

REV. DR. LITTLEDALE ON
THE PAPAL CLAIMS.

I SUPPOSE it is because the traditional polemic of the Church of England against the Church of Rome has been exclusively doctrinal, that there seems some difficulty entertained by yourself and by others in recognizing the greater cogency of the legal argument against Ultramontanism. Yet it is the legal aspect of the Papacy which constitutes its menace to the faith. If Rome claimed no more than priority of rank among the patriarchates, then, however unfortunate the precept and example of such a great Church would still be when making for herself, it would not be the overwhelming disaster to Christendom which it actually is, in consequence of the Papal claim to absolute legal rule over the Church, virtually conceded by Latin Christendom. This is a legal claim (though of course the law upon which it is grounded professes to be an inference from dogma,) and therefore it is subject to and must be tested by legal methods.

I do not think I need trouble myself with a controversialist "pour rire," like "Father Austin," but I would fain address myself to your criticisms, wherein you imply that I "prove too much." I allow that it is a great deal too much to be convenient for Ultramontanes to admit, but doesn't go one hair's breadth beyond the undisputed facts. Granting your contention that what is the creation of human law can be dispensed by human law, yet that does not avail to revalidate the voided Papacy, and for these two simple reasons—(1) No retrospective action has ever been taken to make good

the defects imported into the Papal elections in the sixteenth century, they have simply been covered up in silence; (2) from the nature of the case no validation coming from the Pope or the College of Cardinals, even if it were producible, could avail, seeing that it is their own *status* which is the thing to be validated, and they cannot give themselves a certificate of validity. I would press again some points whose force seems to have been imperfectly apprehended.

1. The papacy is just the one dignity in the Christian Church where *de facto* possession is not allowed to count in favor of the occupant unless *de jure* enjoyment can be proved also. There is no "colourable title" to fall back on, that is specially barred, as I mentioned, by three Papal Bulls. Cardinal Baronius, who knew as much about Roman canon law and history as most men, is precise in stating that the intruded Popes of the Pornocracy were none of them valid Pontiffs, though not one protest against the validity of their tenure is citable in their own times. Now, there is no serious dispute as to the fact that there were three Popes successively elected through simony after the decease of Sixtus IV. in 1484—namely, Innocent VIII., Alexander VI., and Julius II. (Pius III., who came between the two latter, sat less than a month, and need not be counted,) and that the whole College of Cardinals which elected Leo X. (whose election is doubted on other grounds also) were created by Alexander VI. and Julius II., no-Popes by universal and Roman canon law. I must once again press upon your readers the vital fact that the Bulls I have referred to distinctly provide that no acceptance or