

bishop of Rome The tribunal of the Pope is universally acknowledged as competent to pronounce judgment in controversies which regard faith, and its decrees, directed to the body of bishops, or to the Church at large, proposing doctrines under penalty of excommunication, *when acquiesced in by the bishops*, are final and irreversible." These in brief are the views that have been held on this question. It would be absurd to discuss the source of an attribute whose possession by any man or set of men, we utterly deny. Yet it is one of those claims which have had vast influence over minds specially constituted, and which in the vain desire of rest from troublous speculations, tormenting doubts and overwhelming fears, has led some of the noblest intellects to surrender their wills and the powers of their minds in slavish submission to an arrogant assumption, unsupported by Scripture, and contradicted by the history even of some of the dogmas of the Romish Church—dogmas now articles of the faith, to disbelieve which is to incur, according to its teaching, eternal condemnation, but which have repeatedly been declared deadly errors not by *one*, but by the conjoint action of *all* the bodies in whom infallibility is supposed to be vested.

The last memorable addition made to these articles of faith was that of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. The title of "Mother of God" was first bestowed on her, not to enhance her dignity, but to vindicate the divinity of Christ in opposition to the heresy of Nestorius, and in this sense it was explained, in the decree conferring the title. The increasing reverence for her, strengthened by the conferring of the title and the growth of saint and image worship, led to her being placed in the front rank of the saints, and fact was supplanted by mythology in the story of her life, the legend of her assumption was credited, and service till then reserved for God alone, offered to her, winked at by the See of Rome, but not authoritatively adopted. At the Council of Constance it was proposed to make a declaration not only of her immaculate conception but also of that of Joseph, but this proposal was rejected. The Council of Basle pronounced in favour of the new doctrine, but that Council had been declared schismatical by the Pope, because it had done so much to limit his power. The council of Trent came to no definite conclusion, but the laity adopted the belief in the sinlessness of Mary and upheld the

doctrine in despite of excommunications directed against those who did so. But in spite of these decisions, which, according to the theory of the church of Rome are *final and irreversible* the popular will triumphed, and the belief declared an error by several *infallible* authorities, was on the 8th of December, 1854, with all the pomp and display which the church of Rome knows so well how to use, *infallibly* proclaimed an article of the faith, to doubt which was to be damned. In the bull issued on this occasion the claim of the personal infallibility of the Pope was assumed, and a great step gained by the Ultramontane party, who have for years been preparing the minds of the adherents of the Romish Church for such a declaration. The Encyclical letter and syllabus, asserting supremacy over the souls and even the thoughts of mankind followed, and at the Œcumenical Council shortly to meet, the claims advanced in these are to be confirmed, the crowning stone is to be put on the pretensions of Rome, and the will of one weak man is to be declared the voice of God.

The meeting of the Council is looked forward to with much anxiety by several of the Continental powers. The other Churches to which the Pope sent invitations to attend, in his supposed capacity as the vicegerent of God on earth, have declined the invitation. The Greek church repudiates his authority over it, claiming that the supreme power resides in the Eastern and not in the Western Pontiff, the German Protestants have in unmistakeable terms reiterated their protest against the errors and idolatry of the church of Rome; the Roman Catholic laity of the diocese of Treves, have addressed an expostulation to the Bishop of the diocese. The remonstrance was called forth by an article from a French correspondent published in the *Civiltà Cattolica*, the Jesuit organ, and the document is so remarkable, considering who are its authors, that we republish it at page 286. The Hungarian Government has intimated that unless the Romish church is prepared to give certain guarantees as to the spirit and tendency of the Council, they will prohibit the Hungarian prelates from attending. In Italy an anti council has been called to discuss the questions to come before the Council, and the meeting, at first treated lightly by the Romish authorities has been condemned, and an intimation sent that those attending would be excommunicated. The wisest and most judicious adherents of Rome tremble for