

NOTES

SCATTERED REMARKS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF DOGMA AND ON PAPAL INFALLIBILITY IN EARLY SCHOLASTIC WRITINGS

The Church, her organization, and her rights were for the Middle Ages facts of experience. In those days there was little scientific investigation of facts in general, and all science accepted authority as its source. So, too, the sheer fact of the existent Church gave no impetus to further scientific inquiry. Hence problems in ecclesiology were but rarely discussed by the early Scholastics. We do indeed find extensive material about the Mystical Body of Christ; there were many discussions as to whether Adam or Abel was the first to enter the Church; in addition, there was at the most a treatment of the "two swords." Discussion of all other questions was limited to individual remarks scattered here and there in the works of the early Scholastics, and accessible only to one who takes the pains to read these works line by line.

How little the questions found in our modern treatises on the Church were considered real problems in that age may in part be seen from the heedless way in which the early Scholastics utter opinions that we today decisively reject as errors. For example, we find certain remarks on the development of dogma and on papal infallibility which, from this point of view, are of genuine interest, and deserve to be recorded.

Hervaeus of Bourg-Dieu was quite correct in making this comment on I Timothy 6:

Et ideo custodi illud [depositum] 'devitans novitates vocum profanas,' id est, quae sunt extra religionem. Aliae enim non sunt vitandae, quae congruunt doctrinae religionis, sicut ipsum nomen christianorum, quod post ascensionem Domini coepit, quando primum in Antiochia discipuli sunt appellati christiani, res tamen ipsa et ante nomen erat. Et adversus impietatem Arianorum novum nomen patres addiderunt *homoousion*, sed non rem novam tali nomine signaverunt. Hoc enim vocatur *homoousion*, quod est 'Ego et Pater unum sumus,' unius videlicet eiusdemque substantiae. Nam si omnis novitas profana esset, nec a Domino diceretur: 'Mandatum novum do vobis,' nec testamentum appellaretur novum. Sed profanae sunt 'vocum novitates,' quoties haeretici novum quemlibet errorem inveniunt et loqui ceteris praesumunt. Et huiusmodi novitates devita, si depositum vis custodire.¹

¹ SSL 181, 1449 A.

Hervaeus, therefore, cautiously permits a development of doctrine only insofar as a new terminology is adopted to clothe truths already known. Other possibilities of development are not mentioned; neither are they from the outset excluded, save in the case of heretical errors.

Hervaeus belongs to the beginning of the twelfth century; Stephen Langton, to its end. Langton states it as his conviction that progress in the Church's teaching comes about through new revelations made to the Church. He thinks, for example, that in this way it would be possible to decide the controversies whether the *notiones* are God or not, and whether Christ is one or two.²

Even before Langton's time, the possibility of an extension of the object of the Church's teaching had a place in the thought of the age. We may gather this from Peter Cantor, who writes this passage in his commentary on the apostolic letters:

'Unctio' baptismum vel Spiritum Sanctum vel etiam doctrinam. 'Doceat' exterius, quos Spiritus Sanctus docet interius, 'de omnibus,' que tenenda sunt, omnem veritatem. Non videtur ergo Spiritus Sanctus esse in prelati ecclesie, cum errent maxime in sacramentis, ut in matrimonio. Dicunt enim quidam esse matrimonium cum secundo ducta, alii cum primo ducta, ut Ro[mana] ecclesia [MS: ecclesie], sed nunc Gallicana ecclesia consentit. Aliqui horum errant a veritate. Item, papa Alexander viro redeunti a Jerusalem et a peregrinatione, quia uxorem desponsatam alii invenerat et illam duos filios secundo viro peperisse, precepit, ut nec illam superinduceret nec aliam haberet. Et constat, quod matrimonium fuit inter illum et illam vel non. Si non: quare aliam non potuit ducere? si vero matrimonium fuit inter eos, quare non est ei reddita? Quomodo Spiritus Sanctus docuit hoc dominum papam? Videtur autem, quod si Spiritus Sanctus fuerit in aliquo, non permetteret eum errare vel ignorare. Unde: Paraclitus Spiritus Sanctus docebit vos omnem veritatem. Item, si quid petieritis Patrem in nomine meo, fiet vobis. Cum ergo iste, in quo est Spiritus Sanctus, petat in nomine Christi, ut ei matrimonium reveletur, an hoc sit an non, nunquid ei revela-

² *Commentarium in Paul.*, in I Cor. 3 (Salzburg, Stiftsbibliothek von St. Peter, Cod. a X 19, Seite 64): "... Eadem ratione doctor sive predicator docendo falsum meretur, cum credat se bene docere. Quod etiam tertio[?] sic probatur: Aliquis iudex circumventus per falsos testes condemnat aliquem innocentem ad mortem. Nonne iudex iste meretur, cum habeat caritatem et recte se agere credat. Eadem ratione predicator predicto modo predicando et doctor docendo. Cum enim dicunt Christum esse duo et alii unum solum et nondum ecclesie sit revelatum hoc vel illud, nonne utrique, dummodo habeant caritatem, sic docendo merentur? Similiter cum quidam dicant notiones esse Deum et alii negant et tamen alterutra pars docet falsum, cum corrigi sit parata, falsitas non facit, quod altera pars heresim doceat. Ut enim dicit auctoritas, falsum non facit hereticum, sed pertinacia in erroris defensione [MS: errore defensionis]."

bit Spiritus Sanctus? Et item: qui manet in me, non ambulat in tenebris. Et habet glo[ssa]: nec in tenebris peccatorum nec in tenebris ignorantie.³

Here, then, explicit reference is made to the view that, when the Pope decides matters of faith, he does so under the influence of a revelation given by the Holy Spirit. Robert Courson, the disciple of Cantor, has the same thing to say about an ecumenical council when it makes decisions in matters affecting the regimen of the sacraments.⁴

The canonical *Distinctiones Monacenses* of Clm 16084, written shortly after 1170, also touch on the object of infallibility. According to them, the right to make final decisions in matters of faith belongs solely to the Roman See; patriarchs and primates may discuss such questions, but may not decide them.⁵ The Supreme Pontiff cannot alter decisions made by his predecessors, which in a particular way concern the faith and are necessary for the attainment of salvation; and he cannot alter decisions made by the eight Ecumenical Councils. But he can alter decrees about things that were indifferent before the Pope forbade them, and became matters of obligation after the Pope had forbidden them; such, for instance, is the matter of clerical celibacy.⁶

Peter of Capua expressly puts the question, whether the Pope could introduce an article of faith. His answer is that, if a question is disputed, with both parties to the dispute alleging authorities and reasons in their own favor, the Pope can decide that the doctrine of one party must be held. As soon as he has so decided, the doctrine which he has favored becomes an article of faith; knowingly and seriously to deny it would be a mortal sin.⁷

³ In I Jo. 2 (Cod. Paris. Nat. lat. 176, fol. 282).

⁴ *Summe* (Brügge, Stadtbibliothek, Cod. lat. 247, fol. 151): "Solutio: Dicimus, quod non potest pro aliqua necessitate vel oleum benedici nisi ab episcopo nec inunctio celebrari nisi a sacerdote. Nec in aliquo die quam in die cene est oleum illud benedicendum, nisi per generale concilium ampliata esset benedictio illa ad alios dies per internam inspirationem."²

⁵ Fol. 58v: "Responsio: Aliud est questionem motam de fide terminare, quod nulli preterquam Sedi Romane conceditur, sicut dicit Innocentius. Aliud est ipsam sine diffinitione ventilare, quod patriarche et primates possunt facere, ut ait Clemens."²

⁶ Fol. 58: "Responsio: Illa decreta, que dicunt Pontificem Summum decessorum suorum mutare statuta non posse, intelligendum est de illis, que ad fidem specialiter pertinent, sine quibus salus eterna haberi non potest; de illis etiam, que in VIII conciliis sunt deprehensa. Que vero dicunt: posse, illa de illis intelligenda sunt, que ante prohibitionem indifferentia, post prohibitionem vero necessitatem habent observantie, ut continentia clericorum, quibus Romana ecclesia non est obligata necessitate necessitatis, sed necessitate voluntatis, sed his, que continentur in lege et evangelio."²

⁷ *Summe* (Clm 14508, fol. 39): "Queritur ergo, utrum papa possit facere aliquem articu-

In unquestionable dependence on Peter of Capua, the anonymous *Summa* of Cod. Vat. lat. 10754 takes up the same question, and says:

Quinto quesitum est, an summus pontifex aliquem possit de novo articulum instituere. Quod videtur. Nam Alexander papa sub anathematis interdicto prohibuit, ne quis negaret, quod Christus esset aliquid secundum quod homo, et quod omnes debent credere, quod Christus esset aliquid secundum quod homo. Sic ergo videtur, quod summus pontifex possit de novo instituere articulum fidei. Solutio: Ad quod respondemus, quod bene potest cum auctoritate et consensu communis concilii et quilibet prudens et discretus debeat ei acquiescere nec sine periculo possit contra recalcitrare.⁸

A new idea is here introduced into the discussion, since for a definition of an article of faith the Pope's authority is considered insufficient unless it be supported by the consent of an ecumenical council. The reason for this view may have been the fact that it was only with scarcely suppressed reluctance that the author of Cod. Vat. lat. 10754 submitted to the decree of Alexander III against Nihilianism.⁹

It is significant that this same idea was not unfamiliar to canonists. The *Summa Parisiensis* holds that the whole Church can sit in judgment on the Pope, if he should err in faith.¹⁰ Again, in the course of explaining a passage in the decree of Gratian, which lays particular stress on the infallibility of

lum.—Responso: Hoc concedere tunc non erat articulus, sed nunc est articulus, id est peccat mortaliter, qui hoc scienter negat, qui saltem est obediens. Et ubi talis est questio, quod utraque pars habet auctoritates et rationes, potest papa instituere, ut tantum altera teneatur et de cetero erit illa pars articulus, id est mortaliter peccat, qui eam scienter et serio negat.”

⁸ Fol. 5v.

⁹ Cod. Vat. lat. 10754, fol. 21v: “Hec et multa alia, que subticemus propter vitandam prolixitatem et ne contra magistros, quibus debeo reverentiam, recalcitrare videar, predictis possunt opponi. Auctoritatem [sic] vero Alexandri tertii, per quam eis silentium ponitur et per quam predictam cogo[r] deserere oppositionem, sub anathematis incriminatione prohibuit, ne quis Christum esse aliquid in eo, quod est homo, negaret.” Incidental reference may here be made to the author's position with regard to the authority of the Fathers of the Church, to whom he concedes no infallibility; cf. Cod. Vat. lat. 10754, fol. 27v: “Huic opinioni consentit Augustinus volens eum diluculo, cum iam illucesceret, resurrexisse. Et hanc opinionem potioem censet ecclesia. Et si in hoc dissentiant sancti, non est curandum, quia Spiritus Sanctus non semper tangit corda sanctorum, nec est articulus fidei, qua hora, sed quod tertia die surrexit.”

¹⁰ Cod. Bamberg., Can. 56, fol. 7: “Item, dominus papa potest iudicari ab ecclesia tota, sed cum hac distinctione: si in fide erraverit. Alii ita distinguunt: in ea causa, que totam ecclesiam contingit, iudicari potest papa ab ecclesia; sed in ea, que unam personam contingit vel plures, non.”

the whole Church,¹¹ Huguccio's need to answer certain difficulties led him to make statements that, in themselves, cast doubt on papal infallibility:

'A recta-apostolico,' id est apostolicorum 'numquam errasse.' Obicitur de Anastasio. Sed forte processit. Vel forte melius quod est, loquitur universali ecclesie, que numquam desinet, licet forte possit deficere. Licet enim papa Romanus aliquando erraverit, non ideo Romana ecclesia, que non solus papa intelligitur, sed universi fideles. Nam ecclesia est congregatio fidelium, ut di. 1 Ecclesia, que etsi Rome non sit, est tamen in partibus gallicanis [fol. 318] potissime vel ubicumque fideles existunt. Et ecclesia quid[em] potest desinere esse, sed numquam contigit. Nam Petro et universe ecclesie in prima Petri dictum est: Non deficit fides tua. . . .¹²

At that time, the doctrine of the primacy and of papal infallibility had not yet been systematically developed; the elements of it were still being sought out and critically examined. Hence one need not be surprised to find this passage in the *Summa* of Gaufrid of Poitiers:

Item, expono sic: Tu es Petrus, id est firmius firmitate fidei, et super hanc petram, id est super hanc firmitatem fidei edificabo, id est constantem et firmam faciam Ecclesiam meam. Hec sunt illa gloriosa, que dicit glosa in futurum promissa, que, si Petrus haberet, non erraret. Sed non habuit nisi in die Pentecostes, quando indutus est virtute ex alto.¹³

In this connection, we must bear in mind that in the twelfth century the norm for the interpretation of Matthew 16:18 was the phrase in I Corinthians 10:4: "Petra autem erat Christus." Even so great an exegete as Peter Comestor took the "rock" upon which the Church was to be built to be either Christ Himself or Peter's future firmness of faith.¹⁴

¹¹ Pars 2, Causa 24, q. 1, c. 9 (Ae. Friedberg, *Corpus Iuris Canonici*, I [Leipzig, 1879] 969): "Item, Lucius papa omnibus episcopis.—A recta fide ergo et apostolico tramite propter ullam perturbationem nolite recedere scientes, quoniam iuxta Salvatoris sententiam beati sunt, qui persecutionem patiuntur propter iustitiam. Hec est apostolorum viva traditio; hec vera karitas, que predicanda est et precipue diligenda ac fruenda ac fiducialiter ab omnibus tenenda; hec sancta et apostolica mater ecclesiarum omnium Christi ecclesia, que per Dei omnipotentis gratiam a tramite apostolice traditionis numquam errasse probatur nec hereticis novitatibus depravanda succubuit, sed, ut in exordio normam fidei christiane percepit, ab auctoribus suis apostolorum principibus Christi illibata fidentenus mansit."

¹² Cod. Bamberg., Can. 61, fol. 317v.

¹³ Brügge, Stadtbibliothek, Cod. lat. 220, fol. 119.

¹⁴ In Matth. 16 (Cod. Paris. Nat. lat. 15269, fol. 106v and Cod. Paris. Arsenal. lat. 87, fol. 104v f.): "'Et super hanc petram,' quam confiteris. Interlinearis: id est Christum. Vel 'super hanc petram,' id est super hanc firmitatem fidei, quam habiturus es, 'edificabo ecclesiam meam.'"

In conclusion, we may point out the fact that all the doubts we have mentioned remained, after all, in the realm of sheer theory. It is true that particular papal decrees—as, for instance, that of Alexander III—occasioned some astonishment and hesitancy; however, it did not take long for the main body of theologians to become established in loyal obedience to papal decisions. And in what other age of the Church did authority, were it “only” the authority of a Pope, wield a more decisive influence on theology than in early Scholastic times, seeing that the very foundation and whole structure of early Scholasticism was determined by authority and rested on-authority.

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