

## PRESBYTERIANISM AND CATHOLICISM.

(A Reply to the Rev. J. Dickson, Presbyterian Minister, Temuka, by Rev. Father LEMENANT DES CHESNAIS, S.M.)

## ANSWER TO LECTURE III.

## Infallibility.

OBJECTION I.—The Rejection of Christ by the Jews—The Fall of the Churches of Asia.

"What Church has not erred? The Jewish Church erred egregiously in rejecting Christ. The seven Churches of Asia, referred to in the Apocalypse, present as a whole a sad picture of falling from Christ's ideal, and receive very sharp reproofs at his hands."

## REPLY.

(1.) The Jewish Church did not err in her teaching. She preserved entire the Messianic prophecies. The Jewish doctors did err in not recognising that those prophecies were fulfilled in our Blessed Lord; this was an error of fact, not an error of doctrine. However, they were inexcusable, because the miracles of our Saviour, His admirable life and sublime doctrine, combined with the accomplishment of the prophecies in His person, should have opened their eyes had they not been blinded by pride, prejudice and the false idea they had that the Messiah was to be a great temporal monarch, who was to re-establish the kingdom of Israel; this was the principle cause of their rejecting Christ. Nothing can be concluded against the divinity the Mosaic revelation or the prophets from this fact, no more than it can be concluded that the proofs of the infallibility of the Church and of the Pope are not most solid and convincing for an unprejudiced mind, although my friend and many others, blinded by prejudice, cannot see them. The objection, therefore, from the error of the Jewish doctors against infallibility is perfectly groundless. The blindness of the Jewish doctors and the rejection of Christ by the synagogue had, besides, been foretold by the prophets, and, instead of militating against the pre-Christian revelation, is a confirmation of it. (2.) St. John, in the Apocalypse, rebukes some bishops of Asia for want of zeal and fervour for their own perfection. What has that to do with infallibility? Even a Pope may do wrong; *a fortiori* a bishop or a priest. St. Bernard wrote a book of exhortations to Pope Eugenius III.: does it show that he did not acknowledge him as the infallible ruler of the Christian Church? Hear how he speaks of him: "Who art thou? The High Priest, the Supreme Bishop. . . . Thou art he to whom the keys of heaven are given, to whom the sheep are intrusted. There are indeed other doorkeepers and other shepherds of the flocks, but thou art more glorious. The former have their flocks assigned to them, each one his own. To thee all are intrusted. . . . thou art the one shepherd. Thy privilege is immutable, as well in the keys committed to thee as in the sheep entrusted to thy care" (St. Bernard de Consid. l. ii, c. 8). St. Cyprian had a controversy with the Pope, yet he said: "The chair of Peter is the ruling Church whence the unity of the priesthood has its source" (St. Cyprian Ep. ad Cornel. Ep. lv). If my rev. friend wants to speak about theology he should first study it, in order to know what he is saying and not talk nonsense, as he commonly does.

(3.) The falling of a particular Church, or of many particular Churches, from the Catholic faith does not in the least affect infallibility. This privilege is promised to the members of the true Church of Christ and to no others. Separated Churches follow fallible guides instead of Jesus, the infallible ruler of the Christian Church, speaking to us through His visible representative. No greater proof can be given of their folly than the innumerable errors into which they continually fall, their disagreement among themselves and their servility in many cases to civil authority. It is indeed a great pity to see a Christian Church falling into error; but this can never affect the true Church, which will always uphold revealed truth and, in spite of persecution, will ever ultimately triumph and endure for ever, whilst her enemies will perish into oblivion.

OBJECTION II.—Denial of Infallibility by St. Augustine and Many of the Fathers.

"Augustine, like many of the Fathers, did not believe in Church infallibility."

## REPLY.

The Reverend Dickson is mistaken: St. Augustine and all the Fathers believed in Church infallibility. When Rome settled the question of Pelagianism, this great African doctor said: "The decisions of the two Councils of Carthage and Mileve have been sent to the Apostolic See: Rome has spoken, the case is ended. Would to God there might also be an end to the error. . . ." In another place he says: "It is enough to support the faith of the Catholic Church, to have the judgment of that Church where it was the will of our Lord that the first of his Apostles should receive the crown of martyrdom." When St. Augustine cried out: "*Roma locuta est, causa finita est*" "Rome has spoken, the matter is ended," did he not consider the decision of the Pope as final and without appeal? Whether the Council of Ephesus decided or not any-

thing about Pelagianism does not matter, the error still existed, and the Pope authoritatively condemned it; this is all we want to defend our position. Again when this great doctor declared that "the judgment of the Pope was the support of the faith of the other Churches, did he not thereby confess his infallibility? If this was not a confession of infallibility, what was it then? But what about the Fathers? Let me commence with Origen: "If the gates of hell could prevail against the stone or against the Church, the stone would not be the stone on which Christ has built His Church; the Church could not be that Church which Christ has built on the stone. The gates of hell shall not prevail either against the stone on which Christ has built his Church or against the Church no more than a serpent can engrave a mark of his passage on a rock on which it crawled" (Origen in Matth. Greek Patrology iii). Origen, therefore, believed that the Church could not fail, that the gates of hell could not prevail against her; what was this preservation from the power of hell, if not infallibility, which the Rev. Dickson says, but could never prove, many of the Fathers denied? Let us turn to Africa. St. Cyprian declares that "no false faith can have access to Rome" (Ep. lix, 14). If no false faith can have access to Rome she must always keep the true faith, she must be infallible. St. Ephrem, the glory of the Church of Edessa, in Mesopotamia, is still more emphatic: "Hail, light of the world, rising in the East, and everywhere shining, illuminating those who sit in darkness, ever burning without being renovated. This light is Christ; its lamp is Peter; the oil which feeds it is the Holy Ghost" (St. Ephrem Encom. in Petrum). According to this illustrious doctor Christ is the light of the Christian world; Peter is the lamp where it shines; the Holy Ghost is the oil which feeds it. This bright light, which comes from Christ through Peter, the lamp of the Church, is ever shining; it never fails; it has never to be renovated; it illumines the whole world; does not this prove to evidence that St. Ephrem believed in the infallibility of the Church and of the Pope? Hear now the Syrian solitary, St. Jerome: "The Holy Roman Church, which ever remained immaculate, shall continue for ever firm and immaculate in the midst of attacks of heretics, thanks to the Providential protection of the Lord, and the assistance of blessed Peter" (St. Hier. Ep. xv ad Damas). If, according to the Dalmatian doctor, the Church of Rome shall ever remain immaculate owing to the protection of the Lord and the assistance of blessed Peter, she must ever be free from error and infallible. Hark to the profession of faith of the mellifluous Bishop of Milan: "The barque of Peter can never be capsized; she is the messenger of heavenly wisdom; the Holy Spirit propels her; her pilot is the one who gives to the Church her solidity" (See Rev. Klein. Le Pape, Paris, 1887, p. 449). If the barque of Peter can never be capsized; if she is the messenger of heavenly wisdom; if the Holy Spirit propels her, she must always be free from error and be infallible. "St. Peter gives the true faith those who seek for it," cries out St. Peter Chrysologus, the eloquent Bishop of Ravenna (St. Peter Chrysol. Ep. ad Eutich). If St. Peter gives the true faith to those who seek for it, he must be infallible—he must be incapable of falling into error in matters of faith. If time permitted it, we could quote the testimony of St. Clement, A.D. 96; St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, A.D. 114; the General Council of Ephesus, which calls the Roman Pontiff "the pillar of the faith, the foundation of the Catholic Church," A.D. 431; the General Council of Chalcedon, which styles St. Peter "the rock and the foundation of the Catholic faith and the foundation of the orthodox faith," A.D. 451; the formulary of Hormidas, signed by 2,500 bishops, A.D. 662, etc. (See H. I. D. Ryder. Cath. Cont. Papal Infall. 14-25). Will this satisfy the false oracle of the Presbytery at Temuka, and convince him that the Fathers did believe in infallibility? Could the Rev. J. Dickson point out to me one who did not believe in it? It would be, indeed, a wonderful discovery.

OBJECTION III.—That proving the Scriptures from the authority of the Church and in the infallibility of the Church is reasoning in a circle.

"We are told that, on the authority of an infallible Church, we must believe the Scriptures, and on the authority of the Scriptures, interpreted by an infallible church, we must believe the doctrine of infallibility. This is reasoning in a circle, and these lectures of our friend are full of these; out of their own circle he cannot get."

## REPLY.

A little logic and reflection would have sufficed to show the Rev. J. Dickson that the Catholic demonstration is not a vicious circle; this reasoning in a circle has no existence, except in the misconception of our line of argumentation by my rev. friend. In order to prove the infallibility of the Church we use the Bible merely as a faithful record of the words of Christ; and from these words of Christ we show that they contain the promise of infallibility we claim for the Catholic Church. If the Rev. J. Dickson were to claim that a certain property in New Zealand belongs to the Presbyterian Church, and, in proof of this, produced a deed, drawn by a lawyer, and show from external evidence and the intrinsic nature of the deed itself that the document is authentic, and that this authentic and legal document contains the donation of the said property to the Presbyterian Church, would he be accused by the judg-