

CEPHAS

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HE fullness of time has come. The Holy Redeemer is now on the earth, having come, not to destroy the Law but to perfect it. The glorious prophecies concerning the Son of Man are soon to be fulfilled. The world is to have a Church, a Church embracing within its jurisdiction, the ends of the earth, a Church that is to be built upon Unity. (Eph. IV). It is to be the care of the Son of Man that the foundation of that unity be established and that it be established, immovably and indestructibly, amidst the shifting sands of the world. Mark well, the unity, in the very beginning of the organization of the Catholic Church! One day, "Andrew findeth his brother Simon and saith to him: We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And Jesus looking upon him, said: Thou art Simon son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is being interpreted Peter" (John I, 41, 42). Simon at that time did not know, nor did he manifest surprise, nor did he ask the reason why the Messias was changing his name. He did not understand that this new name which the Master had given him signified a *rock*, a rock that would be of unconquerable strength. The Rock that would be a foundation only second to the Chief Foundation, Christ Himself. But he knew he had found the Messias and he knew he felt a great love for the Redeemer. At this very first meeting between Jesus and Simon Peter, there was a beginning of manifestation of the Saviour's Will, His designs and plan, regarding the organization of the Catholic Church, His Church.

WHOM DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?

The Twelve have been called; the Apostolic College has been formed; the Christian plan is to be further developed. Walking on a certain occasion with His disciples, Jesus halted of a sudden and said to them: "Whom do men say that the Son of man is? But they said: Some John the Baptist, and other some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets. Jesus saith to them: But who do you say I am? Simon Peter answered and said: Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. XVI, 13-15). This was the first open

confession, in plain words, in the face of the world, in acknowledgment of the Divinity of Jesus Incarnate. The knowledge came first from the Father to Simon. The reason for the change of name was becoming manifest, even though Peter still did not ask. "And Jesus answering said to him: Blessed art thou, Simon Bar Jona: because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. XVI, 17). Thus we know that Saint Peter was the first to whom the Divinity of Jesus Christ was specially revealed by the Eternal Father. He was the first to make noble and open confession of that Divinity to the world. Immediately upon this confession, yet another revelation was made to Simon Peter in the presence of the disciples. The reason for the change of name was now made plain. To the Apostles of Christ, who in due time were to be commissioned as chiefs in the Christian Spiritual Army, Jesus Christ, the All-Wise Sovereign, made known the selection of a Chief of Chiefs. The Sovereign, then and there, pronounced as it were, His selection of the sole Head to rule in the Christian organization, so that His Church on earth might forever continue to be one. The assembled disciples understood full well the Saviour's plan. A special commission was given to Peter alone, a commission of such a nature never promised to, never expected by, never given to any man before the constitution of the Church. It was fitting that the future Commander in Chief of the Church should receive from the Sovereign, in the presence of the assembled designated chiefs, a special commission defining to him and to them the nature, extent, and duration of the very authority and power entrusted to that Chief. The proclamation of the Lord was, as is universally known: "Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven" (Matt. XVI, 18, 19). Now therefore, we behold the Sovereign Himself, and there stands Peter, the Rock, the sole designated recipient of the plentitude of power, the sole holder of the emblematic keys, the sole designated repository of the delegated jurisdiction, holding special commission. Thus Peter was to be the foundation upon which the Church was to be built. Would Christ, who always works perfectly, choose a weak foundation for His sacred edifice? It is sheer foolishness to entertain such a thought. Yet were Peter fallible in all-important matters of faith and morals, he would be a very weak foundation . . . as sand, crumbling under the slightest pressure. This is scarcely the legitimate picture of

an Eternal Builder. What is more it cannot be. True, Christ did not explicitly use the word *infallibility* when He spoke to Peter but it is most emphatically implied. Christ inferred infallibility; and He intended all the successors of Saint Peter to share in that infallibility.

THE CHURCH, A VISIBLE BODY

Our Church has become an organized, visible fact in the world. She is what we may call a "corporation," recognizable and recognized as such by the world at large. Being such a corporate institution, the body has a governing head, a corps of governing teachers, and also, numbers of individual taught and governed members. Jesus has ascended from earth. The great Supreme Head of the Christian Church sitteth at the right hand of God the Father, whence He will visibly come again to judge the world. Having fully organized His Church on earth before withdrawing from it His own visible presence, it is natural that we should seek to find some open declaration of Our Lord by which men may be assured of His recognition of the organization, as the same which had been perfected by Himself. We have no difficulty in showing this recognition. One day, after His Resurrection, in the presence of the other Apostles, Jesus turned to Peter and said to him: "Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these? He saith to Him: Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith to him: Feed My lambs. He saith to him again: Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me? He saith to Him: Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith to him: Feed My lambs. He said to him the third time: Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me? Peter was grieved, because He said to him the third time: Lovest thou Me? And he said to Him: Lord, thou knowest all things: Thou knowest that I love Thee. He said to him: Feed my sheep (John XXI, 16, 17). "Feed My lambs." "Feed My sheep." What a tender command! What extraordinary love must have filled the Divine Heart of Our Lord as He issued that loving order to the Prince of the Apostles, the true Shepherd. For only the true and eternal pastor would be anxious for the safety of the flock. Thus Christ constituted Peter as His own representative, His own personal Vicar, the visible head of His Holy Church. In doing so, He promised Peter that he would not, indeed that he could not err, when it was a question of leading that chosen flock along the rough road, back to their Eternal Shepherd.

THE INFALLIBILITY OF PETER'S SUCCESSORS

In speaking thus to Peter, did our Divine Lord, promise him

complete freedom from sin? Was Peter from that moment personally sinless? Absolutely not! Christ by no means conferred personal *impeccability* on Peter or on his successors in the Primacy. The Roman Pontiffs are human, and thus they are also capable of sinning. If we are to judge from external appearances, there have been occupants of the See of Peter who have been guilty of grave sins. Still history can tell us no more than one or two names and then with no certainty. It also should be noted that our Lord did not intend that the Pope, when teaching as a private individual, even though he be the most gifted of teachers, should be infallible. "To err is human," and any teacher, no matter whether he be Pope or not, when acting as a mere human individual, is liable to error. But the Pope, while acting as the personal representative of Christ, proclaiming a doctrine for the whole flock, and one that is necessary to insure the eternal salvation of that flock, enjoys *infallibility*. Or again, the Pope, as the Supreme Head of the Church, combines in his person four distinct offices: first, the office of Teacher and Guardian of Christian Revelation, secondly, the office of Legislator in Ecclesiastical matters, thirdly, the office of Judge in Ecclesiastical cases, fourthly, the office of Governor and Ruler of God's spiritual kingdom on earth. In this fourfold character the Pope is Supreme, and has the plenitude of authority over the entire Church, and over every branch of it throughout the world. But, he is infallible only in the discharge of the office of Teacher and Guardian of Christian Revelation.

In the year 1869, the historical Council of the Vatican, convoked by the saintly Pope Pius IX, defined infallibility. "*We teach and we define it to be divinely revealed dogma, that the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks 'ex cathedra,' enjoys infallibility in defining matters of faith and morals.*" . . . Immediately there arose a tremendous furore. Those who called themselves "Old Catholics" declared that the Council was defining a new dogma. It was not a new dogma. The Vatican Council was defining *anew*, a dogma that was as old as the Church itself. It was a dogma that for many centuries had been accepted without question. It was revealed by Christ Himself. It was a dogma that was implicitly contained in the Deposit of Faith. But now according to the Divine Plan, the time had come to make this doctrine explicit.

INFALLIBILITY A SAFEGUARD OF UNITY

It has always been remarked by converts to the true Church, that the fact which impressed them most profoundly was the remarkable

unity of faith. But would this remarkable unity be possible without Papal Infallibility? History answers this question without doubt. In order to have some criterion for determining those things which must be believed, and to put a stop to discussions concerning faith and morals, there is necessarily required some supreme authority with sufficient power to act, and who can demand perfect obedience; and this supreme authority on earth can only be the Roman Pontiff, endowed with the gift of infallibility.

Christ said: "I am the good shepherd" (John X, 11). As the invisible head, He is truly the Good Shepherd. But there is another who can likewise say, "I, too, am the good shepherd." For our Holy Father is the earthly representative and visible head of Christ's flock. Can we reasonably believe that a good shepherd, invisible or visible, would take the awful risk of poisoning his beloved flock? This thought is revolting; yet do not those who deny infallibility in the Roman Pontiff imply this horrible fact?

There is a day determined in the Eternal Decrees of the Almighty, when all must unite in acknowledging the Roman Pontiff as the Supreme Shepherd on this earth. And in making this confession, they must admit that this Vicar of Christ shares by a special gift of God in that infallibility which is the very essence of the Divinity. And then that will be fulfilled which was foretold by the Eternal Shepherd: "And other sheep I have, that are not of this fold: them also must I bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd" (John X, 16).