THE

# INFALLIBILITY OF THE CHURCH

*A COURSE OF LECTURES*

DELIVERED IN THE

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BY

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# GENERAL COUNCILS.

## PART II.

IF I had contented myself, as logically I might, with one proof of the comparative novelty of the doctrine of the Infallibility of General Councils, I need not have gone lower down than the history of the first Ecumenical Council, that of Nicaea. According to modern ideas, its decision ought to have put an end to all controversy. We all approve of that decision as correct. It was arrived at by an overwhelming majority of a fairly representative assembly of the bishops of Christendom. It expressed the sentiments of the Bishop of Rome, and was endorsed by the civil authority. Yet to the eye of a Romanist the history of the Church for the rest of the fourth century presents a scene of awful confusion; Council after Council meeting to try to settle the already settled question, throwing the Nicene Creed overboard, and attempting to improve on it. What ailed them, not to acquiesce in conclusions adopted by infallible authority? Simply that, at the time, there was no suspicion of its infallibility. There was no idea then but that what one Council had done another Council might improve on.

Cardinal Newman *(Historical Sketches, iii. 352)* describes the fourth-century Councils, to which I have just referred, as ‘a scandal to the Christian name’; and he goes on to say:’The Councils of the next century, even such as were orthodox, took their tone and temper from those which had gone before them; and even those which were Ecumenical have nothing to boast of as regards the mass of the Fathers, taken individually, who composed them.’ It is of these Ecumenical Councils of the fifth century I come now to speak.

We must be on our guard against the temptation to which party feeling exposes men, whether in religious or political disputes, namely, reluctance to express disapprobation of any men or any means that have helped to bring about the triumph of the right side. I feel very strongly that the side which triumphed, both at the third and at the fourth Ecumenical Council, was the right side. We of the present day are not concerned with the merely personal question, whether Nestorius was misrepresented; or whether he only expressed himself incautiously, without himself holding what we call Nestorianism. But we can heartily join in condemning that Nestorianism as being practically equivalent to a denial of our Lord’s Divinity. Breaking up our Lord’s Personality into two is a scheme which enables a man to use the loftiest language concerning the Divinity which dwelt in Jesus, while at the

same time holding Jesus Himself to be a man imperfect morally as well as intellectually. If we hold that the Deity did but dwell in Jesus without being truly and properly one with him, this is to ascribe to him no exclusive prerogative. Might not the Deity thus dwell with many men? You will find that one would be able to affirm, in the same words, concerning the founder of Buddhism, everything that, according to the Nestorian hypothesis, you can affirm as to the Divinity of the Founder of the Christian religion. And if I have no sympathy with Nestorianism, neither have I any with the heresy condemned at the fourth General Council, which practically is equivalent to a denial that our Saviour was truly and properly man. But without having sympathy with either heresy, we are still free to inquire whether we can approve of the measures taken to suppress it, and whether these measures were, in point of fact, successful.

Now, when we come down from the second General Council to the third and fourth, our documentary means of knowledge increase, but not so our respect for Councils. More and more I find myself forced to say, that if I believe the conclusions at which these meetings arrived to be true, it is not because the Councils have affirmed them; and, as far as I can judge, it is not on that account that the Universal Church has believed them either. The more I study these Nestorian and Eutychian disputes, the less sympathy can I feel with either party to the struggle. On both sides the virulence of party rancour seems utterly to have killed Christian charity. The problem on which the disputants were engaged—namely, to explain how the divine and human natures could be united in one person, and to state the conditions of such a union—is as difficult as any with which the human intellect has ever grappled, and is therefore one on which error surely might deserve indulgent consideration. Yet both parties regarded those who differed from themselves—and that possibly only in their use of language—as wilful deniers of the truth, enemies of Christ, haters of God, men for whom no punishment could be too severe in this world and in the next. And the reputation of Christianity has suffered, as secular historians have pointed out that these furious struggles took place at a time when the Roman Empire was threatened with dissolution under the inroads of barbaric tribes, who could not be successfully resisted if Christians would not give over fighting with one another.

Cyril of Alexandria, who presided over the third Council—that of Ephesus—is perhaps, of all those who have been honoured with the title of saint, the one whose character least commands our affection. In the fourth century the title *αγιος*, applied to an orthodox bishop, meant, perhaps, little more than the title ‘reverend’ applied to a clergyman of the present day. But of the qualities which go to make up our modern idea of saintliness, the only one to which Cyril can lay claim is zeal for orthodoxy. Of the

non-theological virtues of meekness, kindness, equity, obedience to law, we find in him no trace. There was no country where religious controversies were carried on with such violence as in Egypt. Cyril had been brought up in a bad school; and he handed down to his successor the traditions of that school with extensive evil developments. His whole career was marked with violence and bloodshed. He signalized the commencement of his episcopate by an assault on the Novatians, whose churches he shut up, seizing their sacred vessels, and depriving their bishop of all his property.[1] He followed this up by an attack on the Jews—not without provocation on their part. A leading member of his congregation had been punished by the magistrate on a charge brought against him by Jews. Cyril sent for the chief rabbis, and severely threatened them if such molestations were repeated. Riots followed; and tidings were brought to Cyril one morning that during the night a concerted attack had been made by Jews upon Christians, in which several of the latter had lost their lives. Cyril forthwith took vengeance into his own hands, deciding that there was not room for Jews and Christians in the same city. He put himself at the head of an immense mob, which took possession of the synagogues, plundered the goods of the Jews, and turned them out of the city. These proceedings naturally brought him into collision with the civil authorities, and the relations between the bishop and the prefect became extremely strained. Five hundred Nitrian monks poured down to Alexandria to give substantial support to the cause of the affronted patriarch. They surrounded the prefect's chariot, drove his guards away with showers of stones, and not content with abusive language, one of them, Ammonius by name, struck him with a stone, and covered his face with blood. But the people rose in defence of their magistrate, overpowered the monks, and seizing Ammonius, carried him off to punishment, which, according to the barbarous usage of the time, was so severe that he died under it. Then Cyril set the evil example of canonizing criminals as martyrs. Though there is no reason to suppose that the assault on the prefect was due to direct instigation of his, he made himself an accessory to it after the fact by giving Ammonius a public funeral, bestowing on him the title 'Admirable'; and would have even enrolled him for permanent commemoration as a martyr had not the disapprobation of moderate men warned him to drop the design.[2]

[1] Socrates, *H. E. vii., 7, 13-15.*

[2] I have no wish to exaggerate the case against Cyril, and I will therefore suggest an excuse for his conduct, which I have not seen put forward by any of his apologists. My idea is that the prefect, suspecting that the attack on him had been organized by a higher person than those who took part in it, endeavoured, according to the legal usage of the time, to extract the truth from his prisoner by torture, and that Cyril's admiration and gratitude were moved by the constancy with which Ammonius endured, even to death, without uttering a criminatory word.

But a worse tragedy followed. The belief in Church circles was that the governor would have been on better terms with the bishop if he had not been too intimate with heathens. Prominent among his heathen friends was the celebrated Hypatia, who, in a licentious age, when public life was less open to women than now, exercised the functions of a lecturer in philosophy with such dignified modesty as to command universal respect. One Peter, who held the office of reader in the principal church, collected a band of zealots like-minded with himself, who watched for Hypatia returning from her school, tore her from her chariot, dragged her into a church, and there murdered her with every circumstance of brutal atrocity. It is not to be supposed that this deed had Cyril's sanction; but if a party leader tolerates and profits by the excesses of violent followers up to a certain point, he cannot escape responsibility if they proceed beyond the point where he would have preferred them to stop. If the maxim '*noscitur e sociis*' is ever to have applicability, a Christian teacher must be judged of by the spirit manifested by those who have been the most zealous hearers of his instructions.

For excesses of zeal in his warfare against heretics, or Jews, or heathens, Cyril has not wanted apologists[3] who willingly believe that the case against him has been coloured by witnesses too ready to sympathize with enemies of the Church. But there is one chapter in his history with regard to which his line of conduct now finds no defender. I refer to his treatment of a greater saint than himself, St. Chrysostom. I have already said that in reading the Church history of the centuries following the erection of Constantinople into a capital, we must constantly bear in mind the jealousy felt at Alexandria at the encroachments on the dignity of their ancient see by this upstart rival. I have told how Gregory Nazianzen was compelled, by Egyptian opposition, to resign his see. St. Chrysostom's election to the bishopric of Constantinople disappointed an attempt of the Alexandrian patriarch, Theophilus, to place in Constantinople a nominee of his own. From that time Chrysostom had in Theophilus a bitter enemy, through whose exertions he suffered deposition and exile, accompanied with treatment which hastened his death. Cyril, the nephew of Theophilus, was his aider and abettor in the warfare against Chrysostom; and he continued his hostility when, on his uncle's death, he succeeded to the see. The death of Chrysostom did not soften his feelings; and a few years afterwards, when entreated to allow Chrysostom's name to be placed on the diptychs, he replied that this would be as great an affront to the orthodox bishops on the list as it would be to the Apostles if the traitor Judas were reckoned in their number.

[3] One of the latest is Kopallik, *Cyrillus von Alexandria, 1881.*

It was not until ten years after Chrysostom's death that he reluctantly gave way. Now what, in Roman Catholic eyes, makes his conduct inexcusable is that Cyril's obstinacy placed him in opposition, not only to Chrysostom, but to the bishop of Rome, out of whose communion the Egyptians accordingly remained for twelve years.

Accordingly, Cardinal Newman here gives Cyril up. 'Cyril, I know, is a saint; but it does not follow that he was a saint in the year 412.' 'Among the greatest saints are those who, in early life, were committed to very unsaintly doings.' 'We may hold Cyril to be a great servant of God without considering ourselves obliged to defend certain passages of his ecclesiastical career. It does not answer to call whity-brown white. His conduct out of his own territory, as well as in it, is often very much in keeping with the ways of the uncle who preceded him in his see, and his archdeacon who succeeded him in it.' I hope I am not ungrateful for so much candour if I say that if it does not answer to call whity-brown white, neither does it answer to call black whity-brown. Dr. Newman himself asks the question, '*Is* Cyril a saint? How *can* he be a saint if what has been said above is matter of historical truth?' His chief reason for giving a favourable answer is one that has not much weight with us, 'Catholics must believe that Providence would have interposed to prevent his receiving the honours of a saint, in East and West, unless he really was deserving of them.' 'It is natural to think that Cyril would not have been divinely ordained for so prominent an office in the establishment of dogmatic truth unless there were in him moral endowments which the surface of history does not reveal to us.' And he suggests, that as we hear very little of Cyril during the last few years of his life, it may charitably be believed that he had repented of his early violence; and he thinks that as ' he had faith, firmness, intrepidity, fortitude, endurance, these virtues, together with contrition for his failings, were efficacious in blotting out their guilt, and saving him from their penal consequences.'

Now I am sure you will understand that if I pronounce a man to be undeserving of the title of Saint, I do not mean to deny that he may have repented of his sins, and have entered the kingdom of Heaven. In giving honours to historical characters we can only be guided by those 'moral endowments which the surface of history *does* reveal'; and I count it to involve a degradingly low estimate of the Christian character if we hold up as a model of saintly perfection one in whom history only enables us to discover the excellences and failings of an able and successful, but violent and unscrupulous, party leader. If Cyril changed his character towards the end of his life, his contemporaries do not seem to have been aware of it. Here is the language of one of them on hearing the news of his death: 'At last the reproach of Israel is taken away. He is gone to vex the inhabitants of the world below with his endless dogmatism. Let everyone throw a stone on his

grave, lest perchance he may make even hell too hot to hold him, and return to earth.' 'The East and Egypt are henceforth united: envy is dead, and heresy is buried with her.'[4]

I have spoken at such length about the character of Cyril, because in truth Cyril was the third General Council. You will not expect me to enter into the history of the Nestorian controversy, or to discuss whether Nestorius really deserved condemnation, or whether by mutual explanations he might not have been reconciled to the Church without a schism. He is a man with whom I have no great sympathy; but in those days the views of the bishop of Constantinople were not likely to meet with indulgent criticism from the bishop of Alexandria. If I were to say that Cyril at Ephesus was 'seeking to revenge a private quarrel rather than to promote the interests of Jesus Christ,' I should say no more than was said by good and impartial men at the time.[5] 'Cyril,' says Newman, ' came to Ephesus not to argue but to pronounce an anathema, and to get over the necessary process with as much despatch as possible.' ' He had not much tenderness for the scruples of literary men, for the rights of Councils, or for episcopal minorities ' (pp. 349, 350)

In short, nothing could have been more violent and unfair than the proceedings at Ephesus. Nestorius may have deserved condemnation; but it is certain that he got no fair trial, and that the proceedings against him would have been pronounced null and void by any English Court of Appeal. In fact the Council was opened in the teeth of a protest made by sixty-eight

[4] The letter from which these passages are taken *(Theodoret, Ep.* 180) was read as Theodoret's at the fifth General Council (fifth Session), and there accepted as his. But on questions of this kind Councils are not infallible; and the letter contains a. note of spuriousness in purporting to be addressed to John, bishop of Antioch, who died before Cyril. I own that the suggestion that for 'John' we ought to read ' Domnus' does not suffice to remove suspicion from my mind. But it is solely for the reason just stated that I feel no confidence in accepting the letter as Theodoret's. Newman's opinion that it is incredible Theodoret could have written so 'atrocious' a letter is one which it is amazing should be held by anyone. familiar with the controversial amenities of the time. Our modern urbanity is willing to bury party animosities in the grave; but in the fifth century Swift's translation would be thought the only proper one of the maxim 'De mortuis nil nisi bonum'—when scoundrels die let all bemoan 'em. Certainly the man who half a dozen years after Chrysostom's death spoke of him as Judas Iscariot had no right to expect to be politely treated after his own death by one whom he had relentlessly persecuted.

[5] 5 St. Isidore of Pelusium found himself constrained to write to Cyril in terms of strong remonstrance (see Epp. t., 310, 323, 324, 370). He says that if he were, as Cyril called him, his father, he feared the penalty incurred by Eli for not rebuking his children. If he were, as he himself deemed, Cyril's son, he feared the example of Jonathan, who shared his father's fate because he had not prevented his consultation of the Witch of Endor. He begged him therefore not in avenging a private quarrel, to bring in perpetual dissension into the Church. Affection, no doubt, does not see clearly, but hatred cannot see at all. Cyril was much blamed by many at Ephesus for pursuing his private enmity as he did. They said, He is the nephew of Theophilus, and exhibits the same character, persecuting Nestorius as he did Chrysostom, though no doubt there was a good deal of difference .between the two men.

bishops, because the bishop of Antioch and the bishops of the East were known to be within three days' march of Ephesus. But because these bishops were known to be likely to vote the wrong way, they were not waited for. The Council did its work in one summer's day; deposed Nestorius in his absence, and acquainted him with the fact in a letter addressed to Nestorius, 'the new Judas.' In a few days the bishop of Antioch arrived, and then the other party held what they professed to be the real Council, and deposed Cyril.

There has been a question by what kind of majority must the acts of a Council be carried in order to entitle them to bind the Church: a simple majority? or two-thirds? or more? and ought we to count heads or to take the votes by nations or in some other way? Obviously, if we count heads, the provinces close to the place at which the Council is held are likely to have a disproportionately large share of the representation. At the Council of Ephesus great complaints were made by the Nestorian party that Cyril had taken an unfair advantage over them; that the Emperor had directed only a certain number of bishops to be brought from each province, and that he had brought a great many more from Egypt than he had a right to bring. Ephesus, too, which was on Cyril's side, was, as was natural, largely over-represented. In modern times these difficulties have been avoided by requiring that the decrees of Councils shall be practically unanimous. Pius IV. boasted of the unity obtained at Trent as plainly 'the Lord's doing and marvellous in our eyes.' The unity, to be sure, was brought about by having the questions submitted to a preliminary discussion in committees or congregations; those who there found themselves in a minority keeping their opposition silent when the question was submitted formally to the Council itself. And so was it done at the Vatican Council the other day. Unanimity was thought so essential to the validity of a Council's acts that the anti-infallibilist bishops had not courage for such a breach of discipline or decorum as to say 'non placet' when the matter came formally to a vote, and with one or two exceptions all ran away from Rome before the day of the final vote.

Very different was the state of things at Ephesus. To quote Dr. Newman, 'At Ephesus the question in dispute was settled and defined before certain constituent portions of the episcopal body had made their appearance, and this with a protest of sixty-eight of the bishops then present, against eighty-two. When the remaining forty-three arrived, these did more than protest against the definition that had been carried. They actually anathematized the Fathers who had carried it, whose number seems to have stood altogether at one hundred and twenty-four against one hundred and eleven, and in this state of disunion the Council ended. How then was its

definition valid? By after events, which I suppose must be considered complements and integral portions of the Council.'[6]

If this be so, the infallibility clearly rested not with the Council, but with the after events, which reviewed and chose between its contradictory utterances. But what were the after events thus vaguely described? Bribery and intimidation at the imperial Court. The scene was soon transferred from Ephesus to Constantinople; and if the deposition of Nestorius had more effect in the end than the deposition of Cyril by the rival section of the Council, the result was due not to the venerable authority of the Council, but to the effect produced by the turbulent monks of Constantinople on the nerves of the emperor, who was one of the weakest of men, and to *ευλογίάι*, or, in plain English, bribes judiciously administered to his favourites. At an early stage of the controversy Nestorius complained that Cyril was shooting against him with golden arrows; and when the final decision was arrived at, the clergy of Alexandria mourned at the impoverishment of their Church, which, in addition to sending large sums to Constantinople, had gone in debt 1500 pounds of gold besides.[7]

If it was not a Council which settled the Nestorian controversy, still less was the Eutychian so settled. The Gallicans were quite right in saying that the decisions of a Council only prevail in case they are accepted by the Church. The Eutychian question was, as you know, in the first instance decided the wrong way by a Council, the second of Ephesus. It is worthy of remark that at both the Councils of Ephesus the bishop of Alexandria, as the greatest bishop present, presided, the Roman legates having the second place. Romanist writers reconcile this with modern theories as to Roman supremacy by the gratuitous assertion that Cyril presided at the first Coun-

[6] Letter to Duke of Norfolk, p. 100.

[7] There has been preserved a letter from the archdeacon of Alexandria to the bishop appointed to succeed Nestorius at Constantinople, complaining of the large sums that had been already sent from Alexandria, and entreating the bishops influence to obtain some adequate result from this expenditure: 'Scriptum est a Domino meo vestro fratre et Dominae ancillae Dei reverentissimae Pulcheriae et praeposito Paulo et Romano cubiculario et Dominae Marcellae cubiculariae et Dominae Droseriae. *Et direetae suet benedictiones dignae eas.* Et ei qui contra ecclesiam est Chrysoreti praeposito magnificentissimus Aristolaus paratus est scribere de nonnullis quae angelus tuns debeat impetrare. *Et ipsi Vero dignae translatae sunt eulogiae* Scripsit autem Dominus meus sanctissimus frater vester et Domino scholastico et magnificentissimo Arthebae ut ipsi conveniant et persuadeant Chrysoreti tandem desistere ab oppugnatione ecclesiae. *Et ipsis Vero benedictiones dignae directae runt . . S*ubjeetus autem brevis ostendit quibus hinc directae sint eulogiae ut et ipse noveris quantum pro tua sanctitae laboret Alexandrina ecclesia quae tanta praestet his qui illic sunt. Clerici enim qui hic sunt contristantur quod ecclesia Alexandrina nudata sit hujus causa turbelae, et debet praeter illa quae hinc transmissa sunt Ammonio Comiti auri libras mille quingentas. Et nunc ei denuo scriptum est ut praestet. Sed de tua ecclesia praesta avaritiae quorum nosti ne Alexandrinam eoclesiam contristent' *(Synodicon 203,* ap. Mansi, *Concilia. v. 988).*

cil as the representative of the bishop of Rome;[8] but this evasion is not open to them in the case of the second Council, the bishops of Rome and Alexandria being on opposite sides; and it is plain that the theory had not yet been heard of in the East which would ascribe the headship of all Councils to the bishop of Rome, present or absent.

I have already remarked to you on the difference between the theological schools of Alexandria and of Antioch, the tendencies of the one being in the direction of mysticism, those of the other in that of rationalism; the one accentuating more strongly our Lord's Divinity, the other His humanity. The confusion that reigned in the Eastern Church for the next two centuries arose from the fact that Alexandria, which triumphed at the third General Council, was defeated at the fourth. Reasons of policy had always inclined Rome to support Alexandria against Constantinople; but at this time it chanced through a rare contingency, that the see of Rome was held by a theologian capable of forming an opinion of his own on a doctrinal question. Pope Leo's decision turned the scale against Alexandria; and the result was that many of the same men who had been on the winning and orthodox side at the first of these two Councils unexpectedly found themselves on the heretical side at the other; and it was this reverse of fortune more than anything else which prevented Chalcedon from giving peace to the Eastern Church, there being always hope that a similar change of parts might take place again. You can guess what confusion there would be in the Roman Church were the Vatican Council now reassembled, and if the bishops who had spoken against infallibility, and only yielded at the last moment on the former occasion, now played the leading part, and if Cardinal Manning, and the other leading men who had triumphed before, were now cast out as heretics.

However, the Alexandrians came to the second Council of Ephesus prepared to carry all before them—and so, in fact, they did. It is notorious with what good reason this Council was called the 'Synod of robbers'; but the method of deciding theological questions by physical force, though highly developed on that occasion, did not originate then nor did it come to an end then. In theological violence Alexandria had a bad pre-eminence. What a potentate the bishop there was may be judged from a scene that took place later at Chalcedon. The proceedings there had been very unfavourable to Egypt, the bishop of Alexandria had been deposed; and no doubt it was painful to Egyptian bishops to subscribe the formula adopted by the Council; but the ground alleged for their refusal, and which the Council at length accepted as valid, was, that it would be as much as their lives were worth when they got home if they took any step unsanctioned by

[8] The bishop of Rome duly sent legates, but Cyril was in too great a hurry to wait for

the bishop of Alexandria. They threw themselves on the ground, imploring the pity of the members of the Council 'Have mercy on us; pity our grey hairs; take our sees if you will, but spare our lives; don't send us home to certain death; if we must die let us die here.' The bishop of Alexandria had a sturdy militia zealous to execute his orders. I have told of the descent of monks from the Nitrian monasteries to avenge his slighted authority; but he had defenders closer at hand in the *Parabolani*, a charitable corporation whose duties were concerned with attendance on the sick, and with the burial of the dead, and who were appointed by the bishop and were eager to execute his orders. Possibly the nature of their duties made them heedless of life; but they appear to have been a most violent and turbulent set of men. To their charge has been laid the murder of Hypatia; at all events, we read immediately after that event of complaints made to the emperor, in consequence of which the appointment and control of these men was transferred from the bishop to the civil authorities, though things soon reverted to the old arrangement.

At both Councils of Ephesus the ships that brought the prelates from Alexandria brought also a strong detachment of the Bishop's bodyguard. At the first Council the sailors of the Egyptian ships were reinforced by a body of stout peasants, whom Cyril's ally, Memnon of Ephesus, brought up from his farms; and bishops of Nestorian leanings had to complain of the intimidation to which they were subjected, not only out of doors but in their houses. At the second Council, besides the parabolani, there came from the borders of Syria and Persia a horde of savage monks, well exercised in putting down Nestorianism by physical force, whose irruption brought the proceedings of the council to an end in a scene of awful confusion. Even when only the members of the Council were present, the bishops cannot be said to have voted with perfect freedom, when the assertion of two natures in Christ was received with cries of, 'away with him; burn him alive; cut him in two; as he has divided so let him be divided.' In such a temper of the meeting the acquittal of Eutyches was obtained with tolerable unanimity; and if the president, Dioscorus, had been content to stop there, this synod might have passed as not more disorderly than some others. But when he proceeded to move the deposition of the bishop of Constantinople cries of remonstrance were heard. The chief Roman legate expressed dissent in Latin; and his *κοντραδικιτουρ* has been duly recorded in the proceedings of the Council. Some leading bishops threw themselves at the feet of the throne of Dioscorus, and embracing his knees implored him to be merciful. Then he cried out that violence was being used towards him, and called for the assistance of the civil power. The doors of the Church were opened; soldiers,

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them, and Nestorius was deposed before their arrival.

monks, parabolani, rushed in, and a scene of wild confusion ensued. The bishop of Constantinople was knocked down and trampled on; and the only doubtful point is whether it was not Dioscorus himself who struck the first blow, and who kicked him after he was down. The evidence to that effect might perhaps be enough to produce conviction, if it were not outweighed by the fact that afterwards, at Chalcedon, when no misdeeds of Dioscorus were likely to be passed over in silence, this one was not mentioned. But certain it is that the bishop of Constantinople, within three days, died of the ill-usage he had received. Meanwhile the other bishops of the minority who tried to escape found the doors of the Church again locked. Some tried to hide under the benches; one fled into the sacristy. They were pulled out and told that they must not go till they had subscribed the decision of the Council. But there had not been time to write the proceedings out; and if they were once allowed to go away, it was not likely that their signatures could be had. So before they were let go they were made to subscribe their names to blank sheets, to be filled up afterwards may be judged from a scene that took place later at Chalcedon. The proceedings there had been very unfavourable to Egypt, the bishop of Alexandria had been deposed; and no doubt it was painful to Egyptian bishops to subscribe the formula adopted by the Council; but the ground alleged for their refusal, and which the Council at length accepted as valid, was, that it would be as much as their lives were worth when they got home if they took any step unsanctioned by the bishop of Alexandria. They threw themselves on the ground, imploring the pity of the members of the Council 'Have mercy on us; pity our grey hairs; take our sees if you will, but spare our lives; don't send us home to certain death; if we must die let us die here.' The bishop of Alexandria had a sturdy militia zealous to execute his orders. I have told of the descent of monks from the Nitrian monasteries to avenge his slighted authority; but he had defenders closer at hand in the *Parabolani,* a charitable corporation whose duties were concerned with attendance on the sick, and with the burial of the dead, and who were appointed by the bishop and were eager to execute his orders. Possibly the nature of their duties made them heedless of life; but they appear to have been a most violent and turbulent set of men. To their charge has been laid the murder of Hypatia; at all events, we read immediately after that event of complaints made to the emperor, in consequence of which the appointment and control of these men was transferred from the bishop to the civil authorities, though things soon reverted to the old arrangement.

At both Councils of Ephesus the ships that brought the prelates from Alexandria brought also a strong detachment of the Bishop's bodyguard. At the first Council the sailors of the Egyptian ships were reinforced by a body of stout peasants, whom Cyril's ally, Memnon of Ephesus, brought up from

his farms; and bishops of Nestorian leanings had to complain of the intimidation to which they were subjected, not only out of doors but in their houses. At the second Council, besides the parabolani, there came from the borders of Syria and Persia a horde of savage monks, well exercised in putting down Nestorianism by physical force, whose irruption brought the proceedings of the council to an end in a scene of awful confusion. Even when only the members of the Council were present, the bishops cannot be said to have voted with perfect freedom, when the assertion of two natures in Christ was received with cries of, 'away with him; burn him alive; cut him in two; as he has divided so let him be divided.' In such a temper of the meeting the acquittal of Eutyches was obtained with tolerable unanimity; and if the president, Dioscorus, had been content to stop there, this synod might have passed as not more disorderly than some others. But when he proceeded to move the deposition of the bishop of Constantinople cries of remonstrance were heard. The chief Roman legate expressed dissent in Latin; and his *κουτραδικιτουρ* has been duly recorded in the proceedings of the Council Some leading bishops threw themselves at the feet of the throne of Dioscorus, and embracing his knees implored him to be merciful. Then he cried out that violence was being used towards him, and called for the assistance of the civil power. The doors of the Church were opened; soldiers, monks, parabolani, rushed in, and a scene of wild confusion ensued. The bishop of Constantinople was knocked down and trampled on; and the only doubtful point is whether it was not Dioscorus himself who struck the first blow, and who kicked him after he was down. The evidence to that effect might perhaps be enough to produce conviction, if it were not outweighed by the fact that afterwards, at Chalcedon, when no misdeeds of Dioscorus were likely to be passed over in silence, this one was not mentioned. But certain it is that the bishop of Constantinople, within three days, died of the ill-usage he had received. Meanwhile the other bishops of the minority who tried to escape found the doors of the Church again locked. Some tried to hide under the benches; one fled into the sacristy. They were pulled out and told that they must not go till they had subscribed the decision of the Council. But there had not been time to write the proceedings out; and if they were once allowed to go away, it was not likely that their signatures could be had. So before they were let go they were made to subscribe their names to blank sheets, to be filled up afterwards.

An amusing scene took place when these bishops afterwards, at Chalcedon, pleaded that their signatures had been obtained by constraint. Constraint! cried the Eutychians. What a plea for bishops to put forward! Is the spirit of the martyrs so utterly extinct among you? Or are we to suppose that the martyrs might have done what their persecutors demanded, and afterwards pleaded that they had acted under constraint? Nay, was the reply:

if we had fallen into the hands of heathen we should have borne anything they could inflict rather than yield. But the case was different when we were ordered by a bishop. A bishop is a father; and a son must obey a father, even though he himself disapprove of the command.

That this meeting, which Leo of Rome justly stigmatized as 'Latrocinium,' is not venerated in the East as one of the great Councils of the Church, is mainly due to the death of the emperor and a change of politics at the Court of Constantinople; and the violence and unfairness rather exceeded in degree than differed in kind from what was exhibited in other Councils more fortunate in their repute. As I have mentioned the acclamations of the bishops at this Council, I ought to tell you that there is a difference between the interruptions permitted by the parliamentary decorum of our time and what was considered permissible in the early Roman Empire. In our time, interruptions at a public meeting are usually inarticulate, clapping of hands, stamping of feet, and so forth. Parliamentary order does not permit a speaker, not in possession of the chair, to go beyond a cry of 'oh, oh,' 'hear, hear,' 'order, order,' or 'question'; but in the Roman Senate it was common for the interrupter to shout out a short sentence, which was duly taken down by the reporters, and regularly entered on the Acts of the Senate. Sometimes a cry raised in this manner was taken up by the whole assembly, which repeated it perhaps several times, and, I believe, in a kind of chant; and then the reporters took carefully down how many times the cry was repeated. If time permitted, I could give you many curious illustrations of this practice,[9] which certainly did not tend to the orderliness of proceedings; but the acclamations of the assembly came to be looked on as an essential way of expressing the assent of the whole meeting to what was done. In conformity with this practice, the proceedings of all the early Councils whose doings are recorded in detail end with acclamations; and the practice was kept up to the latest of them: the Council of Trent, for instance, ends with acclamations, led by the presiding Cardinal, and responded to by the Fathers, in the way of versicle and response, in such manner as could not have worked if the Fathers had not been drilled beforehand or given in print or writing what they were to acclaim. But such acclamations, however harmless at the end of the proceedings, must have been very disturbing in the

[9] The Augustan History is full of examples extracted from the official Acts of the Senate: see, for instance, the acclamations at the death of Commodus, and those on the election of Alexander Severus, which fill whole chapters in the lives by Aelius Lampridius. When Tacitus pleaded his age as unfitting him for the Empire, the Senate acclaimed:—Et Trajanus senex ad imperium venit' (dixerunt decies). After acclaiming several similar sentences each ten times, then:—Imperatorem to non militem facimus' (dixerunt vicies); 'Severus dixit caput imperare non pedes' (dixerunt tricies), &c. At the election of Claudius II. some of the acclamations were repeated sixty times. Another interesting specimen is to be found in the official acts of the election of Eraclius as St. Augustine's successor, one of the acclamations being repeated twenty-five times, another twenty-eight times.

middle, since it could not be agreeable to a speaker to be interrupted by shouts of ‘anathema to the heretic,’ ‘burn him alive,’ ‘cut him in two.’ At Chalcedon, where the proceedings were comparatively orderly, there were occasional scenes of great uproar. Thus, when the Church historian, Theodoret, whose sympathies had been with Nestorius, took his place, the Acts of the Council record that: ‘The most reverend the bishops of the East shouted out: “He is worthy.” The most reverend the bishops of Egypt shouted out: “Don’t call him bishop; he is no bishop; turn out the fighter against God; turn out the Jew.” The most reverend the bishops of the East shouted out: “The orthodox for the Synod; turn out the rebels; turn out the murderers.” The most reverend the bishops of Egypt: “Turn out the enemy of God; turn out the defamer of Christ.” ‘It became necessary for the Imperial Commissioners to suppress the clamour.

Succeeding Councils have been less noisy and violent; but this has been because, as a general rule, the parties whom it was intended to condemn have not been allowed to be present, and the Council has only represented one side. I think the Council of Trent will bear advantageous comparison with some of the early Councils. Yet what scenes might we expect to have taken place there if the Protestants had been allowed to be present. We may guess from one little incident related by the Papal historian of the Council, Cardinal Pallavicino. As the Council was breaking up from a debate in committee on the exciting subject of justification, one bishop took so much offence at something said by another that, as the cardinal tells us, after the manner of men inflamed with anger, he burst into an act of passion more injurious to himself than the original offence: for having laid hands on the beard of his opponent, he pulled out many hairs, and forthwith left the assembly.[10] Great uproar ensued; but though the Council thought that the offending bishop had received much provocation, they very properly expelled him.

In short, if you take up the Acts of the Councils predisposed to reverence their decisions as conclusions which holy men arrived at after calm and prayerful deliberation, you find, on the contrary, records of turbulent meetings, in which men who exhibited no particle of the spirit of Christianity used every effort to gain a victory over their opponents, and get them turned out of the Church. In such a case, if we accept the conclusions arrived at as correct, it is by no means on the authority of the bodies which affirmed them.

[10] L’altro allora, secondo il costume degli appassionati nella collera, precipito in una vendetta assai piu nociva al vendicatore the 1’ingiuria vendicata. Imperocche scagliate le mani alla barba del Chironese ne strappo molti peli, ed immantenente partissi.’—Storia *del Concilio di Trento, viii, 6.*

How little, even at the time, was the real influence of a Council is proved by the poor success of the Council of Chalcedon in putting an end to the controversy on account of which it was summoned. No Council had higher external claims on the reverence of Christians. In the number of bishops present (over 600), it exceeded any previous Council. It had all the sanction that could be given it by the bishop of Rome, Leo the Great, whose dogmatic letter it enthusiastically adopted. It was backed by all the efforts of the Emperor Marcian, whose zeal was active in extirpating the heresy which it condemned; yet, after the Council, the Monophysite heresy spread with a new growth; and in respect of the number and zeal of its adherents, I think, surpassed the opposite party. It had frequently its leaders enthroned in all the Patriarchal sees—Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem. In fact, Egypt never acquiesced in the defeat it sustained at the fourth Council. The creed of Chalcedon was but an exotic in that country. Its adherents were but the 'Court party,' the Melchites. The bishop substituted for the deposed Dioscorus was able, in some sort, to maintain his authority as long as the emperor lived; but when news came of the emperor's death, forthwith they murdered him. The empire incurred so much danger by fighting against Monophysitism, that formulas of reconciliation were drawn up, in which the Council of Chalcedon was thrown completely overboard; and it was attempted to state the doctrine of our Lord's nature in a manner in which all might agree. But no compromise was accepted. The fighting went on until the Mahometans came down, and swept both parties away; and the Monophysites exist, though with diminished numbers, down to our own day. As I have asked before, By what better criterion can we test whether a judge is recognized as having authority to decide a controversy than by observing how he is listened to when he speaks? If we find that no one assents to his decisions except those who had been of the same opinion before he spoke, we may conclude that he was not owned as having authority to speak; and if the Council of Chalcedon was not entitled to impose its decisions without examination on the Christian world, I do not see how such a claim can be made for any other Council.

I have already referred to discredit thrown on Councils by the badness of the arguments by which their conclusions were arrived at. For instance, at the third General Council, Cyril who, in his opposition to Nestorius, approached perilously near Apollinarianism, produced 'among the formal testimonies to guide the bishops in their decisions, an extract from a writing of Timotheus the Apollinarian, if not of Apollinaris himself, ascribing this heretical document to Pope Julius, the friend of Athanasius.'[11] But a more plentiful crop of illustrations may be drawn from the proceedings of the

[11] Newman, *Theodoret, p. 351.*

seventh General Council, the second of Nicaea. The Fathers attempted to prove the propriety of image worship from Scripture; but, as if conscious that they would have no easy task, they propounded the then novel doctrine of the insufficiency of Scripture, and anathematized those who say that they will not receive any doctrine on the bare authority of Fathers and Councils, unless it be plainly taught in the Old and New Testament. Their Scripture proofs were not what would be very convincing to us. For instance, the antiquity of looking at images is proved from the Psalms, since David says, 'Show me thy face': and 'Like as we have heard, so have we seen'; and again, from Canticles, 'Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.' Should we have any hesitation in setting up our infallible judgment against that of those infallible interpreters, and in pronouncing such proofs to be texts wrested from their contexts, we need have less scruples about their proofs from antiquity, several of which are from spurious documents which no learned Roman Catholic would now venture to defend. I will read you from Robertson's *Church History (ii. 156)* one famous story, which was such a favourite that it was twice used in the proceedings of the Council: 'An aged monk on the Mount of Olives, it was said, was greatly tempted by a spirit of uncleanness. One day the demon appeared to him, and after having sworn him to secrecy offered to discontinue his assaults if the monk would give up worshipping a picture of the Blessed Virgin and infant Saviour which hung up in his cell. The monk asked time to consider the proposal, and notwithstanding his oath applied for advice to an aged abbot of renowned sanctity, who blamed him for having been so deluded as to swear to the devil; but told him that he had yet done well in laying open the matter, and that it would be better for him to visit every brothel in Jerusalem than to refrain from adoring the Saviour and His Mother in the picture. From this edifying tale a twofold moral was drawn with general consent: that reverence for images would not only warrant unchastity but breach of oaths, and that those who had sworn to the Iconoclast heresy were free from their obligations.'

The highest point, perhaps, that Councils attained was at the time of the Council of Constance. For two or three centuries the power of the Popes had been gradually growing, until first, by their removal to Avignon and their subjugation to French influence, then by the schism in the Popedom, their authority was greatly weakened. The schism made it necessary that there should be some superior authority to determine who really was Pope: or rather that was not enough, for though Christendom was generally agreed in desiring that the three rival Popes should be replaced by a single Pope, the adherents of each were indisposed to admit that they had been all along in the wrong. What was needed was an authority which, if the Popes

should not voluntarily resign, would be able to compel them. In order that all might acquiesce in its decisions it was necessary that it should have power to depose even a real Pope; for there were some who acknowledged each of the three as the real Pope. This power then the Council of Constance claimed in its celebrated decree, passed without a dissentient voice, 'that every lawfully convoked Ecumenical Council derives its authority immediately from Christ, and that everyone, *the Pope included,* is subject to it in matters of faith, in healing of schism, and the reformation of the Church.' I do not say that this decision placed Councils in a higher position than they were at the time of the Council of Nicaea—for I do not imagine that the Roman prelate would have dreamed then of setting himself above the Council—but it placed them higher than they had been in the time immediately before, or than they were afterwards. For when the Council of Basle attempted to exercise, in the face of a universally acknowledged Pope, the prerogatives which the Council of Constance had claimed in the time of the schism, the result was failure; and the appearance of the Greek representatives at the Pope's Council of Florence gave the finishing blow to the pretensions of the rival Council of Basle.

The history of this rival Council of Florence, had I time to dwell on it, would yield a plentiful crop of reasons for distrusting its infallibility. I do not think Mr. Ffoulkes uses words too strong when he says: 'Of all Councils that ever were held, I suppose there never was one in which hypocrisy, duplicity, and worldly motives, played a more conspicuous part. How the Council of Basle was outwitted, and Florence named as the place to which the Greeks should come; how the galleys of the Pope outstripped the galleys of the Council, and bore the Greeks in triumph from Constantinople to a town in the centre of Italy, where the Pope was all-powerful; how they were treated there, and why they were subsequently removed to Florence, would reveal a series of intrigues of the lowest order.' That the Greeks were present there at all was owing to the urgent necessity of obtaining Western aid for the Greek Empire, then on the verge of ruin, against the Turks, by whom, less than sixty years afterwards, Constantinople was taken. The Greek bishops were only induced to undertake so long a journey on the terms that their expenses were paid by the Pope. But they found that the fulfilment of this bargain depended on their submissiveness. Their allowance for subsistence was three months, four months in arrear, and, when they agreed to unite with the Latins, five months and a half. 'Though we made frequent demands on account of our need,' says one of them, 'it was not given until we came into the proposed conditions. When we had come round, we received the second monthly allowance.' Their spirits were broken by delays that seemed to them interminable, and they could not get away; for even if they had had money for the journey, passports were de-

nied them. What wonder that, when they got safe home, all the concessions they had made were repudiated. And as to the goodness of the arguments by which the decrees of the Council were supported, it is enough to say that a great source of these arguments was the spurious decretals of which I mean to speak in another Lecture.

But, really, investigation into the history of bygone Councils is needless to one who can remember, as I can, the Council of 1870. In everything I have thus far said to discredit the authority of Councils, I am, as my quotations from Cardinal Newman will have told you, in full agreement with modern Roman Catholics, who think that, when they have shown that infallibility does not reside in Councils, they have gone very near to prove that it does rest with the Pope. Now, if a tradesman has taken pains to produce a belief that his rival in business is little better than a bankrupt, it would be thought strange if he tried to get his bills cashed on the strength of having this rival's endorsement; yet this was exactly what Pius IX. tried to do when he attempted to have his claim to infallibility endorsed by the Vatican Council. In the next Lectures we shall examine what the Pope's bill is worth; at present, it is easy to show that the endorsement is worth absolutely nothing. The unfairness of the proceedings at the Vatican Council was such that the defeated party, in disgust, playing on the old name, 'Latrocinium Ephesinum,' called it 'Ludibrium Vaticanum.'

There was no fair representation of bishops. In the first place, the assembly included some three hundred titular bishops—bishops not presiding over any real sees, but holding mere titles of honour given them by the Pope, or else missionary bishops deriving their titles from places where there were few or no Christian congregations. In addition, the German bishops, who constituted the main strength of the minority, complained that they were swamped by the multitude of Italian and Sicilian bishops. The twelve millions of Roman Catholics in Germany proper were represented at the Council by fourteen bishops; the seven hundred thousand inhabitants of the Papal States by sixty-two; three bishops of the minority—Cologne, Paris, and Cambray—represented five million; and these might be outvoted by any four of the seventy Neapolitan and Sicilian bishops. The German theologians compared their learning with that of the bishops of these highly favoured localities, amongst whom a clean sweep would have been made if it had been a condition of admission to the Council that the bishop should be able to read the New Testament in its original language, or have Greek enough to be able to consult the writings of Greek Fathers or the acts of Greek Councils—a qualification without which, north of the Alps, one does not rank as a theologian. The German visitors, too, compared the activity of religious thought in the country from which they came with that in those regions which provided the predominant element at the Council. It was

said, and I believe with truth, that more religious books are printed in England, or Germany, or North America in one year than in Italy in half a century. And to the list of Italian publications the States of the Church contributed hardly anything. In Rome a lottery dream-book might be found in every house, but never a New Testament, and extremely seldom any religious book at all. So that it seemed as if it were a recognized principle, that the more ignorant a people, the greater must be the share of their hierarchy in the government of the Church. Then the minority complained that all regulations as to the transaction of business were in the hands of a committee appointed by the majority, and solely representing them, without the consent of which committee no subject could be discussed; and, indeed, it was complained at first that the bulk of the Council did not know what business was coming on. At the first meeting it was found that, owing to the bad acoustic properties of the hall in which they met, nothing could be heard; and a number of bishops, when asked to give their formal vote, 'Placet ' or 'Non placet,' answered 'Non placet quia nihil intelleximus.' An attempt was made to improve matters in this respect by partitioning off a portion of the room; but bad the state of things always remained. Indeed there must always have been a difficulty in following discussions carried on in Latin—a language which all the bishops did not pronounce in the same way, and which in any case is not so easily caught, if utterance is indistinct, as are the sounds of one's native language. But it would be too much to expect of human attention to follow the speeches which were delivered, these being small treatises without any limitation of length, read by their authors without the liveliness of spoken speech, perhaps with indistinct utterance, and in a language which the hearers were not familiar. An easy remedy for this state of things would have been if the speeches had been printed and circulated among the members of the Council, so that any could study at home what he had heard imperfectly. But here was the advantage of the Pope's holding the Council in his own city. There was no license of printing. A *précis* of the speaker's arguments was made for the use of an exclusively Infallibilist committee, which was to draw up the decrees of the Council. That *précis* the speaker was not allowed to correct, or even to see, so that if he were on the wrong side, it might be a mere caricature of his arguments which was submitted to the committee.

Perhaps there was the less fear of doing injustice to the arguments, that, as I already quoted from Cardinal Manning, the Holy Spirit's promised assistance is supposed to be given, not to the arguments, but to the final vote. And, certainly, the practical rule resulting from belief in this principle is, 'Never trouble yourself about the arguments, but do all in your power to secure a vote.' Now, there are many ways besides arguments by which votes can be secured. The use of bad arguments was, indeed, not neglected;

for a paper was circulated, said to have been drawn up by Manning, containing a decree of the Council of Florence, garbled in a way of which I mean to speak on another day. But there were more powerful influences at work than arguments, good or bad. About three hundred of the bishops were the Pope's pensioners, all their expenses being paid by him, and therefore could not be unbiased judges on a question concerning his prerogatives. The Pope himself had his good-humoured jokes on the numbers who had accepted his hospitality, and declared that, in trying to make him 'infallible,' they would make him 'fallire,' that is to say, make him bankrupt. There was no danger of that, however; for, in order to enable him to meet such expenses, a well-timed collection was made, nominally with the object of making him a present in celebration of the jubilee of his first Mass. Fifteen Cardinals' hats were vacant to reward the obedient; and no doubt, as always happens, more were influenced by the hope of Papal favours than actually obtained them. The Pope made no secret how much he had his heart set on obtaining a declaration of his infallibility. This alone would weigh very innocently with many bishops who would shrink from displeasing a venerated superior. Two or three bishops, who unexpectedly spoke on the wrong side, received from the Pope the severest of wiggings. ' Lovest thou me?' was his salutation to another waverer.

Now, what would you think of the merits of the British Parliament as a representative assembly if, in addition to inequalities of representation more gross than any in our unreformed Parliament, the Crown was free to make as many rotten boroughs as it pleased, and to name representatives for them; if it had three hundred members receiving daily pay at its discretion, besides a number of members candidates for promotion; and if the smiles or frowns of the monarch were freely applied to reward or punish? But, at the Council, it was not enough to gain a majority; the minority must be reduced to complete insignificance; and this was effected when, as time went on, the summer months arrived, and the heats at Rome became unbearable—at least to a northern constitution. At first the tactics of the minority had appeared to be to lengthen out the proceedings. They made long speeches, some of them speaking out so plainly that two or three times the greatest uproar was excited; and it really appeared as if there was danger that the scene at Trent would be re-enacted, when one bishop pulled out another bishop's beard. It became necessary for the majority to introduce what the French call the *clôture*:[12] that is to say, the rule was made that, at the request of ten bishops, it should be put to the vote whether the discussion should go on any longer. And so in the first stage of the Infallibility discussion, a premature stop was put to the speech-making; and, amongst

[12] The word has become more familiar now than it was when this Lecture was written.

others, an able speech against Infallibility by the American bishop Kenrick was shelved. It has been since printed as a ‘concio habenda at non habita.’ But when they got into the summer months, the acclimatized Italian and Sicilian bishops could bear delay with comparative impunity; but the opponents of the dogma, who were natives of a colder climate, were one by one sickening with fever. They begged and implored that the Council might be adjourned; but the Pope and his party understood their advantage too well, and the request was sternly refused. It became evident that if the minority indulged in much speech-making, the operation of reducing their numbers would be effected in a very simple way; and so a vote was arrived at.

But now appeared the mischief of the claim to infallibility. In our Parliament a law may be passed in the teeth of opposition, and the minority must submit and obey the law; but their thoughts and words are free: they can avow still that what has been done is opposed to their judgment. But at a Council, when a vote is arrived at, the minority are required to blot from their mind all the tricks and manoeuvres, all the unworthy means by which they know their resistance has been overpowered, and to accept the vote of a majority, no matter how obtained, as the voice of the Spirit of God. The moment the decision is pronounced, they are bound not only to yield a decorous obedience, but from the bottom of their hearts to believe that to be true which the moment before they had been protesting was false, and to publish this belief to the world. No wonder the bishops of the minority shrank from the humiliation of saying ‘non placet’ one moment, and ‘ex animo credo’ the next. So, with two exceptions, they all ran away, leaving behind them a protest which was not regarded.

It is plain how the chance of arriving at truth is prejudiced by the claim to infallibility. If no such claim were made, the majority would be forced to weigh the arguments of the minority, to count the risk of driving them into schism, to take care not to seem before the world to have the worst of the argument. But when infallibility is supposed to rest with the ultimate vote, the majority have no need to care about the arguments advanced. Secure a vote, no matter how, and all is gained. Thus, while there is no better way of arriving at truth than taking counsel with others, a Council which claims infallibility is a place where the wise and cautious are delivered over, bound hand and foot, to the will of a tyrant majority.