth a response from the common reason of men, which commands respectful consideration, and the theological mind generally is beginning to realize that if it is to be satisfactorily refuted, it must be done by legitimate means, which will require all, and likely a good deal more than all, the most earnest resources of Protestant thought.

It is said that Nero, in order to conceal his cruelty from his own conscience, as well as from the eyes of the world, clothed many of his victims with the skins of wild animals, and then cast them into the amphitheatre to be torn to pieces by ferocious beasts. They were human beings, nevertheless. So there are many who oppose infallibility, and denounce it as an absurd pretension, not because of its own true nature, but because of the imaginary and tawdry garments with which they have clothed it. They are fighting, for the most part, the consequences of their own misconception; just as the lions in the amphitheatre thought, no doubt, if they thought at all, that they were devouring beasts, not men; and many of this class, after the true idea was allowed to take the place of the false one, have fully recognized, along with the greatest intellectual lights of the world, its profound rationality, and have come to be not only sincere believers in it, but also its most strenuous advocates.

Let us briefly allude to, and, if possible, correct some of these misconceptions.

Infallibility, for instance, is not inspiration, with which it is often carelessly confounded, namely, that peculiar supernatural gift of

prophets and apostles, by which a divine relation was given to the world. It pretends to no power or authority to give a new revelation, nor yet to add one jot or tittle to the old. Nor is it a personal gift, whereby a man is made to be unerring individually in all his mental or moral judgments. Moreover, it is not impeccability; for, however infallible in his proper function, it is freely admitted that the Supreme Pontiff may nevertheless sin, and sin so deeply as to be lost forever. His sin is always greater than that of others, because of the exalted position which he occupies. Infallibility, briefly, is a supernatural gift secured by the Divine Spirit to him who occupies the office of Vicegerent of Christ on earth, so that when, in this office, and teaching the whole Church, in matters of faith and morals, and when, if he were in error, the whole Church, of which he is the head on earth, would be in error also, he is so guided and guarded, by the promised light and grace of the Holy Ghost, that he cannot but teach the truth in the most absolute accordance with revelation.

As regards the nature of this great endowment the subject of this article requires no further remark at this point.

Now, where is the absurdity of this dogma? Is it an impossible bestowment, and in this view absurd? Then, what becomes of the claims which similarly frail human beings, such as prophets and apostles, made to inspiration—a still more transcendent gift—upon the truth of which depends the validity of revelation? Those claims must, on this ground, also be absurd; for so far as they personally were concerned, it cannot be asserted that they were materially different from the generality of men; they experienced the same human frailties and were conditioned by the same finite limitations. But absurdity is not predicated in respect to their claim upon this or any other ground. Therefore, the objection in this application is, as it must be, without foundation. If God was able, or if it was consistent with His manner of working, to give inspiration to feeble men, men of like passions as ourselves, and through them, thus endowed and conditioned, to communicate an absolutely infallible revelation, can any one on the ground of reason say, that it is absurd to believe that He is also able to give, with this revelation, the inferior grace which will qualify a man, placed at the head of the Church, to preserve the truth thus revealed from all fatal error? Surely this cannot be. To speak of the impossibility, and in this view the absurdity, of frail erring men sharing with God, and by His act, in the grace of infallibility, is, therefore, in the way of fact, to undermine the whole groundwork of inspiration itself; for, if anything is clear, it is the fact that the first is presupposed by the last; that the two are, like body and soul, inwardly bound together; that the union is so vital, that the first cannot be impossible if the

second is not, and that the one cannot be absurd unless the other is so likewise.

These reflections prepare the way for a clear and in some sense full apprehension of the necessity for infallibility, in regard to which we now proceed to speak more definitely and in detail.

As already intimated, it seems clear that the nature of revelation itself requires infallibility. This, so far as it can be sustained, is a direct, divine requisition. Inspiration in giving, and infallibility in guarding revelation, are co-ordinate, at least as to their ultimate aim, and therefore must be, in their respective functions, of equal necessity. The last but secures the proper results of the first, and is, in fact, the only condition on which the first can be of any real account as respects its own purpose and mission.

Revelation is acknowledged to be supernatural, both as to its substance and form, *i. e.*, that its truth and its inspiration are wholly above and beyond the natural order. Although much of it is concerned with natural or historical facts, which might be known in an ordinary way, yet the whole, being the work of the inspired mind and connected with a spiritual and supermundane end, is a purely divine product. This is revelation in itself,—an objective fact, as really so as the sun, which gives natural light to the world,—absolutely unerring and supernatural. Here we stand upon common grounds with all believers in the fact of a revelation.

But now, whilst this objective supernatural revelation is one thing, conceded to be unerringly true by all so-called orthodox Christian minds, our fallible apprehension of it is, as must also be conceded, quite another and a different thing.

It is well, at this stage of our general discussion, to mark somewhat in detail a few of the sharp points of difference which here arise.

1. Revelation, as an objective fact, immediately from the pen of inspiration, is, as to its truth, absolutely certain. It must be so, otherwise it would not be inspired. As, however, it is understood, or subjectively apprehended by fallible minds in their ordinary state, it is just as absolutely uncertain; and this also must be so, otherwise those minds would not be fallible.

2. Revelation, as objective or in itself, teaches the same truth through all ages and to all minds. It cannot vary or change, or, as regards its doctrine, adapt itself to different conditions, being one thing for one and a different thing for another. As understood, however, by different minds, on the principle of fallibility, it teaches radically different things.

3. Revelation, as objective or in itself considered, carries the whole complicated system of divine truth in a way that is perfectly harmonious throughout. There is not, as there cannot be, the

presence of a single jar. As apprehended by the fallible individual reason, it results in contradictions of the most palpable nature from beginning to end.

4. Revelation, as objective, is the bearer to our natural, and now world of sin and moral darkness, of pure supernatural truth, which, as such, is in no sense attainable by the reason, nor by any process which the reason might institute. As apprehended by finite, darkened, fallible minds, it is truth on a level with the limited human understanding, that is, truth in the order of nature.

Now there is certainly no form of reasoning known to the human mind which can make it appear that these two things, with differences so strongly marked, are one and the same thing. This would be to destroy reason itself and convert the whole region of knowledge into a fancy or an idle dream. As it cannot be shown that light is darkness, so neither can it be proven that these two things are the same thing. Rather, like light and darkness, they are opposites, and, as such, can never be reconciled.

Take now these two strongly-marked and divergent facts, and suppose infallibility, or an infallible interpreter, does not exist, which of the two would remain, and be the practical guide and controlling power for men? Very manifestly, the latter—that is, the uncertain, contradictory, natural opinions of men respecting revelation, which constitute just no revelation at all, instead of the absolutely sure and perfect Word of God itself! Here, as all may see, is a direct substitution of the word of man for the Word of God. What, then, in these circumstances, is the perfect objective revelation of God, without the power somewhere to understand it in its own perfect character? Clearly, in spite of all the vain boasts of the Protestant world, it is, as it must be, a pure abstraction.

The absence of this power of infallibility to understand revelation would not, it is true, utterly destroy revelation as such. It would still exist, just as the sun would, were there no eyes to see its light; and it would still be, in itself, absolutely unerring. But, plainly, so far as we are concerned, it would be as though it were not. For us and for the world generally, concretely and practically, it could not be. In other words, it would be shorn, *ex necessitate*, of every element that constitutes it a supernatural revelation, and would be reduced to the character of a mere ordinary, common book, from which each one may, *ad libitum*, gather what notions best suit his tastes, though he would be, at the same time, at absolute war with every other one, who professes, in like manner, to take his opinions from the same source. To speak of this book, thus eviscerated, in which human opinion has taken the place of divine inspiration, as being the revelation of God, is simply to be foolish and impious; and it certainly is not harsh to say, that no

one in proper harmony with his own reason can seriously maintain such a proposition.

In such form, being a mere abstraction, or relegated practically to the clouds, the Revelation of God, however perfect, both as to form and contents, could of course never actualize its own purpose, namely, serve as an infallible guide, or lead men into infallible truth; and not being able to do this, we cannot rationally believe that it would ever have been given. Why should it, in such case, be inspired at all? Surely it did not require inspiration to produce such results. There is nothing in variable and contradictory opinions which, as effects, can connect them with inspiration as their cause.

What then is the general conclusion which reason, to speak of nothing higher, compels the mind to draw from these premises? Nothing less, surely, than this: If Revelation is to be a fact for our world—if it is to be for us the actual revelation of God, whose teachings are, and in their own nature must be, certain, harmonious, invariable, and supernatural, in which there can be no error, no changing opinion, no contradiction, then, by some means or other, we must be made to understand it in its own certain, harmonious, and absolute character. Otherwise, whatever it may be in itself, it is, and can be, no inspired revelation for us. Thus the inherent logic of reason, which speaks to the consciousness of every man who recollects himself as being accountable to God, will force the conviction, when prejudice is banished and nature is calm, that to know revelation in this the only way it can be known, we need a power to interpret it which shall have equal authority with revelation itself. This conclusion cannot be avoided.

It is a great mistake, which many make, to suppose that all that is necessary in order to possess the Bible, is to purchase it, and, like an honest man, pay for it. They seem to forget that infidels of the most advanced type possess it precisely in the same way, and are frequently able much more adroitly to manage, in the service of infidelity, their quotations from it. Such possession may indeed give him a legal right to the paper and ink which enter into it, as into any other mere personal chattel. But the Bible itself, in its own proper nature, namely, its truth, is not thus a matter of merchandise or legal ownership. To possess it in this its only true sense is to seize its meaning, to know its sense, and to know this infallibly, for this sense or meaning is infallible. How may this be done without infallibility?

The necessity for infallibility in this view is, therefore, clearly equal to the value of revelation itself; for without the first it is not possible to possess the last. He who has the truth of revelation, in its own infallible form (and it has no other truth), has revela-

tion, and he who has not the truth under this form has not revelation, and would not have, though printed Bibles were stacked around him to the height of the Himalayas.

Give up, then, this infallible interpreter, and you have remaining a fallible interpretation, a varying opinion, an absolute uncertainty, that is, no revelation at all, and thus nothing, to be the guide for all men in respect to their eternal destinies. What rational mind can calmly yield to such a result?

But we may view the same general truth in another light, namely, in its relation to faith, both in itself and in its unity. It is acknowledged on all hands that faith is an essential grace. Here again we start on common ground. The necessity for infallibility arising from this source is no less apparent and imperative than that which we have just seen growing from the nature of revelation. We all admit the Christian faith to be a divine gift. As such, like the eye, it must have an object. What would the eye be without an object adapted to it? So what would faith be without, in the same manner, an object which in its nature might correspond with it? What is the object for faith other than the truth of revelation? The living person of Christ, as the *λογος*, or the Revealer, is not distinct and separate from this general revelation. This truth of revelation is inspired truth, and therefore, as to its form, is certain and unerring. It is this truth, in this form, that constitutes the object for faith, as a divine gift. Divine truth, substantively, cannot be separated from its form, as given and fixed by inspiration. Divorce here means general shipwreck.

Here, then, are two divine or supernatural things, namely, the spiritual organ of vision (the gift of faith), seeing, and the object (the inspired truth of revelation) seen.

Now, if the truth of revelation is one, or single, as we have already seen it must, to be inspired, then it follows that this faith must also be one or single; that is, it must apprehend its object in the form in which it is given by inspiration, which, by the necessity of the case, must always be one and single. There is no way in which we may escape this conclusion. Therefore, unless revelation changes, or unless there are many and different revelations instead of one, and this one unchangeable, there must be one faith only, even as there is but one baptism and one God.

It follows from the foregoing, that faith is not and cannot be a mere opinion. Opinion takes many forms—is never fully settled. By its own nature it is something individual, and follows all the kaleidoscopic changes to which the individual is liable. In its best estate, and sustained by the highest degree of human intelligence, it involves uncertainty, and therefore, at least, the possibility of error; for if it were or could be certain, it would, *ipso facto*, not

be opinion. Now the uncertain or doubtful is not an object of faith, for it is the nature of faith to exclude doubt. Faith, as distinguished from opinion, is, in its own nature certain, just as much so as its object is, and hence is divine or supernatural; or, to 'change the order, it is divine or supernatural, and *hence* certain, and was given for the purpose of enabling man to rise above all mere sense, and opinion, and ratiocination—the whole sphere of mere mundane existence—into the supernatural order, and thus take into his moral being what he never could by reason, namely, the certain, infallible, and perfect sense of revelation, just as revelation gives it.

Now if revelation could teach, in regard to the same subject-matter, many and different doctrines to many and different minds, or if it could proclaim one doctrine to one age and a different one to another, it would manifestly not be the same revelation for each; and in these circumstances, instead of there being but one faith, there would be many and different faiths. Indeed, there would be, by the necessity of the case, as many revelations as there would be men, and as many faiths as there would be revelations. And, besides all this, they would all be in fatal conflict and contradiction. God would thus be at war with Himself. Could any rational mind regard this as the work of an infinitely wise Being? Such revelations would carry their refutation upon their own face so clearly that the most illiterate even would at once see and spurn them.

Faith, then, by its very nature, is a unit. It could not exist in any other form; for the moment it takes any other attitude or nature, or becomes many and contradictory, it ceases to be properly related to its certain object, and is mere opinion.

But what, now, is the condition on which this essential unity of faith depends? There can be immediately but one, and that plainly is the power to apprehend revelation—the object of faith—in its own infallible character. In this character, as we have seen, revelation does not and cannot teach in regard to the same subject-matter, many different and contradictory doctrines, but must always announce, as it does in fact, one and the same doctrine. That which the Apostles taught and was believed in the beginning, is that which is taught and believed now. It is the same in every age, in every clime, and to all minds; and the original commission under which this teaching is continued from age to age is also the same. Hence the nature, and hence also the ground of the unity of faith—“the faith once delivered to the Saints.”

Here again, it is very clear to perception that the power capable of so apprehending revelation as to give to faith its own sure object, namely, unerring and absolutely certain truth, and in this way preserve its unity, which is essential to its being, can be noth-

ing short of infallibility. Whatever, therefore, may be the value of the unity of faith, nay, whatever may be the importance of faith itself, as a condition of personal participation in the grace of redemption, must form the measure of the necessity which exists for infallibility, since neither faith nor its unity can, in the way of fact, exist without it. Could any necessity well be more absolute? and could any touch our nature at a more vital point?

The same argument might be deduced from the nature of the Church. There is, as is theoretically acknowledged by all properly enlightened minds, but one Church. It is also clear that this Church is visible and invisible, or that these two sides inhere in its nature. As such it is an objective, organic, and historical fact in the world, compared by the Apostle to a human body—it being the “body of Christ.” It cannot, therefore, be divided. By its own nature it is a unit, and division would be destruction. This unity is invisible of course, but it is visible also; for where is the proof of the first if the last does not exist? and, moreover, how can an organism be a unit internally and not a unit externally? But we have not the space further to develop this point, and can only say that this unity of the Church, in fact, in faith, in government, and in work, is possible only on the ground of an infallible head, very clearly secured to it originally in the person of Peter and his successors to the end of time. To speak of invisible unity, as Protestants are in the habit of doing, in spite of the fact that each denomination is independent of all the rest, and in spite of the continued and bitter warfare between them in regard to the most vital doctrines of Christianity, is manifestly a pure delusion, and hardly worthy of earnest discussion. Where earnestness ceases, argument is wasted.

There is yet, however, one other consideration showing the same necessity, to which we would direct earnest attention. This is the nature of Church authority. Here again we start on common ground, at least so far as the more advanced Protestant thought extends.

There is authority in the family and authority in the State, and neither the family nor the State could exist, as all readily acknowledge, without it, except in ruins; certainly could not accomplish their own respective ends in the economy of society in its absence. The same is, of course, true in respect to the Church as the collective body of believers or the Ecclesia. Indeed, the principle of authority, even to a greater extent than is true in relation to the family and the State, is a vital part of its being. This authority, however, thus asserted, both as to the being and the mission of the Church, is peculiar altogether to itself. There is no class into which it may be arranged, and with which it would in all respects be



similar or alike. It stands alone, and all that can be properly said of it is, that it is like itself. As authority simply it is, of course, the same as that in the family and the State; that is to say, it is *real* authority. But as to its nature it differs widely from both, and mainly in the fact that it refers to the conscience and matters of faith. This renders it entirely unique. The conscience, dependent, as it is, upon a morally darkened intellect and perverted will, is not, as all are ready to admit, an infallible or safe guide, and therefore needs a controlling force beyond itself. Of course this force is moral, and not physical. The authority of the family is internal as well as external, *i e.*, it takes hold of the child mentally and physically, but is conditioned and limited at every point. The authority of the State, on the other hand, is wholly external, it having no right to command any but outward obedience, allowing full freedom to faith and the conscience.

Acts, however, arising in the conscientious conviction of being right, may be, and often are, palpably wrong. A sadly striking instance of this is seen in the melancholy conduct of Freeman, the Pocasset murderer of his child. Civil government has the right, and is, moreover, obligated, to suppress and punish such acts, if intelligently committed, however sincere the conscience from which they arise, because it is bound to protect society and punish crime. The mere fact that men are conscientiously sincere, will not, if the act is wrong and injurious, stay the restraining or punitive hand of civil authority. Brutus, when plunging the dagger into the heart of Cæsar, and Jacques Clement, when he assassinated Henry III., acted, no doubt, under a very great excitement of mind, which led them to view their attempts as deeds of heroism; and yet, if they had both been brought before the tribunal of justice, no one would have thought them entitled to impunity—the one on account of his love of country, and the other on account of his zeal for religion.

But now, just as civil law has an acknowledged right to suppress and punish wrong and injurious acts (not thoughts, feelings, or purposes) arising in conscience, so moral law, with even greater right, and quite as strenuously, condemns the wicked feelings which are the immediate antecedents of these acts. There must therefore be a power entering into the person, capable of regulating and controlling the conscience itself, irrespective of outward acts. If this is not so, then the most vital and responsible part of our being is left altogether without government, and this cannot be supposed. The authority, thus entering man's moral being, is not that of the State, but that of the Church. Its field of action is the interior of our being, just as that of civil government is the exterior; the first

having regard governmentally to our moral nature as the second has to our physical.

Here the question arises, what, in the nature of the case, must be the character and ground of that authority which undertakes to regulate the faith and command the conscience of men, or modify and mould their relations with God and eternity? Can it be any form that carries in it even the possibility of error? Clearly, it cannot; for where is the authority to compel men, in conscience, to trust their salvation to an uncertainty? Chances may do in the world of speculation, where, if you miss, you lose a dollar, or ten, or ten thousand. This is comparative trash. But it will not do where, if you miss, you lose your soul and a happy eternity. No man can preserve his sense of moral integrity and manhood who voluntarily surrenders his spiritual being to the dominion of a possible falsehood. But the absence of the rule of absolutely unerring authority means, in our circumstances, not only the possible presence of error, but always its actual presence. Our nature, through the Fall, is preoccupied with error; but where exists the power to compel men to believe a lie, and, in the significant language of Scripture, be damned? To submit to such authority voluntarily and intelligently is moral suicide. Here is the very taproot of slavery,—slavery of the very deepest sort,—the ruin, in fact, of everything in the form of moral manhood and personal responsibility. And, moreover, very clearly, it is treason against God. Against all such authority we are not only justified in rebelling, but we are bound to do it, even unto blood.

Manifestly, the voice of God alone, or unerring truth, can be authority for the conscience. How can this voice reach us practically, so as to be an authoritatively governing power in our moral nature? No progress can be made until this question is fairly met and satisfactorily answered. Is it directly through the Bible? This, as we have seen, on the principle of the fallible mind, is full of contradictions. Whilst in itself it is conceded to be the inspired will of God, to become a consistent practical rule it must be interpreted. This is the point where the real contest begins. The question is not the Bible, but biblical interpretation. How may the Bible be interpreted in such a way as to assure the conscience that the interpretation is, beyond the possibility of error, the inspired truth of God? for if it is not this it is not the Bible. Can individual reason, which in its own strength may affect to be the measure of this truth, give such assurance? This, as is known to all, is the very essence of shrivelling rationalism. Can the principle of self-authentication, which some few modern theologians affect to hold, do this? No principle has, to a greater degree, caused the divergences and contradictions touching sacred truths

which have arisen during the last three centuries. Is it possible for human creeds, springing into life to-day, to wilt and die to-morrow, the handiwork of restless, ambitious men, to give this guarantee? The question carries its own answer. Can synods and assemblies, which acknowledge in the very act of forging the rule of authority that they have not the grace of inerrancy, that they have often been mistaken in the past, as they may possibly be also in the present act, give this assurance? The fact is, that in the very effort they make to weld the links of a chain to bind this God-given freedom of others they themselves have, in the way of fact, we do not say designedly, repudiated the only authority that can bind the soul.

No! All these various forms of authority, by their own confession, and in their very nature, carry in them the principle of error, and doing this, they cannot be admitted into the conscience with power to bind and control. Instinctively the intelligent spirit shrinks from and resists them, and, acting conscientiously, must feel itself ever bound to do so.

The sense of this is coming to be very seriously felt in all directions. Men are restless under the human shackles which are made to bind them. They feel that their moral nature has been invaded and captured, and is now held in bondage, by an illegitimate power, and the sense of humiliation hereby occasioned gives them real pain. This is the reason of the earnest cry which is raised latterly in all directions against creed. Boldly are men moving into the kindly light, beginning to challenge the authorities that have forged their chains. "What right," they are asking, "have you who acknowledge your own fallibility, and often glory in it, to dictate articles for our faith, and formulate rules to coerce our conscience? Are we not your peers, and do we not stand upon the same platform?"

Clearly, for Protestant "churches," this authority, essential to the very idea of the Church, does not and cannot exist. It is a pure delusion. Their creeds are rapidly losing themselves amid the rubbish of other days. It is a remarkable fact, but a fact nevertheless, and we announce it with respect, that not one of these creeds, which created so much enthusiasm in the 16th century, commands to-day the real inward regard and confidence of its friends. It is coming to be seen in a light without a shadow that no Church, any more than any other form of organization, say the Odd Fellows or Freemasons, which does not possess, and is not able practically to apply the principle of inerrancy, can or dare claim authority over faith and conscience.

The idea of dogma, also in the light of this fact, has been in the various Protestant churches already practically abandoned, and

the policy now generally inaugurated to secure union and carry forward their respective enterprises is an appeal wholly to feeling and sentiment; thus hiding an inherent and fatal weakness, and placing themselves beyond the reach of argument—the end of which, notwithstanding, and in the near future must be, by the acknowledgment even of their own more astute friends, pure naturalism, and thus, at last, absolute failure.

Infallibility alone being God's own supernatural gift is able to give to faith its object, and to conscience its law. This cannot err, and therefore, for us, concretely and practically, it is the only ground of authority for our moral being. There can be none other; therefore the alternative is this or nothing.

No abandonment of moral manhood is involved in bowing to such authority. It is the simple, pure dictate of reason itself, and when done voluntarily and intelligently it is one of the highest as well as freest acts that man is capable of performing. Being the mediated voice of God himself, as it must be, if true, to obey it is to be truly free, and to rise consciously into our own proper being, as connected both with absolute truth and with God himself. *Veritas liberabit vos.* Not until this act is thus intelligently performed can any one fully realize its moral richness on the one hand, and, on the other, the utter barrenness of the whole moral world, where this great principle is not to be found.

Upon this principle, moreover, is solved the great problem which has commanded the finest philosophic thought of every age, viz.: How may liberty and authority be reconciled? Apparently they are mutually exclusive and repellent principles, and yet really the one demands the other, and cannot properly exist without it. Liberty without authority is libertinism, whilst authority without liberty is despotism. How may they be united so as to secure and conserve the proper nature and function of each? In themselves there is nothing to furnish the basis of this meeting and blending. By their own nature they look to and demand a third element, a mediating force beyond themselves, which will yet be in inward, real harmony with both, in and through which they may enter, permeate, and condition each other. Ultimately this third factor can be none other than sure or certain truth, or rather the grace of sure and certain truth.

Liberty and authority, both arising in this truth originally, must here again, and by its grace, become really reconciled. Here is solved what philosophy has vainly labored for ages to accomplish. The reason has no legitimate claims beyond this truth, and reason will so acknowledge. This force entering as a factor, both liberty and authority are governed by it, and thus each is preserved in its true character. Indeed, they become, on this ground, substantially

but the different sides of the same thing, and are only distinguished by different names. In the light of this fact it is clearly seen that to obey is to be free, and to be free is to obey; for the obedience here, seeing that its demand arises in truth infallibly ascertained, is not constrained or forced, as by an external arbitrary power, but springs spontaneously from the human soul, as something eternally right and fitting in itself.

The counterpart of this, as we find it in the State, is strikingly significant, and may serve very aptly to illustrate the point. The authority of civil government, whose ultimate basis is also divine, is no less unyielding, and in its own sphere, and for its own ends, infallible; infallible, however, only in the sense of being ultimate and conclusive; and it is this without even the suspicion of ignoring freedom or being despotic. It is a simple necessity; it must take this attitude in order to be free. The citizen, as such, has no civil rights beyond, or contrary to, the decision of the supreme appellate court. This decision announced, the controversy is ended, and the only duty which remains is that at least of outward submission. Take away this power of finality, or of finally determining civil rights, and the foundation of government itself is at once broken up, and freedom is converted into the merest figment of the imagination.

Here, then, unquestionably, is the ultimate and firm foundation on which rest these two strong pillars in all properly constituted society—freedom and authority—without which society must be, through all its manifold departments, in a perpetual state of anarchy and helpless confusion.

All the interest, therefore, which attaches to the principle of moral authority (and of true freedom as well), and with this, more remotely, to civil governmental authority, connected at the same time with the inward sense of reverence and personal responsibility (and no one can sufficiently estimate this, permeating, as it does, our individual nature, and spreading from thence through general society, constituting the basis of morality, the motive of virtue, and the incentive to pure and noble deeds, touching and inspiring our common humanity at ten thousand secret points); all this, we say, is due, primarily and fundamentally, to the supernatural grace of infallibility, giving certainty, and hence divine authority, to truth.

Looking at the question simply as furnishing the basis and animating spirit of Church government, what is there like it in the whole sweep of the world's history? The Emperor Maximin, in the beginning of the fourth century, who was an ardent friend of pagan worship, and the bitter foe of the rapidly rising and spreading Christian Church, recognized very clearly the mighty power

which the Church possessed in her governmental unity; and, with a view to check her progress, and, if possible, crush her, suggested a similar polity for paganism. A complete external imitation was accordingly adopted. Priests were subjected to the authority of superior pontiffs, and these acknowledged, in turn, the supreme jurisdiction of the high-priests of the province, who acted as the immediate vicegerents of the emperor himself. The white robe was the ensign of their official dignity. The new prelates were carefully selected from the most noble and opulent families of the empire. And yet, with all this compactness of organization and power of magistrates combined, it passed away like the morning cloud, or, rather, suddenly crashed, like the rotten framework of an otherwise massive temple. If the government of the Church were, in like manner, a mere pretence or outward imitation even of Heaven's own government, what could have prevented, long since, a like ruin in relation to it? On the contrary, as history fully attests, its strength has remained firm and steady all through the uprisings and downfallings of states and dynasties; and how can this historical wonder, this singular exception, be accounted for or explained, except on the ground that she actually possesses what she claims, namely, this *rock-foundation*, against which even the powers of hell cannot prevail?

These now, to extend the basis of the argument no further, are some of the positions showing the necessity for infallibility. If these positions are well taken, in other words, if they rest on solid ground, as we believe they do, then the inference must follow with a force which cannot be resisted, that the necessity, as to its nature, is simply absolute. To deny it is—to all intents and purposes—to deny revelation itself; for this, without an interpreter, in nature and authority corresponding with revelation, can never be more than a splendid supernatural abstraction, which, as such, would never have been given. To deny it—though there still would be opinion and vague conjecture touching supernatural truth, there can be no faith in the true sense of the word, and, of course, no unity of faith; for there can neither be an infallibly true object for faith, nor an unerring practical rule by which to relate faith with it. At best its object may be error, as well as truth, and is always more likely—taking human nature as it is—to be error; at least it can never be absolutely sure whether it be truth or a lie. To deny it, no one can conceive how the Church could continue with its several essential attributes, and especially that of unity. To deny it, moreover, there can be no regulated authority for conscience, and our whole inward moral nature is at the mercy absolutely, either of every perverted fancy of a depraved heart and darkened intellect, or of every tyrannical pretence seeking to enslave men, coming in

the name of authority from beyond themselves. In a word, let the denial be general and final, and we are absolutely at sea, with all the magnificent interests of Christianity, connected, too, with all the deep longings of the human soul; so that we can have neither confidence in the present nor hope in the future.

Clearly, this necessity for infallibility is entirely too serious and vital, and the consequences depending on it are too far-reaching and tremendous, not to carry with it at the same time the thing itself to which it points. It cannot be that a loving God would thus mock and tantalize His children, and especially in respect to interests which are so momentous.

Is it possible for any one intelligently to concede the presence of this necessity, so absolute in its nature, and yet think that infallibility itself could be absent? We cannot believe this. As well might you concede the presence of a similar necessity in the system of nature for the law of gravitation, and yet imagine the absence, in fact, of such a law. This cannot be; neither can the other. That, therefore, to which this necessity points, and which it so imperatively demands, must have an actual existence; and, like the law of gravitation, be, in the sphere of the supernatural order, in perpetual concrete operation from year to year and age to age. To eliminate the principle of infallibility from the order of grace, would be like destroying the law of gravitation in the kingdom of nature; in the first, no less than in the last, it would result in a universal collapse.

Infallibility, then, we have a full right from reason to conclude, is a fact, and one of the most vital and vitally far-reaching facts, not only for the Church, which is its centre, but also for the entire world.

Viewed, now, in the light of this rational necessity, instead of infallibility being absurd, as the claim is sometimes said to be by those who have not seriously studied its nature, there is nothing, in fact, that can be in deeper and more perfect harmony with reason. The absurdity lies altogether on the other side—in the flip-pant spirit by which it is decried and denounced. *A priori*, the mind looks for, and expects it, and it would be disappointed not to find it, fully as much as the man who, looking into a clear mirror, should fail to meet his own image. It would argue a radical defect in the laws of moral government. Indeed, if there be one call of reason louder and more earnest than all the rest combined, it would seem to be just that call which seeks to regain what belonged to the reason originally, but which was lost in the fall, and thus, through this reacquired supernatural gift, be surely led back on the bright lines of unerring truth, to Him in whom our being may again become complete.

We pause here to ask, Where is this infallibility, thus necessitated, to be found? Is it in *Episcopalianism*? Reluctantly and slowly the response comes—"It is not in me." Is it in *Presbyterianism*? Sharply and somewhat crabbedly the answer is—" 'Tis not in me." Is it in *Methodism*? In a smiling but slightly bewildered tone, the reply is the same—"It is not in me." And thus on and on, *et id omne genus*; and to the whole, if whole there be, I put the same question—is it in you? And the answer is, a deep and absolute—"No."

Still the necessity continues, and grows more earnest with every successive repudiation, and must exist somewhere. Where? And listening, I hear a calm, mild, and gentle voice, saying, "Here—'tis in me;" and, looking up, I find before me all the outlines of the grand old Catholic and Apostolic Church. She stands peerless and alone in her claim to this transcendent grace; and it is so consistent with this a priori necessity for infallibility that it must, in the view of reason, be admitted to be just.

Yes, here it has been from the beginning. Its tones were heard by kings and princes, and they uncovered their heads and reverently bowed before it. They were heard by the rude barbarian, and under them his savage nature warmed and softened into a high-toned civilized Christian man. They were heard among the lowly haunts of the poor and oppressed, and they inspired hope and courage. Truth here received an incomparable majesty and value, and faith an unconquerable life and power. The martyr at the stake or in the dungeon was by them miraculously nerved and enabled to endure the most excruciating torture in the spirit of the grandest heroism. They sounded forth among the rich and powerful, and these, hearing the call as from God, at once abandoned their ambitious pursuits of the world, and dedicated their influence and gold in rearing massive cathedrals, spacious monasteries, and ample asylums for the poor and afflicted. They entered the ears of genius, and at their bidding, as by magic, Christian art sprang into being, which, by its sweet harmony and perfect lines of beauty, allured and lifted the age-thought to heaven. Philosophy and science, and jurisprudence and history entered, by their influence, upon a new and higher mission. Truth, thus made certain, not only ennobled, but also enlarged and truly freed the human mind, gave to it celestial wings, and bade it soar grandly through the universe. Magnificent universities, at its call, were made to dot and cover the whole fair face of Europe. Civilization was led, as by its hand, to its own proper Christian plane, spreading rich blessings by means of ten thousand different conduits through the whole of society, starting the grand march of the races upwards and onwards to their true goal. And from this grand centre of



condensed supernatural power, all over and around the globe, was found to extend a vast and complicated system of spiritual graces, the like of which the world never saw before; here jubilant, and there depressed, now flattered and then persecuted, comprehending all nationalities, races, and tongues, the most lowly and abject of the human family and the most highly gifted and cultured of earth,—the king, the philosopher, the orator, the poet, the sage, and the saint,—“men studying everything, disputing in everything, replying to everything, knowing everything, yet always agreeing in unity of doctrine, bending their noble intellectual brows in respectful obedience to the one faith”—a system moving grandly through all time; old, yet with the dew of early morn sparkling upon it, kept all the while in absolute unity and harmony, the surprise and wonder of the world, the standing, speaking miracle of the ages! And how, under God, is all this accomplished? The simple answer is, by the still, calm, but potent voice of infallibility.

Truly, “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord.”

“Do we not here,” in the language of a brilliant writer, “seem to behold another planetary system, where globes of fire revolve in their vast orbits in the midst of immensity, always drawn to their centre by a mysterious attraction. That central force allows no aberration, takes from them nothing of their extent, or of the grandeur of their movement; but inundates them with light, and gives to their motion a more majestic regularity.”

Now, infallibility, carrying with it, as by an inexorable logic as it seems so plainly to do, all the features peculiar and essential to Catholicity, you may see how and why, sincerely believing it, as I cannot help doing, I am now in this service. I am engaged in it, moreover, frankly to acknowledge that infallibility is stronger than I, and humbly to lay at the feet of the Church, from whose bosom it speaks, this little and poor chaplet, in grateful memory of her victory.\*

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\* The writer of the foregoing article is a recent convert. To this the last few sentences refer.