

The Alleged "Failures" of Infallibility

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The Church of God is a visible society of visible men, a society welded into one compact body by unity of government, unity of faith, unity of sacraments. Moreover, this triple unity of the visible body is impossible without a visible, supreme, and infallible Head. The Head must be visible, because the body is visible. The Head must be supreme, because it is the Head; that is, because all other visible authority in the Church is subordinate to it. And the Head must be infallible, because its decisions must command certain and unhesitating assent that is not merely external, but is internal also.

Who, then, is that visible, supreme, and infallible Head? It can be proved in several ways to be the Bishop of Rome, the Successor of St. Peter, Christ's Vicar and Viceroy upon earth. And for a thousand years the English people recognized the Pope as their spiritual Head. For a thousand years they acknowledged one centre of authority, the See of Peter. For a thousand years as spiritual sheep they were led by the one Supreme Shepherd, the Successor of St. Peter. And, in consequence, for a thousand years the English people were closely united with the rest of Christendom under the same Church government, in the same faith, in the same sacraments. For the thousand years during which the great English nation recognized the Headship and Authority of the Bishop of Rome, the nation was conspicuously one—one in creed, one in religion. In those olden Catholic days, not Canterbury but Rome was the touchstone of unity. And when the yoke of obedience to Rome was cast off by the rulers of England, and the English people were plundered of their ancient Faith, the new-fangled religion which a lustful king brought in, which upstart nobles gorged with Church property welcomed, to which a servile Parliament gave the semblance of legality, and which a code of penal laws unexampled in severity forced upon the people—in spite of it all, the new-fashioned religion could not even for a single generation hold the English people in its allegiance, but at once the process of disintegration and dissolution set in.

Here, then, for those in doubt, is the key of the religious situation. Find out where the visible, supreme, and infallible Teacher is. Do not trouble about other difficulties. Confine your search to this alone. For if God has given such a Teacher, these other difficulties must admit of a clear and certain solution by that Teacher. If God has not given such a Teacher, then of yourself you will never find a clear and certain solution. If there be no such Teacher to enlighten us, then Christianity is a delusion and a dream, and there is nothing for us but, like the pagans of old, to cry out in anguish and desolation of heart, "God there is none. Future life there is none. Let us drink and make merry, for to-morrow we die." If there be no such Teacher to enlighten us, how is our end better than that of the dumb beasts of the field who lie down in the dust and die?

Now, I do not say there are no difficulties connected with the proofs of Papal Supremacy and Infallibility. No doctrine is free from difficulties: not the doctrine of God's existence, not the doctrine of the Trinity, not the doctrine of the Atonement, not the doctrine of Unquenchable Fire. Yet it is a common practice with the enemies of Catholicity to string together lists of such

difficulties to withhold good men from submitting to the Church of their forefathers. Take a book like Littledale's *Plain Reasons against joining the Church of Rome*—a mere catalogue of inaccuracies, of calumnies, of garbled quotations, of studied admixtures of truth with falsehood—a mere heap of those half-truths which are ever the worst of lies; a book which would require the lifetime of a trained theologian to answer in detail. Littledale has taken some work on Catholic theology, copied out the "objections" he found there, and omitted even to hint at the full and complete answers which he also found there. A good specimen of the work is the attack on Papal Infallibility, a part of which I am going to answer now. It occupies but a few pages of Dr. Littledale's small book, yet a whole volume would be required to answer it in detail.

The adversary tells us that Popes have taught error when teaching *ex cathedra*. Therefore, he argues, they were not infallible. If that assertion be true, the Catholic Church collapses like a house of cards, and Christianity collapses with it. If the adversary could demonstrate one single false *ex cathedra* utterance of one single Roman Pontiff, straightway we might give up Catholicity, we might deny Christianity. But proof? Where is the proof? The enemy is rich in assertion, but it is proof we want. Where will you find this proof? Search through the annals of the Papacy; tax back through the centuries; scrutinize the dusty tomes of history; gaze wary-eyed into all the decisions of all the two hundred and fifty-eight Pontiffs who during nineteen centuries have sat in Peter's chair, find but a single instance—one only—from Peter in the first century to Leo in the nineteenth—of a Pope who teaching *ex cathedra* has fallen into error, and we grant the Catholic Church to be a sham and an imposture. But we need not be afraid of the search. The enemy will not succeed. Men more skilful than he, to wit the great theologians of the Catholic schools, have examined every case the opponent can adduce, and they laugh his feeble efforts to scorn. Moreover, the ablest men in our own time in the Anglican Establishment have sifted every instance that eager animosity could find, and what was the result of their search? They broke with the traditions of their youth, they snapped the fondest ties of family and friendship, they abandoned Protestantism and submitted to the Catholic Church! Newman and Manning, Faber and Ward, Oakley and Wilberforce, and a host of others who gave up all they loved for truth's sake—think you that these confessors of the Faith would have made these bitter sacrifices had Littledale's shallow sophistries been true, and Papal Infallibility had been the obvious imposture which this man's pleadings would have simple Protestants believe?

But, the adversary urges, have not some Popes been notoriously bad men? Let that pass, we reply; Judas was a bad man, yet he had supernatural gifts. Let us stick to the point. It is Infallibility we are discussing, not Impeccability.

But, the adversary urges again, have not many Popes notoriously fallen into error? If you mean, we reply, as private teachers and doctors, again let that pass. Let us keep to the point. Infallibility is the prerogative of the Pope, only as Pope, in his official capacity when speaking *ex cathedra*—that is, when as Supreme Teacher and Doctor he defines a question of Faith or Morals to be held by the Universal Church. In that capacity not a single one in the long line of 258 Popes has stumbled once during nineteen centuries!

But again the objector presses. What about the cases of Liberius, Honorius, and Galileo? Were not these *ex cathedra* decisions, and were they not erroneous? Very well, here we have a clear issue. Let us discuss these three cases. They are the three crucial examples on which our opponents rely.

But before giving a direct reply let me point out this significant fact that the objections of our adversaries are now practically limited to these three instances. Formerly, however, a long list of

Popes were charged by opponents with official heresy. There was quite a long catalogue of lapsed Infallibles! In the time of Cardinal Bellarmine, in the seventeenth century, at least forty Popes were impugned by non-Catholics for heretical teaching! But the progress of historical study has changed all that. We Catholics are for ever being told that the Roman Church is afraid of history, and that her foundations will be undermined with the advance of historical knowledge. Yet, curiously enough, the effect is just the reverse. Accurate historical study has indeed killed certain Protestant watch-cries. Who ever hears now among respectable folk of the "Glorious Reformation," or the "Holy Reformers," or of "Good Queen Bess," and still less of the "Virgin Queen"? On the other hand, accurate historical study has gone on reducing the number of heretical Popes, until at the present day no opponent worth notice will venture to cite more than the three cases already mentioned. And that the progress of historical study has, in reality, given the finishing stroke even to these three supposed survivors, it is not hard to show.

I. — Liberius

Let us take first the case of Pope Liberius. Dr. Littledale says (*Plain Reasons*, Ed. 1880, p. 160): "Pope Liberius subscribed an Arian Creed, and anathematized St. Athanasius as a heretic." The facts are briefly these. The General Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325 defined the doctrine of the Homoousion, i.e., the Consubstantiality of the Divine Son with the Eternal Father. In a word, it defined that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity was God. That Council condemned the arch-heretic Arius and upheld his great opponent Athanasius. The Arian heresy was, however, widespread, and its adherents formed a powerful faction. In consequence St. Athanasius became the object of such bitter persecution that to desert Athanasius was to abandon Catholic orthodoxy, to support Athanasius was to champion Catholic orthodoxy. Now the Emperor Constantius, one of the most dangerous foes the Church of God ever had, was himself infected with heresy, and determined to destroy the Catholic religion. But Athanasius with might and main thwarted his plans. The Emperor, therefore, set himself to ruin the saint. He summoned a Synod at Arles in 353, signified his will that Athanasius should be condemned, and prevailed on the cowardly bishops to pronounce the wicked sentence. The destruction of St. Athanasius seemed certain.

One obstacle, however, still blocked the Emperor's path. Unless confirmed by Liberius, Bishop of Rome, the sentence against Athanasius already pronounced by the bishops at Arles was invalid. The Emperor, therefore, set to work to gain the Pope; but do what he would, he could not win over Liberius. The Pope stood firm as granite rock. Promises could not dazzle him, threats could not daunt him. He point-blank refused to endorse the wicked sentence. Nay, brought face to face with the Emperor, the Pope addressed Constantius in favour of Athanasius and the Nicene Creed, with all that placid courage which befits the Vicar of Christ when confronting the proud oppressors of the Church. Liberius was in consequence driven into exile, to Berea in Thrace, where he was treated by the Arians with cruelty and insolence. At the end of two years the Roman populace raised a sedition in his favour, and the Emperor deemed it prudent to reinstate him. The motive of his recall, therefore, was political.

His enemies, however, published another explanation of his return. He had bowed, they said, before the will of the Emperor and had signed an Arian formula of faith. Now what is the evidence for this assertion? Dr. Littledale quotes a line and a half from St. Jerome, but St. Jerome was deceived by the calumnies of the Arians, just as he was deceived when he represented St. John Chrysostom as tainted with Origenism. However, waiving this point, we know of three formulas of Sirmium which

the Pope might have signed. Of these the second only was openly Arian and un-Catholic; the first and third were objectionable only by omission, because they omitted mention of the Nicene definition. The second formula, then, was clearly heterodox; the first and third were open to a heterodox as well as an orthodox interpretation. Now did Pope Liberius sign any of these three formulas? We do not know for certain that he did. There is at least a high probability that he did not. But if he did, which of the three did he sign? Again we do not know. Certainly, however, it was not the second, or heterodox Arian formula. For the Emperor Constantius was not an Arian but a semi-Arian, and so far from requiring the Pope's signature to this second formula, he had actually ordered all copies of it to be destroyed, and had denounced the heaviest penalties against those who even retained it in their possession.

Therefore, if Liberius signed any formula at all (which, however, I am far from granting), he signed either the first or the third. But both the first and the third fairly admitted of an orthodox interpretation.

Consequently, to Dr. Littledale's dogmatic assertion, contained in a line and a half, that "Pope Liberius subscribed an Arian Creed, and anathematized St. Athanasius as a heretic," I sum up my answer as follows:

First, Dr. Littledale's statement that Liberius "anathematized St. Athanasius as a heretic" is a pure fiction of his own imagination. It is an assertion made without a particle of evidence. The Pope issued neither definition nor anathema in the case. The proof that the Pope even withdrew from communion with Athanasius, not as a heretic, but as a disturber of the peace of the Church, is a document known as the *Sixth Hilarian Fragment*, which Hefele and other competent scholars have proved to be a forgery. On the contrary, the Menology of the Greeks describes Liberius as "a saint, the Blessed Liberius, the defender of the truth, whose zeal for the orthodox faith caused him to undertake the defence of the great Athanasius."

Secondly, Dr. Littledale's statement that "Pope Liberius subscribed an Arian Creed" is at most a probability. Dr. Littledale when he made this assertion knew it to be a matter of dispute among scholars whether Liberius subscribed at all, and if so which of the three formulas he subscribed.

Thirdly, it is certain that Liberius did not sign the second or openly Arian formula.

Fourthly, even if it could be proved, as it cannot, that Liberius signed the first or the third formula, it would still have to be proved, as it cannot, that he signed it in a heterodox and not in an orthodox sense. The presumption is wholly in his favour, since he had defied the Emperor and braved exile rather than acknowledge the Arian heresy.

Fifthly, even if it could be proved, as it cannot, that he signed at all, it would still have to be proved, as it cannot, that he signed, not merely as an individual, but as the Universal Teacher addressing the whole body of the faithful. It would still remain to be proved that his act was *ex cathedra*, and for this there is no shred of evidence.

Sixthly, when all these obstacles had been overcome, the opponent of Papal Infallibility would still have accomplished nothing. For let us put the case at its worst. For the sake of argument, let us assume that the Pope did sign one of the three formulas, and that he signed the second or Arian formula, and that he signed it, not in his private capacity, but as Universal Teacher, even these admissions would not in the least compromise his infallibility. Why not? Because the fact is notorious that he was not a free agent at the time. If he signed at all, it was under coercion and from

fear of death. If he signed at all, it was an act of external assent only; for even the Protestant authors Smith and Wace in the *Dictionary of Christian Biography* (iii. p. 723) remark that "when Liberius was once again in possession of his See and surrounded by his orthodox supporters, he appears to have resumed his old position of resolute orthodoxy." Cardinal Newman, in his *Historical Sketches*, ii. p. 340, observes: "It is astonishing to me how any one can fancy that Liberius in subscribing the Arian confession, promulgated it ex cathedra, considering he was not his own master when he signed, and it was not his drawing up. Who would say that it would be a judgment of the Queen's Bench, or a judicial act of any kind, if ribbon-men in Ireland seized one of Her Majesty's judges, hurried him into some house or cave, and there made him, under terror of death, sign a document in the very teeth of an award which he had lately made in court on a question of property?"

Therefore, the signature of the Pope, if he did sign; the heterodoxy of the Pope, if there was any; the ex cathedra pronouncement of the Pope, if he made one, was extorted by force and violence. An ex cathedra decision by its very nature, to be valid, must be free; this supposed act of Pope Liberius was not free; therefore this supposed act was not ex cathedra. How then could it affect the question of his Infallibility?

Such, in outline, is the case of that Pope who according to St. Basil is "the most blessed Liberius"; according to Epiphanius, "the Pontiff of blessed memory"; according to Cassiodorus, "the great Liberius, the most holy Liberius, Liberius in all things most renowned"; according to St. Ambrose, "the thrice-holy Bishop"; according to Theodoret, "the illustrious athlete for the Catholic faith"; and according to the Greek Menology, is "a saint, the Blessed Liberius, the defender of the truth, whose zeal for the orthodox faith caused him to undertake the defence of the great Athanasius!"

So much for what is called the "fall" of Pope Liberius. If Papal Infallibility has no more serious objection to meet than this, it has little cause for fear.

II. — Honorius

I now pass on to the second alleged lapse of Infallibility—the case of Pope Honorius, of whom Dr. Littledale (p. 161) wrote as follows: "Pope Honorius was unanimously condemned by the Sixth General Council as a heretic, for having publicly sided with the Monothelite heresy, and for having officially taught it in Pontifical Letters, the legates of his own successor, Pope Agatho, taking the lead in anathematizing him; and a successor of his, Gregory II., wrote to assure the Spanish Bishops that Honorius was certainly damned."

The history of the case is briefly this. In the seventh century a hot controversy was raging in the Church as to whether in Christ there were two wills and two operations, the human and the Divine, or one only. The Monothelites, or One-Will-ists, held Our Lord to have but only one will and one operation. The orthodox party maintained Christ to have two distinct wills, the human and the Divine, just as He had two distinct natures, the human and the Divine. While the dispute was at its height, Sergius, the Patriarch of Constantinople and a leader of the heterodox party, wrote a deceitful letter to Pope Honorius, begging of him, in the interests of religious peace, to intervene and impose silence on both parties. Honorius incautiously complied, and wrote Sergius two letters to that effect. More than forty years after his death for these letters the Sixth General Council in A.D. 681 condemned the Pope, and the then reigning Pontiff, Leo II., confirmed that condemnation. To those unskilled in theology the case may seem at first blush conclusive against the Infallibility of Pope Honorius. To those versed in theology the case does not even remotely touch the Infallibility

of Pope Honorius. Why not? Let me explain. An examination of the case involves these three points:

First, was Honorius condemned as a heretic? Secondly, did his letters contain heresy? Thirdly, were his letters ex cathedra teaching?

As to the first point, was Honorius condemned as a heretic? Most certainly not! Both by the Council and by the Pope who confirmed the Council, Honorius was condemned, not because he had defined error, but because he had omitted to define the truth. The circumstances of the controversy demanded a definition; Honorius omitted that definition; he was condemned for that omission. This is most clearly stated by Pope Leo II., who informed the Spanish Episcopate that Honorius was condemned "because he did not extinguish the flame of heretical dogma, as it became his Apostolic authority, but rather fed it by negligence." Pope Honorius' offence, then, was this, not that he taught error, but that he omitted to teach truth; not that he defined heresy, but that he failed to suppress heresy. He was condemned not for a doctrinal fault, but for a moral fault. Moreover, he was condemned for a moral fault which was not necessarily wilful, since he appears to have been duped by Sergius. So far from the condemnation compromising his Infallibility, it does not even compromise his personal orthodoxy. Honorius, therefore, was not condemned as a heretic.

As to the second point, did the letters of Honorius contain heresy? Most assuredly not! The letters were entirely orthodox. Honorius most clearly draws the distinction now found in every book of Catholic theology, namely, that if we consider the Person of Christ (the "principium quod") the operations are morally one, because the Operator is one; but if we consider the Natures of Christ (the "principium quo"), the operations are two because the natures are two. The letters of Honorius contain the very doctrine afterwards dogmatically defined by the Sixth Council which condemned Honorius, and by Pope Leo II. who confirmed that condemnation.

His letters were quite orthodox, but he was condemned because he did not, as in duty bound, publicly proclaim and defend that orthodoxy. The letter of Honorius, then, did not contain heresy, so that a second time the case against him collapses.

And now for the third and principal point. Were these letters an ex cathedra definition? If the objector cannot prove they were, he has accomplished nothing. For even had the letters of Honorius contained heresy, and even had he been condemned for heresy, still if the letters were but the expression of his private opinion, the heresy of the Pope, as an individual, would in no sense have compromised the Infallibility of the Pope as Pope. Were these letters, then, ex cathedra? Most assuredly not! Why not? For two reasons. They contain no definition. They were not addressed to the Universal Church.

First, then, they were not ex cathedra because they contain no definition. In them Honorius expressly declares, at least four times, his intention not to define anything on either one side of the controversy or the other. He says: "We must not wrest what they say into Church dogmas." And again: "We leave the matter to grammarians." And again: "We must not define either one or two operations." And again: "We must not by definition declare either one or two operations." The letters, then, were not an ex cathedra definition, because they contain no definition.

Again, these letters were not ex cathedra, because there is nothing in them to show that the Pope, as Supreme Teacher, was addressing the Universal Church. So far from that being the case, the letters were not even published in the Pope's lifetime. The world heard of them for the first time long after the Pope's decease. Pope Honorius was not condemned until forty years after his death.

And now to sum up the case of Honorius. It is at the very least highly probable that his letters were not heretical. It is at the very least highly probable that they were not condemned as heretical. It is absolutely certain that they were not an *ex cathedra* definition. And it is absolutely certain that they were not condemned as an *ex cathedra* definition. What bearing has this case, then, on the Infallibility of Pope Honorius? It has no bearing at all.

Dr. Littledale, out of the luxuriance of his fertile imagination, has made the discovery that Pope "Gregory II. wrote to assure the Spanish Bishops that Honorius was certainly damned." The assertion is erroneous and absurd. The assertion is erroneous, for Gregory II. never wrote a single line in his life to the Spanish Bishops about Honorius. Leo II. did, indeed, write to them that Honorius was among those who were "*aeterna damnatione mulctati*"—involved in a final anathema of the Church. Dr. Littledale's ignorance of Church formulas has betrayed him into this ridiculous translation. He has bungled in his Latin. And the assertion is absurd, for the Catholic Church has never defined any one's eternal damnation, much less has she claimed to inflict it.

So much, then, for what is called the "fall" of Pope Honorius. Once again, if Papal Infallibility has no more serious attack than this to fear, we Catholics have no cause for excessive alarm.

III. — Galileo

I now pass on to the third alleged lapse of Infallibility, I mean the affair of Galileo, in connection with which I have but room to state the leading principles that govern the case.

The facts in brief are these. Galileo eagerly defended the Heliocentric or Copernican theory, the opinion (which was not new, but had been taught by Roman clerics for at least two centuries before his time), that the earth is in motion and the sun at rest. The ancients, who, be it remembered, had no telescopes, believed in the Geocentric theory, that the sun is in motion and the earth at rest. Even yet we retain the ancient phraseology and speak of the rising and setting of the sun. Galileo, however, not content with defending science, which was his province, would for ever meddle with theology, which was not his province. In consequence he fell under ecclesiastical censure, Copernican works were put on the *Index Expurgatorius*, and a mild punishment was inflicted on Galileo. Now the scientific conclusions of Galileo were right, and the scientific conclusions of his Roman judges were wrong. Galileo's conclusions I say were right, but his reasoning was wrong, and his Roman judges knew that his reasoning was wrong. His conclusions were only happy guesses. Nay, not only was his reasoning from the flux and reflux of the tides wrong, but when a scientist greater than himself, Kepler, pointed out the true explanation of the tides, Galileo treated that explanation with lofty contempt.

Galileo, it is urged, was condemned as a heretic for teaching a true doctrine. That I deny, but let it pass. For the sake of argument, let us assume that he was. The question which concerns us is this: Was that condemnation a Papal condemnation? and, if it was, was it *ex cathedra*? It is easy to show that it was neither one nor the other. There are two, and only two, documents bearing directly on Galileo's case, the Decree of the *Index*, dated March 5, 1616, and the Decree of the Holy Office, dated June 22, 1633.

The Decree of the *Index* decided that because the Copernican theory, which Galileo had defended, was "false, unscriptural, and destructive of Catholic truth, the books expounding this theory were not to be read by Catholics." Now the grounds of this decision were wrong, and the decision itself was wrong. It was the erroneous decision of a fallible tribunal. The Roman judges made a mistake,

as our English judges have made mistakes. But, it is asked, was not that tribunal supposed to be infallible? Certainly not! The decree of a Roman Congregation, as such, is neither more nor less infallible than a decree of a county court in England or Ireland. But did not the Roman Pontiff confirm the decree, and thereby make it his own? The *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which represents the conclusions of educated English opinion, shall answer this question: "This edict, it is essential to observe, of which the responsibility rests with a disciplinary congregation, in no sense representing the Church, was never confirmed by the Pope and was virtually repealed in 1757." It was not confirmed by the Pope, as every one with an elementary acquaintance with the subject is aware. Again, even if the Pope had confirmed the decree, that confirmation would not necessarily have been an infallible utterance. To confirm a decree is not necessarily to speak in that decree *ex cathedra*; it is not necessarily to speak in that decree as Universal Doctor and Supreme Teacher; it is not necessarily to speak in that decree at all. Thirdly, even if the Pope had confirmed the decree, and by confirming had spoken in the decree, and had spoken in the decree *ex cathedra*, still that utterance would not have compromised his Infallibility. Why not? Because, as all theologians teach, Infallibility does not extend to the motives which led to a definition, nor to the arguments in favour of the definition. Infallibility extends only to the definition itself, and the definition in Galileo's case was only this, "that the books in question must not be read until amended." The decision was a mere matter of discipline, and not of doctrine at all. So much for the former of the two documents.

The disobedience of Galileo to the former decree led to a second decree against him, this time by the Holy Office, and he was charged with being "suspect of heresy." This second decision was a decree of cardinals only; it received no authoritative Papal confirmation or approbation. It was not a Papal act, and therefore it cannot compromise Papal Infallibility.

But, opponents urge, the Index, or Catalogue, containing among many others the condemned propositions against Galileo, was reissued by Pope Alexander VII. in 1664, accompanied by the Bull *Speculatores*, by which "that Pontiff formally approved of the Index and thus made it an *ex cathedra* utterance. I reply that this objection is only another proof how dangerous it is for laymen to intrude in the domain of theology. The Bull in question is a disciplinary and not a dogmatic Bull. It is not a special approbation of each decree in the Index. It is not a special approbation of any decree in the Index. It is nothing more than an official guarantee that the Index newly reissued is an authentic catalogue of all decrees hitherto published. The Bull gives no new decision; it imposes no fresh obligation; it makes no change in the character of the decrees catalogued in the Index.

The decree concerning Galileo was only disciplinary, and not dogmatic, before the Bull was issued; it remained only disciplinary, and not dogmatic, after the Bull was issued. As that decree was not an utterance of the Infallible voice before the Bull, neither was it an utterance of the Infallible voice after the Bull. The Bull *Speculatores* has absolutely no bearing on the case of Galileo.

But the simplest and fairest way of arriving at a sound opinion on this question, as to whether the decision against Galileo was *ex cathedra* or not, is to see how the Heliocentric theory had been viewed before Galileo's time, and how it was viewed after Galileo's condemnation. For two centuries before Galileo's day the immobility of the sun and the mobility of the earth had been openly taught, and taught, too, by ecclesiastics of the highest rank. Nicolas de Cusa taught it and was made a cardinal by Eugenius IV. in 1448. One hundred years before the decree of the Index against Galileo, Copernicus, himself a priest and a canon, in 1530 taught it and did not suffer in the estimation of his superiors. Widmanstadt taught it in presence of Clement VII. and the College of Cardinals, and received the congratulations of all. Copernicus himself was allowed to dedicate his

book to Pope Paul III., and from the time of its first appearance under that sanction in 1543 until the decree of the Index against Galileo in 1616 the theory was left in the hands of mathematicians and philosophers, who alternately attacked or defended it without either support or molestation from the ecclesiastical authorities. So that had Galileo not meddled with theology, he too would have remained unmolested. So much for Copernicanism before Galileo's condemnation.

After the condemnation how was the decree understood by contemporaries? Was it regarded as an *ex cathedra*, and therefore a final dogmatic decision? Certainly not! A dogmatic decision can never be reversed; yet from the very beginning contemporaries looked on this decree as reformable. To quote only the evidence of Jesuits, the Jesuit Cardinal Bellarmine, a contemporary of Galileo, writes, in his letter to Foscarini, that should proof be adduced (and proof as yet had not been adduced) of the earth's motion, he is quite prepared to change his views as to the meaning of the Scripture texts. In 1651 the Jesuit Riccioli holds Catholics to be under an obligation to respect the censure of the Holy Office until the truth of the earth's mobility is proved to the judges. In 1661 the Jesuit Fabri, Grand Penitentiary of St. Peter's, declares, in words which are reported in the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, 1665, "Nothing hinders, but that the Church may understand those Scripture-places that speak of this matter in a literal sense, and declare they should be so understood as long as the contrary is not evidently proved by demonstration, which, if perhaps it should be found out, in this case the Church will not at all scruple to declare that these places are to be understood in a figurative and improper sense, according to that of the poet, *Terraeque Urbesque recedunt*" (p. 24). The Jesuit astronomer, Grassi, in 1623 remarked, "When a demonstration of the earth's movement shall be discovered, it will then be fitting to interpret Scripture otherwise than has hitherto been done." Such was the Jesuit view of Galileo's condemnation—a view which makes it certain that Galileo's contemporaries, and those contemporaries, too, living in and about the Papal Court, in no sense considered the decree of condemnation to be final, dogmatic, and *ex cathedra*, but to be only disciplinary, temporary, and reformable.

Galileo's case, I say, has no bearing on Papal Infallibility, and that conclusion I support by a quotation from the famous mathematician and philosopher, René Descartes, who in a published letter of 1634 declared that the condemnation of Galileo "had been authorized neither by Pope nor General Council, but was issued solely by a congregation of Cardinals." Again that conclusion I support by a quotation from Mr. Proctor, the late eminent astronomer, the learned mathematician, the eloquent lecturer, and the distinguished editor of two well-known scientific publications. Mr. Proctor, after assuring his readers that he had "specially studied and weighed during eight years the whole question of Papal Infallibility," observes (*Knowledge*, vol. ix. p. 274): "Not quite as absurd, though quite as incorrect, is the idea that Papal Infallibility is disproved by the decision (supposing for the moment it received the Papal sanction) against Galileo. The Catholic doctrine on the subject of Papal Infallibility is perfectly definite; and it is absolutely certain that the decision in regard to Galileo, admitting that it was in every respect unsound, does not in the slightest degree affect the doctrine of Infallibility either of the Pope or of the Church. The decision was neither *ex cathedra* nor addressed to the whole Church. In not one single point does the case illustrate this doctrine of Papal Infallibility, as defined by the Vatican Council."

Having thus quoted one distinguished Protestant to show that Galileo's case does not compromise Papal Infallibility, let me end with a quotation from another distinguished Protestant to show that no case can compromise Papal Infallibility. Mr. Mallock, in his well-known book, *Is Life Worth*

Living? (chap. xii.), observes: "This claim to Infallibility is one, as we shall see when we understand its nature, that no study of ecclesiastical history can invalidate now, or can even promise to invalidate."

Here, then, I end. During the long lapse of nineteen centuries, in a long list of 258 Popes, the enemies of Papal Infallibility think they have discovered three instances—one instance for each six hundred years, one instance for each set of eighty-six Popes—where a Pope as Pope has officially erred in his dogmatic teaching. Three instances they claim to have discovered; yet when we subject even these three instances to the searching criticism of accurate history and precise theology, we find that even in these three cases the attack of our enemies falls ignominiously to the ground. The Church can never err in faith, for she is "the pillar and ground of the truth." The Pope, as Pope, can never err in faith, for he is that Rock against which the Gates of Hell shall never prevail!
