

THE
INFALLIBILITY OF THE CHURCH

A COURSE OF LECTURES

DELIVERED IN THE

Divinity School of the University of Dublin

BY

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XIV.

THE BLUNDERS OF THE INFALLIBLE GUIDE.

I HAVE thought it well to let you see how the theory of an infallible Church works in practice. In the former Lectures I have given proof enough that in a number of cases the guide who asks us to follow him prefers himself to follow, and shows by his hesitations that he is ignorant of the true path. I will now add some cases where he has actually struck into wrong paths, and has been compelled, with very lame apologies, to retrace his steps. I reserve the question whether Popes ever have been heretics until I come to speak of that theory which ascribes infallibility to the Pope personally. One instance, however, in which a Pope was compelled to retire with disgrace, after having attempted to thrust his infallibility into a sphere in which it failed to secure correctness, is the department of Biblical criticism.

The Council of Trent having stamped the Vulgate as ‘authentic,’ ordered that a correct edition of this authorized Vulgate should be published. But little was done in fulfilment of this decree for nearly forty years, when the task was undertaken by Pope Sixtus V., a Pontiff who seems really to have believed in his own infallibility. He employed a Board of learned men to act as revisers, but in complete subordination to himself. In his preface he claims the superiority to them which he exercised, as resulting from the singular privilege which he enjoyed as successor to Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, for whom Christ prayed that his faith should not fail, and who was charged to confirm the other Apostles in the faith. Accordingly, he tells with complacency of the labour which, among all his other apostolic cares, he had spent on this work, day after day, and for several hours each day, reading the collections and opinions of others, and balancing the reasons for the various readings; the plan of the work being, that while his learned revisers collected the evidence, it was for him alone to decide on the validity of their arguments, and determine by his absolute judgment what reading was to be preferred to what. When the work was printed he examined each sheet with the utmost care, and corrected the press with his own hand. The edition appeared in 1590, with a Constitution prefixed, in which Sixtus affirmed the plenary authority of the edition for all future time (‘ hac nostra perpetuo valitura constitutione ‘). ‘ By the fulness of apostolic power,’ he says, ‘ we decree and declare that this edition approved by the authority delivered to us by the Lord, is to be received and held as true, lawful, authentic, and unquestioned, in all public and private discussion, reading, preaching, and explanations.’ He forbids the printing of this Bible for the space of ten years at any press but his own in the Vatican. After that time it might be printed elsewhere, but only from one of the Vatican copies. He

forbade expressly the publication of various readings in copies of the Vulgate, and pronounced that all readings in other editions and manuscripts, which might vary from those of this Sixtine edition, should have no credit or authority for the future. It was forbidden to alter the version in the smallest particle; and any person who should violate this Constitution, it was declared, would incur the indignation of Almighty God, and of His blessed Apostles Peter and Paul; and was threatened with the greater excommunication, not to be absolved except by the Pope himself.

This was the language of a man who really believed in his infallibility. But a glance at the volume was sufficient to convince any moderately learned man of the folly, not to say impiety, of such boastful presumption. Many passages were found covered with slips of paper on which new corrections had been printed; others were scratched out and merely corrected with a pen; and different copies were corrected in different ways. A closer examination showed those competent to judge that the edition had graver faults than could be accounted for by printers' carelessness. Sixtus had changed the readings of those whom he had employed to report upon the text with the most arbitrary and unskilful hand; and it was scarcely an exaggeration to say with Bellarmine that his precipitate self-reliance had brought the Church into the most serious peril. The death of Sixtus removed all constraint, and the learned divines whose opinions had been overruled represented the true state of the case to his successor. There was then much embarrassment how to correct these undeniable errors; and some men of weight advised the Pope to prohibit the use of the faulty books. But Bellarmine counselled that the credit of Sixtus should be saved; thereby, as he says in his autobiography, returning good for evil; for Sixtus, for a reason of which I may speak later, had put Bellarmine's *Controversiæ* on the Index of prohibited books, 'donec corrigerentur.' Bellarmine's way of solving the difficulty was to lay the blame upon the printers,¹ although in his autobiography he makes no secret that those errors had been deliberately introduced by Sixtus himself, which he recommended should be imputed to the carelessness of others. Indeed Bellarmine's original proposal was a delightful illustration of the skill which the Order to which he belonged is popularly believed to possess, in knowing how to insinuate a falsehood in

¹ If an author has sometimes had good reason to complain, in the words of the celebrated erratum, 'printers have persecuted me without a cause,' the present case is one of several in which authors have taken their revenge on printers by trying to make them responsible for their own errors. A signal example is the virtuous indignation displayed by Warburton against his critic, Edwards, who had been 'such a dunce or a knave,' as to imagine that the editor, not the printers, was responsible for the well-known blunder in Warburton's edition of Shakespeare. Pope's statement that the story of 'Measure for Measure' had been taken from the 5th novel of the 8th decade of Cinthio's novels' is printed in Warburton's edition with the abbreviations 'Dec.' and 'Nov.,' written at full length, thus: 'Cinthio's novels, December 8, November 5.'

words consistent with truth. He recommended that the faulty readings should be said to have occurred ‘*præfestinatione vel tupographorum vel aliorum*’—either the printers were to blame or somebody else. However, this evasion was disdained in the preface to the new edition, written by Bellarmine himself, and still printed with the Roman Vulgate. No mention is made of ‘somebody else,’ and the errors are said to have occurred ‘*praeliv- itio*.’ The preface tells that when the work had been printed, and when Pope Sixtus was going to publish it (implying that he had not published it¹), perceiving that several errors of the press had crept in, he determined to have the whole work placed anew on the anvil. But that Sixtus really had any such intention is a statement for which there is no shadow of proof, and no probability. The edition of Clement, also published as authentic, differed from that of Sixtus in more than two thousand places. A list of these is given in the work of Dr. James, a former learned librarian of the Bodleian, called *Bellum Papale*, or *Concordia Discors*. And it became evident that the work of editing the Bible required patience, learning, critical sagacity, and that this was a work to which ‘infallibility’ was unequal.

We owe it to the wilfulness of Sixtus that this was so soon found out. If he had been content to follow the opinions of the experts whom he had consulted, no doubt his edition would have appeared without opposition, and the Constitution prefixed, in which Sixtus had plainly claimed for his text the guarantee of infallibility, would have been a great obstacle to its emendation by later criticism.

I will mention one other department from which the Popes have had to retire with their prerogative of infallibility sorely discredited. In ordinary cases, as I have so often said, their policy has been to avoid committing themselves; but in some rare instances the case appeared to be so plain as to make caution unnecessary. One of these cases was when the notion was first seriously entertained by men of science, that the sun, not the earth, is the centre of our system, and that the earth, instead of being stationary, is in rapid motion. Such an idea was so opposed to reason and common sense, so contrary to the opinion entertained for many ages by philosophers, so at variance with the plain words of Scripture, that the Church authorities felt they were quite safe in putting down teaching at once heretical and absurd. Now let me do every justice to the Roman authorities who took this false step. There is no error committed by the Popes or their councillors which we ought to be more ready to pardon and to sympathize with; for their mistake was prompted by reverence for Scripture, and quite similar mistakes have been since committed by highly respected men in our own commun-

¹ We have a copy in our Library. It contains several corrections by neatly pasted slips; for example (Isaiah lii. 5), ‘*nunc quid*’ which is right, instead of ‘*numquid*’ retained in the Clementine edition.

ion. But still if we make mistakes we confess them and profit by them. We do not pretend to be possessors of any infallibly accurate interpretation of Scripture, and we, therefore, cannot omit to use one of the few opportunities open to us of testing the pretensions of those who do make this claim.

The present case is one of the most unpleasant that Roman Catholic controversialists have got to meet, for they cannot but be conscious that the best apologies they can offer are extremely unsatisfactory. They could save themselves all trouble if they would frankly say, 'Our Church made a great mistake two hundred and fifty years ago. She then imagined statements to be heretical which we now know were not only not heretical, but were perfectly true. She is a great deal wiser now.' Perhaps the theory of development may be improved into a form which will allow that confession to be made. But if that time comes, we need dispute no more about the Church's infallibility; the whole claim will then have been given up. Meanwhile we have to consider whether any of the attempts have been successful that have been made to free the Roman Church from the responsibility of mistakes which her rulers confessedly made at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

It is well known to you all to what severe treatment Galileo was subjected for holding the doctrine about the motion of the earth which is now held by every educated man; or rather for being suspected of holding it. For Galileo did not categorically state this opinion as his own, but only introduced it in the form of a dialogue, so as not to make himself responsible for the opinions of either speaker. In order that you should understand the necessity for this caution, I had better briefly tell you those facts in his life with which we are concerned;¹ and before discussing the dealings of the Inquisition with him in 1633, I must say something about the previous action of the Inquisition in 1616.

Galileo had already a high place in the scientific world, when, in 1609, he was the first to turn a telescope on the heavens. All Europe soon rang with the news of the surprising announcements he was able to make, which entitled him to rank as the greatest philosopher of his age. The new facts thus brought to light speedily removed all doubts in Galileo's own mind as to the truth of the theory which Copernicus had put forward concerning the motion of the earth. One of the first of his discoveries, that of the satellites of Jupiter, put the controversy concerning the true system of the universe in a new position. The old theory was that stars and planets all went round the earth. Here was a clear case of exception; for these four newly-discovered stars unquestionably made their revolutions, not round the earth, but round

¹ I recommend those who have leisure to read *The Private Life of Galileo*, published by Macmillan in 1870, and to make the acquaintance of that most charming person, Galileo's daughter, Sister Maria Celeste.

Jupiter. The sight of this planet, attended by its four satellites, was alone sufficient to shake the confidence of astronomers in their belief that the earth was the most important body in the universe; while the spectacle of these bodies performing in perfect order their revolutions round one celestial body could not but suggest an analogy revealing the true relation of the planets to the sun. Again, when the theory was first put forward that the planets are bodies which only shine by the reflected light of the sun, it was objected that, if this were the case, Venus ought to present the same phases as the moon, changing from full face to a crescent, according as we saw more or less of the side illuminated by the sun. Copernicus made an unsuccessful attempt to explain this difficulty; but when Venus was looked at through a telescope, she was seen actually going through those changes, the seeming absence of which when sought for by the naked eye had been considered a fatal objection to the Copernican theory.

Galileo was a firm believer in the truth of Scripture, and as soon as he came to believe that the Copernican theory was true, he could not help also believing that it was not contrary to the Bible. Accordingly, in 1613, he wrote a letter, defending this view, to Castelli, who was Mathematical Professor at Pisa. He said that the Bible was beyond doubt infallible; but that though the Scripture could not err, its interpreters might. Clearly we are not to interpret every word of Scripture literally; for if so we should have to attribute to God hands, feet, and ears, and human and bodily emotions, such as anger, repentance, and hatred. There were obvious reasons why, in speaking incidentally of the sun, or of the earth, or other created bodies, the Scriptures should conform to popular language. For had a different course been pursued, the vulgar would have been only perplexed, and have been rendered more difficult of persuasion in the articles concerning their salvation:—

‘I believe that the intention of Holy Writ was to persuade men of the truths necessary to salvation; such as neither science nor other means could render credible, but only the voice of the Holy Spirit. But I do not think it necessary to believe that the same God who gave us our senses, our speech, our intellect, would have us put aside the use of these to teach us instead such things as with their help we could find out for ourselves, particularly in the case of those sciences of which there is not the smallest mention in Scripture; and above all in astronomy, of which so little notice is taken, that none of the planets except the sun and moon, and once or twice only Venus, under the name of Lucifer, is so much as named there. Surely, if the intention of the sacred writers had been to teach the people astronomy, they would not have passed the subject over so completely.’

This letter was the occasion of the first collision between Galileo and ecclesiastical authorities; for though it was a private letter, a copy fell, ei-

ther through indiscretion or treachery, into the hands of Dominicans at Florence, one of whom denounced it to the Holy Office at Rome. And naturally it gave much offence that a layman should presume to teach theologians how to interpret Scripture.

It is a commonplace with Roman Catholic apologists to say that Galileo had only himself to blame for the trouble he got into, through, as one of them expresses it, poking his nose into what was other people's business. 'Why did he not stick to his mathematics, and leave the interpretation of Scripture to theologians? He seemed determined to ruin himself. Had he not got a message from Cardinal Barberini (afterwards Pope Urban VIII.), telling him that he ought not to travel out of the limits of physics and mathematics, but confine himself to such reasonings as Ptolemy and Copernicus had used? Declaring the views of Scripture theologians maintain to be their own particular province.' Cardinal Bellarmine also had said that if Galileo spoke with circumspection, and only as a mathematician, he would be put to no further trouble.

If theologians at that time complained that astronomers had intruded into their province of interpreting Scriptures astronomers have, with equal reason, complained that it was theologians who intruded into their province of interpreting the appearances of the heavens. The fact was that the two provinces then overlapped, and there was ground on which one party had as much right to be as the other. Either the earth moves, or it does not. If it moves, theologians were wrong in inferring from Scripture that God had revealed that it is at rest; if it does not move, the Copernicans had wrongly interpreted the indications of their science. You know how the matter has ended. Roman Catholics and Protestants are now agreed that the theologians of two hundred years ago were wrong in the system of astronomy which they imagined they had derived from the Bible; and Roman Catholics and Protestants agree in adopting the principles of Scripture interpretation which Galileo taught the theologians of his day.

But it is necessary to explain how a collision had been avoided before, and what was meant by saying that Galileo ought to speak 'only as a mathematician.' The reason why Copernican speculations about the earth's motion had been tolerated by ecclesiastics, while the writings of Galileo on the same subject were rigidly condemned, was that Galileo's predecessors, in order to avoid shocking existing prejudices, had taken some pains to represent the notion of the earth's motion, not as a true account of what actually takes place, but as a mathematical fiction imagined for the more convenient calculation of the places of the heavenly bodies. There is, you know, great virtue in an *if*. Theologians insisted on saying, without contradiction, that the earth does not move; but they had no objection to allow mathematicians to amuse themselves with the problem, *If* the earth and the planets went

round the sun, what appearances would the heavens, on that hypothesis, present?¹ Galileo found that the answer to that question was, Exactly the appearances which we observe now; while, on the contrary, the observed appearances were not explained by the older theory. He could not then resist the conviction that the Copernican doctrine of the earth's motion was no mere mathematical fiction, but the absolute truth.

Holding this belief, how could he acquiesce in the conclusion that the Bible teaches the direct contrary? From the language used by Roman Catholic writers one would imagine that Galileo had attempted to establish the earth's motion by an array of Bible texts, and to prove that the opposite doctrine was an anti-Scriptural heresy. Far from this, all he contended for was toleration for his own belief. He only endeavoured to make out that there was nothing in the Bible that forbade him to believe that the earth moved. And unless he imagined that the same thing could be scientifically true and theologically false, how was it possible for him, who believed that nothing false is taught as an article of faith in the Scriptures, when he had come to believe that the doctrine that the earth does not move is false, to avoid asserting that the doctrine that the earth is at rest is not taught in the Bible as an article of faith? Nothing is so puzzling as a real love of truth to people who are not possessed of it themselves. The good old orthodox theologians of Galileo's day could not imagine what motive the philosopher could have for persisting in saying that it was the earth which went round the sun, and not the sun which went round the earth. That he should say so, merely because he was convinced it was true, was quite beyond their comprehension. It must be from love of opposition, from a wish to insult them, from sheer obstinacy, from self-conceit, or some other unworthy motive. And similar blindness to the claims of truth, and to the obligations which it imposes, is exhibited by the Roman Catholic apologists of the present day, who cry out against Galileo's imprudence and hot-headed meddling with theological questions. Surely more true zeal for the honour of Scripture was shown by Galileo, when he reasoned that the doctrine which he knew to be false could not be the doctrine of Scripture, than was shown by those ecclesiastics who were angry with him because he would

¹ If the reader will remember that a hypothetical proposition is a proposition with an *if* in it, it will preserve him from common misconceptions as to the meaning of the permission to mathematicians to discuss the earth's motion if they treated it only as a hypothesis. Thus, a respectable Roman Catholic writer tells us that Galileo would not have been interfered with *if*, instead of treating Copernicanism as if it were absolute truth, he had offered it only as a 'probable hypothesis.' The writer seems to imagine that Galileo might have taught Copernicanism if he had admitted that the evidence for it fell short of demonstration. But the Roman authorities declared that Copernicanism was directly contrary to Scripture; and they denied (see p. 241 *infra*) that a doctrine directly contrary to Scripture could be in any sense probable. What they were willing to permit was the tracing the mathematical consequences of a supposition not asserted to have any reality.

not allow them, without remonstrance, to stake the credit of Scripture on the maintenance of an utterly false philosophy; and who, if allowed to have their own way, would have done as much injury to the reputation of the Bible as they have done to the doctrine of the infallibility of the Church of Rome.

I return now to the history. When Galileo's letter was brought under the notice of the Roman Inquisition there was great unwillingness to deal harshly with the philosopher, who was then at the height of his reputation, and who had many and powerful friends at Rome itself, where he had recently exhibited his telescope, amid general admiration. Now, in every criminal trial there are two questions—a question of law, and a question of fact. In the case of a trial for heresy, the question of fact is, What are the words which the accused person has spoken or written? the question of law is whether these words contain heresy. The practice of the Inquisition is only to deal directly with 'the question of fact; while the question of law is referred to a special Board of skilled theologians, under the title of Qualifiers, their business being to state the quality of the propositions submitted to them, and in particular whether or not they are heretical. Now, the Inquisition was able to pronounce Galileo's acquittal on the question of fact. The document submitted to them only purported to be a copy of a letter written by Galileo: where was the original? It could not be produced. No doubt, if the Inquisitors had been malevolently disposed, they might have resorted to such further inquiry as would either have brought the letter home to Galileo, or at least would have proved that it truly expressed his sentiments. But they were content, in the absence of positive evidence, to pronounce a verdict of Not Guilty; only they took care that the verdict should be, Not Guilty, but don't do it again.

They obtained a report from their 'qualifiers,' which ran in the following terms:—

(1) The proposition that the sun is the centre of the world, and immoveable from its place, is absurd, philosophically false, and formally heretical, because it is expressly contrary to Holy Scripture.

(2) The proposition that the earth is not the centre of the world, nor immoveable, but that it moves, and also with a diurnal motion, is also absurd, philosophically false, and theologically considered at least erroneous in faith.

Galileo was not required to make abjuration, or to do penance, because he had not been convicted of heresy; but, by order of the Holy Office, Cardinal Bellarmine summoned him before him, and admonished him in the name of the Pope and of the Holy Office, under pain of imprisonment, that he must give up the opinion that the sun is the centre of the world and immoveable, and that the earth moves, and must not hold, teach it, or defend it

either by word or writing; otherwise proceedings would be taken against him in the Holy Office. Galileo submitted, and promised to obey.

But it was not enough that Galileo should be personally warned against holding the heliocentric theory of the universe; the whole world must be similarly instructed;¹ and this was done by another tribunal. On March 5th, 1616, the Congregation of the Index, a Committee of Cardinals appointed by the Pope for the prevention of the circulation of dangerous books, published the following decree:—

‘Since it has come to the knowledge of this Holy Congregation that the false Pythagorean doctrine, altogether opposed to the Divine Scripture, of the mobility of the earth, and the immobility of the sun, which Nicolas Copernicus, in his work, *De revolutionibus orbium caelestium*, and Didacus a Stunica, in his Commentary on Job, teach, is being promulgated and accepted by many, as may be seen from a printed letter of a certain Carmelite Father (Foscarini), entitled, &c., wherein the said Father has attempted to show that the said doctrine is consonant to truth, and not opposed to Holy Scripture; therefore, lest this opinion insinuate itself further to the damage of Catholic truth, this Congregation has decreed that the said books, Copernicus *De revolutionibus*, and Stunica on Job, be suspended till they are corrected, but that the book of Foscarini the Carmelite be altogether prohibited and condemned, and all other books that teach the same thing.’

You might understand, from what I have said before, the kind of correction with which the book of Copernicus might be tolerated. But we have direct evidence in a later ‘monitum’ published by the Congregation four years later. It states that it had been deemed necessary to prohibit the book of Copernicus because it ventures to state, not by way of hypothesis, but as actual truth, propositions concerning the motion of the earth, repugnant to the Holy Scripture and to its true and Catholic interpretation, a thing by no means to be tolerated in any Christian man. But, since the works of Copernicus are in other respects useful, permission for their circulation is given, provided every passage where the motion of the earth is asserted as a fact is altered so as to indicate that this is merely an assumption made by the author. And then a detailed list is given of the necessary emendations.²

¹ The publication by papal authority of the decision of the ‘qualifiers’ in Galileo’s case will be mentioned presently.

² I may as well here add a caution against a common confusion between Prohibitory and Expurgatory Indexes. The object of the Prohibitory Index is obvious enough, namely, to warn the faithful against mischievous books; and of course to such warnings full publicity was given. But cases might arise, such as that which has now come before us, where a book in the main innocent, or even useful, was in places disfigured by some erroneous teaching. The possessors of such books were mercifully permitted to use them provided they first gave them up to the Inquisitors in order to have them returned to them with the faulty matter expunged. The Expurgatory Indexes contained directions what passages were

While speaking of the Congregation of the Index, I may mention that it continued its war on the Copernican theory for about two centuries. The Index of 1704 contains the comprehensive prohibition, 'all books that teach the mobility of the earth or the immobility of the sun.' A striking proof that this prohibition did not remain a dead letter is afforded by the preface to what is commonly called the Jesuits' ¹ edition of Newton's *Principia*. Whether apprehensive that their own book might be placed on the Index, and its sale forbidden, or that they might suffer in some other way for the publication of a book so plainly teaching the mobility of the earth, they tender in the preface the following apology:

'Newton, in this third book, supposes the motion of the earth. We could not explain the author's propositions otherwise than by making the same supposition. We are therefore forced to sustain a character which is not our own; but we profess to pay the obsequious reverence which is due to the decrees pronounced by the sovereign Pontiffs against the motion of the earth.'

I cannot help observing, in passing, how the despotic system of the Church of Rome inevitably leads to scepticism. No one can trust his neighbour, or be sure that he really believes the doctrine which he professes. No one can believe that the authors of the very intelligent commentary on Newton's *Principia*, to which this advertisement was prefixed, did in their hearts pay more reverence to the decrees of the supreme Pontiff against the motion of the earth than the earth pays to them herself; and when we have such a striking proof how Roman Catholic divines will, in order to preserve external unity, deny their most certain convictions, what value can we attribute to the submission made to the decrees of the Vatican Council by men who had given good proof of their falsity?—nay, what certainty have we that any Roman Catholic really believes what he says about Purgatory or Transubstantiation, not to speak of a disputed doctrine like the Immacu-

to be thus blotted out. But it is plain that these directions must be reserved for the private use of those who were to make the corrections; for if an Expurgatory Index got into general circulation, it would evidently be infinitely more mischievous than the books themselves, all whose bad passages it would present in a concentrated form. The attempts, however, to keep such Indexes secret were not quite successful. Some fell into the hands of Protestants, who naturally triumphed on discovering that in some instances genuine sayings of Fathers were directed to be expunged because they had too Protestant a sound.

A copy of De la Bigne's Library of the Fathers, contained in our Library, has undergone this expurgation, the certificate of which is to be found in the beginning of the second volume. The faulty passages in some cases have paper pasted over them, in others are blotted out with a pen. The shelf-mark is GG. E. 5-8. The expurgations will be found to be those directed in Quiroga's Index, the shelf-mark of which is N. f. 37.

¹ The editors were really members of a different religious order.

late Conception, or the sanction that bishops and priests have given to such a tale as that of La Salette?

These prohibitions continued in force for a century longer. At the beginning of the present century the astronomer Lalande made great exertions at Rome to have the names of Galileo, Copernicus, and Foscarini, removed from the Index; but in vain. Accordingly, the Index for 1828 contains the names of these three culprits; but the prohibition against all books teaching the mobility of the earth was quietly dropped out of the later editions of the Index. It was only on the accession of Gregory XVI., the predecessor of Pius IX., that the important step was taken, and the attempt to insist on believing in the immobility of the earth was finally abandoned. For the first time for some two hundred years an index of prohibited books was published, in which no confession of previous error was made, but the names of Galileo, Copernicus, and Foscarini, were silently withdrawn. Even then there were some at the Papal Court who regarded this as a weak-minded concession to modern prejudice. I remember well how common it was in Roman Catholic periodicals to see the Newtonian theory of gravitation spoken of as if it were a temporary scientific fashion, likely as time went on to blow over. I remember that when Cardinal Cullen came over here it was asserted that he had committed himself as an Anti-Copernican. Mr. St. George Mivart quotes a priest now living, a head of a college, as saying, 'How glorious it would be if it should turn out after all that the sun does move round the earth, and that the Church had been all the time in the right.' But if the race of Anti-Copernicans is not yet extinct,¹ their better

¹ The occasion of my article in the *Contemporary Review* (referred to, page 215) was, that I happened to come across a periodical published in Paris by the Abbe Cloquet, which claimed for itself an immense circulation, and the main object of which, number after number, was to denounce the Copernican theory, and to accuse of heresy those of his ecclesiastical superiors who countenanced a doctrine condemned by the highest authority in his Church. The circulation of such a periodical in our own day appeared to me so very curious a phenomenon, that I could not help speaking of it, nor did I see any need for refusing to put the story into print. But I was careful to state that the higher ecclesiastical authorities in France, far from sympathizing with Cloquet's teaching, were making every effort to put it down. In fact Cloquet was putting dangerous weapons into the hands of those enemies, not only of the Roman Church, but of Christianity, who desired to exclude that Church from all share in the education of the people. The spectacle of priests disobedient to their bishops is not unknown in our own Church; and it was with some surprise, but with real sympathy, that I saw that our neighbours' discipline was not as perfect as I had imagined it to be. Father Ryder accuses me of bad taste in doing something like 'making play with a tipsy priest.' I have never heard that there was any impeachment on Cloquet's moral character, and I rather think Father Ryder does not mean to bring any. I take the phrase 'tipsy priest' to be merely a specimen of controversial logic. Insubordination is wrong, tipsiness is wrong, therefore when you mean an insubordinate person you may speak of a tipsy one, if thereby greater odium can be cast on an opponent. Insubordination is most excusable when a private disobeys his captain's orders, because he knows that these orders are in direct opposition to the orders given the captain by the colonel. Cloquet clearly proved that he had that excuse; for no one who, like him, is quite free from the

instructed Roman Catholic friends are now ashamed of them, and at the present day those of them who discuss the case of Galileo do not venture to deny the scientific truth of that philosopher's doctrines, but offer other apologies, the value of which I will consider presently.

I now return to the history of Galileo. He went back to Florence much disheartened at the condemnation of the Copernican doctrines, but professing outward submission to the Papal decisions. It would be unreasonable to suppose that he accepted them in his heart; and we cannot help regarding as ironical some of the language he used. Thus, for instance, in a tract which he published on the motions of comets, he says: 'Since the motion attributed to the earth, which I, as a pious and Catholic person, consider most false and not to exist, accommodates itself so well as to explain so many and such different phenomena, I shall not feel sure but that, false as it is, it may not just as deludingly correspond with the phenomena of comets.' He preserved the same verbal conformity to the commands of his superiors in the work which he published in 1632, which was the cause of his subsequent troubles. He gave it the form of a dialogue, which enabled him to state the arguments on both sides without committing himself to an adoption of either; and he said that he proposed to discuss the Copernican system as a mere mathematical hypothesis, and to show, not its absolute truth, but its authority to some bad arguments by which it had been assailed. The disguise, however, was found to be a little too thin. Johnson said that when he reported the speeches in Parliament he took care that the Whig dogs should not get the best of it; and certainly the Anti-Copernicans did not get the best of it in Galileo's report. Their advocate was felt by the reader to be no very wise person: 'un sciocco' he was called by the Papal reporters on the dialogue. And what made the matter worse, it is said that the Pope (Urban VIII) recognized in the arguments put into the mouth of this silly speaker some which he had formerly used himself in discussion with Galileo. So the sale of the dialogue was forbidden, and a summons was served on Galileo ordering him to appear before the Inquisition at Rome. He made every effort to escape obedience, pleading inability to undertake the journey (a more formidable business then than now), on account of his age (he was seventy), and the bad state of his health, and asking for at least a reprieve. His excuses were not accepted by the Pope, who said he might come in a litter if he pleased; but come he must. The Florentine Inquisitor visited Galileo, and found him confined to his bed, and professing himself unable to take the journey in his then state of health. A certificate was forwarded, signed by three of the most eminent medical men in Florence, to the effect

modern prejudice that in matters of science philosophers know better than popes, can doubt that the heliocentric theory is a condemned heresy.

that Galileo was suffering from hernia, and could not be moved without danger to his life. The answer from the Inquisition was, that if he did not come, the Pope and the Holy Office would send down a commissary and a physician of their own, whose expenses would have to be defrayed at Galileo's cost. If they should find him able to travel they were at once to deprive him of his liberty, and send him up in irons; if they should find that the move would involve danger of life, they were to send him up bound and in irons as soon as the danger was over.

Under this persuasion Galileo was induced to face the journey to Rome, where he met with as much indulgence as the rules of the Inquisition permitted. Until personal examination was necessary, he was allowed to lodge in the Florentine ambassador's palace, but on condition that he was to observe strict seclusion, and receive the visits of none but intimate friends. When personal examination was necessary, the three or four weeks he spent within the walls of the Inquisition were not passed in any close or unwholesome dungeon, but in the apartments of the Fiscal of the Inquisition, where the attendance of his own servant was allowed him. Even this mitigated confinement had an unfavourable effect on his health.

The result of the trial is well known. Galileo pleaded in vain that he had not infringed the injunction laid on him by defending an opinion already condemned, and the condemnation of which had been made known to him. When he urged that he had left the question undetermined, and had only discussed the probability of the Copernican hypothesis, he was told that therein he had committed a grave error, for that an opinion can in no manner be probable which has already been declared and defined to be contrary to the Divine Scriptures. The Inquisitors were certainly justified by the evidence when they arrived at the conclusion that there were very strong grounds for suspecting that Galileo held the heretical doctrine of the earth's motion, and also the heresy that an opinion can be held and defended as probable after it has been declared and defined to be contrary to Holy Scripture. Accordingly, in order to remove from the minds of all Catholic Christians this vehement suspicion legitimately conceived against him, he was ordered to swear that with a sincere heart and faith unfeigned he abjured, cursed, and detested the above-named and all other heresies; and to swear further that for the future he would not assert, either by word of mouth or in writing, anything to bring upon him similar suspicion. And in order that his grave and pernicious error might not remain altogether unpunished, that he might be more cautious for the future, and be an example to others to abstain from offences of this sort, his book was prohibited by public edict; he was condemned to the prisons of the Holy Office during the Pope's pleasure, and was commanded for three weeks to recite the seven Penitential Psalms once a week.

Galileo made his abjuration accordingly, but for the remaining eight or nine years of his life never completely recovered his liberty; for though his confinement was as little disagreeable as such a thing could be, he was never permitted to have quite free intercourse with his friends. He was for five months a guest with the Archbishop of Siena; afterwards, when his residence in a city was thought to lead to a mischievous propagation of his opinions, he was allowed to reside in his own country-house, a little distance from Florence, but not to occupy his house in that city. He must remain in solitude, and neither invite nor receive guests for conference. When he asked special permission to go to Florence for medical advice, he was told that if he was troublesome the liberty he already enjoyed would be taken from him. At length he was once allowed to go. He was not permitted either to reprint his old books, or to print new ones. When he died, his power to make a will was disputed, and the question was raised whether his body might be placed in consecrated ground. That was decided in his favour; but when the Grand Duke proposed to raise a marble monument to him, he received a message from the Pope that such an intention, if carried out, would be most pernicious, and that he must remember that Galileo during his life had caused scandal to all Christendom by his false and damnable doctrine.

In considering Romanist apologies for the treatment of Galileo, I have chiefly in view one of the ablest, published in the Clifton Tracts in 1854, and founded on two articles, one in the Dublin Review for July, 1838, the other in the Rambler for January, 1852.

The apologist's first topic is the leniency shown to Galileo by the Inquisition, and therefore I have been careful to make due mention of the instances of their indulgence. If you should ever be in the wrong, and really deserve a scolding, the most approved method of getting out of the scrape is to wait until those who have good reason to be angry with you make use in their wrath of some unadvisedly strong expressions. Then it is your turn: you may raise an outcry at the undeserved imputations that have been cast on you; exaggerate as much as possible the reproaches that have been heaped upon you; and if you play your part well the original offence may be forgotten, and you may pass yourself off successfully as the aggrieved party. This is the common method of Roman Catholic apologists for their Church on points on which her doctrines or her actions have excited prejudice against her. Their plan is to commence the reply with a highly-coloured account of the hard things Protestants have said against them; and then by way of contrast to produce the maligned doctrine with everything offensive kept carefully in the background, so as to enlist the reader's sympathies on the side of injured innocence, and make him wonder that anything so harmless should be assailed by such malignant misrepresentations.

Thus the article to which I now refer begins by informing us that Protestants (we are not told who) had asserted that Galileo had been kept for five years in the dungeons of the Inquisition, that he had been put on the rack, that his eyes had been put out by the cruel Inquisitors; whereas, his penance had been nothing more than the recital of the Penitential Psalms once a week, and his place of imprisonment only the Dominican Convent, where the officers of the Inquisition themselves resided, or the ‘delightful palace’ of the Tuscan ambassador at Rome, and finally Galileo’s country-place near Florence. The account I have given you of the restrictions under which he suffered, and which destroyed the happiness of the last years of his life, will have shown you that this author’s rose-coloured picture is as far from the truth as the Protestant exaggerations which he quotes, and that the ‘tender mercies’ of the Inquisition are sufficiently cruel.

Let us suppose, for example, that the Archbishop of Canterbury had taken it into his head that the great telescope made by our former Chancellor, the late Lord Rosse, was dangerous to the Christian faith; suppose that our astronomer was compelled to go over to London to answer for his heresies; that no plea of age or ill-health was allowed to excuse him from the journey; that he was there obliged to observe the strictest seclusion; and that after some months’ delay there, when eventually allowed to return home, he was ordered to consider himself a prisoner in his own house at Parsonstown; that there he was forbidden to publish scientific books, or to hold conference with men of science, and that he asked in vain for permission to come up to Dublin for medical advice. Let us suppose all this, and what should we say of the clergyman who should set up for such treatment such a defence as this: To be sure, the offence of the heretical telescope was one which could not be overlooked; but then consider how mildly he was treated. He was not put into a dungeon with common felons, but allowed to occupy in the prison the Governor’s own private apartments; he was not kept in jail for five years; we did not put him on the rack; and, above all, we did not put out his eyes!

Although I accept the statement that Galileo was not put on the rack, it is right to mention that the point has been contested. It appears from the sentence on Galileo that his answers not being thought satisfactory, it was deemed necessary to proceed to a ‘rigoroso esame,’ and I think it is sufficiently proved that in the language of the Inquisition this phrase meant an examination in which torture might be used. Torture was an established method with the Inquisition. It was used in secular courts at the time, and the Inquisition considered that they were less able than other courts to dispense with it, because the offence of heresy being a secret one, residing in the mind alone, and therefore one which an accused person could easily deny, special means were necessary to elicit his real opinions. In the case,

however, of children and very old persons a minor form of torture was commonly used, that of threatening torture; and accused persons in the hands of the Inquisition had good reason to take such threats very seriously. There is clear evidence that torture was threatened in Galileo's case; but as far as I can judge, not good reason to think that it was actually used. But the point seems to me of quite small importance. The opinion expressed in Galileo's abjuration, that the doctrine of the earth's motion was false, was certainly not that with which he had entered the walls of the Inquisition; and the arguments which induced him to express a change of mind were certainly not addressed to his intellect. Put the question of torture aside; and still Galileo was informed that the opinion which he really held had been pronounced heretical, and that if he again taught it, he would be treated as a relapsed heretic. Translating this into English, it meant that if he were dealt mildly with, the result would be lifelong imprisonment; if the law were fully carried out, he must be burned alive, as Giordano Bruno and others had been. The ecclesiastical authorities at the time, no doubt, thought they had gained a triumph when they obtained Galileo's abjuration; but that abjuration remains their lasting disgrace, because it could only have been obtained by means which it was a disgrace to use. If I had time to discuss with you the question of the propriety of torturing and burning heretics, I should add another to the list of papal errors; and an error is not less an error though he who falls into it may be able to produce companions in his mistake, and to cite respectable authorities who led him into it.

The question, however, whether or not the Inquisitors dealt mildly with Galileo is irrelevant to the subject of this lecture. What we are concerned with is, Did the Inquisitors, acting under the Pope's authority, and with his personal concurrence, oblige Galileo to profess belief in what we now know to be false; and if so, how can Infallibility be claimed for an authority guilty of such a prodigious blunder? Our apologist contends that it was right to require a retraction, because the scientific arguments by which Galileo supported his opinion were not as good as have been since obtained on the same side; and that his doctrine being likely to prejudice in men's minds their respect for the Bible, he might properly be called on to condemn and renounce it, and declare it to be 'false in the sense of unproved.'

False in the sense of unproved! The apologist must have counted on readers ignorant of the English language. He might nearly as well have said, 'False in the sense of true.' Who can be persuaded that to declare a doctrine to be absurd, false, and expressly contrary to Holy Scripture, means no more than that the arguments which support it fall short of demonstration? Besides, it would be for astronomers, not for theologians, to judge whether the scientific arguments by which Galileo supported his views amounted to demonstration or not. If theologians undertook to find

fault with arguments which men of science have since found to be abundantly conclusive, they were justly punished for 'poking their nose into other people's business.' But they made no such mistake. The tribunal of the Inquisition never dreamed of setting itself up as an authority for pronouncing on the progress of science. In knowledge of the science of astronomy they must have been perfectly well aware that Galileo was infinitely their superior. What they thought they did know better than he was how to interpret Scripture. It was as theologians they interfered; and interfered, as we now know, wrongly. And indeed how could science ever have come to its present state if they could have had their way? Every good Catholic was forbidden even to read a book which taught the mobility of the earth. You might find something to say in defence of an attempt to silence an ignorant person who, without any real knowledge, had scoffingly asserted the mobility of the earth, only in order to bring the authority of Scripture into contempt; but nothing to justify an attempt to suppress the respectful investigations of the most eminent man of science of the day.

I have just said that the Inquisitors did not claim to know more about scientific arguments than Galileo, but that they did claim to know better than he how to interpret Scripture. Yet it turns out now that, with regard to the interpretation of Scripture, Galileo was right, and they were wrong. The condemnation of Galileo has been a good deal discussed with reference to the question of the Pope's personal infallibility. You will see now that it cuts much deeper, and affects the question of the Church's infallibility speaking by no matter what organ. The Council of Trent declared that it is the province of Holy Mother Church to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. Now there are many texts of Scripture which we hold that the Roman Church interprets wrongly; but we have no means of forcing her to own that we are right and she wrong. We have the means in the case of such texts as 'He hath made the round world so fast that it cannot be moved.' From such texts it was inferred in the sixteenth century that the physical fact of the immobility of the earth was a revealed truth. Everyone entitled to speak on behalf of 'Holy Mother Church' asserted it. If general consent, universal long tradition, absence of opposing view, can prove any interpretation of Scripture to be lawfully imposed by the head of the Church, this certainly was so. And yet it has now to be confessed that that interpretation was wrong. It must be owned, therefore, that whatever respect the Church may claim when she interprets Scripture, she is not infallible, and that the Church of a more learned age may wisely review and correct the decisions of its predecessors.

Yes; but it will be said that the Church's infallibility when she interprets Scripture is limited to questions of faith and morals, and that the question of the earth's mobility is not one of faith. But this is to accuse the

heads of the Church in Galileo's time of a far graver mistake. It is surely a less error to decide a question that belongs to your province wrongly, than not to know what belongs to your province, and what does not. If modern apologists are right, the Church in Galileo's time not only was wrong in pronouncing it to be a heresy to hold that the earth went round the sun, but was utterly wrong in imagining that either of the opinions—the sun goes round the earth, or the earth goes round the sun, possibly could be heresy, the whole subject being outside the domain with which faith has to deal. On the contrary, the Church in Galileo's time held that it was of faith to maintain the absolute correctness of everything asserted in express words of Scripture, and that the doctrine of the earth's fixity was so asserted. Some parts of Scripture, dealing directly with faith or morals, are eminently dogmatical, and are spoken of as *scripta propter se*; other parts are only dogmatic per accidens; but the Church has taught that all are alike inspired. But, in any case, no loyal member of the Roman Church is justified in raising the question whether, in Galileo's case, she went out of her province. It is for the Church to ascertain the limits of her own powers. How could she condemn any heresy, if it was open to the accused person to deny the Church's jurisdiction altogether with regard to the question in dispute? The truth is, that modern Roman apologists have fallen into a condemned heresy themselves. For I have already told you that one of the heresies condemned in the sentence on Galileo was 'that an opinion can be held and defended as probable after it has been declared and defined to be contrary to Holy Scripture'; and the doctrine of the earth's mobility was so declared and defined.

It remains to discuss how the condemnation of Galileo directly affects the question of Papal Infallibility. It is certain that the decrees of the Inquisition and of the Congregation of the Index expressed the sentiments of the individual Pope who was the prime mover in the whole business, and who even personally presided at some of the meetings. But on various pleas it has been contended that the tribunal which published the decrees was not the Pope speaking infallibly. That he did not speak infallibly then we need not dispute; but if he did not speak infallibly then, it will be impossible to know that he ever speaks infallibly.¹

¹ The Rev. W. W. Roberts (see *Guardian*, Aug. 10, 17, 1887, and his work, *Pontifical Decrees against the Motion of the Earth*) has collected some instances from the pontificate of the late Pope Pius IX., in which decisions to which the Pope was less directly committed than in the case of Galileo, were treated as binding on all Catholics. For example, on February 20, 1857, the Congregation of the Index condemned and prohibited certain works of a German theologian, Gunther. The decree contained no doctrinal statement, and gave no reason for the prohibition. But some of Gunther's followers being still unwilling to own the unsoundness of their master's tenets, the Pope wrote an apostolic letter to the Archbishop of Cologne, known as the Brief 'Eximiam tuam,' in which he says:—'That decree sanctioned by our authority, and published by our command, plainly ought to have suf-

But before discussing any of these pleas, let me say that if they were successful they would only transfer the present instance from the subject of the present lecture, 'The Blunders of the Infallible Guide,' to that of the preceding lecture, 'The Silences of the Infallible Guide.' We have seen that the Popes appear to think the gift of infallibility quite too precious for everyday use, and that when a disputed question arises it is the hardest matter to obtain a decision on it from the infallible authority. But there are some occasions which would extort speech from the most taciturn of human beings; and I imagine that the most silent of men might be induced to speak, if he saw a fellow-creature about to be severely punished, perhaps burned alive, in his name, and by his alleged authority, upon a charge of heresy which he had the means of infallibly knowing was no heresy at all. It cannot plausibly be maintained that a Church possessing an infallible guide to secure her from heresy should appoint a special tribunal for the expulsion of heresy, and that that tribunal, acting under the very eyes of the Church's head, should be left in uncertainty what is or is not heresy. I have used the illustration of an alchemist allowing his own children to starve. This would be exactly verified if we were to believe that the Pope is infallible when he tells other people what is heresy, but that he is either unable or unwilling to ascertain this when it is absolutely necessary for the guidance of his own conduct. It is nothing less than a gross libel on Pope Paul V., who was Pope in 1616, to assert that he did not bring all the resources of his infallibility into play in the case of Galileo; and whatever errors we may accuse him of, we can honestly acquit him of this charge.

I need not then tarry over the plea that either Paul in 1616, or Urban in 1633, erred but only as a private doctor, not as a Pope speaking *ex cathedra*. With regard to the question when the Pope speaks *ex cathedra*, the only rational distinction is between his official and non-official utterances. We do not hold the Papacy responsible for everything Urban may have said in conversation to Galileo; but in all the transactions which I am discussing

ficed that the whole question be judged entirely settled, and that all who boast of the Catholic name should clearly and distinctly understand that complete obedience was to be paid to it. And that the doctrine contained in Gunther's works could not be accounted sound.' The second Papal utterance quoted by Mr. Roberts was made on the occasion of a meeting of German divines and men of science in the autumn of 1863. The Pope expressed himself dissatisfied with their acknowledgment that 'Catholics are to submit in all their scientific investigations to the dogmatic utterances of the infallible authority of the Church.' Not merely so, he taught them, 'but also to the decisions pertaining to doctrine that are put forth by Pontifical congregations, as also to those heads of doctrine which are retained by the common consent of Catholics as theological truths and conclusions so certain, that opinions adverse to the same, though they cannot be called heretical, yet deserve some other theological censure.' A third instance relates to the condemnation of the teaching of a Louvain Professor, Ubaghs, which, though never officially made known to the world, was treated by Papal authority in 1866 and in 1870 as absolutely decisive with respect to the doctrines in question.

it is clear that neither Urban nor Paul acted as a private doctor, but as Pope. It is said, however, that the Pope is both teacher and governor of the Church, and that though infallible as teacher, he may err in the steps he takes as governor, for the preservation of the Church's discipline. But when the punishment of heresy is concerned, it is impossible to separate his disciplinary from his teaching power. It may be assumed as certain that the Pope would not punish a man for heresy without having first ascertained that the doctrine which he held was heresy; and the Pope could not teach the world more distinctly that a certain doctrine is heretical than by setting the example of punishing a man for holding it.

Neither need I linger over a plea in which some Romanists find much comfort, that the condemnation of Galileo does not contain what is called the customary clause of Papal confirmation at the end. We may be sure that Paul V. did not knowingly omit anything necessary to give validity to his sentence; and the fact is, that the 'custom' in question has come in since Paul's time, and that this clause does not appear in previous decrees of the Congregation of the Index.¹

Sixtus V. appointed fifteen Congregations of Cardinals, assigning to each its proper function, but with the limitation 'that they refer to us all the more important and difficult matters under consideration.' It is now customary that the secretary of the Congregation should certify when a matter has been thus referred to the Pope; but clearly the only important question is whether the matter has been thus referred, and not whether the secretary has certified it. Such a certificate was certainly not necessary in the case of the Holy Office, the highest of all the Congregations, having jurisdiction over every member of the Church of whatever rank. On account of its supreme importance, the Pope was wont to be its president, and the votes to be taken in his presence; so that no important decree could go forth without having been first submitted to the Pope. The Pope indisputably did thus take part in the decision in Galileo's case.

Assuredly Galileo and the Copernicans of his day were not allowed to suppose that to persist in their heresy would be to resist anything short of infallible wisdom. They were pressed with the words of the Bull of Sixtus V., by which the Congregation of the Index was remodelled: 'They are to examine and expose the books which are repugnant to the Catholic doctrines and Christian discipline, and after reporting them to us, they are to condemn them by our authority.' What was done by the Inquisition in Galileo's case was not a mere verdict on a matter of fact on which the judges might pardonably go wrong, but it was the decision by the Pope's authority

¹ Mr. Roberts has not been able to find any decree of the Index with the clause earlier than January 17. 1729 (see *Bullarium*, ed. Lux., vol. Xiii., p. 380).

on a question of doctrine. Pope Urban made that decision his own by directing (in 1633) that in order that these things might be known to all, copies of the sentence on Galileo were to be transmitted to all Apostolic Nuncios, and all Inquisitors of heretical pravity, especially the Florentine Inquisitors. These were to summon the professors of mathematics and to read the sentence for their instruction. This sentence refers to the interference of the Congregation of the Index as made 'to the end that so pernicious a doctrine' as the Copernican 'might be altogether taken away and spread no further to the heavy detriment of Catholic truth.' It states that the Congregation was held in the Pope's presence in which Galileo was ordered to give up this false opinion. It relates that Galileo had been formally made acquainted with 'the declaration made by our Lord the Pope, and promulgated by the Sacred Congregation of the Index,' the tenor whereof is that the doctrine of the motion of the earth and the fixity of the sun is contrary to the sacred Scriptures, and therefore can neither be defended or held. It may be added that the desired Papal confirmation in express terms was given by a later Pope, Alexander VII., in 1664, who republished and confirmed the previous decrees with the words, 'Cum omnibus et singulis in eo contentis, auctoritate Apostolica tenore presentium confirmamus et approbamus.' I really recommend, therefore, Roman apologists to consider again whether it may not be possible to maintain that the sun actually does go round the earth, this being in my judgment quite as hopeful a line of defence as to deny that successive Popes officially asserted that it does.

To conclude, then, the history of Galileo makes short work of the question: Is it possible for the Church of Rome to err in her interpretation of Scripture, or to mistake in what she teaches to be an essential part of the Christian faith? She can err, for she has erred. She has made many errors more dangerous to the souls of men, but never committed any blunder more calculated to throw contempt on her pretensions in the minds of all thinking men, than when she persisted for about two hundred years in teaching that it was the doctrine of the Bible, and therefore an essential part of the Catholic faith, that the earth stands still, and that the sun and planets revolve daily around it.

Since this lecture was written, a couple of articles on this subject have been published by Mr. St. George Mivart (*Nineteenth Century*, July, 1885, July, 1887), of which a very brief notice will suffice. Mr. Mivart professes to be a Roman Catholic, but he is fortunate that he did not live two hundred years ago, for if he had then expressed the views he holds now, the Pope, if he had him in his power, would certainly have punished him severely as a

contumacious heretic of the worst kind. The Church of Rome changes so much, that what was heretical two hundred years ago may be quite orthodox now, and possibly Mr. Mivart's teaching may hereafter be accepted; but at present it is calculated to try severely the toleration of his ecclesiastical superiors; and his best chance of escape is, that the 'Judge of controversies' will, according to his usual habit, abstain from pronouncing any decision on the questions raised by Mr. Mivart, until the controversy comes to settle itself. Such forbearance is all the more likely, because times have so changed with the Roman Church that she is now glad on any terms to have the credit of having men of science in her communion, and is willing, therefore, to let them say what they like. It does not commit her authority, and may retain waverers of a scientific turn of mind.

Mr. Mivart throws overboard, as any man of common sense would, the subterfuges by which it had been attempted to deny that the highest ecclesiastical authorities were distinctly pledged to the condemnation of Galileo. He says that it has now been ascertained that what is declared by authoritative congregations to be opposed to the teaching of Scripture, of the holy Fathers, and of antecedent ecclesiastical tribunals, concerning a matter of science, may nevertheless be true. His inference is that Roman Catholic men of science may pursue their investigations regardless of any judgment ecclesiastical tribunals may pronounce on them, it having been proved by the voice of history that it is not to ecclesiastical congregations, but to men of science, that God has committed the elucidation of scientific questions. The freedom thus happily gained for astronomical science, he concludes, extends to all science, geology, biology, sociology, political economy, history, and Biblical criticism; in short to whatever comes within the reach of human inductive research and is capable of verification. This may be very good doctrine, but it strikes me that it is Protestant and not Roman Catholic doctrine.

Mr. Mivart, however, is only a Protestant as far as regards the subjects in which he himself takes an interest. He has given much attention to biology, and is an authority on that subject, so he claims for himself perfect freedom. He takes much interest in Biblical criticism, and would have no scruple in accepting the most advanced speculations which German rationalists have made concerning the Old Testament, which he imagines are in the main correct, though they may have been pushed to unjustifiable extremes. As far as the Roman Catholic laity are concerned, they are commonly so little acquainted with Scripture, that he would not be surprised if some of them were even disposed to chuckle over a disproof of the Bible's truth, as being a matter likely to 'dish' the Protestants, and so make their own religious position more secure. But he perceives that better instructed Roman Catholics would feel that it would dish themselves too if the

Church's teaching on so important a question, from her foundation until now, was proved to be mistaken. He seems to be ignorant that the Vatican Council has asserted the inspiration of Scripture in a way that cannot be reconciled with the speculations of which I speak. But he confesses the reluctance that Roman Catholic divines would feel to adopting conclusions opposed to a unanimous consensus of theologians, and to the ordinary teaching of the Church, which has constantly appealed to Scripture for proof of her doctrines. He however urges that the basis of doctrines may be taken away and the structure remain unharmed. Are not the Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals now given up as spurious by all learned men, but the system of doctrines founded on them remains? Do we not now know that the arguments used at many Councils are utterly bad, but the conclusions obtained by these arguments remain in full force? This reads like sarcasm, but I imagine that Mr. Mivart has written it in all sincerity.

It is not my business now to discuss all the questions raised by Mr. Mivart. I am only concerned with the question of infallibility; and I see no good reason why on this subject Mr. Mivart should only go half way towards Protestantism. He claims a right to disregard the instructions of his infallible guide on every subject capable of verification, but he implies that he is ready to accept those instructions if no verification be possible. This is much the same as if we were to say to a traveller who had told us some marvellous tales, I cannot believe what you have told us about France, Portugal, and North America, because I have been there, and I know that what you have told us is a pack of lies; but I will believe with all my heart everything you have said about China and Japan, because I have never been in these countries, and therefore cannot contradict you. Mr. Mivart ought to remember that there are other sciences besides those in which he himself takes an interest; such as the science of history, and especially of the history of dogma. Let him take the word of those who have studied these matters, that on many of the questions on which Roman Catholics differ from Protestants, the teaching of the Church of Rome is as opposed to the testimony of facts as the old theory which Galileo overturned. Had we not a parallel case to Galileo's the other day when an expert, von Bollinger, was excommunicated because he would not accept a conclusion which the voice of history condemns? Whenever Mr. Mivart sees his way to give the human mind not a partial but complete freedom, the dispute with him concerning the infallibility of the Church is at an end.

The Rev. Sydney F. Smith has published in *The Month* (March 1890) what purports to be an answer to lectures xi-xiv, but which is really an

abandonment of the whole case. In these lectures I had contrasted the professed doctrine of the Roman Church about Papal Infallibility with the actual working of the Roman System. Mr. Smith admits that I have correctly described that actual working; but he contends that the supposed inconsistency only arises from my having made a 'heedless misconception' of their doctrine. With regard to the practice of his Church, having: given a summary of what I had stated might have been expected from a Church conscious of possessing the gift of Infallibility, he proceeds: 'It is obvious that nothing of all this has taken place; and what do we find in its place? On the part of the flock, doctrinal differences of opinion (on points not yet covered by formal definition) still continuing to exist, and to grow fervid, and recourse had to the oracle only by the side which anticipates a judgment in its own favour, the other side meanwhile vehemently deprecating the reference, and even warning the Pope of the danger to the faith which may result from condemnation of the views it advocates; on the other hand, the supreme authority itself "shrinking with the greatest timidity from exercising the gift of Infallibility on any question which had not already settled itself without its help." ' And then he states the difficulty he has got to explain: ' If there were any reality about this professed belief in Papal Infallibility) could there be co-existent with it this reluctance to see it exercised? If the Pope believed in it, would he delay to use a power incapable of misuse, till the opportunity for its useful exercise was gone by? If the faithful believed in it, would they not court and welcome decisions which would prove adverse to any previous convictions of the applicants, only by furnishing the consolatory assurance that these convictions had been misleading, and by substituting the truth in their place?'

Mr. Smith then proceeds to correct my misconception of the doctrine of his Church about Infallibility, which, he contends, when rightly understood, is quite consistent with her practice. He says that I assume that they attribute the Infallibility which they recognize in the Pope to Inspiration, whereas they hold that it is due not to Inspiration but to Assistentia. I wish to avoid all merely verbal controversy, and therefore I only remark in passing that I do not use the word Inspiration in the same sense as he, and that I should give the name Inspiration to what he calls Assistentia. The latter word I have not been in the habit of using at all, not recognizing it as either Latin or English; but it appears I am singular in this respect, for Mr. Smith assures us that 'it is of common use in the circle of literature to which a Protestant student's reading is confined.' However, I take the words as Mr. Smith uses them. He gives the following explanation of them: Inspiration directly communicates the thoughts of God to the inspired subject, and impels him to deliver them to mankind. Assistentia, as its name implies, stands by him like a guide, and whilst allowing him the exercise of his nat-

ural faculties, guards him against error by providentially influencing the setting forth of the evidence before his mind, and causing him to see the propositions under consideration in their true light. The one is an impulse; the other is an aid. Inspiration has the necessary effect of causing the book written, or the judgment delivered, to be the book or judgment of God. Assistentia leaves them in their previous quality of human composition, while it guarantees their declarations against error, by the Divine aid which it administers.'

Now, having received this explanation, I have to declare that I was guilty of no misconception. I never supposed that Roman theory regarded the gift of Papal Infallibility to be of the kind which Mr. Smith ascribes to Inspiration; but the amusing thing is, that it would have been far better for his argument if he had been able to say that my mistake was in ascribing the gift to Assistentia, whereas, according to Roman theory, it was due to Inspiration. For I am amazed that he had not the acuteness to perceive that the effect of the distinction on which he insists is simply to abandon an easy answer to my criticisms, and to leave himself completely without defence. If the pronouncing a decision on a controversy was solely the result of a divinely communicated impulse, and a thing in which the Pope's natural powers had no part, it were surely idle to blame him for silence and non-interference. He could say that he could only speak such words as God might be pleased to put into his mouth, and that he was bound to be silent until a Divine inspiration was communicated to him. But if the initiative rests with himself; that is to say, if the order of proceeding is, that he must first use his natural powers and ordinary means of informing his judgment, and then has a guarantee that when he publishes the result of his investigations in an *ex cathedra* decision, he will be divinely secured from error, what but want of faith in the reality of this guarantee can account for his not so using his natural powers, when a decision is urgently needed for the appeasing of controversies within his Church?

Of course I admit (as I have already done, p. 184), that the Pope is bound to exercise so great a trust with caution and deliberation, and that he is justified or rather required, to postpone a decision, until he has taken due means to inform his judgment. But still there ought to be some limit to such delay. It was about 400 years from the time that the disputes about the Immaculate Conception became violent, to the time when the Papal decision was pronounced. This seems carrying deliberation to an extreme. I have heard of Chancery suits which lasted till the whole property in dispute had been dissipated in costs. In this case, a decision on a controversy does not come until the controversy has died a natural death.

The Pope has less excuse for unreasonable delay, because, though it is, no doubt, his duty to use all proper human means to guide his judgment, the

guarantee of infallibility does not depend on his having actually done so. It is not merely that his people would not be justified in rejecting his decision, on the plea that he had neglected to consult with learned divines, but the decision would really be infallibly correct, whether or no. Take the most important decisions of all, those made by the Pope in Council, and it is held that, though the parties to the decision may have been misled by bad arguments and deceived by forged documents, infallibility attaches to the decision all the same. Why, then, should the Pope hesitate, when the peace of the Church requires that controversies should be put to rest? It occurs to every one of us to have occasionally to make important and difficult decisions, and though we have no gift of infallibility, we do not abstain from acting. We use all human means to inform our judgment, we implore the Divine guidance, and then act boldly in humble faith that our prayers will not be unanswered. Why, then, should the Pope, if he really believed himself to have a guarantee that his decisions would by special Divine guidance be absolutely secured from error, show more timidity and indecision than has been exhibited by the most hesitating of Lord Chancellors?

I have already stated one principal reason; it has been because even if he had faith in his own guaranteed infallibility, he had no confidence that his people had, and so had to consider the dangers of a schism that might result from an unacceptable decision. Mr. Smith owns that distress at an *ex cathedra* decision, and unwillingness to accept it, is very inconsistent on the part of a 'Catholic,' and very wrong; but he says that 'human nature is weak.' So it is, and in this case belief in the Pope's infallibility must be weak, very weak, if not non-existent. But, then, Mr. Smith urges that this attitude of mind is not general among 'Catholics,' as testified by the comparative smallness of the schism caused by permanent non-acceptance of the late Vatican decrees. Yes, but it was because it was anticipated that the schism would be small, even smaller than it actually proved to be, that the Pope ventured to have those decrees passed. But in former days, especially since the precaution had not then been taken of limiting a bishop's powers, so that the Pope might be able, by refusing to renew his faculties, to reduce a refractory bishop to obedience, there is no doubt that a main cause of inducing the Pope to suspend his decisions, was the fear that his decisions would not be accepted. The reason expressly given for not meddling with the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception at Trent, was 'lest it should cause a schism among Catholics.'

Mr. Smith argues that it was quite justifiable to inspire this fear in the mind of the Holy Father. No doubt, the moment an *ex cathedra* judgment is pronounced, a good 'Catholic' is bound to accept it, and thenceforth, *ex animo*, to believe that the doctrine defined in it is true. But until the judgment has been pronounced, he is quite free to believe, with equal firmness, that

the doctrine proposed to be defined is false. He will then naturally persuade himself that a doctrine which he thinks he knows to be false can never receive the seal of Papal sanction. Providence will in some way interfere to prevent the judgment from being pronounced. If he can succeed (by such bullying, for example, as Bellarmine practised towards Pope Clement VIII.) in producing in the Pope's mind a belief that the pronouncing of a judgment would cause great evils to the Church, he may regard himself as an agent whom Providence is employing to prevent the Church from committing herself to an erroneous decision. Thus, while it is owned that actually to reject an *ex cathedra* decision is inconsistent with beliefs in the Pope's Infallibility, it is contended that it is compatible with that belief to try to inspire the Pope with fear that his decision will not be accepted. Perhaps, now that the theory has been explained, it will not be so easy as formerly to inspire such fear; but certainly the attempt has often been successfully made, and those who were able to persuade the Pope that they had no real faith in his Infallibility have no right to complain if other people think so too.

Mr. Smith barely glances at the case of Galileo. He denies that what he calls 'the Pythagorean doctrine'¹ concerning the movement of the sun round the earth 'was believed by the Church to be an article of faith.' The absolute insistency was throughout on the irrefragable authority of Holy Scripture, and only extended to the Pythagorean theory on the supposition that this was necessarily involved in the biblical statements.' This is an excellent illustration of the controversial artifice which I described (p. 63), of escaping the defence of an untenable position by substituting the defence of something that is not disputed. No one quarrelled with the Pope for insisting on 'the irrefragable authority of Scripture.' But what Mr. Smith has got to explain was, how infallibility can be claimed for authority which made the gross mistake of teaching that the doctrine of the earth's immobility was 'necessarily involved in the biblical statements.' If it be the province of Holy Mother Church (as the Council of Trent declared) to judge of the true sense and interpretation of Scripture, how was it that in this case, what Mr. Smith now owns to be the true interpretation of Scripture, was taught, not by the Pope or his Cardinals, not by any one entitled to speak on behalf of Holy Mother Church, but by a layman; and how was it that the ecclesiastical authorities instead of gratefully adopting the right method of interpretation, rebuked their instructor for his presumption, ordered him to be silent, and condemned him to imprisonment for as long a period as the Pope might choose to detain him?

¹ Though Mr. Smith does not mention Galileo by name, he got this phrase from an imperfect recollection of the decree of the Congregation of the Index in his case, where it is used in the opposite sense.

One word more in conclusion. Suppose that Mr. Smith had completely established his case, and had proved that Infallibility such as it exhibits itself in the actual working of the Church of Rome, is the only kind of infallibility that she claims in theory; and we should only have an instance of a phenomenon that often presents itself, namely, the contrast between Roman doctrine as exhibited to those within the fold, or to those whom it is hoped to induce to enter it, and the doctrine as reduced to modest dimensions when it has to be defended against opponents. If there is any inducement which more than another has been successful in gaining converts to Romanism, it is the promise of a judge who shall be able authoritatively to determine controversies. Modern thought is constantly raising new difficulties, and presenting new problems for solution. To these a number of contradictory answers are given, each supported by persons with some claims to respect. Men impatient of doubt are eager for some guide who can tell them with absolute certainty which is in the right; and when such a guide is offered them in the Church of Rome, they gladly accept the offer without too rigid enquiry as to her power to fulfil her promises. But what must be their disappointment when they discover that she has no rule for determining controversies save that by which non-theological disputes are terminated; namely, she lets the disputants fight it out; if owing to the number, or ability of its advocates, one side gets the predominance she will give it encouragement; and if within 400 years, more or less, its opponents are reduced to absolute insignificance, then she will pronounce their opinion false. Such an authority as this no more deserves to be called a guide than, to use an illustration employed by Professor Huxley on a different subject, a coach dog deserves to be called a guide, who watches which way the machine is about to turn, and then runs on loudly barking before it.