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PRELIMINARY TO A DISCUSSION.

Pittsburg, Pa., July 28, 1897.
The Rev. L. A. Lambert, LL. D.

(1) Dear Sir: The position taken in your letter in the *Freeman's Journal* of July 21 seems to me to block the way most effectually against any discussion of the main issues between us. You ask for a common understanding on the issues in question, such, in your judgment, as would render the discussion of them altogether uncalled for. As it appears to me, you, in fact, require that we should agree on the very point at issue as a preliminary to what would then become an impertinent discussion.

(2) It was my endeavor to present the issues between us as pointedly as they can be presented in a comprehensive form, in the affirmation that the essential and distinctive principles of Roman Catholicism are a departure from the principles of the Apostolic Church. With the same clearness and definiteness these issues are also presented in the statement of the essential and distinctive principles of Roman Catholicism are identical with the principles of the Apostolic Church. Either one of these theses will bring the proposed discussion directly and without any delay to its most vital points.

Suppose we agree to discuss the latter of the above propositions. You would in that case take the affirmative and begin the discussion. Why could you not do so without any further preliminaries by taking up one point under the general proposition? Why could not we begin the discussion by affirming that the doctrine of the Roman Pontiff is an essential and distinctive principle of the Roman Catholic Church, and by then proceeding at once with your argument to prove that this principle was also a principle of the Church of Christ in the days of the Apostles.

Or, if the former of the foregoing propositions were accepted as the one to be discussed, I cannot see anything that could properly hinder one from proceeding at once to affirm that the principle of the infallibility of the Roman Pontiff is an essential and distinctive principle of Roman Catholicism, and to follow this immediately with the proof that this principle was not a principle of the Apostolic Church.

In either case we would have a common understanding that the doctrine of the infallibility of the Roman Pontiff is an essential and distinctive doctrine of Roman Catholicism. We would both appeal to the definition of this doctrine, as contained in the First Dogmatic Constitution concerning the Church of Christ, proclaimed in the decree of the fourth session of the Vatican Council. To similar documents the appeal would be made in determining all other essential and distinctive principles of Roman Catholicism. I agree with you when you say that these principles "are found in the doctrinal definitions of the [Roman Catholic] Church, and there alone."

Having come to a common understanding as to what any distinctive principle of Roman Catholicism is, is not the next step logically a discussion on our part of the point on which we differ, viz., whether or not the said principle was embodied in the constitution of the Apostolic Church? Is it not absolutely necessary for us, with our divergent views, to discuss this point before we can come to a common understanding in regard to it? How else can we determine this and other similar issues between us?

Permit me to repeat just here your words quoted above, "and there alone." Unintentionally on your part, these words present the point on which we discuss in reference to the essential and our understanding to be the essential and distinctive principles of Roman Catholicism. Your words come to hand most opportunely to express my contention. They state concisely what I believe to be true, namely, that the essential and distinctive principles of Roman Catholicism are found in the definitions given by that system, "and there alone." These doctrines, as I read the history of that age, are, in fact, not found in the inspired records of the Apostolic Church—the Sacred Scriptures. I propose to give the proof of this in the discussion which we are unable to begin because of what seems to me the unreasonable preliminary requirement that we should first come to a common understanding as to what were the principles of the Apostolic Church.

To demonstrate how unreasonable this required preliminary is, let me illustrate its practical application. You say expressly: "It is evident that we cannot go to work on this proposition (viz., that the essential and distinctive principles of Roman Catholicism are a departure from the principles of the Apostolic Church) without first having a common understanding of what the principles of (Roman) Catholicism are, and what the principles of the Apostolic Church." That is, to take the one of three principles mentioned already, we must come to a common understanding that the infallibility of the Roman Pontiff is a distinctive principle of Roman Catholicism. Very well. We already have that common understanding. But you demand further that, before proceeding with the proposed discussion, we must have a common understanding as to whether this principle was or was not a principle of the Apostolic Church. In other words, whether it is found in the doctrinal definitions of the Roman Catholic Church, "and there alone," or also in the inspired and authoritative account of the divine constitution of the Apostolic Church.

Let us suppose that we do in some way, before proceeding with our proposed discussion, reach a common understanding, either that the doctrine of the Papal infallibility was, or that it was not, a principle of the Apostolic Church. What will then remain of this particular issue to be discussed? On the other hand, you would then agree with me that this essential and distinctive principle of Roman Catholicism was not a principle of the Apostolic Church; or, on the other hand, I would agree with you that it was. And such a preliminary common understanding, either one way or the other, would make the further discussion of this point, on our part, as I affirmed at the beginning of this letter, both needless and impertinent.

Perhaps you may say that you never intended anything so unreasonable as for two persons, who have diametrically opposing views on the question, whether or not the infallibility of the Roman Pontiff was a principle of the Apostolic Church, to come to a common understanding on that point without discussing it. In that case, I am happy to be already at a common understanding with you that it is in order for us to proceed with the discussion, whether that or any other essential and distinctive principle of the Apostolic Church was a principle of the Apostolic Church without waiting for an order for us to proceed with the discussion, whether that or any other essential and distinctive principle of the Apostolic Church was or were not the principles of the Apostolic Church.

But I imagine I hear you repeat your demand that we must first come to a common understanding as to what were the principles of the Apostolic Church. If this demand means anything, it must mean that we take up one principle after another, and discuss whether or not it was a principle of the Apostolic Church. Taking up the first of all, the doctrine of the Papal infallibility, it is clear to my mind to me that that principle was, or I must prove to you that it was not, a principle of the Apostolic Church before we can come to a common understanding on this point.

For my part, I certainly do not expect or ask you to come to a common understanding with me as to what was or was not any one of the principles of the Apostolic Church before the proofs on my side are given and the opposing arguments on your side are fairly answered. If you require and expect me to reach a common understanding with you in any other way than in order which I have indicated, it is in order for you to make your method so clear and plain, like the sacred Scriptures, that a wayfarer man like myself need not err therein.

Taking it for granted that you agree with me that the most reasonable way of coming to a common understanding as to what were the principles of the Apostolic Church is by a courteous, candid and careful discussion, I now propose that our discussion begin with the examination of the following proposition: "Resolved, That the principle of the infallibility of the Roman Pontiff was a principle of the Apostolic Church." Or if you wish me to affirm and begin the discussion, let the statement be in the negative form: "Resolved, That the principle of the infallibility of the Roman Pontiff was not a principle of the Apostolic Church."

Permit me to say, in closing, that while I certainly do not wish to appear to be going about with a chip on my shoulder, and while I am far from hinting that a champion of your proved position is afraid of such a humble opponent as myself, it does seem passing strange that we cannot proceed with our proposed discussion by bringing forward, without any delay, our arguments to prove or to disprove the claims of the Papal infallibility and all other essential and distinctive principles of Roman Catholicism to be the principles of the Apostolic Church. Respectfully yours, David McAlister.

REPLY.
Rev. Dear Sir: Your letter is but an elaboration of your Pittsburg *Gazette* interview, which I commented upon in last week's *Freeman's Journal*. In my comments I anticipated much in this reply I may have to run in the same general line of thought.
The insistence on the essential conditions of logical debate does not block the discussion of the issues between us; it blocks only illogical discussion of them, and illicit processes. It prepares the way to clear and clean work when the discussion is on.

I do, as you state, insist on a common understanding on the issues in question. We must know what the issues are, otherwise it is evident a discussion is impossible. For instance, before we can discuss Catholic doctrines we must agree on what these doctrines are. Without knowing what they are I could not defend them, nor could you refute them. This argument as to what they are does not mean an agreement as to the truth or error of them. It is only after we have come to this common understanding in the issue in question that we are in a position to discuss its truth or fallacy. Thus it is that a common understanding, instead of blocking discussion or making it needless, makes it impossible; without it, discussion—at least intelligent discussion—would be impossible. What we say in reference to Catholic doctrine is equally true of Apostolic doctrines.

To find likeness or unlikeness between principles or doctrines, a comparison must be made. But it cannot be made until both principles or doctrines are known. You cannot say A is or is not B until you know the value of both A and B. Just so with Catholic principles and the principles of the Apostolic Church. Both must be known before likeness or unlikeness can be affirmed or denied. These principles of dialectics are so self-evident I am inclined to believe that in objecting to them you are laboring under a misapprehension.
As matters now stand between us one term of the comparison—Catholic principles—is known. But the other term—principles of the Apostolic Church—is not known. You propose to discover it by means of a discussion. This brings us to a most important point, wherein the necessity of a common ground or criterion, or ultimate test, will become apparent.
In our search for the principles of the Apostolic Church we must bring with us a criterion or test by which we can distinguish those principles from others that we may meet on the way, for you know that there are many adverse claimants to that dignity.
What is this criterion or rule which must constitute a common ground between you and me in the joint quest for the principles of the Apostolic Church? This is the crux of the main issue between Catholicism and Protestantism: it is also the rule by which all particular issues must be determined.
In your letter you recognize the necessity of this common ground, and indicate what you think it ought to be when you say: "These [Catholic] doctrines, as I read history of that [Apostolic] age, are in fact not found in the inspired records of the Apostolic Church, the Sacred Scriptures."
Here you propose to make certain books whose inspiration you assume without proof the common ground or criterion. You would make these books, as interpreted by your private judgment, the test of Catholic principles. In other words, you propose to test Catholic principles by your Protestant rule of faith. We stand man to man and face to face. On what principle, then, do you assume so confidently that your Protestant rule of faith, and not the Catholic rule of faith, should be made the test of what the principles of the Apostolic Church are?
If you were discussing a doctrinal question with a Presbyterian, a Methodist, a Baptist, or other fellow-Protestant, your proposed criterion—Bible and private judgment—would be proper for the common ground. But when you discuss a question with a Catholic, that rule is no longer a common ground, for the Catholic rejects it as a false rule, misleading and untrustworthy. For his belief on that subject he has the experience of three hundred years of this Protestant rule of faith. He sees that those who follow it are split up into hundreds of wrangling sects, holding contradictory creeds, and each one of them claiming to have exclusive possession of the principles of the Apostolic Church, pure and undefiled. A rule of faith whose legitimate results are such confusion and contradiction cannot be the true rule. And yet it is this Protestant's box of a rule that you expect me to accept as the common ground, and to exclude from the discussion the Catholic rule of faith.
But, passing these considerations, the Catholic sees another reason why he cannot accept your proposed criterion. Those books, to be of any value as a test, must be inspired. There must be no doubt about their inspiration. Your assuming it is not enough. It must be proved by you, and proved by your rule of faith—the Bible alone, and private judgment. As a man of intelligence, you know that such proof cannot be produced.
Assuming you to be a consistent Covenanter, you believe the Covenanter Church holds the principles of the Apostolic Church. But the Covenanter Church differs from every other Protestant Church in the world. Therefore, consistency requires you to affirm that all Protestant churches, save the Covenanter, have departed from the principles of the Apostolic Church, and are, consequently, in error. But all these unfortunate churches are what they are by following the Protestant rule of faith—Bible and private judgment. In view of these disastrous results, this widespread departure from the principles of the Apostolic Church caused by that rule of faith, would it be wise in you and me to adopt that rule in our search after the principles of the Apostolic Church? How can you approve of a rule that led so many good people away from the principles and blessings of Covenantarianism, I cannot understand. To be consistent, you should discard it as a damnable error, a device of him who goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.
Between you and me, then, the Protestant rule of faith, as a criterion of revealed truth, must be discarded. What, then, shall we do? We must have some criterion, or we can come to no definite conclusion. In this emergency I will not let you outdo me in generosity. You offered me your Protestant rule, which, for reasons, given, had to be declined. In return, I now offer you the Catholic rule of faith. Here it is: Scripture and tradition, as presented and explained by the Roman Catholic Church. How does it strike you as a criterion? Accept it and we will soon know what are the principles of the Apostolic Church.
Ah, say you, to accept that would render further discussion needless—it would be to give away the whole case. Certainly it would. If you accept it in good faith, you would be a Catholic; and as you do not want to be a Catholic just yet, you decline to accept it, and look upon my pro-

posal as absurd. Very well; I did not offer it with the hope that you would accept it. I offered it to bring vividly home to you the absurdity of your expecting me to accept your Protestant rule as the criterion of truth in the proposed discussion. I have known all along that you have been dreaming that your rule of faith was the ultimate test of revealed truth, and I made the offer of my rule of faith to wake you up to a realization of the situation.
Now, as I reject your criterion of Apostolic principles, and you reject mine, what are we to do to find a common ground? We must leave out both rules of faith, which means that we leave out the Scriptures as inspired records, for, in the hypothesis, their inspiration is not yet established. We must also leave out tradition. All we have left are four short histories of events that transpired in Palestine nineteen centuries ago, a biography of an energetic and talented Jew known as Saul or Paul, and some letters and diacetic essays written mostly by some poor fishermen who earned a precarious living on the banks of a small lake in the interior of Palestine. These histories, letters and essays if not inspired, are of no more authority than the histories and essays of Josephus, Dion Cassius, Epictetus and Seneca. The Christian world has believed them to be inspired, but it has so believed because the Catholic Church taught through the centuries that they are inspired. That is the sole basis of the belief in their inspiration. It was this that made the great St. Augustine, in the fifth century, say: "I, for my part, would not believe the Gospel, unless the authority of the Catholic Church moved me to it." But you, as a Protestant, reject the authority of the Catholic Church, and consequently, you must prove the inspiration of the Scripture, in some other way. This, I repeat, you must do before you can quote those writings as Bible. Until this is done, they are not Bible to you or to me, and cannot be in the proposed discussion.

If we want to know what are the principles of the Apostolic Church, why may we not appeal directly to that organ of revealed truth which Christ built upon a rock, against which He declared the gates of hell should not prevail, and with which He said He would be until the end of time? Christ commanded us to hear it under pain of being considered as heathens and publicans. It exists still on earth. To say the contrary is to say that the gates of hell have prevailed, and that Christ's promise and prophecy have failed. To say that the Apostolic Church has ceased to exist is to say that Christ was a false prophet. As you are not ready for that blasphemy, I assume that you admit its present existence in the world. And, by reason of Christ's promise, it is the best authority on earth on Apostolic principles. Here we have a common ground, have we not? We have only to seek and identify this divinely-established organ or teaching corporation, and learn what it teaches now, for what it teaches now it taught in the Apostolic age. For, as St. Paul states, "it is the pillar and ground of truth."

Where, then, is this divine organ of revealed truth? It is simply a question of identification. It is not the Covenanter Church, for that was organized in Scotland, not in Palestine. It comes too late to make a claim to Apostolicity. The same must be said of all other churches of Christendom until we find one to which we can trace its historical existence through the centuries up to the time just previous to Christ's ascension into heaven. When we find that society or corporation our quest is at an end, for Christ said of it: "He that heareth you heareth Me."

I hope I have said enough to convince you that we must have a common ground or criterion, and that, to insist on it as a preliminary, is a dictate of reason and common sense. When we have settled the question of the criterion of Apostolic principles we can, I doubt not, agree on the medium of publication.
You say in your concluding paragraph that it is strange that we cannot proceed to prove or disprove the essential and distinctive principles of Roman Catholicism to be the principles of the Apostolic Church. It would be still more strange if we were to proceed to compare the former with the latter without knowing what the latter are, and without any criterion by which to distinguish them. I confess I would be afraid of a man so devoid of logic as to think he can compare two things together without knowing them both. He would be too apt to mistake his subjective notions for objective realities. He is in more need of an indulgent friend than of an exacting opponent.

Very truly yours,
L. A. Lambert.
—N. Y. Freeman's Journal.

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THE CHURCH AND DIVORCE.

In answer to a correspondent who asked, "Did Clement VIII. grant a divorce to Henry IV. of France from Margaret of Valois?" Dr. Lambert of the *Freeman's Journal* says:

Not in the sense in which the term "divorce" is commonly used at present. The Church recognizes certain impediments which render a marriage null and void from the beginning. Where an impediment of this kind exists at the time of the marriage contract there is no marriage, and consequently no need of a divorce. But when a question is raised as to the existence of such an impediment at the time of the contract, investigation must be had and an authoritative decision given.
Now, a decision affirming that such an impediment existed is equivalent to a declaration that the parties were never married. A decision of this kind would be called, in common parlance, a divorce. But it is not; for a divorce as now understood in our courts and among non-Catholics, is a surrender of the marriage bond. To break the bond is to admit its existence up to the time of breaking it. But a decision recognizing the existence of a diriment impediment declares that the bond never existed, and consequently, can not be surrendered. It declares that the parties were never married.

Let us look at some of these impediments, so that we may understand the case of Henry IV. The first is "error." Thus, if a man goes through the form of marriage with one woman, mistaking her for another, he marries neither. Suppose he intends to marry Amanda Doe, but by some trickery Rebecca Roe takes Amanda's place, there is no marriage. The man is not a husband; he is merely the victim of a fraud. If he appealed to the ecclesiastical court the decision would be, no marriage by reason of the impediment "error," and he would be told that he was free to marry some other woman, if he could find one that would consider him worth having.

Another impediment is "crime." Suppose a single man and a married woman conspired and killed her husband so that they could marry. A contract of marriage between these two conspirators would be null and void in the eyes of the Church.

Another of these impediments is "force." Any force or compulsion that creates a grave fear in the mind of either of the contracting parties invalidates the marriage contract. A contract supposed liberty in the contracting parties. A woman, for instance, who consents, through fear of life or honor, to the marriage ceremony, is not married. Fear has deprived her of that liberty which is necessary to make a valid contract. Any decision, civil or religious, declaring her free from such a contract would not be a divorce. It would be a declaration: a divorce was not necessary, because she was not married.

Now we come to the case of Henry IV. In his appeal to Clement VIII. his plea was that his consent to the marriage with Margaret of Valois was the result of force. When he established this plea to the satisfaction of the court he would have secured a decision that there had never been a marriage. He was, therefore, free to marry, and did marry Mary de Medici, daughter of the Grand Duke of Tuscany. There was no question here of dissolving a legitimate and consummated marriage; no question of divorce in the sense understood by our courts and by Protestants generally, who do not recognize marriage as a sacrament of the new law.

The attitude of the Church and the Popes as to divorce in the modern sense of surrendering the matrimonial bond, is clearly indicated by Pope Pius VII. In his letter to the Emperor Napoleon, who had asked him to divorce his brother Jerome from Miss Patterson, of Baltimore. After having investigated and found the marriage valid, Pius VII. wrote:

"Were we to usurp a power that we do not possess, we should render ourselves guilty of the most abominable abuse of our sacred ministry before the tribunal of God, and before the whole Church. Your Majesty, even in his justice, would not desire us to pronounce a judgment contrary to the testimony of our conscience and the invariable principles of the Church. Hence we earnestly hope that the Majesty will be satisfied that the desire which animates us of seconding your wishes, as far as depends on us, especially in a case so closely connected with your august person and family, is in this case rendered ineffectual by want of power."

This clear and forcible statement by the highest authority in the Church, on divorce, leaves no room for doubt or quibbling.—Sacred Heart Review.

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