

VERY SMALL--VERY NARROW

In 1893, when our St. Patrick's Day number was on the press, we found it necessary to delay the issue a few hours, in order to reply to a very untimely and ungenerous article which appeared, the evening previous, in our contemporary the Daily Witness. Last year no such contribution to St. Patrick's Day literature came from that source. We had expected that, while the Witness could not be reasonably supposed to sympathize with the celebration, at least it would let us off with its usual half-witty (we were going to half-witted) and quasi-cynical report of the proceedings. We were mistaken. In Saturday's issue of our very religious and Christian contemporary we find the following leading editorial:

"Our Irish friends do well to honor Patrick the evangelist of their country, who, like all other successful evangelists from Paul to Moody, was a distinguished saint. Although the son of a deacon and the grandson of a priest, and doubtless duly baptized, he felt the need of conversion when in captivity in Ireland, and there experienced a change of heart; soon after he became an evangelist and devoted himself to foreign missions. He knew nothing of any of the distinctively Roman Catholic doctrines. He preached from the bible and appealed to the bible, and founded not a Church, but what would now be called Congregational churches, each with its own bishop or pastor. Among these churches sprung up a culture which for centuries kept Ireland before almost all other countries, during which she stalwartly resisted the innovations of Rome."

This is about the richest piece of humbug that we have ever read. Probably the Daily Witness felt it advisable to become witty. If so it has given irrefutable evidence of the absence of a humorist's vocation. When it tries to be serious, it is wonderfully funny; when it wants to be funny, it is most stupidly serious. We cannot for a moment imagine that an educated Christian ever intended the above as a sample of his historical erudition. Rather would we, for that paper's sake, prefer to accept it as an attempt at anti-Irish and anti-Catholic sarcasm. We could, we think, improve upon the above and make it read as a really serious article. Had the effusion been thus constructed it might pass muster:

"Our Irish friends do well to honor St. Patrick, the apostle of their country, who, like all great apostles from St. Paul to Father Mathew, was a model of sanctity. Although some so-called Christians, in order to cast a slur upon the Catholic priesthood, have pretended that St. Patrick was the son of a deacon and grandson of a priest, still these falsifications of history in no way alter the fact that his own baptism created in him a burning desire to baptize the people amongst whom he was a captive. He became a great evangelist and devoted himself to foreign missions—that is to say, to the conversion of nations beyond the home influence of Rome. He was not a controversialist, since Protestantism did not exist and there were no other doctrines preached by Christian ministers than those of Rome. He preached from Bible texts, as do all the Catholic missionaries the world over; he established parishes, dioceses and monasteries, each with its pastor, bishop or abbot. Among these establishments sprung up a culture which for centuries kept Ireland before almost all other countries, during which she stalwartly resisted the invasions of the Roman legions, of the Danes, and of the Saxons."

Thus constructed, the article might have some common-sense in it and a share of historical truth. But if the Witness were really bent on giving us a

witty piece of semi-rational literature, it might have taken the following strain:

"Our Irish friends do well to honor a certain Patrician, who started the revival system in their country, and, who, like all notorious sensationalists, from John Knox to Moody, from Habbakuk Mucklewirth to Mrs. Shepherd, from Baron Munchausen to the Daily Witness, was dignified by the title religious. Although the son of his father and grandson of his grandfather, and baptized before being freed from original sin, he 'found the Lord' and set the example followed up by Mrs. Jelliby in regard to foreign missions—and by Henry Grattan Guinness in his 'Regions Beyond.' As St. Peter knew nothing about the distinctive doctrines of Rome, until he became Head of the Church, so this preacher was not acquainted with Roman dogma or morals until he studied the theology of the Church. He indicated the Shamrock as the explanation of all the Bible, and he founded High, Low, Broad, Crooked, Straight, Wooden, Stone and Mud churches, or chapels—as may be seen in the remains of those edifices throughout the land. He had faith in Talmage and followed the style of Beecher. Among these churches sprung up hedge schools which for centuries kept Ireland educated despite barbaric efforts of England to colonize ignorance in the land."

We have just given the foregoing samples in order that the Witness may be able to prepare an article—be it serious or funny—for next St. Patrick's Day. We certainly don't envy our contemporary's learning and tact, but we must admire its cheek and temerity.

INFALLIBILITY.

We have seen the source, or origin of Infallibility; we will now turn our attention to the object of that doctrine. "The purpose of infallibility is to guarantee for all time the safe keeping and preaching, in its unity, purity and integrity, of 'the faith which was once delivered unto the saints' (Jude, ch. 1, 3); to enable the Church in all ages to fulfil effectively the great mission entrusted to her by her Divine Founder of 'teaching (all nations) all things whatsoever I have commanded you,' (Matt. xxviii., 20); to 'guide' her 'into all truth,' (John xvi., 13); that we may 'all come into the unity of faith,' (Ephes. iv., 13); and 'be no more children tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine,' (Ibid. 14; Heb. xiii., 8, 9); 'ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth,' (I. Tim. iii., 7). In one word the purpose of infallibility was to make the Church 'the pillar and ground of truth' (I. Tim. iii., 15), and thereby assure all men that they can, with utmost confidence, intrust to her direction the great interests of their souls."

Thus, through infallibility, the Pope does not receive the power to make good or evil, nor right or wrong, nor truth or falsehood, nor morality or immorality; no more is he thereby raised above the Divine Law. He is not enabled to make new revelations, nor to add to nor take from any doctrine, or dogma of faith, given to the Church through the Apostles. The Vatican Council says: "The Holy Spirit was not promised to the successors of Peter that by His revelation they might make new doctrine, but that by His assistance, they might inviolably keep and faithfully expound the revelation or deposit of faith delivered by the Apostles." "The office of the Church, therefore," says Cardinal Manning, "is to declare what was contained in the original revelation, and infallibility is the result of a divine assistance, whereby what was divinely revealed in the beginning is divinely preserved to the end."

To say that the Pope can modify or change any decree of the Church, even as the Queen can repeal a statute, is rank nonsense. Cardinal Newman thus expressed it: "The Pope cannot by virtue of his infallibility reverse what has always been held." "Never," wrote Bossuet to Leibnitz, "will an example be found of a definition once made being deprived of its power by posterity." "A definition once made," says Cardinal Hergenrother, "remains unchanged and unchangeable for all time."

No more does infallibility empower the Pope to depose sovereigns or absolve peoples from their obligations to the State. In a word infallibility is not a personal, but an official prerogative; it belongs not to the person but to the office. It is sometimes called personal because the office of the Primacy, to which the infallibility is attached, is held by the Pope alone and he is unable to communicate or delegate his infallibility to another. But the individuality of the Pope has nothing to do with the prerogative. No matter who or what he is the office continues to exist, and to that office, according to Christ's promise, does the infallibility cling. Simon may die, but Peter never dies; Leo XIII. must pass away, but the Papacy must remain.

Before examining into the capacity in which the Pope is infallible, let us hear the clear statement of Father Fidelis on this question of the logical necessity of infallibility. "It has been proved, with a redundancy of argument, that a Church which is divinely commissioned to teach must be divinely protected against error in its teaching. The Church is infallible. Therefore the Head of the Church is infallible; for, as St. Thomas demonstrates, the faith of Christ must be fixed by the decisions of its Head. An infallible Church with a fallible Head would be, not a mere monstrosity, like the famous heteroclit at which the Pisces were expected to smile, but an inconceivable absurdity."

The infallibility of the Head of the Church is, then, a logical inference from the infallibility of the Church. This, of course, is not equivalent to saying that the former term—or, more strictly, that which it represents—is, metaphysically, a consequence of the latter. The reverse is the truth. The argument is one from effect to condition (to use Whately's phrase). From the infallibility of the Church we infer the infallibility of its Head, inasmuch as the latter is an essential condition of the former. In other words, the logical therefore in the enthymeme, *The Church is infallible, THEREFORE it must have an infallible Head* gives us the metaphysical because in the proposition, *The Church is infallible BECAUSE it has an infallible Head*.

Finally, when we refer to the Head of the Church as infallible, we mean that he is infallible as the Head of the Church; when he speaks by virtue of his office. The prerogative has nothing to do with the man's character, abilities, or attainments. In speaking of the Church as infallible and its Head as infallible, it is the imperfection of language that obliges us to refer to what seems a double infallibility. The infallibility of the Church is the infallibility of its Head, and vice versa. It is all the one "standing-by," or presence of Holy Spirit. It would be as absurd to say that the Holy Ghost was with the Church and not with its Head, as to say the sun shone upon the universe but not upon the earth, or that the case enclosed the works of the watch but not the spring. If we could conceive a divinely protected Church without any Head, a divinely established kingdom without any sovereign, a divine-

mouth-piece, we might be able to imagine an infallible Church with a fallible Head. And, then, we would have to impute to Christ that which would be blasphemy to state.

In fine, the great misunderstanding regarding this dogma of the infallibility is the result of an entire misapprehension of the meaning of that dogma. Men who only look at the surface, who pick up every straw of absurd argument that dances upon the waters, but who have not sounded the depths of reasoning, are most liable to have all sorts of foolish ideas regarding this truth; but the moment they grasp the meaning of the doctrine they cannot but understand its reasonableness.

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