

The Infallibility of the Pope

by Ian Paisley

The concept of infallibility is against Scripture, reason, and history, and the ultimate authority is the Bible.

Scripture: Matthew 16:18, John 14:26, 1 Thessalonians 5:21, 2 Timothy 3:16, 1 John 4:1

Topics: "Papal Infallibility", "Roman Catholicism"

Description

Ian Paisley preaches against the claimed infallibility of the Pope, arguing that it goes against Scripture, reason, and history. He questions the basis of the Pope's infallibility, refuting the idea that Saint Peter was infallible and therefore his successor should be. Paisley highlights the inconsistencies and controversies surrounding the concept of infallibility within the Roman Catholic Church, emphasizing the need for individuals to rely on the Bible and the guidance of the Holy Ghost rather than human authority.

Transcript

I shall prove that this claimed infallibility is against Scripture, reason, and history.

The argument is old; yet, not useless now, as it may prevent the introduction among Protestants of some pseudo-infallibility, if not of the Popish infallibility itself.

This infallibility is a Romish point of faith. *

It rests on the same general ground that we have already found the Pope's supremacy placed on; namely, his being St. Peter's successor.

Now, was Saint Peter infallible? If not, his successor, as such, cannot pretend to infallibility. "Yes, Saint Peter was infallible." Why? "Because Christ promised him infallibility." When? "When he said, -Peter, Satan will tempt you, but I pray my Heavenly Father that your faith may be preserved. Consequently Peter, in matters of faith, was immutable, and therefore infallible." But, Peter was not immutable, for he really fell, and thrice denied his Devine Master; being at that moment a real unbeliever. You say, "only externally;" but is an even external unbeliever a proper authority for an infallible dictum? Peter was then an apostate; an unbeliever; therefore, not infallible. +

* It is defined as such where Popery is dominant. Here, and in other Protestant countries, the priest denies this before educated people; but in Italy I never heard from a priest the slightest doubt of the Pope's infallibility; those who do not believe in it are called heretics, and are said to be found among Protestants only. It is a main and cardinal point of Romish Faith.

+ The early Christians were called by the Church apostates when they merely threw a few grains of incense on the fire of a false God;

Infallibility is sought to be proved by Christ's having called Peter the rock, as the Romanists say. In a former Lecture I clearly showed that Peter was not the Rock. *

"But there are texts in which Christ twice promised to be with Peter to the end of time. Do not these make him infallible?" The texts are true texts, but by no means prove infallibility. Christ promised to be with his apostles (not Peter particularly) to the end of time. Christ promised to be with them, with his Church, present with them. Does that look like appointing a successor? +

Alas! for Peter's infallibility! Poor Saint Peter was a very good man, in many instances only a man; as, when he deserted Christ in his passion, when he denied Him in his anguish, when he did not assist Him in Golgotha, when, lest he should scandalise the Jews, he abstained from the society of the Gentiles. To err is human; to be infallible is to be Divine.

But, for arguments' sake, supposing the absurdity that Peter was infallible; still, is the Pope Peter's successor? I have clearly shown that he is not. ++

for this external sign of apostasy, (perhaps without bad design, and with internal faith,) they were expelled from the Church. When Peter thrice denied Christ, the Jews, the Woman, and the soldiers, considered Christ what He was not; had Peter confessed his Divine Master, perhaps He would have suffered so much. Yes, even the apostle Peter was an apostate for the time.

* See Lecture II. First Course. The promise was given for the Church of Christ, not for the Church of Peter; in support of the Church, not a man. Saints Ambrose, Augustine, Hilary, and Eusebius, agree that Peter, not being the rock, is not infallible.

+ Does any one who is not about to absent himself appoint a vicar or a successor? a vicar to one who himself performs his office? a successor to one who is present and continues his functions? No; Christ Himself is always with His church.

++ The proof from the "monuments" is of the same kind as that for the Irish Wells of Saint John and Saint Coleman, whose mysterious appearances are seen every year; and for the tales about the Mamertine Prison, and the Santa Maria in via, where Peter baptised the soldiers who guarded him.

"Saint Peter was at Rome, because his chair is there!" By the same rule he must have been in another place, where he never could have been. A chair used by him ('tis said) when he was bishop of Antioch, called the Antiochian chair, is at Venice; therefore, he was Bishop of Venice!

But let us suppose Saint Peter was infallible, and that the Pope is his successor, and therefore infallible; still, a great question remains, -is Pius IX. infallible? To be so, he must be a Pope; but, is Pius IX. a Pope? You wonder. But the matter really is, and always must be, one of very great doubt. To have a Pope you must have a bishop; to have a bishop, a priest; to have a priest, he must have received Christian baptism, for which, the baptising priest must have had the intention to give it. But no one can ever know he had; therefore, no one can be sure Pius IX. is a Pope. *

Pius IX. then, cannot claim infallibility, even as being certainly Pope. And even if certainly Pope, he is not the successor of Saint Peter; and even if Peter's successor, he is not infallible. Neither history, reason, nor

Scripture establishes Infallibility. Hear the emphatic word of David: "Each man is a liar." Not for any man, but for Himself alone, Christ made this assertion, "I am the way, the life and the truth;" therefore, the only Infallible is Christ.

But Rome has a convenient way of arguing. She knows

But Venice was built nearly four hundred and fifty years after he died. Could he have been at Venice, Bishop of Venice? The Venetians were once great merchants to the east; how easily they could bring this chair to Venice from Antioch, without the original owner ever having been there! Now, suppose that wherever is a chair of Saint Peter, there he must have been. But could either that at Venice or that at Rome have been his? No! The former is of Turkish construction, and has on it some sentences from the Koran; it may be a good Mohammedan, but it is a shockingly bad Christian chair. Mohammed wrote the Koran, therefore this chair must, be at the earliest, have been made in the seventh century; Saint Peter died in the first. Is this chair his? As to the Roman chair, Cardinal Wiseman, a great giant Goliath, met a little female David, Lady Morgan, who, using, instead of a sling, a book which she wrote, gave Cardinal Goliath Wiseman a great blow! In fact she proved that he made a very unlearned blunder. But, being a prince of the Roman Church, he has the privilege of confounding all things human and divine, without any imputation either upon his purity or his learning.

* Even if the baptiser intended, it is still doubtful, for the same reason, that he was a priest; and the same doubt besets us at every stage. Infallibility implies certainty; we have mere supposition.

what texts mean, because she is so infallible, and she is infallible because texts prove her so. *

Further she says, "If you interpret for yourself, then, in the great variety of interpretations, you stray into a labyrinth, and are lost. You must have a guide through the Bible, and I am that guide." Yes; I admit it; to read honestly and rightly, it is necessary to have a guide, and this guide is the Bible itself. The affair is a private one between the individual and his God; between the soul of the Christian and the Holy Ghost. +

An infallible Church! In the sense of the Saviour, a Church is any Christian congregation, large or small. He said, "where two or three of you are gathered together, I will be with you." This promise is to any few anywhere

* To be at once witness and Judge is very pleasant. The infallibility proves the infallibility! Ah! You must prove it, not by itself, nor by the Pope, nor by your Church, but by the Bible! "The Bible proves my infallibility, and my infallibility proves the Bible." "I am infallible because I am infallible." That won't do; logicians call it "a vicious circle."

+ Supposing the Bible, through variety of interpretation, were not a guide, what simple, consistent, and easily consulted substitute does Rome offer? The Canon Law, the Bulls, the Bullarium, the Canons of the Councils, &c. &c. The Canon Law is in twenty folio volumes, the Bullarium in twenty-four, the Canons of the Councils in forty-five; in all ninety folio volumes! Which is more apt to vary, the Bible, the Word of the One and Immutable God, or ninety folio volumes, composed by thousands of different men, in as many different centuries? Something a little worse than the tower of Babel! Blind guides! by the time you have read them, you will be blind yourself and on the edge of a precipice. A multitude of physicians give the speediest passport to the other world, while one good and true physician heals: so this multitude of guides is the prime origin of the confusion which reigns among Roman Catholics.

According to Pius IV., Romanists receive the Bible in the sense of the Church, and the Church according to the unanimous consent of the Holy Fathers. But I have repeatedly shown that they never consent on any doubtful point. They pay a tribute to the Bible, it was the Bible originated the Fathers, not the Fathers the Bible. Thus Basilius, Cyrillus and Augustine, (especially the two former,) said, "Do not receive our teachings as doctrines, but try them by the Holy Book and the Inspired Word; and if you find them according to that Word, receive them, as being so, but not as our doctrines" The majority of the Fathers recognise, not Peter, but Christ in the text of Matthew, "Thou art Peter and upon this Rock, &c." Sometimes the Church recognises the Councils as infallible, sometimes not.

congregated in his name. But does this promise give infallibility? No, he will be with them to aid, guide, and save them. This is not the Popish sense of a Church. According to Cardinal Bellarmino, and Father Perrone, both Jesuits, the Church is represented by the clergy and laity together. Generally speaking, the Councils were composed of clergy alone, the laity were excluded, especially in the latter ages. This is but half a Church; and the infallibility which Christ never promised to the whole, cannot be found with the half. Councils infallible! But even that was not enough. Bellarmino goes further: he says- "they are entitled to make new dogmas of faith, and cannot err, being God himself." No! Christ's dogmas were enough! men cannot add to them.

Councils infallible! No! Not even when general, ecumenical. Some of these were composed of fifty persons, not all bishops even, but part abbots. On the other hand, some National Councils consisted of two hundred bishops. These two hundred, collected for the Church's sake, (as at the Tridentine Council), are infallible, because an Ecumenical Council! What is the number necessary? Some say eighteen, some sixteen, some twelve! The French receive the Councils of Basle and Constance, the Italians reject them. Here is an embroilment-confusion. Where is our rule of faith, our infallibility? * Christ gave the Bible not to bodies, but to individuals, not to the Church, but to the Christians. To individuals, not to the Apostles as a body, He said, "search the Scriptures." Saint Paul said, not to

* Worse: some Councils taught heresies. Constantinople taught that those baptised by heretics, must be re-baptised; one of the Councils of Laodicea, that the soul of man is a corporeal being; both heresies! Nice condemned Arius, and Constantinople absolved him. Constantinople condemned Nice, Lateran condemned Basle. A council of Ephesus condemned Eutychus, and, nineteen years afterwards, a second Council of the same Ephesus absolved him. The Ecumenical Council of Constantinople declared the bread and wine images of Christ's body in heaven; Lateran and Trent pronounced the fullest Transubstantiation. Constantinople and Basle asserted that councils are superior to the Pope; Lateran opposed the claim. Laodicea excluded the Apocrypha. Trent adopted them all!

a body, but to individuals, "try the spirit;" also, "all the Inspired Word is useful, to make the perfect man of God, and instructed in all works." If aught seem obscure, pray to God; and your guide will be not a Jesuit, a Liguorist, a Dominican, a Council, a Pope, but the Holy Ghost. Thus Infallibility is against Scripture and reason. In the last place, it is against history.

When is the Pope infallible? The most severe Romanists answer, when he speaks together with a Council.

But whether is it the Pope who sanctions the Council, or the Council the Pope? If either originate doctrine, and the other approve it, the part of one is useless, for the infallible can do all. "But, they are infallible together." Ay! But, unfortunately, some Councils condemn the doctrine of Popes; while, on the other hand, certain Popes anathematise many Councils! "But we have infallibility when the Pope speaks ex cathedra,

namely, in a Bull." *

Let us see. Firstly, we must understand the Bull. Secondly, we must be certain that the Pope wrote it freely, uninfluenced by fear. Thirdly, we must know whether the Pope invoked the prayers of the whole church. Fourthly, we must be sure the Bull was inspired and suggested by all the bishops in the world. Fifthly, we must know that the Bull was received everywhere. Sixthly, we must be sure that not one among all the bishops refused to accept this Bull. Seventhly, we must be satisfied that the Bull touches on matters of faith or of custom.

When I find any one man in all the world who is reasonably satisfied on all these points, I will let him believe in as many Bulls as he pleased. +

* Bellarmino says, "a bull is certainly inspired by the Holy Ghost. If you try, you will find infallibility in all the Bulls."

+ To try a Bull by these seven points, suppose a good simple Yankee receives one. It is in Latin; he cannot read it; he gets another man to translate it; but is he sure the translation is correct? First difficulty! Then, he will find it very hard, tedious, and expensive to fulfil the remaining conditions. He must write or go to Europe, Asia, Africa, and Oceanica, to know whether every bishop in the world gave his prayers to the Pope, whether the Bull was accepted or refused, whether it touched matter of faith or custom. It may be said, "general certainty will do." No! This is a matter of the soul's safety, and certainly must be complete. How long will it take Jonathan

More; many Popes have been declared apostates and heretics. Marcellinus paid tribute to idols. Liberius denied the passion of Christ. John XXI. was condemned by the University of Paris for many errors. Vigilius, Honorius, John XXIII. were rightly accused as heretics.

The Council of Constance gave some Popes the same title. Infallible Popes! Infallible heretics! *

The Romanists have a great miracle-to get honey from vinegar. Their canon admits the Book of Wisdom, which says: "No bad soul shall ever enter the wisdom of God, and his wisdom shall never inhabit a body subject to sin." Therefore the wisdom of God, which is the infallibility of God, can never be given to Popes, for they are exceedingly subject to sin!

"The Popes are holy men," says Rome. Yes, antonomatically, they are styled "Your Holiness," as a King is spoken of as "His Majesty." Come with me to Rome, and enter the palace of the Vatican. You find guards, chamberlains, prelates, cardinals, surrounding the Pope, this man living in more than imperial state, yet humbly signing himself "the Servant of the Servants of God." A servant living amid the homage of a Court, like an emperor, has a little too much irony in it. On one of his fingers this man wears a ring worth eight thousand dollars, is called the fisherman' ring-as the ring of poor Saint Peter, which probably cost two cents.

to get such certainty? But, suppose he has got it-out comes another Bull; (there are not less than three thousand of them.) He will want a long life!

* What is still more amusing is to see some of those infallibles fighting for infallibility with others of the infallibles like dog and cat. Gregory the Great says, he who assumes the title of the universal bishop, is Satan; and Gregory VII. says the bishop of Rome is universal. Leo IX. is for, and Gregory XIII. against infallibility. Pope Vigilius is against, and Innocent III. for Transubstantiation. Pius V. by a Bull, declared the

breviary correct; Urbanus VIII. declared the breviary of Pius V. full of errors. Sextus V. pronounces the Bible published by him correct; Clement VIII. says the Bible of Sextus V. contains two thousand capital errors. Clement XIV.. by an infallible Bull suppressed the Jesuits as fatal to the church and society. Pius VII. by another infallible Bull, re-established the Jesuits as useful to the church and society. Infallible?

His Holiness! But not himself alone, all belonging to him, is holy. His palaces are called the very holy places; his gardens, the very holy gardens; his stables, carriages, horses, are all most holy. A stranger sees ten, twenty, or thirty horses in the street; he asks whose they are, and is told they "are the most holy horses." This is no exaggeration, no comedy to amuse you, but a common fact. Enter the most holy kitchen, and the most holy cook, (he has no other name in Rome,) will tell you "this is the most holy plum pudding." Is the Pope infallible because "the most holy father?" Then his roast beef must be also infallible, as being "the most holy roast beef." "My Father and I alone are holy," says Christ. Be not surprised if the term applied to sinful man is also debased to things the most vile.

To be always infallible, it is necessary to be always Holy; but to read the history of the Popes-a transcript of crimes the most horrible and revolting.* Oh! to learn what Popes

* Take only one epoch, from the ninth to the eleventh century; and consult only Roman Catholic writers, and those among the purest, Gilbert and Baronius; who state, that many Popes were apostates, and committed crimes degrading to human nature. Formosus became Pope by invading the Basilica of the Vatican where he erected an altar over the slaughtered bodies of the people. After a little, he was overcome, and dragged to death. His successor Stephen had his body taken from the sepulchre, dressed in pontifical robes-brought into conclave, and questioned about the crimes it committed when living. Receiving no answer, Stephen ordered three fingers of the right hand to be cut off, the corpse stripped naked, and cast into the Tiber. He then excommunicated all the followers of Formosus, and cancelled all his acts, so as to cover his memory with ignominy. A few months after, another Pope restored Formosus; a few days subsequently another condemned him and all his acts; and, finally, after seven or eight years, Pope John restored Formosus to all prerogatives and rights among Popes! After the death of Stephen and Boniface, Sergius III. was Pope-called by Baronius, Assassin-one of the worst of mankind. He was made Pope through the favour of Marozia and Theodora-the story of Messalina revived! Two sons of Sergius III., who succeeded him in the popedom, were the paramours, the one of his grandmother, the other of his mother. His son John, who killed his father, and was elected Pope in his seventh year, was called the Nero and Heliogabalus of the church. He committed such enormous licentiousness, that he gave rise to the story of Pope Joan, who was not a female but a male, with the most wicked female habits.

were and are, go to Italy where they are known-incestuous murderers, assassins; no better now than in former days.*

Here is our moral and practical conclusion. Americans, thank God that you are without Popes in your country! Try never to have Popes dominant among you! Keep your Bible-guard your Bible-read your Bible-fulfil the command of your Bible-under the guidance of the Holy Ghost be faithful to your Bible, and to it alone! If any one endeavor to introduce amongst you human authority instead of the authority of the Bible, even though he be in Protestant disguise, Americans distrust him! Americans, beware! it is Satan introducing the Pope and Popery into your country!

* Pope Gregory XVI. was a public drunkard, and publicly recognised as an adulterer. The present Pius IX. to speak benevolently of him, is a vile apostate from the Italian cause, a vile calumniator of his

fellow-countrymen, and a vile leader of the cursed system of despotism now prevailing in Europe.

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