

THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

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The Roman State-Church: An Inside View

Bishop Josef Strossmayer

Among the more than one hundred prelates who stood in opposition to the doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope at the First Vatican Council in 1870, Bishop Josef Strossmayer was one of the most notable. J. B. Bury, who succeeded Lord Acton as Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge, on page 117 of his work, History of the Papacy in the 19th Century (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1930), called him "the most courageous man at Rome." The following speech, translated from an Italian version published at Florence shortly after the Council adjourned, was given in the closing months of debate. As we honor the Reformation this fall, let us also recall here some of the reasons for it so ably summarized by a Roman Catholic bishop. — The Editor

Venerable fathers and brethren—It is not without trembling, yet with a conscience free and tranquil before God who lives and sees me, that I open my mouth in the midst of you in this august assembly. From the time that I have been sitting here with you, I have followed with attention the speeches that have been made in the hall, hoping with great desire that a ray of light descending from on high might enlighten the eyes of my understanding and permit me to vote the canons of this holy ecumenical council with perfect knowledge of the case.

Penetrated with the feelings of responsibility, of which God will demand of me an account, I have set myself to study with the most serious attention

the Old and New Testaments, and I have asked these venerable monuments of truth to make known to me if the holy pontiff, who presides here, is truly the successor of St. Peter, vicar of Jesus Christ, and the infallible doctor of the church. To resolve this grave question I have been obliged to ignore the present state of things and to transport myself in mind, with the evangelical torch in my hand, to the days when there was neither Ultramontanism nor Gallicanism and in which the church had for doctors St. Paul, St. Peter, St. James, and St. John—doctors to whom no one can deny the divine authority without putting in doubt that which the Holy Bible, which is here before me, teaches us, and which the Council of Trent has proclaimed as the rule of faith and of morals. I have then opened these sacred pages. Well (shall I dare to say it?), I have found nothing either near nor far which sanctions the opinion of the Ultramontanes. And still more, to my very great surprise, I find in the apostolic days no question of a pope, successor to St. Peter and vicar of Jesus Christ, any more than of Mahomet who did not then exist. You, Monsignor Manning, will say that I blaspheme; you, Monsignor Fie, that I am mad. Now, having read the whole New Testament, I declare before God, with my hand raised to that great crucifix, that I have found no trace of the papacy as it exists at this moment. Do not refuse me your attention, my venerable brethren; and with your murmuring and interruptions do not justify those who say, like Father Hyacinthe, that this council is nothing, but that our votes have been from the beginning dictated by authority. If such

were the case, this august assembly, on which the eyes of the whole world are turned, would fall into the most shameful discredit. If we wish to make it great, we must be free. I thank his Excellency, Monsignor Dupanloup, for the sign of approbation that he shakes with his head: this gives me courage, and I go on.

Reading then the sacred books with that attention with which the Lord has made me capable, I do not find one single chapter or one little verse in which Jesus Christ gives to St. Peter the mastery over the apostles, his fellow workers. If Simon, son of Jonas, had been what we believe his holiness Pius IX to be today, it is wonderful that he had not said to him, "When I have ascended to My Father, you should all obey Simon Peter as you obey me. I establish him my vicar upon Earth."

Not only is Christ silent on this point but so little does he think of giving a head to the church, that when he promises to his apostles to judge the twelve tribes of Israel (*Matthew* 19:28), he promises them twelve thrones, one for each, without saying that among those thrones one shall be higher than the others—which shall belong to Peter. Certainly, if he had wished that it should be so, he would have said it. What do we conclude from this sentence? Logic tells us that Christ did not wish to make St. Peter the head of the apostolic college. When Christ sent the apostles to conquer the world, to all he gave the promise of the Holy Spirit. Permit me to repeat it: if he had wished to constitute Peter his vicar, he would have given him the chief command over his spiritual army. Christ—so says the Holy Scripture—forbade Peter and his colleagues to reign or to exercise lordship, or to have authority over the faithful like the kings of the Gentiles (*Luke* 22:25). If St. Peter had been elected pope, Jesus would not have spoken thus; but according to our tradition, the papacy holds in its hands two swords, symbols of spiritual and temporal power.

One thing has surprised me very much. Turning it over in my mind, I said to myself, "If Peter had been elected pope, would his colleagues have been permitted to send him with St. John to Samaria and announce the Gospel of the Son of God?" What do you think, venerable brethren, if at this moment we

permitted ourselves to send his Holiness Pius IX and his Excellency Monsignor Plantier to go to the Patriarch of Constantinople, to pledge him to put an end to the Eastern schism?

But there is another still more important fact. An ecumenical council is assembled at Jerusalem to decide on the questions that divide the faithful. Who would have called together this council if St. Peter had been pope? St. Peter. Who would have presided at it? St. Peter or his legate. Who would have promulgated the canons? St. Peter. Well, nothing of this occurred. The apostle assisted at the council as all the others did, yet it was not he who summed up, but St. James; and when the decrees were promulgated, it was in the name of the apostles, the elders, and the brethren (*Acts* 15). Is it thus that we do in our church? The more I examine, O venerable brethren, the more I am convinced that in the Scriptures the son of Jonas does not appear to be first.

Now, while we teach that the Church is built upon St. Peter, St. Paul (whose authority cannot be doubted) says in his Epistle to the *Ephesians* 2:20, it is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone. And the same apostle believes so little in the supremacy of St. Peter that he openly blames those who would say, "We are of Paul: we are of Apollos" (*1 Corinthians* 1:12), as those who say, "We are of Peter." If therefore this last apostle had been the vicar of Christ, St. Paul would have taken great care not to censure so violently those who belonged to his own colleagues. The same apostle, counting up the offices of the Church, mentions apostles, prophets, evangelists, doctors, and pastors. Is it to be believed, my venerable brethren, that St. Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles, would have forgotten the first of these offices, the papacy, if the papacy had been of divine institution? The forgetfulness appeared to me to be as impossible as if an historian of this council were not to mention one word of his Holiness Pius IX. [Several voices—"Silence, heretic, silence."] Calm yourselves, my brethren, I have not yet finished. Forbidding me to go on, you show yourselves to the world to do wrong in shutting the mouth of the smallest member of this assembly.

I continue. The apostle Paul makes no mention, in any of his letters directed to the various churches, of the primacy of Peter. If this primacy had existed, if, in one word, the church had in its body a supreme head infallible in teaching, would the great apostle of the Gentiles have forgotten to mention it? What do I say? He would have written a long letter on this all-important subject. Then, as he has actually done, when the edifice of the Christian doctrine is erected, would the foundation, the key of the arch, be forgotten? Now, unless you hold that the church of the apostles was heretical (which none of would either desire or dare to say), we are obliged to confess that the church has never been more beautiful, more pure, or more holy, than in the days when there was no pope. [Cries of, "It is not true; it is not true."] Let not Monsignor di Laval say, "No," since if any of you, my venerable brethren, should dare to think that the church which has today a pope for its head is more sacred in the faith, more pure in its morals than the apostolic church, let him say it openly in the face of the universe, for this enclosure is the center from which our words fly from pole to pole.

I go on. Neither in the writings of St. Paul, St. John, nor St. James, have I found a trace or germ of the papal power. St. Luke, the historian of the missionary labors of the apostles, is silent on this all-important point. The silence of these holy men, whose writings make part of the canon of the divinely inspired Scriptures, has appeared to me burdensome and impossible, if Peter had been pope, and as unjustifiable as if Thiers, writing the history of Napoleon Bonaparte, had omitted the title of emperor.

I see here before me a member of the assembly who says, pointing at me with his finger, "There is a schismatic bishop who has got among us under false colors." No, no, my venerable brethren, I have not entered this august assembly as a thief by the window, but by the door like yourselves. My title of bishop gave me a right to it, as my Christian conscience forces me to speak and to say that which I believe to be true.

What has surprised me most, and what moreover is capable of demonstration, is the silence of St. Peter.

If the apostle had been what we proclaim him to be—that is, the vicar of Jesus Christ on Earth—he surely would have known it; if he had known it, how is it that not once did he act as pope? He might have done it on the day of Pentecost, when he pronounced his first sermon, but did not do it; neither in the two letters directed to the church. Can you imagine such a pope, my venerable brethren, if St. Peter had been pope? Now, if you wish to maintain that he was the pope, the natural consequence arises that you must maintain that he was ignorant of the fact. Now I ask whoever has a head to think and a mind to reflect, are these two suppositions possible?

To return, I say, while the apostle lived, the church never thought that there could be a pope; to maintain the contrary, all the sacred writings must be entirely ignored.

But it is said on all sides, "Was not St. Peter at Rome? Was he not crucified with his head down? Are not the pulpits in which he taught, the altars at which he said the mass, in this eternal city?" St. Peter having been at Rome, my venerable brethren, rests only on tradition; but, if he had been bishop of Rome, how can you from that episcopate prove his supremacy? Scaliger, one of the most learned of men, has not hesitated to say that St. Peter's episcopate and residence at Rome ought to be classed with ridiculous legends. [Repeated cries, "Shut his mouth, shut his mouth; make him come down from the pulpit."]

Venerable brethren, I am ready to be silent; but is it not better, in an assembly like ours, to prove all things as the apostle commands, and to hold fast what is good? We have a dictator, before whom we—even his holiness Pius IX himself—must prostrate ourselves, and be silent and bow our heads. That dictator is history. This is not like a legend, which can be made as the potter makes his clay, but is like a diamond that cuts on the glass what cannot be cancelled. Till now I have only leant on her; and if I have found no trace of the papacy in the apostolic days, the fault is hers, not mine. Do you wish to put me into the position of one accused of falsehood? You may do it, if you can.

I hear from the right someone expressing these words: "Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my church." I will answer this objection presently, my venerable brethren; but, before doing so, I wish to present you with the result of my historical researches.

Finding no trace of the papacy in the days of the apostles, I said to myself, I shall find what I am in search of in the annals of the church. Well, I say it frankly—I have sought for a pope in the first four centuries, and I have not found him. None of you, I hope, will doubt the great authority of the holy bishop of Hippo, the great and blessed St. Augustine. This pious doctor—the honour and glory of the Catholic church—was secretary in the Council of Melvie. In the decrees of this venerable assembly are to be found these significant words—"Whoever wills to appeal to those beyond the sea shall not be received by anyone in Africa to the communion." The bishops of Africa acknowledged the bishop of Rome so little that they smote with excommunication those who would have recourse to an appeal. These same bishops—in the sixth Council of Carthage, held under Aurelius, bishop of that city—wrote to Celestinus, bishop of Rome, to warn him not to receive appeals from the bishops, priests, or clerics of Africa; and that he should send no more legates or commissaries; and that he should not introduce human pride into the church.

That the patriarch of Rome had from the earliest times tried to draw to himself all the authority is an evident fact, but it is an equally evident fact that he had not the supremacy that the Ultramontanes attribute to him. Had he possessed it, would the bishops of Africa—St. Augustine first among them—have dared to prohibit the appeals of their decrees to his supreme tribunal? I confess without difficulty that the patriarch of Rome held the first place. One of Justinian's laws says, "Let us order, after the definition of the four Councils, that the holy pope of ancient Rome shall be the first of the bishops, and that the most high archbishop of Constantinople, which is the new Rome, shall be the second." "Bow down then to the supremacy of the pope," you will say to me. Do not run so fast to this conclusion, my venerable brethren, inasmuch as the law of Justinian has written on the face of it, "Of the

order of the patriarchal sees." Precedence is one thing, the power of jurisdiction is another. For example, supposing that in Florence there was an assembly of all the bishops of the kingdom, the precedence would be given to the primate of Florence, as among the Easterns it would be accorded to the patriarch of Constantinople, as in England to the archbishop of Canterbury. But neither the first, nor the second, nor the third could deduce from the position assigned to him a jurisdiction over his colleagues.

The importance of the bishops of Rome proceeded not from a divine power, but from the importance of the city in which they had their seat. Monsignor Darboy (in Paris) is not superior in dignity to the archbishop of Avignon; but, in spite of that, Paris gives him a consideration that he would not have, if, instead of having his palace on the bank of the Seine, he had it on that of the Rhone. That which is true in the religious order is the same in civil and political matters: the prefect of Rome is not more a prefect than one at Pisa, but civilly and politically he has a greater importance.

I have said that from the very first centuries the patriarch of Rome aspired to the universal government of the church. Unfortunately he very nearly reached it; but he had not succeeded assuredly in his pretensions, for the Emperor Theodosius II made a law by which he established that the patriarch of Constantinople should have the same authority as he of Rome (*Leg. cod. de sacr.*, etc). The fathers of the Council of Chalcedon put the bishops of the new and the old Rome in the same order on all things, even ecclesiastical (Can. 28). The sixth Council of Carthage forbade all the bishops to take the title of prince of the bishops, or sovereign bishop. As for the title of universal bishop, which the popes took later, St. Gregory I, believing that his successors would never think of adorning themselves with it, wrote these remarkable words: "None of my predecessors has consented to take this profane name; for when a patriarch gives himself the name of Universal, the title of Patriarch suffers discredit. Far be it then from Christians to desire to give themselves a title which brings discredit upon their brethren!"

The words of St. Gregory are directed to his colleagues of Constantinople, who pretended to the primacy of the church. Pope Pelagius II calls John, bishop of Constantinople, who aspired to the high priesthood, "impious and profane." "Do not care," he said, "for the title of universal, which John has usurped illegally. Let none of the patriarchs take this profane name; for what misfortunes may we not expect, if among the priests such elements arise? They would get what has been foretold for them—He is the king of the sons of pride" (Pelagius II, *Lett.* 13). Do not these authorities prove (and I might add a hundred more of equal value), with a clearness as the sun at midday, that the first bishops of Rome were not till much later recognized as universal bishops and heads of the church? And on the other hand, who does not know that from the year 325 (in which the first Council of Nicaea was held) down to 580, (the year of the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople) among more than 1,109 bishops who assisted at the first six general councils, there were not more than nineteen Western bishops? Who does not know that the councils were convoked by the emperors without informing, and sometimes against the wish of, the bishop of Rome? that Hosius, bishop of Cordova, presided at the first Council of Nice, and edited the canons of it? The same Hosius presided afterwards at the Council of Sardica, excluding the legates of Julius, bishop of Rome.

I say no more, my venerable brethren; and I come now to speak of the great argument—which you mentioned before—to establish the primacy of the bishop of Rome by the rock (*petra*). If this were true, the dispute would be at an end; but our forefathers—and they certainly knew something—did not think of it as we do. St. Cyril in his fourth book on the Trinity says, "I believe that by the rock you must understand the unshaken faith of the apostles." St. Hilary, bishop of Poitiers, in his second book on the Trinity says, "The rock (*petra*) is the blessed and only rock of the faith confessed by the mouth of St. Peter," and in the sixth book of the Trinity he says, "It is on this rock of the confession of the faith that the church is built." "God," says St. Jerome in the sixth book on St. Matthew, "has founded His church on this rock, and it is from this rock that the apostle Peter has been

named." After him St. Chrysostom says in his fifty-third homily on St. Matthew, "On this rock I will build my church—that is, on the faith of the confession." Now, what was the confession of the apostle? Here it is— "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God." Ambrose, the holy archbishop of Milan (on the second chapter of the Ephesians), St. Basil of Seleucia, and the fathers of the Council of Chalcedon, teach exactly the same thing. Of all the doctors of Christian antiquity, St. Augustine occupies one of the first places for knowledge and holiness. Listen then to what he writes in his second treatise on the *First Epistle of St. John*: "What do the words mean, 'I will build my church on this rock'? On this faith, on that which said, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.'" In his treatise on St. John we find this most significant phrase: "On this rock which thou hast confessed I will build my church, since Christ was the rock." The great bishop believed so little that the church was built on St. Peter that he said to the people in his thirteenth sermon, "Thou art Peter, and on this rock (*petra*) which thou hast confessed, on this rock which thou hast known, saying, 'Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God,' I will build my church—upon Myself, who am the Son of the living God: I will build it on Me, and not Me on thee." That which St. Augustine thought upon this celebrated passage was the opinion of all Christendom in his time.

Therefore, to resume, I establish: (1) That Jesus has given his apostles the same power that he gave to St. Peter. (2) That the apostles never recognized in St. Peter the vicar of Jesus Christ and the infallible doctor of the church. (3) That St. Peter never thought of being pope, and never acted as if he were pope. (4) That the councils of the first four centuries, while they recognized the high position which the bishop of Rome occupied in the church on account of Rome, only accorded to him a pre-eminence of honour, never of power or of jurisdiction. (5) That the holy fathers in the famous passage, "Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my church," never understood that the church was built on Peter (*super Petrum*) but on the rock (*super petram*), that is, on the confession of the faith of the apostle. I conclude victoriously, with history, with reason, with logic, with good sense, and with a

Christian conscience that Jesus Christ did not confer any supremacy on St. Peter and that the bishops of Rome did not become sovereigns of the church, but only by confiscating one by one all the rights of the episcopate. [Voices— "Silence, impudent Protestant! Silence!"]

No, I am not an impudent Protestant. History is neither Catholic, nor Anglican, nor Calvinistic, nor Lutheran, nor Arminian, nor schismatic Greek, nor Ultramontane. She is what she is—that is, something stronger than all confessions of faith of the canons of the ecumenical councils. Write against it, if you dare, but you cannot destroy it anymore than taking a brick out of the Coliseum would make it fall. If I have said anything which history proves to be false, show it to me by history, and without a moment's hesitation I will make an honourable apology; but be patient, and you will see that I have not said all that I would or could; and even were the funeral pyre waiting for me in the place of St. Peter's, I should not be kept silent, and I am obliged to go on. Monsignor Dupanloup, in his celebrated Observations on this council of the Vatican, has said, and with reason, that if we declared Pius IX infallible, we must necessarily and from natural logic be obliged to hold that all his predecessors were also infallible.

Well, venerable brethren, here history raises its voice to assure us that some popes have erred. You may protest against it or deny it, as you please, but I will prove it. Pope Victor (192) first approved of Montanism, and then condemned it. Marcellinus (296-303) was an idolater. He entered into the temple of Vesta and offered incense to the goddess. You will say that it was an act of weakness; but I answer, a vicar of Jesus Christ dies rather than become an apostate. Liberius (358) consented to the condemnation of Athanasius and made a profession of Arianism that he might be recalled from his exile and reinstated in his see. Honorius (625) adhered to Monothelism: Father Gratry has proved it to demonstration. Gregory I (590-604) calls anyone Antichrist who takes the name of Universal Bishop, and contrariwise Boniface III (607-8) made the parricide Emperor Phocas confer that title upon him. Paschal II (1088-99) and Pius IV (1560) forbade it. Eugenius IV (1431-39) approved of the

Council of Basle and the restitution of the chalice to the church of Bohemia; Pius II (1458) revoked the concession. Hadrian II (867-872) declared civil marriages to be valid; Pius VII (1800-1823) condemned them. Sixtus V (1585-90) published an edition of the Bible, and by a bull recommended it to be read; Pius VII condemned the reading of it. Clement XIV (1700-1721) abolished the order of the Jesuits, permitted by Paul III, and Pius VII re-established it.

But why look for such remote proofs? Has not our holy father here present, in his bull which gave the rules for this council, in the event of his dying while it was sitting revoked all that in past times may be contrary to it, even when that proceeds from the decisions of his predecessors? And certainly, if Pius IX has spoken *ex cathedra*, it is not when from the depths of his sepulchre he imposes his will on the sovereigns of the church. I should never finish, my venerable brethren, if I were to put before your eyes the contradictions of the popes in their teaching. If then you proclaim the infallibility of the actual pope, you must declare that the Holy Spirit has revealed to you that the infallibility of the papacy only dates from 1870. Are you bold enough to do this?

Perhaps the people may be indifferent and pass by theological questions which they do not understand and of which they do not see the importance; but though they are indifferent to principles, they are not so to facts. Do not then deceive yourselves. If you decree the dogma of papal infallibility, the Protestants, our adversaries, will mount in the breach, the more bold that they have history on their side whilst we have only our denial against them. What can we say to them when they show up all the bishops of Rome from the days of Luke to his Holiness Pius IX? Ah! If they had been like Pius IX, we should triumph on the whole line; but, alas! it is not so. [Cries of "Silence, silence; enough, enough!"]

Do not cry out, Monsignori! To fear history is to own yourselves conquered and, moreover, if you made the whole waters of the Tiber pass over it, you would not cancel a single page. Let me speak, and I will be short as it is possible on this most important

subject. Pope Vigilius (538) purchased the papacy from Belisarius, lieutenant of the Emperor Justinian. It is true that he broke his promise and never paid for it. Is this a canonical mode of binding on the tiara? The second Council of Chalcedon had formally condemned it. In one of its canons you read that "The Bishop who obtains his episcopate by money shall lose it and be degraded." Pope Eugenius III [IV in original] (1145) imitated Vigilius. St. Bernard, the bright star of his age, reproves the pope, saying to him, "Can you show me in this great city of Rome anyone who would receive you as pope if they had not received gold or silver for it?"

My venerable brethren, will a pope who establishes a bank at the gates of the temple be inspired by the Holy Spirit? Will he have any right to teach the church infallibility? You know the history of Formosus too well for me to add to it. Stephen XI caused his body to be exhumed, dressed in his pontifical robes; he made the fingers which he used for giving the benediction to be cut off, and then he had them thrown into the Tiber, declaring him to be a perjurer and illegitimate. He was then imprisoned by the people, poisoned, and strangled. Look how matters were readjusted; Romanus, successor of Stephen, and after him John X, rehabilitated the memory of Formosus.

But you will tell me these are fables, not history. Fables! Go, Monsignori, to the Vatican Library and read Platina, the historian of the papacy and the annals of Baronius (A.D. 897). These are facts which, for the honour of the holy see, we should wish to ignore; but when it is to define a dogma which may provoke a great schism in our midst, the love which we bear to our venerable mother church, catholic, apostolic, and Roman, ought it to impose silence on us?

I go on. The learned Cardinal Baronius, speaking of the papal court, says (give attention, my venerable brethren, to these words), "What did the Roman church appear in those days? How infamous! Only all-powerful courtesans governing in Rome! It was they who gave, exchanged and took bishoprics; and, horrible to relate, they got their lovers, the false popes, put on the throne of St. Peter" (Baronius,

A.D. 912). You will answer, "These were false popes, not true ones." Let it be so; but in that case, if for fifty years the see of Rome was occupied by antipopes, how will you pick up again the thread of pontifical succession? Has the church been able, at least for a century and a half, to go on with ahead, and find itself acephalous?

Look now: the greatest number of these antipopes appear in a genealogical tree of the papacy; and it must have been this absurdity that Baronius described; because Genebrardo, the great flatterer of the popes, had dared to say in his Chronicles (A. D. 901), "This century is unfortunate, as for nearly 150 years the popes have fallen from all the virtues of their predecessors, and have become apostates rather than apostles." I can understand how the illustrious Baronius must have blushed when he narrated the acts of these Roman bishops. Speaking of John XI (931), natural son of Pope Sergius and of Marozia, he wrote these words in his annals: "The holy church, that is, the Roman, has been vilely trampled on by such a monster. John XII (956), elected pope at the age of eighteen through the influence of courtesans, was not one whit better than his predecessor."

I grieve, my venerable brethren, to stir up so much filth. I am silent on Alexander VI, father and lover of Lucretia; I turn away from John XXII (1319), who denied the immortality of the soul and was deposed by the holy Ecumenical Council of Constance. Some will maintain that this council was only a private one; let it be so; but if you refuse any authority to it, as a logical sequence you must hold the nomination of Martin V (1417) to be illegal. What, then, will become of the papal succession? Can you find the thread of it?

I do not speak of the schisms that have dishonoured the church. In those unfortunate days the see of Rome was occupied by two competitors, and sometimes even by three. Which of these was the true pope? Resuming once more, again I say, if you decree the infallibility of the present bishop of Rome, you must establish the infallibility of all the preceding ones, without excluding any. But can you do that, when history is there establishing with a clearness equal to that of the sun that the popes have

erred in their teaching? Could you do it and maintain that avaricious, incestuous, murdering, simoniacal popes have been vicars of Jesus Christ? Oh, venerable brethren, to maintain such an enormity would be to betray Christ worse than Judas! It would be to throw dirt in his face. [Cries, "Down from the pulpit, quick; shut the mouth of the heretic!"]

My venerable brethren, you cry out; but would it not be more dignified to weigh my reasons and my proofs in the balance of the sanctuary? Believe me, history cannot be made over again; it is there, and will remain to all eternity, to protest energetically against the dogma of papal infallibility. You may proclaim it unanimously; but one vote will be wanting, and that is mine! Monsignori, the true and faithful have their eyes on us, expecting from us a remedy for the innumerable evils that dishonour the church: will you deceive them in their hopes? What will not our responsibility before God be, if we let this solemn occasion pass which God has given us to heal the true faith? Let us seize it, my brethren; let us arm ourselves with a holy courage; let us make a violent and generous effort; let us turn to the teaching of the apostles, since without that we have only errors, darkness, and false traditions. Let us avail ourselves of our reason and of our intelligence to take the apostles and prophets as our only infallible masters with reference to the question of questions: "What must I do to be saved?" When we have decided that, we shall have laid the foundation of our dogmatic system firm and immovable on the rock, lasting and incorruptible, of the divinely inspired Holy Scriptures. Full of confidence, we will go before the world; we will "know none other than Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." We will conquer through the preaching of "the folly of the cross," as Paul conquered the learned men of Greece and Rome; and the Roman church will have its glorious '89. [Clamorous cries, "Get down! Out with the Protestant, the Calvinist, the traitor of the church!"] Your cries, Monsignori, do not frighten me. If my words are hot, my head is cool. I am neither of Luther, nor of Calvin, nor of Paul, nor of Apollon, but of Christ. [Renewed cries, "Anathema, anathema, to the apostate."]

Anathema? Monsignori, anathema? You know well that you are not protesting against me, but against the holy apostles under whose protection I should wish this council to place the church. Ah! If wrapped in their winding-sheets they came out of their tombs, would they speak a language different from mine? What would you say to them when by their writings they tell you that the papacy had deviated from the gospel of the Son of God, which they have preached and confirmed in so generous a manner by their blood? Would you dare say to them, "We prefer the teaching of our own popes, our Bellarmine, our Ignatius Loyola, to yours?" No, no! A thousand times, no, unless you have shut your eyes that you may not see, blunted your mind that you may not understand. Ah! If he who reigns above wishes to punish us, making his hand fall heavy on us, as she did on Pharaoh, he has no need to permit Garibaldi's soldiers to drive us away from the eternal city. He has only to let them make Pius IX a god, as we have made a goddess of the blessed Virgin. Stop, stop, venerable brethren, on the odious and ridiculous incline on which you have placed yourselves. Save the church from the shipwreck that threatens her, asking from the Holy Scriptures alone for the rule of faith which we ought to believe and to profess. I have spoken: may God help me!

The Roman Church and The *Westminster* *Confession of Faith*

Of the Holy Scriptures:

The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are not part of the canon of Scripture, and therefore are of no authority in the Church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved or made use of than other human writings.

The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, depends not upon the testimony of any man or Church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself), the author thereof;

and, therefore, is to be received, because it is the word of God.

The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men.

All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all, yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.

The Old Testament in Hebrew ... and the New Testament in Greek ... being immediately inspired by God, and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic; so as in all controversies of religion the Church is finally to appeal unto them. But because these original tongues are not known to all of the people of God, who have right unto and interest in the Scriptures, and are commanded, in the fear of God, to read and search them, therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come....

The infallible rule of Scripture is the Scripture itself...

The supreme Judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.

Of Justification:

Those whom God effectually called he also freely justified; not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins and accounting and accepting their persons as righteous: not for

anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone....

Of the Church:

There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ: nor can the Pope of Rome in any sense be the head there of; but is that Antichrist, that man of sin and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the Church against Christ, and all that is called God.

THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

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Acton on the Papacy

John W. Robbins

Lord Acton: A Study in Conscience and Politics, Gertrude Himmelfarb. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1952, bibliography, index, 258 + x.

Lord Acton: Historian of Liberty. Robert Schuettinger. LaSalle, Illinois: Open Court, 1976, bibliography, index, appendix, 251 + xii.

Many have heard the aphorism, "Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely," though it is usually misquoted as "Power corrupts." Few who have heard it, however, know who its author was: the nineteenth-century German and English historian, John Emerich Edward Dalberg, better known as Lord Acton. Fewer still realize that Acton used the aphorism in opposing the papacy, the monarchy of the Roman Catholic church.

Acton was arguably one of the greatest historians of the nineteenth century, though he never published a book. He was immensely learned, knew several languages, wrote prodigiously, and was a member of the Roman Catholic Church all his life. His criticisms of the papacy and the Roman Church are some of most damning ever leveled against those institutions, and they are virtually unknown today. Yet to anyone seriously concerned about religious and political freedom, Acton's views on the Roman Church, his own church, in particular his condemnation of the papacy, ought to be of great interest. Unfortunately, contemporary theological correctness has a taboo against criticism of Catholicism.

Acton on the Inquisition

In an early essay, "The Protestant Theory of Persecution," Acton opined that the Protestant theory of persecution was worse than the Catholic theory, though Catholic practice was more bloody. A few years later, after more study, the older Acton changed his mind, and condemned Catholic persecution as at least as bad in theory and far worse in practice. In 1867 Acton published many essays and reviews in the *Chronicle*, a short-lived weekly. One essay was provoked by the announcement from Rome that on the 1,800th anniversary of the martyrdoms of the apostles Peter and Paul the infamous Spanish inquisitor, Pedro de Arbues, would be elevated to sainthood. In his essay, Acton revealed some of the common deceptions used by the Roman Church to deny the heinousness of the Inquisition. Acton refuted Joseph de Maistre's argument that the Inquisition was an instrument of the state and not of the Church; he exposed the lie that few or no heretics suffered under the Roman Inquisition; he demonstrated that Giordano Bruno was not the last of its victims.

Acton offered historical evidence to show that Pope Pius V and his adviser, Charles Borromeo, had both instigated and approved murder, and were later canonized as saints. Acton kept a notebook on the Inquisition in which he wrote:

[The] object of the Inquisition [was] not to combat sin – for the sin was not judged by it unless accompanied by [theological] error. Nor even to put down error. For it punished untimely and unseemly remarks the same as blasphemy. Only unity. This became an outward, fictitious, hypocritical unity. The gravest sin was pardoned, but it was death to deny the donation of Constantine. [The Donation of Constantine was a document forged in the eighth century in which the Roman Emperor Constantine willed the Western Roman Empire to the Pope. The Roman Church taught that the Donation was genuine, and the legal basis for the pope's civil authority, for centuries. – JR] So men learnt that outward submission must be given. All this [was] to promote authority more than faith. When ideas were punished more severely than actions – for all this time the Church was softening the criminal law, and saving men from the consequences of crime: – and the Donation was put on a level with God's own law – men understood that authority went before sincerity.

The papacy was designed for power and dominion over men; that was its purpose. And that was why Acton opposed it so vigorously.

Acton believed that the Inquisition was the institution by which the medieval papacy had to be condemned or acquitted. Just as a man charged with murder is judged for a single act, though he may be kind to his mother and a great philanthropist, so the papacy must be judged for the Inquisition. To Mandell Creighton, an Anglican priest, Acton wrote:

I cannot accept your canon that we are to judge Pope and King unlike other men, with a favourable presumption that they did no wrong. If there is any presumption it is the other way, against holders of power, increasing as the power increases. Historic responsibility has to make up for the want of legal responsibility. Power

tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men, even when they exercise influence and not authority: still more when you superadd the tendency or the certainty of corruption by authority. There is no worse heresy than that the office sanctifies the holder of it.... For many years my view of Catholic controversy has been governed by the following chain of reasoning: 1. A crime does not become a good deed by being committed for the good of a church. 2. The theorist who approves the act is no better than the culprit who commits it. 3. The divine or historian who defends the theorist incurs the same blame.... To commit murder is the mark of a moment, exceptional. To defend it is constant, and shows a more perverted conscience.

The St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre

Acton turned his attention to other crimes of the Roman Church as well. Beginning on Sunday, August 24, 1572, tens of thousands of French Huguenots were massacred by the Catholics. Overnight, thousands were murdered, and the murders continued for several months. The massacre began in Paris. The sign of the cross was everywhere, and the murders took on the air of a crusade, a holy war against the infidels. The banks of the Seine became a slaughterhouse. Men, women, children, and infants were stabbed or dragged by a rope around the neck to be thrown into the river. The murder, looting, and rape went on for days in Paris.

On Monday noon, a hawthorn bush in the Holy Innocents' churchyard bloomed. The Romanists regarded it as a miracle and a sign of God's approval for the massacre, for the bush ordinarily bloomed in May. They were incited to new heights of pious hatred. Over the next few days a statue wept, and there was a new star in the night sky. The

Romanists understood all these things as signs from God.

The Pope, Gregory XIII, reacted immediately to the holocaust: He delivered a complimentary speech, and commended the King of France, Charles IX, who "has also displayed before our Most Holy Master and this entire assembly the most splendid virtues which can shine in the exercise of power." The Pope commissioned a mural in honor of the great occasion; he ordered salutes fired for Charles; he had a commemorative seal struck; and in a horrible blasphemy he ordered a special *Te Deum* sung. Less than two years later, at the age of 24, King Charles died in extreme pain with blood oozing from his pores. His last words were pleas to God for pardon for the murders.

The massacre was a matter of controversy in 1868 when Acton wrote an essay in the *North British Review*. He concluded his long essay by saying that there was no evidence to absolve the Roman Church of premeditated murder. Acton argued that it was not only facts that condemned the papacy for this heinous crime, but the whole body of casuistry developed by the church that made it an act of Christian duty and mercy to kill a heretic so that he might be removed from sin. Acton pointed out that only when the Roman Church could no longer rely on force but had to make its case before public opinion did it seek to explain away its murders. "The same motive which had justified the murder now promoted the lie," he wrote. A bodyguard of lies was fabricated to protect the papacy from guilt for this monstrous sin. Acton wrote:

The story is much more abominable than we all believed.... S. B. [St. Bartholomew's] is the greatest crime of modern times. It was committed on principles professed by Rome. It was approved, sanctioned, and praised by the papacy. The Holy See went out of its way to signify to the world, by permanent and solemn acts, how entirely it admired a king who slaughtered his subjects treacherously, because they were Protestants. To proclaim forever that

because a man is a Protestant it is a pious deed to cut his throat in the night....

For three centuries the Roman church's canon law had affirmed that the killing of an excommunicated person was not murder, and that allegiance need not be kept with heretical rulers. Murder and treason were part of the Roman church's official teachings. Charles IX was acting as a good Catholic, and he was highly praised by the pope for his murders.

The Infallibility of the Pope

In 1867 Pope Pius IX summoned a general council of the Roman Church to be held in Rome in 1870. It was the first general council of the Roman Church since the sixteenth century Council of Trent, at which the schismatic Roman Church had condemned all the truths of the Reformation. This time the Pope was determined to establish himself as the infallible sovereign of the Roman Church.

Acton thought that the time of the council would be better spent abolishing many of the "reforms" made by the Council of Trent, reforms which had perpetuated in the Roman Church a spirit of intolerant absolutism, and "austere immorality." He opposed the doctrine of papal infallibility, because, as an historian, he knew the popes were not infallible. Acton wrote:

A man is not honest who accepts all the Papal decisions in questions of morality, for they have often been distinctly immoral; or who approves the conduct of the Popes in engrossing power, for it was stained with perfidy and falsehood; or who is ready to alter his convictions at their command, for his conscience is guided by no principle.

The Vatican Council itself was a travesty. The 700,000 residents of the Roman states were represented by 62 bishops constituting half to two-thirds of every committee. The 1,700,000 Polish Catholics were represented by one bishop, who was not chosen for a single commission; four Neapolitan and Sicilian bishops outvoted the bishops of Paris, Cologne, and Chambray, representing 4,700,000 Catholics. Not to take any chances at losing,

however, the papacy demanded that debates be conducted in Latin, condemning, writes Himmelfarb, nine-tenths of the bishops to silence and the rest to confusion. The pope refused the bishops permission to examine the stenographic reports of their own speeches; he prohibited meetings of 20 or more bishops outside the council; he strictly censored literature, imprisoned and threatened recalcitrant bishops, and continued the time-honored tradition of the Roman post office of opening letters suspected of heresy or error. It was declared to be a mortal sin to communicate anything that occurred in the Council. But all was not threats. The pope used promises of titles, positions, and benefices to aid his cause as well.

Despite these attempts to rig the council, opposition to the notion of papal infallibility continued. Further steps were necessary. Debate was cut off, minority speakers interrupted, and the rules of order and debate were skewed to favor those who favored infallibility. The final text was rushed through the council without any debate at all.

Acton was in Rome at the time of the Council, and being a stalwart opponent of absolute power, he feared assassination by the Jesuits. He referred to them as "that great ecclesiastical polypus, with its thousand feelers and arms." He published an open letter to an anonymous German bishop in 1870 in which he condemned the Vatican Council as "a conspiracy against divine truth and law" and the doctrine of papal infallibility as a "soul destroying error." He warned Prime Minister Gladstone: "We have to meet an organized conspiracy to establish a power which would be the most formidable enemy of liberty as well as science throughout the world."

Acton and Newman

One of the nineteenth century's prominent converts to Romanism was John Henry Newman. He is still admired today by many Protestants, tired of their trek through the wilderness, who remember the grandeur of Rome. Acton disagreed: He considered Newman a member of what he called "a very grotesque company of professing Christians." Newman, Acton thought, had no idea of truth or

right apart from expediency. Of Newman, Acton wrote:

He defended the *Syllabus* [of *Errors*, a document issued by Pius IX in 1864], and the *Syllabus* justified all those atrocities [of the Inquisition]. Pius the Fifth held that it was sound Catholic doctrine that any man may stab a heretic condemned by Rome, and that every man is a heretic who attacks papal prerogatives. Borromeo wrote a letter for the purpose of causing a few Protestants to be murdered. Newman is an avowed admirer of Saint Pius and Saint Charles [Borromeo], and of the pontiffs who canonized them. This, and the like of this, is the reason for my deep aversion for [Newman].

The Roman Church

The Roman Church, thought Acton, abrogated every precept of morality, and men had become demons in the service of religion. After studying the history of the popes, Acton wrote:

The papacy contrived murder and massacre on the largest and also on the most cruel and inhuman scale. They were not only wholesale assassins but they made the principle of assassination a law of the Christian Church and a condition of salvation.... [The Papacy] is the fiend skulking behind the Crucifix.

Conclusion

Both Protestants and Catholics have largely ignored Acton's thought on the papacy in this ecumenical century. He was and is an anomaly: too anti-Catholic to be a good Catholic; too Catholic to be a Protestant. Much of his career was spent protesting the crimes of the papacy and opposing the tendency toward greater centralization within his church. He brought his powerful intellect and immense learning to bear on the question, but he could not thwart the

absolutists within the church. They remain in control of the Roman Church today.

The reason Acton failed is that he did not have a sufficiently profound understanding of the issues. Three hundred years earlier another German had withstood the pope and won. Luther went far deeper than Acton in his condemnation of Rome: By the grace of God Luther understood that the problem with the Roman Church was not primarily in its immorality, egregious though it was, nor even in the church's casuistical defense of its immorality. The fatal problem was its theology. Many before and after him have protested the immorality of Rome, but only Luther's blows struck home, for he knew that the Gospel is the power of God.

Luther challenged the pope on the issue of authority, asserting that the Bible alone, and neither church, pope, council, nor tradition, is the source of truth. No man or group of men can add to or subtract from the Bible. No man or group can bind the conscience of a Christian. Liberty of conscience was a result of the Reformation.

Further, just as there is one source of authority, so there is one mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ. Each believer can approach God directly, through Christ. The Roman Church's apparatus of confession, penance, absolution, and hierarchies of priests was worse than useless. Each man could approach God through one mediator; the hierarchies were human institutions, without divine authority, designed to enslave men. Luther continued his cleansing of the church; There was one source of authority, the Bible; one mediator, Christ; and one instrument of salvation, faith.

Luther challenged the pope on the matter of justification, asserting that the just shall live by faith alone, not by works. That faith and our salvation were granted by grace alone, not because of any works that we have done or might do, but because of the finished work of Christ for us. It was therefore possible to be assured of Heaven, not held in suspense by a corrupt Church hoping to win contributions and obedience from frightened and obsequious members.

At the end of the twentieth century, we ought to learn from Luther: Protesting the immorality of the church or the world will not have any lasting effect. The central problem with both is not moral, but theological. It is the Gospel alone that has the power to dispel the darkness that is enveloping the globe. Luther rediscovered the Gospel in the sixteenth century; or, more accurately, the Gospel discovered Luther. The results were revolutionary, just as they had been in the first century.

Acton was a very brave man to do what he did, but he accomplished little. The papacy remains; the pope still claims to be infallible; the purpose of the Roman Church remains dominion over men. One wonders what might have been the outcome if Acton and his circle of friends within the Roman Church had been enlightened by the Holy Spirit as Luther was. Perhaps another Reformation might have occurred, and the beast struck a wound from which it could never recover.

Christians ought to realize that historically the greatest enemies of Christianity have been false religions. Christ and the apostles were killed by false religionists. The growth of false religions will pose the most serious threats to the church in the next century, should Christ not return to Earth before then.

We cannot meet those threats with denunciations of immorality, nor invocations of God's law, no matter how firmly delivered or richly deserved. Our message must be the Gospel that has turned the world upside down twice. Nothing more is needed; nothing less will do.