

Papal Infallibility

by Ian Paisley

Ian Paisley's sermon critiques the concept of Papal Infallibility, arguing it is an absurd claim that contradicts both reason and scripture.

Scripture: Psalm 146:3, Jeremiah 17:5, 1 Corinthians 1:25, 1 Timothy 6:16, Revelation 19:16

Topics: "Papal Authority", "Church Governance"

Description

Ian Paisley delivers a sermon critiquing the claim of infallibility within the Papal system, emphasizing that infallibility belongs only to God and not to any human being. He highlights the inconsistencies and imperfections of Peter, questioning the audacity of his professed successors to claim such an attribute. Paisley exposes the historical record of the Popes, depicting a lineage marred by impiety, profligacy, and wickedness, challenging the notion of Papal infallibility. He dissects the arguments for infallibility in both the Pope and General Councils, ultimately concluding that the belief in Papal infallibility is preposterous and devoid of substantial grounds.

Transcript

Infallibility is a dogma at which the Protestant world has long ceased to look with gravity. Among them it only serves the purposes of humour, mockery, and reproof to self sufficient folly. The claim to infallibility, however, notwithstanding its superlative absurdity, was necessary to the completion of the Papal system, which would otherwise have been wanting in the most material feature of its impiety, while all the other parts would have lacked coherence. Nothing created can be infallible. Infallibility implies self-existence - independence, infinitude, omniscience, omnipotence and eternity.

Infallibility belongs only to God. For a human being to lay claim to it, but for the shocking impiety, would be to excite ineffable ridicule; and were it not for the circumstances under which the claim is made, it would be considered as a freak of lunacy. It is especially with very great incongruity that the professed successors of Peter lay claim to such an attribute, since nothing was further from the mind of Peter himself, and, indeed, nothing was farther from his character. With all his worth, he was anything but a perfect man; of all the Apostles, he had the least claim to such a distinction, for prudence propriety, and general consistency. He admits of comparison with none of them; more defective features came out in his single history than in that of all the rest united, with the exception of Judas; and, indeed, but for the close of his career, even he seems to have been one of the discreetest among them. His very vice was productive of cautious propriety.

Peter, on the contrary, even subsequently to his restoration after his fall, and the baptism of Pentecost, was still attended by his characteristic infirmity. His inconsistency was such, that, on a very memorable occasion, it became necessary for Paul to withstand him to the face, and to rebuke him in the presence of all the people. But with all his imperfections, there is no hazard in affirming that he was incomparably better than the best of his successors so called at Rome the bulk of whom have been the worst of human kind. This is the unanimous voice of history.

No matter; Infallibility was found to be necessary to sustain the claims of the Popedom, and infallibility was arrogated accordingly. The Pope cannot err either in doctrine or in discipline; hence, the world is summoned to implicit submission to all his dogmas, and all his decisions, on pain of damnation! According to that Goliath of Popery, Bellarmine, "If the Pope should command vice, or prohibit virtue, the church is obliged to believe vice to be good and virtue to be evil! All the sanctions of the Apostolic see are so to be understood, as if confirmed by the voice of St. Peter himself; whatsoever the Church, doth determine, whatever it doth appoint, is perpetual and irrevocable, and to be observed by all men." "Christ has bestowed on the Pope, who is Peter's successor, the same infallible spirit that he had; and, therefore, the Pope's decretory letters are to be received as if they were the words of St. Peter, and to be accounted as the very Bible itself."

It is difficult to say whether the impiety or the absurdity of this language be the greater; but surely to state, is sufficiently to expose it to all men of common sense. The doctrine was suited only for children, or for those adults who are but "children of larger growth," although their brainless heads might be clothed with grey hairs. The race of the Popes, happily for the interests of the truth, have found faithful chroniclers of their deeds, and the record is but one mingled mass of impiety, profligacy, and peerless wickedness, all on a scale beyond the average iniquity, even of the worst portion of mankind.

Viewed as a succession, they have but too well sustained the dreadful designation given them by the Holy Spirit the Man of Sin. "In most of them the work of iniquity has been completed;" they have nearly all reached the fullness of the stature of perfect men in enormity; they have, in very deed, been children of the devil, enemies of all good, who have never for a moment ceased "to pervert the right ways of the Lord." Compared with them, the old Emperors of Rome were moralists, and almost saints! There is no crime of which humanity is capable, with which one or other of them has not been chargeable. A portion of them have been monsters rather than men!

Pope Marcellinus sacrificed to idols; Pope Felix was perjured; Pope John denied the immortality of the soul; Leo X was enormity personified; Alexander VI., and several others, were atheists! Even one of the greatest of Papal historians has testified that John XXIII. was "the genius of evil in human shape;" by his own confession, he was guilty of the most revolting sensuality of simony, of poisoning his predecessor, and a multitude of other crimes, at which humanity shudders.

These are facts; the question, then, is, in what light ought the world to look upon the pretension of such a line of men to Infallibility? Surely among persons of ordinary reason, that question may soon be determined. But before we advance, we must look a little more closely into the subject; and in so doing it is proper to observe that there is no point in which the boasted unanimity of the Catholic Church is so imperfect and untenable. They all agree that there is infallibility somewhere; but there is a dispute as to its seat, whether it be in the Pope, or in General Councils. Even the Council of Trent on this point, as if conscious of danger, has spoken with caution. The following is its deliverance:

"The Church cannot err in delivering Articles of Faith, or Precepts of Morality, inasmuch as it is guided by the Holy Spirit;" and, as a conclusion, they add: "It necessarily follows that all other Churches which falsely claim that name, and being also led by the Spirit of the Devil, are most dangerously out of the way, both in doctrine and practice." This is a compliment to Luther and the Protestants. The Jesuits and a portion of the Romish Divines, however, contend for the Infallibility of the Pope. Another class of them deny this, and insists that the Infallibility rests, not with the Pope, but with the General Council, "viewed as the legitimate organ and representative of the Catholic Church?" This latter class, however, will be considered as but a slight exception to the rule. The notion of personal infallibility in the Pontiff, is the orthodox view, and has -been- such indeed, to the present time. As is obvious from the Encyclical Utter of the present Pope, Pius IX published in 1846, in which he states that "God has constituted a living authority to teach the true sense of his heavenly revelations, and to judge infallibly in all controversies on matters of faith and morals."

There can be no mistake in the language; its import is plain. It claims for Pope Pius IX and his successors entire infallibility. This specimen puts an end to the exercise of popular judgment. How unlike the Apostle Paul, who says to the Corinthians "I speak as unto wise men; judge ye what I say!" Pope Pius IX. will have no "judging" He asks only for doing, and enjoins it under the penalty of perdition! Happily, however, men may reject the dogmas of Pope Plus, and yet be saved; nay, that they may be saved, it must be so! The claim is alike unfounded in reason and in Scripture.

All the attempts to prove it from the latter source are insulting perversions of the Word. We may take an example from Matthew xviii. 20, where the Lord makes a promise of his presence, where two or three" are met together in his name. Will any man for a moment say that these words refer to an Ecclesiastical Council met to decide matters of controversy in doctrine, morals, or discipline? Can anything be more incontrovertibly certain than that they refer exclusively to Social. Prayer? The Papists should consider the consequences of thus tampering with Scripture; and if it proves anything on the subject of Councils, it will prove too much since it will enable a thousand men to constitute 500 general councils. It will farther show that there has been a vast amount of needless expenditure in travelling in past times.

If Christ's being in the midst of them makes them infallible, since it is sure that he will never be worse than his word, it is also certain that if but two or three only shall meet together in his name in London when so met together they will be infallible; and if infallibility may be bad at home, and also at so cheap a rate great fools are they who will put themselves to the trouble and expense of travelling to Rome for it.

The words of the Saviour to Peter have also been specially relied on in Luke xxii. 32, in which he says that he had "prayed for him that his faith may not fail." We offer this as a very striking example of Popish craft and dishonesty. Even a child will see that the Saviour's prayer referred to Peter personally and exclusively, and that even in his case, it referred not to his whole career, but to the coming hour of Satanic temptation, when the enemy should seek to sift them as wheat." The advocates of Popery apply this language to Peter's faith in Christian doctrine, and, placing him first in the Papal chair, make him the federal head of the Papal line, and thus give them all the benefit of the prayer which that Saviour had presented for Peter on a special occasion.

But we will not further disgust our readers. If Infallibility have an existence on earth. it is very clear that it is not in the Pope. Popes have, by decrees contradicted themselves and each other; history abounds with examples of such contradiction, a portion of the Popes, moreover, have been convicted of undoubted heresy. They went not only in the teeth of the acknowledged doctrines of the Sacred Scriptures, even on

points in which Protestants and Papists are agreed. Some Popes have been schismatic, and there have been two and even three at the same time warring and hurling anathemas at each other.

Wherever infallibility resides, therefore, it is not in them Is it, then, in General Councils? Perfection is one; could perfect beings thus coexist or did they exist in succession they could never thus have contradicted each other. But councils as well as popes, from the first, have dealt in such contradictions, and that in matters and measures of the most serious character. The Council of Trent, for instance, expunged the decrees of the Councils of Ephesus and of Nice, by greatly multiplying the articles of faith. The Council of Laodicea, in 364 rejected the Apochrypha; the Council of Trent, in 1564, hurled its anathemas against every man who should not receive and hold every part of that very Apochrypha as inspired and canonical! Other councils acted similarly concerning the use of images, the celibacy of the clergy and other subjects. So much for the infallibility of General Councils!

Such, then, is a general view of this most preposterous dogma of Papal infallibility, and we think it not too much to say, that he who can believe it will find no difficulty in believing anything that may be conveyed in words; proof will neither be wanted nor welcomed, and even plausibility will, perhaps, be deemed an impertinence. It was not without substantial ground that the Church of Rome held and still holds that "ignorance is the mother of devotion," such devotion as that of the Popedom. Darkness is its native element. Let the true light of heaven shine upon it, and it is undone Hence the truth, propriety, and force of the apostolic prediction, that the whole of the colossal system shall be destroyed by the Son of God "through the breath of his mouth, and the brightness of his coming." The righteous will pray that the wickedness of the wicked may come to an end, in order to the establishment of the just.

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