

ST XENIA OF ROME MISSION

Study Publication Vol. 021209A

Infallibility

Mary Ann Collins
(A Former Catholic Nun)
February, 2002

According to Roman Catholic doctrine, popes and Catholic church councils are infallible. This means that whenever they make official declarations concerning matters of faith or morals, God supernaturally protects them from making errors. Infallibility applies to all Roman Catholic popes and church councils: past, present, and future. [Note 1]

"Webster's Dictionary" defines "infallible" as "not capable of erring". It says that "infallible" as used by the Roman Catholic Church means "incapable of error in defining doctrines touching faith or morals".

What happens if a pope or a Catholic church council makes an "infallible" declaration which directly contradicts the "infallible" declaration of another pope or church council?

Truth does not contradict truth. Therefore, if the "infallible" pronouncements of the popes and Catholic church councils really are infallible, they will never contradict other "infallible" pronouncements. So if there is even one contradiction, then the doctrine of infallibility cannot be correct.

The claim for papal infallibility does not stand up to the test of history. Pope Zosimus (417-418 A.D.) reversed the pronouncement of a previous pope. He also retracted a doctrinal pronouncement that he himself had previously made. Pope Honorious was condemned as a heretic by the Sixth Ecumenical Council (680-681 A.D.). (This means that Honorious made doctrinal statements which are contrary to the Roman Catholic faith.) He was also condemned as a heretic by Pope Leo II, as well as by every other pope until the eleventh century. So here we have "infallible" popes condemning another "infallible" pope as a heretic. In 1870, the First Vatican Council abolished "infallible" papal decrees and the decrees of two "infallible" councils. [Note 2]

The doctrine of the Assumption of Mary was officially declared to be a dogma of the Roman Catholic faith on November 1, 1950. This means that every Roman Catholic is required to believe this doctrine without questioning it. However, as we will see, the teaching of the Assumption of Mary originated with heretical writings which were officially condemned by the early Church.

ST XENIA OF ROME MISSION

Study Publication Vol. 021209A

In 495 A.D., Pope Gelasius issued a decree which rejected this teaching as heresy and its proponents as heretics. In the sixth century, Pope Hormisdas also condemned as heretics those authors who taught the doctrine of the Assumption of Mary. Here we have "infallible" popes declaring a doctrine to be a heresy. Then on November 1, 1950, we have Pope Pius XII (another "infallible" pope) declaring the same doctrine to be official Roman Catholic doctrine, which all Catholics are required to believe. [Note 3]

So before November 1, 1950, any Catholic who believed in the Assumption of Mary was a heretic (because of "infallible" declarations of popes). But after November 1, 1950, any Catholic who failed to believe in the Assumption of Mary was a heretic (because of the "infallible" declaration of Pope Pius XII).

In 1864, Pope Pius IX "infallibly" declared that the idea that people have a right to freedom of conscience and freedom of worship is "insanity," "evil," "depraved," and "reprobate". He also declared that non-Catholics who live in Catholic countries should not be allowed to publicly practice their religion. In 1888, Pope Leo XIII "infallibly" declared that freedom of thought and freedom of worship are wrong. These encyclicals are available on-line. [Note 4 gives addresses for them.]

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) produced a document entitled "Declaration on Religious Liberty" which states that all people have a right to freedom of religion. [Note 5]

Now I certainly agree with the idea of freedom of religion. However, it totally contradicts the "infallible" declarations of Popes Pius IX and Leo XIII. It also contradicts the anathemas of the Council of Trent, the killing of "heretics," the Inquisition, the burning of people who translated the Bible into the language of the common people, and the persecution of Protestants.

Freedom of religion also contradicts modern Canon Law (1988). Canon 1366 says that parents are to be punished with "a just penalty" if they allow their children to "be baptized or educated in a non-Catholic religion". The reference to baptism shows that this refers to Christian religions which are not Roman Catholic. [Note 6] (During the Inquisition, "a just penalty" included things like torture and being burned at the stake. The Inquisition was based on Canon Law.) (See the article "Hunting 'Heretics'".)

Here the Catholic Church is on the horns of a dilemma. If it says that people have a right to freedom of religion, then it admits that it

ST XENIA OF ROME MISSION

Study Publication Vol. 021209A

is not infallible. If it says that it is infallible, then it admits that it really does not believe that people have a right to freedom of religion.

The Catholic Church can claim infallibility, or it can claim that it has seen the error of its ways and it now supports freedom of religion. But it can't have it both ways.

Two Roman Catholic organizations have found contradictions between "infallible" doctrinal declarations of the Second Vatican Council and "infallible" doctrinal pronouncements of Pope Pius IX. [Note 7 gives addresses of on-line articles dealing with these contradictions.]

The conservative group (True Catholic) concludes that, therefore, the Second Vatican Council must not be legitimate. The liberal group (Women Priests) concludes that, therefore, Pope Pius IX taught "errors". Either way, there are contradictions between official doctrinal declarations of an "infallible" pope and an "infallible" church council.

True Catholic also claims that Pope John Paul II has taught 101 things which are contrary to "infallible" Catholic doctrines which were declared by "infallible" popes and church councils. They conclude that John Paul is therefore a heretic, which, according to Canon Law, means that he is not a valid pope. So they call him an anti-pope. [Note 8 gives the address of an on-line article.]

If John Paul II is not a valid pope, then the papal chair has been vacant. In order to rectify this situation, True Catholic has elected a pope. On May 20, 1998, Pope Pius XIII was elected. [Note 9 gives the address of an on-line article.]

So we now have two men who claim to be Pope: John Paul II and Pius XIII. It seems that having two popes at the same time is not confined to the Middle Ages.

SUMMARY

There are "infallible" doctrinal declarations which contradict one another. Therefore, the doctrine of infallibility is not valid.

The contradiction of "infallible" doctrines has caused some very conservative Catholics to believe that John Paul II is not a valid pope, and the Second Vatican Council was not a valid council. It has also caused some very liberal Catholics to believe that Pope Pius IX taught doctrinal errors.

USE OF THIS ARTICLE

ST XENIA OF ROME MISSION

Study Publication Vol. 021209A

I encourage you to link to this article and to put it on your own web site. You have my permission to copy this article, to quote from it, to translate it into other languages, and to incorporate it into publications of your own. You have my permission to distribute copies of this article, including selling it for profit. I do not want any royalties or financial remuneration of any kind. Please give this information to anybody who might be interested in it.

NOTES

1. "Catechism of the Catholic Church" (Washington, DC: U.S. Catholic Conference, 2000), paragraph 891. This book comes in numerous editions and languages. Because it has numbered paragraphs, statements can be accurately located in spite of the variety of editions. It is available on-line with a search engine.

<http://www.christusrex.org/www2/kerygma/ccc/searchcat.html>

<http://www.scborromeo.org>

2. William Webster, "The Church of Rome at the Bar of History" (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1995), pages 63-71.

3. William Webster, "The Church of Rome at the Bar of History," pages 81-85.

4. Pope Pius IX, "Quanta Cura" ("Condemning Current Errors"), December 8, 1864. The "error" is given in Section 3, second paragraph. (Most numbered sections consist of only one paragraph. This section has two paragraphs.) The condemnation of all of the "errors" described in the rest of the encyclical is given in paragraph 6. This encyclical is available on-line.

http://www.pax-et-veritas.org/Popes/Pius_IX/quantacu.htm

<http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/pope0255e.htm>

http://www.dickinson.edu/~rhyne/232/Six/Quanta_Cura_Both.html

Pope Pius IX, "The Syllabus of Errors," December 8, 1864, paragraphs 15, 77, and 78. The "Syllabus of Errors" accompanied the encyclical "Quanta Cura". In reading it, remember that Pius condemned every statement that you are reading. This encyclical is available on-line.

<http://www.geocities.com/papalencyclicals/Pius09/p9syll.htm>

<http://www.stthomasAquinas.net/encyclicals/Pius09/P9SYLL.HTM>

http://www.reformation.org/syllabus_of_piis.html

Pope Leo XIII, "Libertas Praestantissimum" ("On the Nature of Human Liberty"), June 20, 1888, paragraph 42. This encyclical is available on-line.

http://fsspx.free.fr/en/popes/Leo_XIII_LIBERTAS.htm

ST XENIA OF ROME MISSION

Study Publication Vol. 021209A

http://www.saint-mike.org/Library/Papal_Library/LeoXIII/Encyclicals/Libertas.html

5. "Dignitatis Humanae" ("Declaration on Religious Liberty") in Austin Flannery (editor), "Vatican Council II, The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents," New Revised Edition, Volume 1 (Northport, New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1975, 1996), pages 799-812.

6. Canon 1366, "Code of Canon Law," Latin English edition, New English Translation. (Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1988), page 427. Canon Laws provide the legal basis for everything that the Roman Catholic Church officially does. Even the Inquisition and the persecution of Protestants were supported by Canon Law.

7. "The Errors of Pope Pius IX". This article gives extensive quotations, with references to Pope Pius IX's encyclicals and documents from the Second Vatican Council. It is available on-line.

<http://www.womenpriests.org/teaching/piusix.htm>

"Summary of the Principal Errors of Vatican II Ecclesiology." This article is on-line.

<http://www.truecatholic.org/v2ecclesio.htm>

Lucian Pulvermacher, "Vatican II Council -- Accepts Freedom of Religion, Teaches Heresy" in "Caritas Newsletter," August 19, 1989. This article is on the Internet.

<http://www.truecatholic.org/car8908.htm>

8. Patrick John Pollock, "101 Heresies of Anti-Pope John Paul II." Internet article.

<http://www.truecatholic.org/heresiesjp2.htm>

9. Lucian Pulvermacher, "Papal Election," "Caritas Election News #1". Internet article.

<http://www.truecatholic.org/electionnews1.htm>

Copyright 2002 by Mary Ann Collins.
E-MAIL: MaryAnnCollins@juno.com