

THE
INFALLIBILITY OF THE CHURCH

A COURSE OF LECTURES

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Lecture XIII.

MODERN REVELATIONS.

ON the last day I spoke of one use made of modern revelations in the Church of Rome, and gave a specimen how, on the authority of what is there called a revelation, but we should call a dream, a tissue of historical facts is asserted without a particle of historical evidence, or rather in the teeth of historical probability. I told how bishops encourage their flocks to invoke in their prayers the intercession of a person who never had any existence, and even propagate tales of miracles worked by the power of this imaginary personage. It is impossible to doubt that there must be many a Roman Catholic ecclesiastic in high position who does not believe in St. Philomena any more than we do; but it is very common with such persons to regard the excitement of devotional feeling as more important than the truth of the alleged facts which excite it; and so they see no necessity to interfere with the practice of a devotion which appears to them conducive to pious feelings, and to be at least harmless.

But these alleged revelations are also the foundation of new doctrines, and the Pope's silence concerning them affects the whole question of the rule of faith. I do not think that in the Roman Catholic controversy sufficient attention has been given to the place which modern revelations have now taken as part of the foundation of their system. No one can take up modern popular books of Roman Catholic devotion without seeing that their teaching differs as much from that of the Council of Trent, as the teaching of that Council differs from that of the Church of England. Taking notice of this difference was the fundamental idea of Dr. Pusey's book, *The Eirenicon*, to which I referred in a former lecture. He observed how far popular Roman doctrine had got beyond anything that the Council of Trent had authorized, and more particularly so in the place assigned to the Blessed Virgin. Pusey's idea then was to make the Trent decrees a basis of reconciliation; if the Romanists would only confine themselves within Tridentine limits, he hoped to screw up Anglican teaching so far. Whether he would have succeeded in the latter part of his task we need not speculate; for the doctrine of development has now gained too firm a hold of the Roman Church to permit her people to be content to believe now as she believed three hundred years ago. One of the ablest of the Roman Catholic replies to Dr. Pusey was by a Father Harper, originally, I believe, a (pervert), now a Jesuit. Pusey had said, 'I doubt not that the Roman Church and ourselves are kept apart much more by that vast practical system which lies beyond the letter of the Council of Trent—things which are taught with a quasi-authority in the Roman Church—than by what is actually defined.' Harper replies (l. lxxvii.), 'It is precisely this practical system, this development of the Tridentine Canons, as Dr. Pusey means it, which is the expression, or rather actuation, of the Church's present indwelling vitality. Dead ideas alone can be hidden up in manuscript; living ideas grow and show fruit. It is precisely in

and through this vast practical system, in proportion as it is universal, that the Holy Ghost is working, directing, leading the mind of the Church by degrees into all the truth. Mere formulas, mere written definitions, by themselves are bodies that either have lost animation, or are waiting for it. In the Church they are the expression of her perfected consciousness, on the particular subject of that revealed dogma about which they treat. They live in her spirit and grow with her growth. Like all things else that have an undecaying life, they can never decrease, but must ever increase. Christ grew in wisdom daily. So does the Church, not in mere appearance, but of a truth. Her creed, therefore, can never shrink back to the dimensions of the past, but must ever enlarge with the onward future.' I am not now discussing the truth of the doctrine of development; but you must take that doctrine into account in judging what Romanism at the present day is.

Roman Catholic controversialists have often been in the habit of running away from attacks on the most vulnerable parts of their practical system by saying, 'Oh, the Church is not pledged to that; it is a mere popular abuse'; or, 'It is an unauthorized speculation of some private theologians.' I had already occasion to show how unfair an evasion that was in the case of the dogma of the Pope's personal infallibility. Though controversialists had run away from defending it on the ground of its not having been asserted in any formal decree, and so being only private opinion, yet now we have supreme Roman authority for knowing that the Protestant champions had been quite right in holding that this doctrine, however defective in formal attestation, had all the time been really part of the faith of the Roman Church. Well, this same principle gives us a right to treat the practical system which prevails in the Church of Rome as something for which that Church is responsible. If we point out that popular Romanism is full of superstitions and of belief in what sober, thoughtful Roman Catholics own to be lies, we are told 'these things are not part of the faith of the Church; she has never authoritatively affirmed any of them the religion of the vulgar is always apt to run into extremes you must excuse these things in consideration of the real piety which is at the bottom of them.' But though popular Romanism is certainly not the same as the Romanism of the schools, I hold that it is the former which has the best right to be accounted the faith of the Church. Let popular belief come first, and scholastic definition and apology will come in its own good time afterwards. I have already remarked how seldom the infallible authority is exercised to guide men's belief as long as it is doubtful; but usually only comes in when all controversy is over, to ratify the result which public opinion had already arrived at. Is it, then, only the duty of the head of the Church to declare the belief held by his people when it becomes general, or is he to exercise no superintending care over the influences which form the belief he may afterwards have to declare? If the Pope's infallibility reaches so far as to qualify him for guiding the Church at this stage, he always omits to exercise it. I have said that popular Romanism differs as much from that of the Council of Trent as the latter does from the creed

of the Church of England. And I wish now to point out that the difference springs out of a fundamental difference as to the rule of faith. The Thirty-nine Articles appeal to Scripture alone, the Council of Trent to Scripture and tradition; and so it is to be expected that the results should be different when the principles of investigation are different. But the rule of faith of popular Romanism is different again; it is not Scripture and tradition, but Scripture and tradition and modern revelations.

There is a certain development of Christian doctrine which inevitably takes place, but which is quite private and unauthorized. Anyone who thinks much about the things of religion will be sure to make speculations of his own about them, and to draw consequences from generally accepted revealed truths, which consequences may, or may not, be legitimately drawn. Here, according to Newman's theory, would be the place for the infallible authority to interfere to inform the Church which developments are to be accepted. But what actually happens in a number of cases is, that these additions to the structure of Christian doctrine find a shorter road to recognition. Both within and without the Church of Rome it has constantly happened that persons of an excitable and enthusiastic frame of mind, whose thoughts have been much occupied about religion, have supposed themselves to be favoured with miraculous communications from God. Such persons, for instance, were Johanna Southcote among Protestants; St. Gertrude, Marie Alacoque, among Roman Catholics. Among Protestants persons of this kind do not find it easy to get anyone to listen to their pretensions; they are joined by no sober-minded persons; they collect a few foolish people for a while, form them into a small sect, and in a few years there is an end to them. But in the Church of Rome pretenders of this kind not only gather a larger band of followers, but they meet with no opposition—not from those of their own communion even who do not believe in them. Few Roman Catholics would grudge any honour, not even excepting the title of saint, to a pious woman of this kind, even though they do not believe in her asserted revelations. 'She will at least promote the cause of piety; and for their part they do not choose to give scandal to pious minds and triumph to unbelievers by exposing the weaknesses and excesses of faith to an infidel world.' But meanwhile the utterances of these supposed recipients of a revelation are caught up and accepted with implicit faith by others. This will happen when the utterances express only the seer's private speculations. But more usually they are the opinions already favourably thought of in her own little circle, which is therefore prepared to welcome an authoritative enunciation of them; and then with this backing of inspired attestation, belief in them grows so strong and spreads so widely, that Church authorities are no longer free to choose whether or not they will approve of them.

There is in the Roman Church an amazing amount of literature recording revelations such as I have described but whether these revelations are genuine or not, the Pope will not tell, and it is at anyone's choice to accept or reject. Some of the Oxford converts made it a point of honour to show how much

they were able to believe, and with what ease they could swallow down what old-fashioned Roman Catholics were straining at. Among these there was none more influential than the late Father Faber (far more so, indeed, than Dr. Newman), whose devotional and theological works had a rapid and extensive sale. You can hardly read half a dozen pages of these without meeting as proof of his assertions, Our Lord said to St. Gertrude, 'It was revealed to St. Teresa,' 'Let us listen to the testimony of God Himself: He made known to a holy nun, &c.'¹ These quotations are made as much as a matter of course as you or I might cite texts of Scripture. A number of new things about Purgatory are stated on this authority, and being incorporated into widely circulated devotional works, pass rapidly into popular belief: for instance, that the Virgin Mary is queen of Purgatory, that the Archangel Michael is her prime minister, that the souls there are quite unable to help themselves, and that our Lord has so tied up His own hands that He is unable to help them except as satisfactions are made for them by living Christians; with a number of other details as to the causes for which souls are sent there, the length of time for which they are punished, and the manner in which they are relieved. I regret to have to mention that, according to the revelations of St. Francesca, bishops seem on the whole to remain longest in Purgatory, and to be visited with the greatest rigour. One holy bishop, for some negligence in his high office, had been fifty-nine years in Purgatory at the date of her information; another, so generous of his revenues that he was named the Almsgiver, had been there five years because, before his election, he had wished for the dignity.²

More recently a French admirer of Father Faber has made a systematic treatise on Purgatory, based on modern revelations. The book is called 'Purgatory, according to the Revelations of the Saints,' by the Abbé Louvet.³ I have formed a high opinion both of the piety of the Abbé and of his literary honesty. I praise the latter quality because it is commonly lightly regarded in Roman Catholic works, of which edification is the main object. Thus, for instance, anyone must be mad who would trust St. Liguori for a reference. If the saint finds anything ascribed to St. Bernard (or thinks he remembers that he does),

¹ Our Lord said to St. Gertrude, that as often as anyone says to God: "My love, my sweetest, my best beloved," and the like, with a devout intention, he receives a pledge of his salvation, in 'virtue of which if he perseveres he shall receive in heaven a special privilege of the same sort as the special grace which St. John, the beloved disciple, had on *earth*.'—*All for Jesus*, p. 60.

'Our Lord said to St. Teresa, that one soul, not a saint, but seeking perfection was more precious to Him than thousands living common lives,' p. 117.

'St. Gertrude was divinely instructed, that as often as the Angelic Salutation is devoutly recited by the faithful on earth, three efficacious streamlets proceed from the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, most sweetly penetrating the Virgin's heart.' p. 104.

'Once more let us listen to the testimony of God Himself: a holy nun pressed God in prayer to reveal to her what it was in which His Divine Majesty took so much pleasure in His beloved Gertrude,' &c., p. 323.

² *All for Jesus*, p. 367.

³ *Le Purgatoire d'après les révélations des Saints*, per M. l'Abbé Louvet, Missionnaire Apostolique: Paris, 1880.

which is what, in his opinion, St. Bernard ought to have said, he puts it without scruple into his 'Glories of Mary'; and I fancy he would have thought anyone very unreasonable who should have suggested that he ought to give himself the trouble of looking into St. Bernard's works to try whether the passage was there at all, and whether among the genuine or the spurious works. And similarly with the anecdotes which he relates in such numbers. If a story is good and edifying he does not waste his time in trifling investigations, whether there is a particle of historical evidence for the truth of the story. Louvet, on the other hand, inspires me with confidence that his quotations have been correctly given, and that he has taken all the pains he says he has to put aside every apocryphal or doubtful revelation, and to state nothing that is not attested by canonized saints. On Purgatory more than on any other subject the evidence of revelations deserves to be listened to, for the whole faith of the Church of Rome on this subject has been built upon revelations, or, as we should call it in plain English, on ghost stories. For hundreds of years the Church seems to have known little or nothing on the subject. Even still the East has lagged sadly behind the West in her knowledge, and the reason is that the chief source of Western information is a Latin book, the dialogues of Gregory the Great, a work of which the genuineness has been denied by some, merely because it seemed to them incredible that so sensible a man should have written so silly a book. But no one acquainted with the eccentricities of the human intellect can rely on such an argument, in the face of positive evidence the other way. Gregory, believing twelve or thirteen centuries ago that the end of the world was then near at hand, and that the men of his age, by reason of their nearness to the next world, could see things in it which had been invisible to their predecessors, collected a number of tales of apparitions which, being received on his authority, have been the real foundation of Western belief in Purgatory. And so Father Faber quotes a namesake of his as saying, 'that although Gregory was a saint who should be loved and honoured on many accounts, yet on none more than this, because he had so lucidly and transparently handed down to us the doctrine of the purgatorial fire; for he thought that if Gregory had not told us so many things of the holy souls, the devotions of subsequent ages would have been much colder in their behalf.'¹ I don't see, then, why our knowledge of Purgatory should not be enlarged from the same source from which it was first communicated, and why Louvet should not be regarded as doing a good work in collecting all the information that had been received from ghosts who have appeared since Pope Gregory's time; for it is not reasonable to believe that means of communication with the other world which existed in the seventh century have been since completely stopped.² It appears

¹ *All for Jesus*, p. 385.

² 'On the subject-matter of Purgatory we may, with less scruple, make use of such revelations from the example of so grave an authority as Cardinal Bellarmine himself, who, in his treatise on Purgatory, as I have already said, always adds some private revelations as a distinct head of proof.'—*All for Jesus*, p. 386.

that it is not only that many ghosts have returned to tell of their sufferings, but more saints than one have been permitted to descend to visit the purgatorial regions, and have given us, as Louvet assures us, a complete map of the place. It appears that Purgatory is but one division of the subterranean regions. At the centre of the earth is the place of the damned; above it lies Purgatory, divided into three regions, for the special torments of each of which I must refer you to Louvet. Above Purgatory is the *limbus infantium*, inhabited by unbaptized infants; above that the *limbus patrum*, now empty, but formerly dwelt in by the souls of the patriarchs until the descent of our Lord to release them.

I am sorry to tell you, though you might have gathered it from something that I have said already, that the lowest division is largely tenanted by the souls of priests and bishops, monks and nuns: the bishops with mitres of fire on their heads, a burning cross in their hands, and clad in a chasuble of flames. But it will shock you to hear that in that region are the souls of many popes who, with all the treasure of the Church at their command, were either so thoughtless or so unselfish as to make no provision for their own needs. For example, the venerable Pius VI., in this life, had an unusual share of suffering. He had been dragged from his home by the impious hands of the French Revolution; outraged ignominiously in his twofold dignity of pontiff and king; dragged from city to city as a criminal, and he died the death of a confessor of the faith in 1799. He had done great things as an administrator, struggling with apostolic intrepidity against Gallicanism and Josephism, the two precursors of the Revolution, and in short his long pontificate of twenty-four years was one of the greatest in Church history; yet in 1816, seventeen years after his death, Marie Taigi saw his soul come to the door of Purgatory, and be sent back again into the abyss, his expiation not being yet finished. How long is it still to last? That is the secret of God. We know from the same source that Pius VII., who suffered so much at the hands of the first Napoleon, and who was so worthy and holy a pontiff that he won the respect even of unbelievers, remained in Purgatory nearly five years. Leo XII. escaped after a few months, on account of his eminent piety and the short time he had held the awful responsibility of the pontificate. I will not delay to speak of Benedict VIII, but will go on to tell what, as Louvet says, is really frightful, and what one would not dare to believe if we had not as guarantees St. Lutgarde, whose prudence and discretion are known, and Cardinal Bellarmine, who, having studied as a theologian all the details of this revelation, declares that he cannot doubt of it, and that it makes him tremble for himself. That great pontiff, Innocent III., who held the Lateran Council, who passed for a saint in the eyes of men, and did so much for the reform of the Church, appeared to St. Lutgarde, all surrounded by flames, and on her expressing her astonishment, informed her that he had narrowly escaped hell, and that he had been condemned to suffer in Purgatory till the end of the world. He earnestly entreated her prayers, whereupon St. Lutgarde, with all her nuns, set themselves with all their might to make intercession for his deliverance; but no sign came that their prayers were answered,

and, for all we know, after five centuries the poor wretch may be still plunged in those horrible pains from which he begged so earnestly to be delivered. 'This example,' says Bellarmine, fills me with real terror every time I think of it.'¹

Louvet makes a calculation, by the help of his revelations, how long an ordinary Christian may expect to have to stay in Purgatory. I cannot trouble you with the details of his proof, but his result is, that a Christian of more than usual sanctity, who has never committed a mortal sin, who has carefully avoided all the graver venial sins, and has satisfied by penance for three-fourths of the lighter sins into which frailty has led him, must expect to spend in Purgatory 123 years, 3 months, and 15 days. 'A truly terrifying result,' says Louvet; 'for if it is so with righteous souls, what will become of poor sinners like me?'²

But these 123 years are only years of earthly measurement; they would be more than centuries if measured by the sensations of the suffering souls. This Louvet proves by several authentic histories. One is of two priests who loved each other like brethren. It was revealed to one on his death-bed that he should be released from Purgatory the first Mass that was offered for him. He sent for his friend, and made him promise that he would lose no time after his death in fulfilling the conditions of his release. The friend promised, and the moment the sick man expired, flew to the altar, and celebrated the Mass with all the devotion he was capable of. Immediately afterwards, his friend appeared to him radiant with glory, but with an air of reproach on his countenance, 'O faithless friend,' he cried, 'you would deserve to be treated with the same cruelty you have exercised towards me! Here I have been years in the avenging flames, and to think that neither you nor one of my brethren should have had the charity to offer a single Mass for me!' 'Nay,' returned his friend, 'you had no sooner closed your eyes than I fulfilled my promise; and you may satisfy yourself by examining your body, which you will find is not yet cold.' 'Is that so?' returned the deceased. 'How frightful are the torments of Purgatory when one hour seems more than a year!' Another case was that of an abbot who, on returning from a journey, found that the most promising of his young monks had just died. As the abbot was praying in the choir after matins he saw a phantom enveloped in flames. 'O charitable Father,' said the novice, with deep groans, 'give me your blessing. I had committed a small breach of rule, not a sin in itself. As this is the only cause of my detention in Purgatory, I have been allowed by special favour to address myself to you. You are to impose my penance, and I shall then be released.' The abbot replied: 'As far as it depends on me, my son, I absolve you, and give you my blessing; and for penance, I appoint you to stay in Purgatory till the hour of prime': that was the next service, usually held at eight o'clock in the morning. At these words the novice,

¹ *Louvet*, p. 124.

² *ibid.*, p. 178.

filled with despair, ran shrieking through the church, crying : ‘O merciless father! O heart pitiless towards your unhappy son! What! for a fault for which in my lifetime you would have thought the lightest penance enough, to impose on me so fearful a penalty. Little do you know the atrocity of the sufferings of Purgatory.’ And shrieking out, ‘O uncharitable penance!’ he disappeared. The abbot’s hair stood on end with horror; gladly would he have recalled his severe sentence. But the word had been spoken. At last a happy thought struck him. He rang the bell; called up his monks; told them of the facts, and celebrated the Office of prime immediately. But all his life he retained the impression of this horrible scene, and often said that till then he had had no idea of the punishments of the other world, and could not have imagined that a few hours in Purgatory could form so fearful an expiation.

But we shall be less disposed to pity the souls in Purgatory when we learn what exceptional good fortune it is to get there. To the question ‘Are there few that be saved?’ Louvet would return a most gloomy answer. His arguments and calculations are very interesting, but would take me too long to repeat. But (p. 26) he clinches his opinions by a revelation. St. Bernard, it appears, was privileged on two successive days to stand by the judgment-seat of God, and hear the sentences pronounced on all the souls that died on these two days. He was horrified to find that of 80,000 souls only three souls of adults were saved the first day, and only two on the second; and that of these five not one went direct to heaven: all must visit Purgatory.

Louvet, as I have said, builds his speculations solely on the evidence of canonized saints. If he had been content with authentic history, he might have used the following, to which we, at least, ought to take no exception, since the credit of our own country is pledged to its truth.¹ The Roman Breviary of 1522 relates that St. Patrick, having fasted, like Elias, forty days and forty nights, on the top of a mountain, asked two things of God: first, that at the day of judgment there should not remain a single Irishman on the earth; the other, that God would show him the state of souls after death. Then the Lord led him to a desert place, and showed him a certain dark and deep pit, and said, ‘Whosoever shall remain in this cave a day and a night shall be delivered from all his sins.’ This passage of the Roman Breviary was afterwards suppressed, then restored, then finally suppressed again, on account of the evil comments of Protestants and Rationalists.

‘But,’ says Louvet, ‘the old Parisian and other local Breviaries accept the story; so do the historians of the Church of Ireland, and, above all, the Bollandists, with their grave authority. And besides, there remain so many histories of actual descents into this purgatory, that unless we accuse a great and illustrious Church of knavery and imbecility, we must admit that the story has a foundation of historic fact.’ The routine of the descent into this purgatory was as follows: none was permitted to descend without the sanction of his

¹ *Louvet* p. 42.

bishop, who did all in his power to dissuade every applicant from the attempt, reminding him of what was very true, that many had made the venture who had never come back. If, notwithstanding, the postulant persevered, the bishop gave him a letter to the prior of the monastery which was at the place, who also tried to turn him aside from the dangerous enterprise. If the candidate persisted, he was shut up in the church for fifteen days' fasting and prayer; then, confessed and communicated, was sprinkled with holy water, and led in procession, with singing of litanies, to the mouth of the grotto. There the prior made a last appeal. If the candidate persevered, he received the prior's blessing, crossed himself, and disappeared in the darkness. The prior waited a little to see if he would come back. If not, they shut the door and returned in procession to the church. Next day they returned, with processions and litanies as before. If the adventurer was there, they led him back, singing the *Te Deum*; if not, they returned the next morning: if he did not then appear, the prior sadly locked the door of the abyss, and they gave him up for lost.¹ Some successful adventurers have left records of the sufferings of Purgatory, which they not only saw, but participated in; but Louvet, as I said, declines to use these histories in his treatise. Any of you who have read Carleton's story of the Lough Derg Pilgrim will have learned how the descent was conducted in our degenerate days.

Before I part with Louvet, I must mention another reference of his to Irish history. You may have heard of Malachi, who 'wore the collar of gold which he won from the proud invader.' Alas! the true history of the collar of Malachi is very different from Tommy Moore's version. An Irish bishop, praying after his office, saw a pale spectre with a collar of flames about his neck. This was Malachi. He had misused his kingly power; and, to bend his confessor to culpable indulgence, had bribed him with a ring of gold. For punishment he had now to wear this ring of flame about his neck. And his confessor could give him no help; for he was himself condemned to wear a heavier and more painful one. You will be glad to hear that after some months of prayers the bishop was able to obtain relief for the two sufferers.²

These extracts, long as they have been, give you a very faint idea of the mass of information about Purgatory made known by revelations which respected priests, writing with all the air of grave historians,³ relate for the edification of their flocks, in books bought up by thousands. A companion volume to that on Purgatory might easily be made on the revelations about the Virgin Mary, in which the modest doctrine of the Council of Trent, that it is useful to invoke her intercession, is rapidly being improved into the doctrine that no one

¹ I find that the real authority for this account of St. Patrick's Purgatory is O'Sullivan Beare's *History of Ireland*, in which is translated the narrative given by a Spanish nobleman, Ramon, of his visit to the place. Ramon grossly abused the proverbial liberty of travellers.

² Louvet, p. 79.

³ Louvet says of one of his authorities, 'impossible de rien lire de plus sûr comme authenticité et comme véracité,' p. 76.

who does invoke it can be lost, and no one who does not can be saved. One would think we had a right to know from the infallible authority whether these revelations and the doctrine which they contain ought to be received or not; but he remains silent. Those who, like Father Faber and Louvet, receive these revelations as Scripture, obtain commendation for their piety; but one who treats these stories with complete disregard is visited with no official censure, whatever suspicions private individuals may entertain of the coldness of his faith. But all the time, on the strength of stories which the supreme authority will neither affirm nor deny, beliefs are being silently built up in the Church on which he is likely hereafter to be asked to put his seal.

In the Roman Church the idea seems to be now abandoned of handing down the Faith ‘once for all (apas) delivered to the saints.’ It is a vast manufactory of beliefs, to which addition is being yearly made. And as when you go into some great manufactory you may be shown the article in all its stages: the finished product, with the manufacturer’s stamp upon it; the article near completion, and wanting hardly any thing but the stamp; the half-finished work, the raw materials out of which the article is made; so it is in the Roman Church. There you have the finished article: dogmas pronounced by Pope and Council to be *de fide*, which none may deny on pain of damnation. But there are, besides, articles *ferè de fide*, not yet actually proclaimed by infallible authority to be necessary to salvation to be believed in, yet wanting nothing else but official promulgation—so generally received, and acknowledged by such high authorities, that to contradict them would be pronounced temerarious, and their formal adoption by the Church seems to be only a question of time. Somewhat below these in authority, but still very high, are other doctrines supported by such grave doctors that it would be a breach of modesty to contradict them. Below these again, other things owned to be still matters of private opinion, but which seem to be working their way to general belief, and which, if they should in time gain universal acceptance, will deserve to be proclaimed to be the faith of the Church. It is needless to say what help is given towards such general recognition of a doctrine, if a canonized saint, whom it is impossible to suspect of deceit, and disrespectful to suspect of delusion, declares that he has been taught the truth of the doctrine by revelation from heaven. It is inevitable that a doctrinal statement so commended, if no disapprobation of it is expressed by higher authority, comes to the Church with such a weight of recommendation that it can hardly help becoming the prevalent opinion: and then, in process of time, how can the head of the Church refuse to declare that to be the faith of the Church which the great majority of its members, including perhaps himself, believe to be true? If the supreme authority puts off its interference to the last stage, that interference comes altogether too late.

It is useless to teach the Church when the Church has already made up its mind.

And surely if Christ has left a vicar upon earth, what more appropriate function can he have than that of informing the world how to distinguish the voice of Christ from that of false pretenders who venture to speak in his name? Anyone who claims to have received a revelation from God must be either as much deluded as Johanna Southcote, or as much inspired as St. Paul. If there be any in the later Church to whom God has made real revelations, we are bound to receive the truths so disclosed with the same reverence and assent which we give to what was taught by the Apostles. It is important for us to know whether the book of God's revelation has closed with the Apocalypse of St. John, or whether we are to add to the inspired volume the revelations of St. Francesca, St. Gertrude, and St. Catherine. If these last are real revelations, they who reject them are doing their souls the same injury as if they rejected the books of Scripture. We look to the infallible authority for guidance, but he owns himself to be as helpless as ourselves to distinguish the true prophet from the false pretender, and gives us leave to believe or reject as we like. Nay, he gives a kind of ambiguous approval: he honours the recipients of the alleged revelations, canonizes them as saints, encourages his children to ask their intercession, now that they are dead: but if questioned did these persons, when they were alive, deceive the people by teaching them their own fancies as if they were divine revelations, he declares this a question outside his commission to answer. It is clear that he does not really believe in his own infallibility.¹

¹ An answer to what is here said has been lately attempted by Father Ryder (*Nineteenth Century*, Feb., 1887). In the *Contemporary Review* for October, 1883, I had complied with a wish expressed by some friends that I should put on paper some things that I had told them in conversation in which they had been interested, namely, what I had read in then recent publications by the Abbés Cloquet and Louvet. My article was written without any controversial intention, and was almost entirely confined to a simple report of what these writers had said. But in writing about Louvet I had saved myself trouble by making use of the present lecture, which had been written and delivered a couple of years previously; and the only part of my article that can be called controversial was where I copied some of the remarks made above, on the fact that the Church of Rome has shown herself unwilling or unable to pronounce officially on the credit due to alleged modern revelations.

Father Ryder gives an excellent illustration of what I have said as to the habit of controversialists, when at a loss for something better to say, of laboriously proving what their opponents do not deny. He says that I 'admit in words' that the Church of Rome does not pledge herself to the truth of any modern revelations, and then, as if I did not admit it in reality, he occupies in the proof of this statement great part of the space which he devotes to me. Surely, in the three years and more that he took to meditate on my article, he might have discovered that the complaint I had made was that the Church of Rome does *not* tell us whether we are to believe these things or not; and the question why she does not deserves some better reply than, she doesn't because she doesn't.

Then he has recourse to a 'tu quoque'—but about this I need not dispute, since, clearly, he would establish my case, not his own, if he could show that the Church of Rome behaves exactly as a Church behaves which makes no pretensions to infallibility.

He blames me for quoting the positive acceptance given by Father Faber to modern revelations 'in an uncontroversial work intended to assist the imaginative piety of his readers.' It is strange that Roman divines do not find out how they repel Protestants by the defective appreciation of the claims of truth exhibited in their distinction as to what may be said in controversial and uncontroversial books. To people of their own community they assert things as

I ought not to dismiss this subject of revelations without reminding you of the first occasion when an attempt was made to impose such private revelations as a rule of faith on the Church: I mean, in the Montanist heresy. The Montanists, you know, were perfectly orthodox. They had not the least desire to alter the ancient faith of the Church. They only aimed at a development of Christian doctrine: according as prophets to whom the Paraclete revealed the Divine will cleared up anything that had been obscure in the apostolic teaching, or guarded the purity of the Church by supplemental commands which the Church, on its first formation, had not had strength to bear. But the Montanists held, and as it seems to me with good reason, that the recipient of a Divine revelation was not justified in looking on it as given only for his private edification. It was both his privilege and his duty to make known to the Church what God had taught him; and any who refused to hear rejected a message from God. So the Montanist prophecies came to be written down and circulated as demanding to be owned as God's word. This was what more than anything else led the heads of the Church to oppose people whose aims and doctrines were all such as religious and orthodox men could sympathize with. But it was felt, and truly felt, that their prophecies were encroaching on the supreme authority of Scripture, and that they were presuming to add to what had been written. From the time of the breaking out of Montanism, greater care was taken than had been used before, to prevent any unauthorized uninspired composition from seeming to be placed on a level with Scripture. And so the

positive facts which they run away from defending the moment an opponent grapples with them. It would seem as if their maxim was, 'We need not be particular about the truth of what we say if no one is present who can contradict us.'

He says that the Church is only directly concerned with the deposit entrusted to her at Pentecost. With regard to any other statement, she does no more than say whether or not it contradicts the doctrine of that deposit. I wish the Church of Rome did confine herself to the doctrine delivered to her at Pentecost; but since the publication of Newman's Essay on Development, the 'quod semper' of Vincent of Lérins is thrown completely overboard, and Romish divines speak with as much disdain of a Church which is satisfied to abide by its old creed, as a fashionable lady does of one who appears in the dress she wore last season. See the passage quoted from Father Harper, p. 201, and another in this very article of Father Ryder.

Finally, he denies that the new things taught by modern revelations can properly be called doctrines. I do not know how else to call them. What I understand by 'doctrines' is 'revealed facts.' If God has really revealed anything, our obligation to believe it is all the same, no matter who the organ may be through whom the revelation was made; whether it be St. John or St. Paul, St. Bridget or St. Catherine. Our only concern is to know whether or not a real revelation has been made. The Church of Rome is willing to tell her people that they are bound to believe what is delivered to them by St. John and St. Paul. Why will she not give the same information with regard to things which later persons, whom she honours as saints, profess to have received by divine revelation?

It cannot be said that these things do not affect practice. One specimen is enough. It is asserted that it was revealed through St. Simon Stock that no one who dies wearing the scapular can possibly be lost: 'in quo quis moriens æternum non patietur incendium.' Surely the revelation of a certain means of escaping the flames of hell deserves to be called a doctrine, if anything can. Other things are taught about Purgatory on the same authority which, if true, ought seriously to affect practice. Why will not the infallible authority tell us positively whether we are to believe these things or not!

Epistle of Clement, the Shepherd of Hermas, and one or two writings more, which had been admitted into Church reading, were then excluded, and fell rapidly into such neglect, that copies have scarcely survived to our day. And it is the real truth that those who accept these modern revelations, and draw proofs of doctrines from them, have really a different Bible, not only from us, but from the Council of Trent. The Church of Rome is but dissembling a schism when she allows differences to remain unsettled, affecting the very foundations of faith: when what is accepted by one as the voice of God Himself is set down as a dream of silly women by another.

In what I have said I have only contemplated revelations made in visions to their recipients, belonging thus to the class of what may be called invisible miracles. But there have been, in my own recollection, miracles of still higher pretensions; yet concerning these, too, the infallible authority will not tell us what to think. I address an audience so much junior to myself, that some of the things I remember as having at the time made the greatest sensation are to you forgotten stories of things that happened before you were born; yet they serve well to illustrate the practical working of the Roman system. I can call to mind more revelations than one, not hidden away in biographies of saints, whence they can be drawn forth by enthusiastic preachers, but coming forth into the world, forcing their way into the newspapers, and challenging even the investigation of the law courts.

The miracle of La Salette took place 19th September, 1846. Two children minding cows on a lonely mountain in the diocese of Grenoble were surprised by the apparition of a fine lady robed in a splendid yellow dress, wearing varnished shoes, and with a head-dress of ribbons and flowers. She told them that she was the Virgin Mary; discoursed to them on the sins of France, and gave them messages in the name of her Son. The children told the story: the matter was noised abroad; pilgrimages were made to the scene of the occurrence; the place soon became crowded with visitors; chapels arose; inns were opened, medals were struck, the sale of the water of La Salette soon came to be a gainful traffic, for it had not only virtue in curing diseases, but a few drops, even operated the conversion of an obstinate sinner, in whose liquor it had been mixed without his knowledge. Among the pilgrims was Cardinal Newman's friend and diocesan, Bishop Ullathorne of Birmingham. He published an account of his visit, professing full belief in the reality of the miracle. He opened at Stratford-on-Avon a chapel to our Lady of La Salette, and introduced the Confraternity of La Salette into his diocese. His pamphlet claims Papal sanction for the new devotion. By a Brief dated 26th August, 1852, the Pope, as we are told, made the altar of La Salette a privileged altar, gave a plenary indulgence to visitors to the shrine, besides other privileges too tedious to enumerate. A priest of Bishop Ullathorne's, a Mr. Wyse, published under the bishop's sanction a Manual of the Confraternity of La Salette. Mr. Wyse remonstrates indignantly with those of his co-religionists who still withhold faith from the story. The truth of the apparition of La Salette,' he says, 'is in contestable; the

proofs are such that it is worthy of the fullest belief. Yet because it is not of faith, that is to say, because a man will not be damned for not believing it, the faith of some who call themselves Catholics is so ungenerous and thrifty, that they refuse their assent.' 'In matters of faith,' he tells us, 'God loves a cheerful giver: He is not pleased with those who seek what is the very minimum of belief which will secure their salvation. In these days of infidelity, supernatural faith, cultivated for safety's sake to the very utmost, is the only security against the vilest errors.'

This language expresses a state of feeling I believe to be very common among Roman Catholics; but surely it is very absurd. It is accounted faith not only to believe all that God says, but also to believe anyone who says that God has said a thing. Should I account it a compliment if anyone told me that he had such faith in me that he would not only believe anything I said, but anything that anyone said I said? The result certainly would be, that although no one has any particular motive to misrepresent me, he would believe a good deal I never said, and some things I should be sorry to be thought to have said. It is really not faith in the Divine Word, but want of faith, if the belief which is due to a divine revelation is thoughtlessly given to anyone who claims it. A man could not think much of his dog's attachment to him if he was a dog that would follow anybody.

In the present case the result proved that a certain suspension of judgment might be pardonable. Some of the clergy of the neighbouring dioceses declared the whole apparition to be an imposture, and denied (I am sure I do not know whether with truth or not) that the Pope had given the alleged approbation. The Salettites declared that this was envy and jealousy on the part of men whose own shrines had suffered a decrease of pilgrims, in consequence of the superior attractions of the new shrine. Then their adversaries proceeded to particulars. It was asserted that the Virgin who appeared to the children was a certain Constance Lamerlière; a nun, half knave, half crazy, who could be proved to have purchased the dress in which the Virgin appeared, and whose connexion with the apparition could in other ways be proved. This was stated so persistently that Constance Lamerlière was forced to accept the challenge, and bring an action for defamation of character; but the Court decided against her, and the decision was confirmed on appeal. I shall not pretend that the decision was conclusive, for I believe that there are still Roman Catholics who believe in La Salette; but I fear that the apparition must be pronounced a failure, as having caused more scandal to unbelievers than edification to the faithful, unless the large pecuniary gains it brought to the parties interested may redeem it from the charge of being altogether a failure.

Scarcely had the excitement provoked by the events of La Salette begun to subside, when the supernaturalist party dealt a heavier blow against their opponents by what was called the miracle of Lourdes. In this spot, in Gascony, Bernadotte Soubirous, a poor girl of fourteen, on February 11, 1858, while picking up dry wood, saw a beautiful lady robed in white, with a blue sash,

and the vision was afterwards several times repeated. On being asked who she was, the lady answered, 'I am the Immaculate Conception.' She invited the girl to drink at a fountain. The child, seeing no fountain, scraped away some earth with her hands. A little water filtered through the orifice it increased gradually in volume, became perfectly clear, and now supplies to the faithful I do not know how many millions of bottles, which are in large demand for the purpose of effecting supernatural cures. The local bishop gave his sanction to the miracle; pilgrimages to the shrine were organized, and pilgrimages are now made easy. It is not, as in former days, when a devout pilgrim had to walk over half Europe with or without peas in his shoes. Railway Companies are only too glad to organize excursion trains, and secure for their line an undue share of the tourist traffic. Only the other day the chairmen of the other Companies were looking with envy at the profits the Midland Great Western Company were deriving from the miracles at Knock.¹ True, there is a number of incredulous people who object that the witness to the Lourdes miracle was a child subject to hallucinations; and the speech 'I am the Immaculate Conception,' does put a severe strain on one's faith. It is said, however, that the miracles worked by the intercession of Our Lady of Lourdes ought to banish all incredulity. But what I complain of is, that when there is an infallible guide he will not interfere to clear our doubts. Why should he leave us in danger of mistaking the utterances of a crazy nun or the ravings of a hysteric child for miraculous communications from the Blessed Virgin; or, conversely, of rejecting a message from heaven?

Perhaps one reason why we must despair of getting a solution of our doubts from this quarter is, that infallibility is said to be subject to an unfortunate limitation. The Pope, though infallible on questions of doctrine, is liable to be deceived by human testimony about a matter of fact. You may remember reading in Burnet of the use made of this distinction in the Jansenist controversy. The adversaries of the Jansenists had obtained a papal condemnation of certain propositions from the work of Jansenius. As devout Catholics, the Jansenists were forced to confess that the doctrines condemned by the Pope were false, but they saved the credit of their master by saying that these propositions had not been asserted by him, at least not in the erroneous sense. Their adversaries, determined not to permit themselves to be thus balked of their triumph, obtained from the Pope a supplemental decree, declaring that the propositions

¹ A small village in the county Mayo, where the Virgin Mary, St. Joseph. and a third personage, supposed to be St. John, are affirmed to have appeared to many persons on the evening of 21st August, 1879, and in the early days of 1880. The scene of the alleged apparitions was the exterior of the southern gable of the sacristy attached to the Roman Catholic chapel of the parish. See *The Apparitions and Miracles at Knock*, by John Mac Philpin (Dublin: Gill and Son. 1880); in which tract will be found a full account of the matter, with the depositions of witnesses made before a commission of priests appointed by the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Tuam, and the particulars of many miraculous cures reported by the Roman Catholic priest of Knock as having been effected on blind, crippled, and diseased persons who have visited the chapel, or swallowed particles of mortar taken from the wall.

in question were not only erroneous, but that they had been taught by Jansenius. To this the Jansenists replied, 'We acknowledge the Pope to be infallible in questions of doctrine, but the question whether Jansenius taught such and such doctrines is one of fact, and we say that on this the Holy Father has been deceived.'

I own I do not myself see the justice of the distinction, nor how it is rational to give up the infallibility in the one case and assert it in the other. If this limitation exists, how can any heretic be infallibly condemned? The falsity of his doctrines may be infallibly asserted; but whether he had taught them will admit of controversy. In several doctrinal questions which came before the Privy Council, it was found to be easier by far to ascertain what the doctrine of the Church of England was than whether the impeached clergy men had contravened it. But it is more important to observe that the doctrines of our religion are all assertions of the occurrence of facts. That our Lord died, and was buried, and rose again the third day, are all matters of fact. The question which, it was said, was to have been determined if the Vatican Council had not been prematurely broken up, whether or not the body of the Virgin was miraculously taken up to heaven, is a question of fact. If the Pope is unable to arrive at certainty about things alleged to have taken place in his own lifetime, how can he expect to be more successful about things that happened centuries ago? There is a story about a grave writer who abandoned in despair a contemplated historical work, when he found himself unable to ascertain the real facts of a quarrel which had taken place under his own windows. But yet again, those miracles of modern times, though the question of the reality of their occurrence may be one of fact, are made the foundation of doctrines and practices the reception of which must surely be affected by our acceptance or rejection of the facts. Thus, in the instance last given, if we believe that the Virgin Mary really said to a little girl, 'I am the Immaculate Conception,' however odd we may think her way of expressing herself, we cannot doubt that she meant to give her approval to the doctrine that she was conceived without sin, and so that the truth of that doctrine must be regarded as miraculously guaranteed.

Shortly after time pilgrimages to Lourdes others were organized to Paray-le-Monial. This had been the scene of the revelations of the blessed Marguerite Marie Alacoque, the foundress of the now popular devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This is not, like the other two I mentioned, a revelation of our own time, though a great impetus was given to that devotion by the beatification of this nun by Pius IX. She lived at the end of the seventeenth century, the time when the strife between the Jesuits and the Jansenists was the hottest. Her revelations were patronized by the Jesuits¹ and condemned by the Jansenists. With the late Pope the Jesuits were all-powerful. This poor nun was subject to

¹ This was but common gratitude considering how much good she had to say of them. Her biographer tells us: 'Notre-Seigneur, en parlant à Marguerite-Marie, lui a maintes fois déclaré qu'il se servirait en particulier des Pères de la Compagnie de Jesus pour faire connaître aux hommes tout le prix des trésors renfermés dans son divin Cœur.'

what we heretics would call hysteric delusions, in the course of which she saw many visions in which, as always happens, the ideas of her waking hours were reproduced. All that has been said metaphorically about our Lord's human heart was materialized by her, and referred to that physical portion of our Lord's human frame.¹ As a specimen, I mention one of the most celebrated of her visions, in which she saw our Lord's heart in His bosom burning as in a furnace, and her own heart placed as a small atom of fire in that furnace. You cannot pass by a Roman Catholic picture-shop without observing what vogue the adoration of the material heart of our Lord has now gained. It was much opposed by the Jansenists, so that it was not till after a century and a-half that Margaret Mary obtained, under Pius IX., the dignity of beatification, which is next below canonization. It has been objected that this worship of a portion of our Lord's Body is downright Nestorianism. In the course of the Nestorian controversy it was distinctly condemned to make a separation between our Lord's Godhead and His manhood, so as to offer worship to the one not addressed to the other. And here the worship is not even offered to our Lord's entire humanity, but to a part of it. However, the lawfulness of this worship is not what I am discussing now. My object is to show that every one of these alleged revelations has a distinct bearing upon doctrine. Of course, however objectionable this superstitious worship may appear to us, if our Lord has revealed His approval of it, our objections must be dismissed; and so an infallibility which owns itself incompetent to pronounce on the reality of alleged revelations really owns itself incompetent to pronounce on questions of doctrine which these revelations would seriously affect. So much it may well suffice to have said about the hesitations and vacillations of the infallible guide. I had intended to say something about positive errors into which he has fallen, but these I must reserve till the next day.

¹ It is curious that her conceptions have close affinity with the contemporary teaching of a Puritan divine, Goodwin, who was chaplain to Oliver Cromwell. Goodwin published books in which he dwelt much, in rather mystical language, on the point that our Lord's manhood remains still united to His Divinity, and that He still retains His human heart and feelings. De la Colombière, the director of the nun of whom I speak was for a considerable time in England, attached to the household of the Duke of York, afterwards James II., so that he might easily have become acquainted with Goodwin's writings. It has consequently been imagined that Marguerite Marie derived her ideas through De la Colombière from Goodwin. It appears, however, that it was in 1675 she had a vision directing her to labour for the establishment of the feast of the Sacred Heart, and that her director did not return from England until 1679. Her devotion was not established even in