

THE
INFALLIBILITY OF THE CHURCH

A COURSE OF LECTURES

DELIVERED IN THE
Divinity School of the University of Dublin

BY
GEORGE SALMON, D. D.

PROVOST OF TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN SOMETIME REGIUS PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN

Author of
A Historical Introduction to the Study of the Books of the New Testament

SECOND EDITION

LONDON

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET .

1890

XVIII.

THE PREROGATIVES OF PETER.

IT remains now to speak of that theory of Infallibility which makes the Pope personally its organ. It is the theory now in the ascendant; and, since the Vatican Council, may be regarded as the theory recognized exclusively by the Roman Church; and it is the only theory which satisfies the demands of the *a priori* arguments showing the necessity of an infallible guide. What these arguments try to show to be needful is a guide able infallibly to resolve every controversy as it arises; and this need can only be satisfied by a living speaking voice, not by the dead records of past Councils. The truth is, that the much desired object of uniformity of opinion in the Church, can only be obtained, either on the terms of resolute abstinence from investigation, or else upon the terms of having an inspired teacher at hand competent to make new revelations on every desired occasion. If we adhere to the old theory, that Christ made one revelation, which it was His Church's business to preserve and teach; let that revelation have been as copious as you please, still if it is limited at all, it is of necessity that questions must arise which that revelation will not have determined; on which private judgment is therefore free, and on which, therefore, there will be difference of opinion. If such diversity of opinion is thought an evil, there must be a new revelation to supplement or explain the old one. And this necessity must go on as long as men continue to exercise their thoughts on religious subjects. The difficulty and inconvenience of assembling Councils is so great that the number of General Councils during the whole duration of Christendom has been comparatively few, and the likelihood that many more will be assembled is but small. The Roman theory then leads you necessarily to expect a kind of incarnation of deity upon earth; one which with infallible voice will decide and silence every dispute. And if this is not to be found in the person of the Pope it is to be found nowhere else.

The marvel however is, that if the Church had from the first possessed this wonderful gift it should have taken eighteen centuries to find it out. It is historically certain that in the year 1870, when it was proposed at the Vatican Council to proclaim the fact, the doctrine was opposed by a number of the leading bishops; and that since the publication a number of most learned, and who up to that time had been most loyal, Roman Catholics, consented to suffer excommunication rather than agree to it. And the reason for their refusal, alleged, as we shall see, with perfect truth, is that this new doctrine is utterly opposed to the facts of history. Although, then, the theory is condemned from the first by its novelty, let us not refuse to examine the grounds on which it is defended.

But I must warn you at the outset that, although it was only the question of Infallibility that I proposed in these Lectures to discuss, I am now forced to spend time on what is really a different question, that of the Pope's alleged supremacy. I am obliged to do so, because I must follow the line of argument adopted by the Roman advocates. Their method is to try to show that Christ made the constitution of His Church monarchical, that He appointed St. Peter to be its first ruler and governor, and that He appointed, moreover, that the bishop of Rome, for the time being, should perpetually be Peter's successor in that office. Suppose they succeed in proving all this: suppose it established that the Pope is, by divine right, sovereign ruler of the Church, it still remains possible that in the course of his rule he may make mistakes, as earthly monarchs who reign by the most legitimate titles are liable to do. And in point of fact it is fully admitted that, in his capacity of ruler and governor, the Pope may make mistakes, and often has made very great ones. To name no other, one has already come before us in the course of these Lectures. Whether or not it be true that the Popes, in their capacity of teachers, have committed themselves to the declaration that it is heresy to maintain that the earth goes round the sun, it is certain that, in their capacity of rulers, they endeavoured for a long series of years to put down the teaching of that doctrine; and all will own that this attempted suppression was unwise and impolitic, and has brought great discredit on their Church. Clearly, therefore, if the Roman advocates even succeed in establishing the Pope's supremacy, the task still lies before them of proving that the Pope, in his capacity of teacher, is infallible. We sometimes read of Alpine explorers who, in attempting to reach a virgin peak, have found themselves, after infinite labour, on a summit separated by impassable ravines from that which it was their desire to attain. And so in this case, between the doctrines of the Pope's supremacy and of his Infallibility there lies a gulf which it is, in my opinion, impossible to bridge over. To begin with: suppose it proved that St. Peter was universal ruler of the Churches, he certainly was not universal teacher; for the other Apostles who were inspired as well as he had no need to learn from him; and their hearers were as much bound to receive their independent teaching as were St. Peter's own hearers. But I postpone the consideration of difficulties of this kind. At present let us examine what success our opponents have in establishing the doctrine of the Pope's supremacy. If they succeed, it will be time enough then to discuss the question of the Pope's Infallibility; for if they fail, it is all over with the latter doctrine.

And first we have to consider the Scripture argument, resting on a supposed transmission to the Pope of certain prerogatives of St. Peter. In order to make out the theory by this process four things ought to be proved—(1) that Christ gave to St. Peter a primacy over the other Apostles not merely in dignity and precedence, but in authority and jurisdiction, constituting him their guide and teacher and ruler; (2) that this prerogative was not merely personal but designed to be transmitted to successors; (3) that Peter was Bishop of Rome and

continued so to his death; and (4) that those who succeeded Peter in this local office were also the inheritors of his jurisdiction over the whole Church. On this last point alone there would be ample room for controversy. If there be any faith due to the legend that Peter was Bishop of Rome there is some due also to the story that he had been previously Bishop of Antioch, which see might therefore contest with Rome the inheritance of his prerogatives. Again, it was never imagined that the bishop of the town where an Apostle might chance to die thereby derived a claim to apostolic jurisdiction. But Roman Catholic controversialists make short work of the dispute on the last two heads. They argue that if they can prove that Christ ever provided His Church with an infallible guide, and intended him to have a successor, we need not doubt that the Pope is that successor, since there is no rival claimant of the office. It is the more needful, then, to scrutinize carefully the proofs of the first two heads, as these are made to do double duty: not only to prove the proposition on behalf of which they are alleged, but also to induce us to dispense with proof of the others.

The Scripture proof, in the main, consists of three texts; sometimes called the three texts, viz. (1) the promise of our Lord to Peter (recorded Matt. xvi.), that upon this rock He would build His Church; (2) His promise (recorded Luke xxii.), 'I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not, and when thou art converted strengthen thy brethren'; and (3) the commission 'Feed my sheep,' related in the last chapter of St. John. Before giving a particular examination to these texts I would remark on the general presumption against the Roman Catholic theory arising out of the whole tenor of the N. T. history, from which we should conclude that, highly as Peter was honoured, he was not placed in an office having jurisdiction over the other Apostles; for the Apostolate is ever spoken of as the highest office in the Christian Church; 'God hath set some in the Church, first Apostles, secondarily prophets' (1 Cor. xii. 28): not, as it ought to be if the Roman theory had been true, first Peter, then the Apostles. The history related in the Acts gives no trace of Peter's having exercised the prerogatives which are now attributed to him. To take a single example:—When Peter took the decisive step of eating with one uncircumcised, the Church of Jerusalem (Acts xi.) called him sharply to account for a proceeding so repugnant to Jewish traditions; and Peter did not justify himself by pleading his possession of sovereign authority to decide the Church's action in such a matter, but by relating a special revelation sanctioning what he had done. As for the Epistles, they certainly give no support to the theory of Peter's supremacy; and in the story of Paul's resistance to Peter at Antioch they throw in its way one formidable stumbling-block.

Still less is any hint given that Peter was to transmit his office to any successor. I need not say that we are not so much as told that Peter was ever at Rome. The New Testament contains two letters from Peter himself; one purporting to be written immediately before his death, and with the express object that those whom he was leaving behind should be able to keep in memory the

things that it was most important for them to know (2 Pet. i. 15). We may be sure that if Peter had any privileges to bequeath he would have done so in this his last will, and that if there was to be any visible head of the Church to whom all Christians were to look for their spiritual guidance, Peter would in these letters have commended him to the reverence of his converts, and directed them implicitly to obey him.

Let us turn now to the texts appealed to. That in St. Matthew is so familiar to you all that I need not read it: but I will give you, in the words of Dr. Murray, one of the ablest of the Maynooth Professors, what this text is supposed to mean. He says, 'Peter was thus established by our Lord as the means of imparting to the Church indefectibility and unity, and of permanently securing these properties to her. Peter was invested with supreme spiritual authority to legislate for the whole Church; to teach, to inspect, to judge, to proscribe erroneous doctrine, or whatever would tend to the destruction of the Church; to appoint to offices or remove therefrom, or limit or extend the jurisdiction thereof, as the safety or welfare of the Church would require: in one word, to exercise as supreme head and ruler and teacher and pastor all spiritual functions whatever that are necessary for the well-being or existence of the Church.'¹ It takes one's breath away to read a commentary which finds so much more in a text than lies on the surface of it. If our Lord meant all this, we may ask, why did He not say it? Who found out that He meant it? The Apostles did not find it out at the time; for up to the night before His death the dispute went on, which should be the greatest. When James and John petitioned that in His kingdom they might sit with Him, one on each hand, they do not seem to have suspected, and their Master then gave them no hint, that the chief place in His kingdom had already been given away. There is, as I have just pointed out, no other indication in the New Testament that the Apostolic Church so understood our Lord's words recorded by St. Matthew.

It remains that this interpretation must have been got from unwritten tradition. We eagerly turn to explore the records of that tradition. Here, surely, if anywhere, we shall find that unanimous consent of the Fathers of which the Council of Trent speaks. I have already said that I do not refuse to attribute a certain weight to tradition in the interpretation of Scripture. I have owned that an interpretation of any passage has a certain presumption against it if it is clearly new-fangled: if it derive from the text a doctrine which the Church of the earliest times never found there. The more important the doctrine, the greater the presumption that if true it would have been known from the first. But certainly here is a case where, if the Fathers were ever unanimous, they could not fail to be so if the Roman theory be true. This is no obscure text; no passing remark of an inspired writer; but the great charter text, which for all time fixed the constitution of the Christian Church. If, in these words, our Lord appointed a permanent ruler over His Church, the Church would from

¹ *Irish Annual Miscellany*, iii. 300

the first have resorted to that authority for guidance and for the composing of all disputes, and there never could have been any hesitation to recognize the meaning of the charter on which the authority was founded. Yet I suppose there is not a text in the whole New Testament on which the opinion of the Fathers is so divided; and you have to come down late indeed before anyone finds the bishop of Rome there.

The most elaborate examination of the opinions of the Fathers is in an Epistle¹ by the French Roman Catholic Launoy, in which, besides the interpretation that Peter was the rock, for which he produces seventeen Patristic testimonies, he gives the interpretations that the rock was the faith which Peter confessed, supported by forty-four quotations;² that the rock was Christ Himself, supported by sixteen; and that the Church was built on all the Apostles, supported by eight. But as Launoy was a Gallican, and as through the progress of development he would not be acknowledged as a good Roman Catholic by the party now in the ascendant, I prefer to quote the Jesuit Maldonatus, whose Romanism is of the most thorough-going kind, and who I may add, on questions where his doctrinal prepossessions do not affect his judgment, is an interpreter of Scripture whose acuteness makes him worth consulting. He begins his commentary on this passage by saying, ‘There are among ancient authors some who interpret “on this rock,” that is, “on this faith,” or “on this confession of faith in which thou hast called me the Son of the living God,” as Hilary,³ and Gregory Nyssen,⁴ and Chrysostom,⁵ and Cyril of Alexandrian.⁶ St. Augustine going still further away from the true sense, interprets “on this rock,” that is, “on myself Christ,” because Christ was the rock. But Origen “on this rock,” that is to say, on all men who have the same faith.’ And then Maldonatus goes on with truly Protestant liberty to discuss each of these interpretations, pronouncing them to be as far as possible from Christ’s meaning;—and to prove, not by the method of authority, but of reason, that these Fathers were wrong, and that his own interpretation is the right one.

I ought to tell you, however, that St. Augustine is not perfectly uniform in his interpretation. In one of his latest works, his *Retractations*, which does not mean retractations in our modern sense of the word, but a re-handling of things previously treated of, he mentions having sometimes adopted the language which St. Ambrose had used in a hymn, and which designates Peter as the rock of the Church, but most frequently he had interpreted the passage of Christ Himself, led by the texts “that rock was Christ,” and “other foundation

¹ *Epist. vii. Opp. vol. v., pt. 2. p. 99: Geneva, 1731.*

² This interpretation may claim the sanction of the Council of Trent, which (Sess. III.) describes the Creed as ‘principium illud in quo omnes qui fidem Christi profitentur necessario conveniunt, ac fundamentum firmum et unicum contra quod portae inferi nunquam praevallebunt.

³ *De Trin. lib. vi., 36, 37.*

⁴ *De advent. Dom., in Carne adv. Jndaeos.*

⁵ *Hom. in hunc locum, et Orat. ii., Cant. Judaeos.*

⁶ *Dial. 4, De Trin.*

can no man lay.” He leaves his readers at liberty to choose, but his mature judgment evidently inclines to the latter interpretation. He lays more stress than I am inclined to do on the distinction between Petra and Petrus, regarding the latter as derived from the former in the same manner as Christianus from Christus.¹ ‘Thou art Petrus,’ he says, ‘and on this Petra which thou hast confessed, saying, “thou art Christ the Son of the living God,” will I build my Church, that is to say, on myself. I will build thee on myself, not myself on thee. Men willing to build on man said, “I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Peter.” But others, who were unwilling to be built upon Peter, but would be built on the rock—not on Petrus but on Petra—said, I am of Christ.’ Such is Augustine’s commentary, which, using my Protestant liberty, I shall not scruple presently to reject. Other Fathers besides Augustine and Origen are not quite uniform in their interpretation: and this is not to be wondered at; because, as we shall presently see, there is a sense in which the Church is founded on Christ alone, a sense in which it was founded on Peter’s confession, a sense in which it was founded on Peter or on all the Apostles; so that no matter which interpretation gives the true sense of this particular passage, it is quite easy to harmonize the doctrines which different Fathers derive from it. But none of these can be reconciled with the interpretation which regards this text as containing the charter of the Church’s organization. A charter would be worthless if it were left uncertain to whom it was addressed or what powers it conferred. So that the mere fact that Fathers differed in opinion as to what was meant by ‘this rock,’ and that occasionally the same Father wavered in his opinion on this subject, proves that none of them regarded this text as one establishing a perpetual constitution for the Christian Church. My case is so strong that I could afford to sweep away all evidence of diversity of Patristic interpretation of this text. I could afford to put out of court every Father who interprets ‘this rock’ of Christ, or of all the Apostles, or of Peter’s confession, and to allow the controversy to be determined by the evidence of those Fathers only who understand ‘this rock’ of Peter himself, and by examining whether they understood this text as conferring a perpetual privilege on Peter *and a local successor*. But at present it is enough that the extract I read from St. Augustine shows plainly enough that at the beginning of the fifth century it had not been discovered that this text contained the charter of the Church’s organization, the revelation of the means of imparting to her indefectibility and unity. And if, as I said, it had ever been known in the Church that this was what

¹ This exposition of St. Augustine’s was derived, probably indirectly, from Origen, who though he speaks incidentally of ‘Peter on whom the Church is built (Ap. Euseb. H. F.. vi. 25), yet, when directly commenting on the passage in St. Matthew (tom. xii. § § 10, 11), teaches that every one who makes the same confession of faith as Peter may claim the blessing given to Peter as given to himself. ‘If you imagine that it was on Peter alone the Church is built what then would you say about John the son of Thunder, or any other of the Apostles?’ But he teaches that if we make Peter’s confession we all are ‘Peters.’ Just as because we are members of Christ we are called ‘Christian’; so Christ being the Petra—the rock—every one who drinks of ‘that spiritual rock which follows us’ is entitled to be called Petrus.

Christ intended by the words, the tradition could not have been lost; for the constant habit of resorting to this authority would have kept fresh the memory of our Lord's commands.

We may, then, safely conclude that our Lord did not, in that address to Peter, establish a perpetual constitution for His Church; but as to the historical question, whether He did not, in these words, confer some personal prerogative on Peter, I do not myself scruple to differ from the eminent Fathers whom I have cited as holding the contrary opinion. It seems to me that they have erred in considering the general doctrine of Scripture, rather than what is required by the context of this particular passage. It is undoubtedly the doctrine of Scripture that Christ is the only foundation 'other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. iii. ii). Yet we must remember that the same metaphor may be used to illustrate different truths, and so, according to circumstances, may have different significations. The same Paul who has called Christ the only foundation, tells his Ephesian converts (ii. 20):—'Ye are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.' And in like manner we read (Rev. xxi. 14):—'The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb.' How is it that there can be no other foundation but Christ, and yet that the Apostles are spoken of as foundations? Plainly because the metaphor is used with different applications. Christ alone is that foundation, from being joined to which the whole building of the Church derives its unity and stability, and gains strength to defy all the assaults of hell. But, in the same manner as any human institution is said to be founded by those men to whom it owes its origin, so we may call those men the foundation of the Church whom God honoured by using them as His instruments in the establishment of it; who were themselves laid as the first living stones in that holy temple, and on whom the other stones of that temple were laid; for it was on their testimony that others received the truth, so that our faith rests on theirs; and (humanly speaking) it is because they believed that we believe. So, again, in like manner, we are forbidden to call anyone on earth our Father, 'for one is our Father which is in heaven.' And yet, in another sense, Paul did not scruple to call himself the spiritual father of those whom he had begotten in the Gospel. You see, then, that the fact that Christ is called the rock, and that on Him the Church is built, is no hindrance to Peter's also being, in a different sense, called rock, and being said to be the foundation of the Church; so that I consider there is no ground for the fear entertained by some, in ancient and in modern times, that, by applying the words personally to Peter, we should infringe on the honour due to Christ alone.

If there be no such fear, the context inclines us to look on our Lord's words as conferring on Peter a special reward for his confession. For that confession was really the birth of the Christian Church. Our Lord had grown up to the age of thirty, it would seem, unnoticed by His countrymen; certainly without attempting to gather disciples. Then, marked out by the Holy Ghost at His bap-

tism, and proclaimed by John as the Lamb of God, He was joined by followers. They heard His gracious words; they saw His mighty works; they came to think of Him as a prophet, and doubted, in themselves, whether He were not something more. Was it possible that this could be the long-promised Messiah? This crisis was the date of Peter's confession. Our Lord saw His disciples' faith struggling into birth, and judged that it was time to give it the confirmation of His own assurance that they had judged rightly. By His questions He encouraged them to put into words the belief which was forcing itself on them all, but to which Peter first dared to give profession. In that profession he claimed the distinguishing doctrine of the Christian Church. Up to that time the Apostles had preached repentance. They had been commissioned to announce that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. But thenceforward the religion they preached was one whose main article was faith in Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, the Saviour.

When you once understand the importance of this confession, you will understand the warmth of commendation with which our Lord received what seems to us but the simple profession of an ordinary Christian's faith. We are apt to forget what an effort it was for a Jew, at the time when the nation was in a state of strained and excited expectation of some signal fulfilment of the prophetic announcement of a coming deliverer, to give up his ideal of a coming triumphant Messiah, to fix his hopes on a man of lowly rank, who made no pretensions to the greatness of this world, and to believe that the prophecies were to receive no better fulfilment than what the carpenter's son could give them. One proportions praise and encouragement, not only to the importance of the thing done, but also to its difficulty to him who does it. The act of running a few steps alone, or of saying a few articulate words, is a feat on which none of you would dream of priding himself; but with what praise and encouragement parents welcome a child's first attempt to walk without support; with what delight they catch at the first few words he is able to pronounce. And it is not only that the first efforts of the child are as difficult to him as some more laborious exercise would be to us; but also that first victory is the pledge of many more. The very first words a child pronounces give his parents the assurance that that child is not, either through want of intellect or through want of powers of speech, doomed to be separated from intercourse with mankind. The learning these two or three words gives the assurance that he will afterwards be able to master all the other difficulties of language, and will be capable of all the varied delights which speech affords. And so in that first profession of faith in Christ, imperfect though it was, and though it was shown immediately afterwards how much as to the true character of the Messiah remained to be learned, was contained of the pledge of every future profession of faith which the Church then founded has since been able to put forth. This accounts for the encouragement and praise with which our Lord received it.

I own it seems to me the most obvious and natural way of understanding our Lord's words to take them as conferring a personal honour in reward for that

confession. Thy name I have called Rock: and on thee and on this confession of thine I will found my Church. For that confession really was the foundation of the Church. Just as in some noble sacred music, the strain which a single voice has led is responded to by the voices of the full choir, so that glorious hymn of praise, which Peter was the first to raise, has been caught up and re-echoed by the voices of the redeemed in every age. Nay, the anthem of thanksgiving to Jesus, the Son of God, which has filled the mouths of the Church militant on earth, shall still be the burden of their songs in heaven as they ascribe ‘blessing, and honour, and glory, and power to Him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb.’

It was not only in this first recognition of the true character of our Lord that Peter was foremost. Jesus fulfilled His promise to him by honouring him with the foremost place in each of the successive steps by which the Church was developed. It was through St. Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost that the first addition was made to the number of the disciples whom our Lord Himself had collected, when on one day there was added to the Church 3000 souls; and it was by Peter’s mission to Cornelius that the first step was made to the admission of Gentiles to the Church: thus causing it to overleap the narrow barriers of Judaism and to embrace all the families of the earth. Thus the words of our Lord were fulfilled in that Peter was honoured by being the foremost among the human agents by which the Church was founded.¹ But I need not say that this was an honour in which it was impossible he could have a successor. We might just as well speak of Adam’s having a successor in the honour of being the first man, as of Peter’s having a successor in the place which he occupied in founding the Christian Church.

I have said that the Romanist interpretation of the text we have been considering is refuted by the fact that many eminent Fathers do not understand the rock as meaning St. Peter. You will see now, that even if they did,² as I do myself, the Romanist consequences would not follow. If Peter were the foundation of the Church in any other sense than I have explained, it would have shaken immediately afterwards when our Lord said unto him: ‘Get thee behind me, Satan,’ and tottered to its base when he denied his Lord. Immediately after Peter had earned commendation by his acknowledgment of Jesus as the Messiah, the doctrine of a crucified Messiah was proposed to him and he rejected it. So that if the Apostles had believed that the words ‘On this rock I will build my Church’ constituted Peter their infallible guide, the very first time they followed his guidance they would have been led into miserable error. They would have been led by him to reject the Cross, on which we rely as our atonement, and on which we place all our hope of salvation. I will not delay to

¹ The same explanation may be given of the bestowal on Peter of the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

² For example Tertullian, the earliest writer quoted as interpreting the ‘Rock’ to mean St. Peter, contends vehemently (*De Pudic.* 21) that the privilege conferred by our Lord on that

speak of the latter part of the passage, because it is clear that the privileges therein spoken of are not peculiar to Peter, very similar words being used in the 18th of St. Matthew to all the Apostles.

I hasten on to the words in St. Luke, on which Roman Catholics are forced to lay much of their case. For when it is pointed out, as I did just now, that the charge in St. Matthew clearly did not render Peter competent to guide the Apostles, it is owned that the due powers were not given to him then, but it is said they were conferred afterwards. When it is pointed out that the disputes among the Apostles for precedence show that they were not aware that Peter had been made their ruler, it is answered that our Lord on the night before He was betrayed decided the subject of these disputes in His charge to Peter. Our habitual use of the second person plural in addressing individuals so disguises from the modern English reader the force of the Roman Catholic argument, that I have hardly ever found anyone who could quote correctly that familiar text about sifting as wheat unless his attention had been specially called to it. Our Lord's words do very strongly bring out a special gift to Peter: 'Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you (was all the Apostles) that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee (Peter) that thy faith fail not, and when thou art converted strengthen thy brethren.' But certainly no one who interpreted Scripture according to its obvious meaning could suspect that the passage contains a revelation concerning the Church's appointed guide to truth in all time. The whole passage refers, on the face of it, to the immediate danger the faith of the Apostles was in from those trials under the pressure of which they all deserted their Master. There was a special prayer for Peter because of his special danger, and we see that this prayer did not exclude a grievous fall. If no security of unbroken constancy in the faith was thereby gained to Peter, for whom the prayer was directly made, we have no ground for supposing that it had greater efficacy in the case of any alleged successors, to whom the petition can at most apply indirectly. It may be added that the work of 'strengthening' his brethren, thereby committed to Peter (one to which *he* was peculiarly bound, whose fall had perilled men's faith), was no peculiar prerogative of Peter's. The same word *sthrizein* is used in three or four places in the Acts (xiv. 22; xv. 32, 41; xviii. 23) of Paul's confirming the Churches of Syria and Cilicia, of Judas and Silas confirming the brethren at Antioch, of Timothy confirming the Thessalonian Church. And most remarkable of all, Paul when purposing to visit Rome, which is said to have been Peter's peculiar charge, expects that it is by *his* instrumentality this benefit will be conferred on the Roman Church: 'I long to see you that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established.' (Rom. i. 11).

I may here, in passing, mention another passage (2 Cor. xi. 28), where Paul shows himself strangely unconscious of Peter's prerogatives. For, having

occasion was exclusively personal, and was fulfilled by the part Peter took in the first formation of the Church.

enumerated some of his labours and sufferings in the cause of the Gospel, he adds: 'Beside those things that are without, that which cometh on me daily, the care of all the Churches.' If, as Roman theory would have it, the care of all the Churches was Peter's province, St. Paul is most unreasonable in complaining of the trouble he had incurred through gratuitously meddling with another man's work, thus literally becoming what St. Peter himself called an *allotrioepiskopos* (1 Pet. iv. 15). But Paul elsewhere (Gal. ii. 8) limits Peter's province to the 'Apostleship of the Circumcision,' that is to say, to the superintendence of the Jewish Churches: and states that the work of evangelizing the Gentiles had, by agreement with the three chief Apostles, been specially committed to himself and Barnabas.

This prayer for Peter is so clearly personal that some Roman Catholic controversialists do not rely on this passage at all. Neither can they produce any early writers who deduce from it anything in favour of the Roman See. Bellarmine can quote nothing earlier than the eleventh century, except the suspicious evidence of some Popes in their own cause, of whom the earliest to speak distinctly is Pope Agatho in his address to the sixth general council, A.D. 680. How earlier Fathers understood the passage, will appear plainly from Chrysostom's commentary,¹ when he answers the question why Peter is especially addressed: 'He said this sharply reproving him, and showing that his fall was more grievous than that of the others, and needed greater assistance. For he had been guilty of two faults, that he contradicted our Lord when He said all shall be offended, saying, "though all should be offended, yet will I never be offended"; and secondly, that he set himself above the others: and we may add a third fault, that he ascribed all to himself. In order, then, to heal these diseases, our Lord permitted him to fall: and therefore passing by the others He turns to him: "Simon, Satan hath desire to have you, that he may sift you as wheat (that is to say, might trouble you, harass you, tempt you), but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." Why, if Satan desired to have all, does not our Lord say, I have prayed for all? Is it not plainly for the reason I have mentioned? By way of rebuke to him, and showing that his fall was worse than that of the others He turns His speech to him.'² Similar language is

¹ Hom. 82. In Matt. xxvi., vol. vii., p. 785.

² It is proper to mention, by way of set off, that in the Homilies on the Acts ascribed to Chrysostom (vol. ix., p. 26), the part taken by Peter in initiating the election of Matthias is treated as resulting from the prerogatives bestowed in the words recorded in St. Luke's Gospel. [long Greek text not included here Ed.] Chrysostom's authorship of the Homilies on the Acts has been disputed on account of their great inferiority, both in style and treatment, to his unquestioned writings. Erasmus is so impolite as to say 'Nihil unquam legi indoctius. Ebruius ac stertens scriberem meliora.' Great preachers, however, are not always at their best, and possibly these Homilies. as they have come down to us, are a bad report of sermons really delivered by St. Chrysostom. And vacillations of interpretations are so common with the Fathers, that I do not regard it as a proof of diverse authorship that the text in St. Luke is dealt with differently in these Homilies and those in St. Matthew. But on no supposition is the question at issue more than the speculative one, what prerogatives were enjoyed by Peter personally; no ambiguity of interpretation could have been tolerated if Chrysostom had imagined that the text in Luke determined the constitution of the Church in his own day.

used by a much later expositor, the Venerable Bede, in his commentary on this text of St. Luke. He explains it 'as I have by praying preserved thy faith that it should not fail under the temptation of Satan, so also do thou be mindful to raise up and comfort thy weaker brethren by the example of thy penitence, lest perchance they despair of pardon.' It is plain that the great teachers of the Church were ignorant for hundreds of years that this text contained more than a personal promise to the Apostle about to be tried by a special temptation, and that they never found out it was a charter text revealing the constitution of the Christian Church.

I come now to the third text, the 'Feed my sheep' of St. John; and here, too, certainly, there is no indication in the text itself that there was an appointment to an office peculiar in its kind. The office of tending Christ's sheep is certainly not peculiar to St. Peter. It is committed, in even more general terms, by St. Paul to the Ephesian elders, 'Feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood' (Acts xx. 28), and by Peter himself to his fellow elders, 'Feed the flock of God which is among you' (1 Pet. v. 2). The sequel of the story, too, is adverse to the supposition that our Lord meant to confer on St. Peter the oversight of his fellow Apostles. For when he asks concerning St. John, 'What shall this man do?' he receives something like a rebuke: 'What is that to thee? follow thou me.' I don't know any respectable Patristic authority for understanding the passage otherwise than Cyril of Alexandria does, whose commentary we may well adopt: 'If anyone asks for what cause he asked Simon only, though the other disciples were present, and what he means by "Feed my lambs," and the like, we answer that St. Peter, with the other disciples, had been already chosen to the Apostleship, but because meanwhile Peter had fallen (for under great fear he had thrice denied the Lord), he now heals him that was sick, and exacts a threefold confession in place of his triple denial, contrasting the former with the latter, and compensating the fault with the correction.' And again, 'By the triple confession Peter abrogates the sin contracted in his triple denial. For from what our Lord says, "Feed my lambs," a renewal of the Apostolate already delivered to him is considered to have been made which presently absolves the disgrace of his sin and blots out the perplexity of his human infirmity.' I shall not detain you longer with the Scripture argument; nor shall I examine, for instance, how Romanist advocates struggle to make out that the appointment of Matthias was made by the single authority of Peter, because the whole history of the Acts (as, for instance, the appointment of the seven deacons, the conversion of Samaria, where we find not 'Peter took John' but 'the Apostles sent Peter and John'), shows that the original constitution of the Church was not monarchical, and that when that of the Jerusalem Church became so, James, and not Peter, was its ruler. I may mention that in the Clementines of which I shall have occasion to speak again presently, and which did so much to raise the authority attributed to Peter in the

Church, it is James, not Clement, who is bishop of bishops and supreme ruler; and to James Peter must yearly render an account of his doings.¹

¹ In a still later forgery, the Decretal Epistles, this is rectified. Among these is a letter supposed to be written by Clement, after Peter's death, to James although, according to Eusebius, James died before Peter. In this letter Clement, as Peter's successor, assumes the position of James' master and teacher:—'Quoniam sicut a beato Petro Apostolo accepimus omnium Apostolorum patre qui claves regni coelestis accepit qualiter tenere debemus de sacramentis, to ex ordine nos decet instruere.'