

§ 10. CONCLUSION.

I have now said all that I consider necessary in order to fulfil the task which I have undertaken, a task very painful to me and ungracious. I account it a great misfortune, that my last words as they are likely to be, should be devoted to a controversy with one whom I have always so much respected and admired. But I should not have been satisfied with myself, if I had not responded to the call made upon me from such various quarters, to the opportunity at last given me of breaking a long silence on subjects deeply interesting to me, and to the demands of my own honour.

The main point of Mr. Gladstone's charge against us, is that in 1870, after a series of preparatory acts, a great change and irreversible was effected in the political attitude of the Church by the third and fourth chapters of the Vatican *Pastor Aeternus*, a change which no state or statesmen can afford to pass over. Of this cardinal assertion I consider he has given no proof at all; and my object throughout the foregoing pages has been to make this clear. The Pope's infallibility indeed, and his supreme authority have in the Vatican *capita* been declared matters of faith; but his prerogative of infallibility lies in matters speculative, and his prerogative of authority in no infallibility, in laws, commands or measures. His infallibility bears upon the domain of thought, not directly of action, and while it may fairly exercise the theologian, philosopher or man of science, it scarcely concerns the politician. Moreover, whether the recognition of his infallibility in doctrine will increase his actual power over the faith of Catholics, remains to be seen, and must be determined by the event; for there are gifts too large and too fearful to be handled freely. Mr. Gladstone seems to feel this, and therefore insists upon the increase made by the Vatican definition in the Pope's authority. But there is no real increase; he has for centuries upon centuries had and used that authority, which the definition now declares ever to have belonged to him. Before the Council there was the rule of obedience, and there were exceptions to the rule; and since the Council the rule remains, and with it the possibility of exceptions.

It may be objected that a representation such as this, is negatived by the universal sentiment which testifies to the formidable effectiveness of the Vatican decrees, and to the Pope's intention that they should be effective; that it is the boast of some Catholics and the reproach levelled against us by all Protestants, that the Catholic Church has now become beyond mistake a despotic aggressive Papacy, in which freedom of thought and action is utterly extinguished. But I do not allow this alleged unanimous testimony to exist. Of course Prince Bismarck and other statesmen such as Mr. Gladstone, rest their opposition to Pope Pius on the political ground; but the Old Catholic movement is based, not upon politics, but upon theology, and Dr. Dollinger has more than once, I believe, declared his disapprobation of the Prussian acts against the Pope, while

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