

THEOLOGICAL TRENDS

THE PAPACY II

Papal Infallibility (a)

THE AUTHORS of a recent ecumenical essay on authority in the Church expressed the opinion that the most serious obstacle in the way of agreement concerning the papacy is created by the doctrine of Vatican I concerning the pope's immediate primatial jurisdiction over the whole Church.¹ In the popular mind, however, it is probably papal infallibility which sums up all that non-Catholics find unacceptable in the Catholic teaching concerning the pope. Thus the Anglican-Orthodox Agreed Statement of 1976, in Moscow, affirms:

Both Anglicans and Orthodox agree that infallibility is not the property of any particular institution or person in the Church, but that the promises of Christ are made to the whole Church.²

Consequently, in recent years, ecumenical concern has given rise to a number of discussions of papal infallibility, some of them prompted by the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission's Agreed Statement, *Authority in the Church*.³ In addition, the centenary of the First Vatican Council in 1970 was the occasion for further writings on the infallibility decree. This article does not claim to deal with them all, or even with the most important of them; it simply reports the author's impressions of the significant theological trends which have made an impression on his own thinking.

The general infallibility of the Church

The 1870 definition runs as follows:

When the Roman Pontiff speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when in fulfilment of his office of pastor and teacher of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the whole Church, through the divine assistance promised to him in St Peter, he enjoys that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer wished his Church to be endowed in defining doctrine concerning faith or morals; and therefore the definitions of the aforementioned Roman Pontiff are irreformable of themselves, not because of the consent of the Church (DS 3074).

¹ E. J. Yarnold s.j. and Henry Chadwick, *Truth and Authority* (London, 1977), p 36.

² Para. 17. The Statement is published by S.P.C.K. as *Anglican-Orthodox Dialogue: the Moscow Agreed Statement* (London, 1977).

³ Published in several editions: e.g. jointly by C.T.S. and S.P.C.K. (London, 1977).

It will be seen that the pope's infallibility is not said to be unique in the Church, but is one particular realization of 'that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer wished his Church to be endowed'. The position criticized above by the Moscow Statement is therefore not held by the Catholic Church. Many of the objections made against the doctrine of *papal* infallibility should really be aimed at the broader and primary target of the infallibility of the Church as a whole.

Indefectibility or Infallibility?

Anglicans on the whole prefer to speak of the Church as 'indefectible' rather than 'infallible'. Only God, it is said, is infallible. Under God's infallible guidance, the Church, despite 'confusions and backslidings and refusals of co-operation', is always 'tacking towards the truth'; 'the Catholic mind settles ever more and more firmly on essentials'; but on no particular occasion can we have the antecedent certainty that Church authorities will not err through resisting the divine guidance. 'Infallibility is not to be spotted, pinned down, identified with an ecclesiastical organ, or demanded on a given occasion'.⁴ Another writer, appealing to the Lambeth Conference of 1948, makes a similar point in different terms: 'Authority is not embodied, it is dispersed; and the reaching of authoritative decisions is a continuous process involving all the participators'.⁵

This insistence on the fallibility of General Councils, and *a fortiori* of the pope, goes right back to the twenty-first of the thirty-nine Articles, which asserts that general councils 'may err'. This article, however, is balanced by the traditional Anglican acceptance of the decrees of at least the first four general councils. Some Anglicans — and Austin Farrer's words quoted above seem to place him among them — hold that even these councils were not infallible of themselves; rather, they owe their authority to the fact that the Church has subsequently recognized their teaching as the faithful reflection of its own faith. But there are other Anglicans who are able to accept the infallibility of general councils in matters of essential faith. The signatories of the Agreed Statement of the Anglican/Roman Catholic Commission on *Authority in the Church* evidently share this view, for they write:

When the Church meets in ecumenical council, its decisions on fundamental matters of faith exclude what is erroneous. Through the Holy Spirit the Church commits itself to these judgments, recognizing that, being faithful to Scripture and consistent with Tradition, they are by the same Spirit protected from error.⁶

⁴ M. D. Goulder and A. M. Farrer, in *Infallibility in the Church*, an Anglican-Catholic Dialogue, ed. Goulder (London, 1968).

⁵ S. W. Sykes, *The Integrity of Anglicanism* (Oxford, 1978), p 99.

⁶ Para. 19. Cf note 3 above.

It is not only Anglicans who prefer a theory of general indefectibility to one of recognizable moments of infallibility. Hans Küng takes the same line in his celebrated (or notorious) book *Infallible?*⁷ It is of course a view which implies the rejection of the infallibility definition of Vatican I. It is worth while examining some of the thinking that lies behind it.

The *first reason* alleged in its support is that only God is infallible.⁸ It is strange that the fact that infallibility is a divine property should be seen as a proof that God is unable to grant his human creatures a limited participation in it. We do not deduce from the fact that God is loving the conclusion that human beings are not. Infallibility is not claimed as a human property, but is gratefully and humbly acknowledged as a gift of the Holy Spirit.

The *second reason* which seems to underly the theory, even though I cannot recall seeing it set out in the open, is the assumption that it is in some way more reasonable to expect God to keep the Church tacking towards the truth than it is to expect him to ensure that the Church actually gets there. But is it really harder for God to preserve the integrity of his revelation at all key moments, than it is for him to do so at only some key moments? And how close an approximation to the truth is claimed for the Church by the proponents of indefectibility? Is the approximation claimed for every age? In which case, how is this different from infallibility? Or is it only a long range forecast, so that at any given time the Church may be seriously astray? In which case, what help is this to the unfortunate generations who have to work out their salvation during the intervening error?

Peter Hodgson, an Oxford nuclear physicist, suggested that light might be cast on the infallibility *versus* indefectibility debate if one looked to see how the two concepts would apply to scientific method.⁹ In science there are no moments of infallible certainty. 'Scientific research has a strongly progressive character'. Theories are always open to correction, and the discovery of new phenomena may show that a theory is not incomplete but erroneous. Nevertheless, the 'errors and anomalies are soon corrected and absorbed. This process is highly stable about the axis of truth and seldom strays far from it'.

Confronted by the unknown, the scientist is concerned wholly with determining the truth, and not at all with maintaining consistency with what he or other scientists have written in the past. The consistency of science is at a deeper level than the purely verbal. This is the essential difference in methodology between the indefectibilist and the infallibilist.

⁷ H. Küng, *Infallible? An Enquiry* (London, 1971).

⁸ E.g. A. M. Farrer, *op. cit.*, p 23: 'God is infallible, Church is not'. Cf Küng, *op. cit.*, pp 150, 181, 196. There is, of course, the further objection, made by Küng and many others, that the Church has in fact erred.

⁹ 'Science and Indefectibility', in *The Month* (November 1971), p 153.

Hodgson realizes that theological 'stability about the axis of truth' is due to a different cause from the stability of science: 'in science this is provided essentially by the constant appeal to experiment, while in the Church it is guaranteed by the promise of Christ'. The difference is, however, less clear-cut than this statement suggests. Even theology depends on experience, even if not on experiment. The traditional formula *lex orandi, lex credendi* implies, among other things, that expressions of faith are the crystallization in words of the Church's fundamental experience of faith, or rather its experience of Christ himself in faith, an experience which goes deeper than words; and St Thomas held that the fundamental object of faith is not propositions but God himself.¹⁰ Moreover, theology as well as science is 'progressive'. A dogmatic statement does not claim to provide a perfect or complete account of reality any more than a 'scientific' law. Newman's basic theory, that doctrine develops, which once seemed dangerously radical, has become a commonplace, even though there may be dissatisfaction with his detailed working out of the theory.

For Newman, however, doctrinal development does not conflict with infallibility: even in the original anglican edition of the *Essay on Development* he wrote:

If Christianity is both social and dogmatic, and intended for all ages, it must, humanly speaking, have an infallible interpreter.¹¹

The fact that Christianity is a revealed religion and not a human discovery provides the basic reason why indefectibility of a scientific type is not good enough for christian truth. The source of revelation is not the human intellect but the supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit, which is operative in the primary events of the Incarnation and the inspired scriptural witness to these events, as well as in the gift of the power to comprehend this revelation. The Holy Spirit also, in 'reminding' the Church of these events in all ages,¹² preserves it from fundamentally misleading interpretations of christian truth. The social nature of the Church requires that this should be done not only in the consciousness of each individual believer, but by the regulation of verbal formulas, because these are the normal means of human communication. Moreover, since salvation comes through revelation and it is God's will to save all men,¹³ religion has a more urgent need than science for firm criteria *in every age*. It is disastrous enough when a generation suffers because of a scientific mistake, as happened when expectant mothers took thalidomide; science corrected

¹⁰ *Summa Theologica*, II-IIae, 1, 1; *De Veritate*, 14, 8.

¹¹ *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* ed. J. M. Cameron (Harmondsworth, 1974), p 177. This edition reproduces the original Anglican text first published in 1845. The same passage occurs in the revised edition of 1978, part 1, chapter 11, section 11.

¹² Cf Jn 14, 26. The Church is 'the pillar and bulwark of the truth' (1 Tim 3, 15). The faithful have been 'anointed by the Holy One' and given knowledge (1 Jn 2, 20; cf 2, 27).

¹³ 1 Tim 2, 4.

the mistake, but only after many human beings had suffered. God in his goodness has not left his Church to the risks involved in such a slow process of self-correction. We shall return to this line of thinking when we come to consider the purpose of infallibility.

The logic of infallibility

There is a *third reason* put forward against the doctrine of infallibility: it is a contradiction in terms, it is asserted, to speak of an infallible statement. Hans Küng, for example, who argues in this way by appealing to modern philosophical investigation into the nature of language, maintains that no form of words can ever be infallible, because words always fail to signify the whole truth, they often fail to express the author's meaning, they can never be translated into other languages without an element of distortion, the meaning of words changes in the course of time, and statements are often used as slogans for ideological purposes.¹⁴

Another Catholic writer, Peter Chirico, while accepting the doctrine of infallibility, expresses a line of thought that at times comes very close to Küng's. Statements, according to Chirico, cannot be described as infallible, not, however, simply because of the slippery nature of words, as Küng asserts, but for the more fundamental reason that infallibility, like truth, is a quality of mind; expressions are only 'markings on paper, in wood, on stone . . . sounds that are uttered . . .', and cannot be said properly to be either true or false, infallible or fallible.¹⁵ Thus, while Küng regards dogmatic statements as fallible, Chirico believes that neither of the categories of fallibility or infallibility applies to them. 'Infallibility can exist only with regard to what I have called universal meanings'.¹⁶ In fairly simple terms, what I understand Chirico to mean (his own vocabulary is so technical that he finds it necessary to equip his book with a nine-page glossary) is that these universal meanings concern, not objects of my attention, but the invariable features of my own process of knowing and of all other processes of human development. These universal meanings can be called dogmatic when they concern those human processes which have been made available through Christ as aspects of the salvation which is God's will for all mankind. Although these dogmatic meanings concern subjective experience, this experience is 'the subjective appropriation of objective reality'.¹⁷ In even simpler terms, it is the shared experience of salvation which is infallible. The Church's dogmatic *statements* cannot properly be described as infallible, not because only 'meanings' are infallible, but also because the vast majority of these statements are expressed in terms of a particular culture, and so lack the necessary quality of universality.¹⁸ What the Church can do, if I understand Chirico, is to guarantee

¹⁴ Küng, *op. cit.*, esp. pp 129-33.

¹⁵ P. Chirico s.s., *Infallibility: the Crossroads of Doctrine* (London, 1977), p 279. Bishop B. C. Butler expresses agreement in his review of the book in the *London Tablet* (7 January 1978), p 10. ¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, p 62. ¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, pp 102-03. ¹⁸ *Op. cit.*, pp 279-82.

the adequacy of certain culturally limited expressions which point to infallible universal experiences of salvation. One is, however, entitled to ask why these guaranteed expressions should not themselves be called 'infallible'. After all, it is the act of teaching (the proper sense of the word *magisterium*) which Vatican I describes as infallible, and it is the Church in the act of defining which is said to possess infallibility.¹⁹ However infallible the *meaning*, the act of *teaching* and *defining* cannot be infallible unless the infallible meaning is infallibly reflected in the doctrinal formulas.

Unlike Chirico, Karl Rahner regards the regulation of language as an essential element in an infallible definition.²⁰ This is so because a definition has a *sociological* purpose: namely, to formulate the common creed of the Church. This regulative function of a definition, Rahner continues, also follows from the analogical nature of religious language.²¹ In defining a doctrine, what the Church does is to single out a particular form of words in order to emphasize one aspect of the truth about God, without necessarily denying the truth of other possible expressions, except in so far as they are put forward as a rejection of the Church's position. Thus the Church rejected the language of consubstantiation, not because the truth about the Real Presence *could* not be expressed in such terms, but because, if it were so expressed, there was a danger that it would not be understood.

Accordingly, since the Vatican I definition, now that the function of religious language is more clearly realized,

we have reached a situation in which a new definition can no longer be false. For in a new definition the range of legitimate interpretation is so wide that there can no longer be any error involved.²²

This quotation brings us to the centre of the problem concerning the logic of infallible statements. If Rahner is right in saying that no definition could

¹⁹ DS 3065 (heading); 3074.

²⁰ 'On the Concept of Infallibility in Catholic Theology', in *Theological Investigations*, vol 14 (London, 1976), p 78. I have preferred my own phrase 'regulation of language' to the translation 'authorized language' given there.

²¹ It is traditional Catholic teaching that our language about God is analogical: that is to say, when we speak about God we use words which apply primarily to our everyday lives, and are necessarily inadequate to describe God. When we say, for example, that God is loving, we mean that we can recognize a similarity between the way God cares for us and the way a friend cares for us; so that it is appropriate to use the same word to describe God's concern for us which we use to describe our friend's. Now we know from our self-awareness what it is like to be loving, and thus we know what we mean when we call someone a loving person. But because God is God, infinite, self-sufficient, unchanging, we do not know what God's lovingness is like in itself. What we can do is to note that the effects of his love are similar to, but incomparably greater than the effects of human love, and to remember that all human good qualities are limited images of and participation in the infinite simplicity of God. Now it follows from this analogical nature of religious language that no single form of words can do justice to God; there is need of a plurality of theological expressions.

²² Rahner, *op. cit.*, p 80 (my translation).

be false, what is meant by saying that some definitions are infallible? Rahner in fact believes that there can now be no 'new' definition at all, because the Church now embraces such a pluralism of 'regional cultures, philosophies, terminologies, outlooks, theologies, and so on' that no 'genuinely *new* proposition can be so expressed that it can be felt throughout to be an expression of the conscious faith of the whole Church'.²³

One can, however, without too much ingenuity imagine situations in which the Church still needed to declare the truth with the full solemnity of an infallible definition: for example, affirming the Church's *faith* in the full truth of the Incarnation against the modern tendency to regard Jesus as no more than a man uniquely at the disposal of God for the salvation of the world; or, in the field of *morals*, reaffirming against advocates of abortion the sanctity of all human life. As Rahner himself concedes, despite the legitimacy of a plurality of doctrinal expressions, and even the need of such plurality in modern circumstances, a negative can still be simply false. There have, for example, been extreme protestant statements to the effect that there is no sense in which an ordained minister as such can be truly described as a priest. There could easily be extreme 'liberal' statements to the effect that the Nicene definition that Jesus is one in substance with the Father is simply untrue. If the Church were to repudiate such negative views, the repudiation could be infallible in the sense that it was true to the facts.

But suppose one considers a defined doctrine not as the condemnation of its negation, but as the affirmation of a positive teaching. If what Rahner says about pluriformity is correct, the definition will be only one of perhaps a large number of other true statements that could be made. One can, for example, give a true account of the eucharist in terms not only of transubstantiation, but also of sacramental presence or symbolic reality or transfinalization or transignification. It seems to be saying very little if one claims that a definition is infallibly true, if almost any positive theological statement is true.

It therefore seems desirable to look for a deeper understanding of the truth of a dogma. So far we have been considering dogmas to be true if they correspond with the facts. Biblical scholars, however, point to another sense of truth. When St John, for example, describes the Incarnate Word as 'full of grace and truth',²⁴ though writing in Greek, he is probably using a concept derived from the hebrew word *emeth*. *Emeth* is a word used to describe God's *faithfulness* to his covenant: 'I will also praise thee with the harp for thy faithfulness (*emeth*), O my God'.²⁵ John Scullion, among others, has suggested that it is in this sense that the scriptures contain truth, even though they may be factually in error: 'the truth of the Bible is the truth, steadfastness, constancy of God to himself, to his people and to his creation'.²⁶ In other

²³ *Op. cit.*, pp 72-73 (D. Bourke's translation).

²⁴ Jn 1, 14. Cf 14, 6.

²⁵ Ps 71, 22; Cf 30, 10; 36, 6; 40, 11; 91, 4.

²⁶ *The Theology of Inspiration* (Cork, 1970), p 83. Cf Küng, *op. cit.*, p 181.

words, the essential truth of scripture is what Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation calls 'saving truth'.²⁷ We have God's promise that he will use the words of scripture as a means of salvation, and he will be true to his undertaking.

In two other works I have suggested that the meaning of infallibility needs to be expressed in a similar way.²⁸ To take the infallibility of the Church to mean that the Church's dogmatic judgments are *factually* true is to make too low, not too high, a claim for them; the same could be said about almost any religious statement which is not a pure negation. It is much more important to maintain that the Church's definitions are infallibly true in a *pragmatic* sense: we can have utter confidence that God can and will use them to lead his Church to knowledge and love of himself. It was for this reason that I have previously called infallibility 'The charism of providential teaching'.

The use of infallible statements

In the Statement on Authority in the Church by the Anglican/Roman Catholic Commission, the word 'infallibility' occurs only once, in a footnote which states that the theological meaning of the term does not correspond exactly with its everyday use.²⁹ However, the note does throw light on the Commission's understanding of the word; for it goes on to state that the theological sense is contained in paragraphs 15 and 19 of the statement. The first of these paragraphs explains the need of officially authenticated expressions of faith as follows:

All generations and cultures must be helped to understand that the good news of salvation is also for them. It is not enough for the Church simply to repeat the original apostolic words. It has also prophetically to translate them in order that the hearers in their situation may understand and respond to them. . . . Although these clarifications are conditioned by the circumstances which prompted them, some of their perceptions may be of lasting value. . . . This is why the Church has endorsed certain formulas as authentic expressions of its witness, whose significance transcends the setting in which they were first formulated. This is not to claim that these formulas are the only possible, or even the most exact, way of expressing the faith, or that they can never be improved. Even when a doctrinal definition is regarded by the christian community as part of its permanent teaching, this does not exclude subsequent restatement. Although the categories of thought and the mode of expression may be superseded, restatement always builds upon, and does not contradict, the truth intended by the original definition.

²⁷ *Dei Verbum*, 7 (*salutaris veritas*). The italics in the text are my own.

²⁸ 'The Charism of Providential Teaching', in *The Month* (November 1971), pp 131-41; *The Second Gift: a Study of Grace* (Slough, 1974), pp 144-49.

²⁹ *Op. cit.*, 24c, footnote.

Paragraph 19, as well as stating that ecumenical councils are 'protected from error' when they fulfil this function 'in fundamental matters of faith' (the passage is quoted on page 304 of the present article), explains that these definitions 'do not add to the truth but, although not exhaustive, . . . clarify the Church's understanding of it'.

The Church's dogmatic definitions, then, provide clear landmarks which allow Christians, confident of their bearings, to explore new methods of expounding the eternal truths in words that will speak resonantly to their contemporaries. Neither theologians nor preachers nor catechists may rest content with simply echoing the consecrated formulas. In regulating language, the Church is not providing slogans to be repeated. Dogmatic statements

are answers to yesterday's questions in yesterday's terms. But . . . today's answers to today's questions must be consistent with these dogmas, even if today's questions need to be answered in very different terms.³⁰

The theologian never has the right to start all over again from the drawing-board.

At the same time, if dogmatic statements must not be merely repeated, but need to be 'prophetically translated', how do they exercise their regulative function? How, in other words, do we distinguish genuine restatements from those which distort the meaning of the original? How, for example, do we decide whether the chalcedonian definition of Christ as true God and true man, with the natures of humanity and divinity united in the single person of God the Word, is adequately restated by Rahner's description of Christ as the 'absolute saviour'? To insist on a word-for-word equivalence between the new formula and the old would be to confine the Spirit of truth within a strait jacket. It would be equally constricting to insist on a strictly logical deduction of the new formula from the old.

In looking for criteria by which to distinguish between adequate and inadequate restatements (I do not speak of *false* restatements because Rahner seems to be more or less right when he speaks of the element of truth in all dogmatic statements),³¹ we are engaged on the same inquiry as Newman when he sought 'distinctive tests between development and corruption' of an idea.³² Newman proposed seven tests: preservation of the essential idea, continuity of principles, power to assimilate or coalesce with other ideas,³³

³⁰ E. J. Yarnold, 'The Church and the Churches', in *The Way*, vol xviii (April 1979), p 109.

³¹ See above, pp 308-09.

³² *Op. cit.*, p 116.

³³ 'Life is characterized by growth, so that in no respect to grow is to cease to live' (p 130). 'The stronger and more living is an idea: that is, the more powerful hold it exercises on the minds of men, the more able is it to dispense with safeguards, and trust to itself against the danger of corruption' (p 133).

early anticipation, logical sequence (which is not the same as saying that the new statement is arrived at by logical deduction), the ability of new statements to explain and protect what has gone before, and continuing vigour.

But in formulating these criteria, Newman still does not show us how an earlier dogmatic statement regulates later ones. The process, he tells us, is 'higher and choicer than that which is logical'; it is carried on 'silently and spontaneously'.

An idea grows in the mind by remaining there; it becomes familiar and distinct, and is viewed in its relations; it suggests other ideas, and these again others, subtle, recondite, original, according to the character, intellectual and moral, of the recipient; and thus a body of thought is gradually formed without his recognizing what is going on within him.³⁴

The implication seems to be that, although at the time and in the circumstances of its propagation, a definition will regulate forms of speech, at other times and in other circumstances its influence may be less direct: it may serve more as a focus for prayerful reflection. This suggestion is confirmed by the passage in which Newman considers how later dogmas would appear to the apostles:

the holy Apostles would know *without words* all the truths concerning the high doctrines of theology, which controversialists after them have piously and charitably reduced to formulae, and developed through argument.³⁵

The apostles would recognize the dogmatic formula as crystallizations of their own experience of Christ in prayer; and the experience of the later generations which is crystallized in these formulas has itself been influenced by earlier formulas.

The conclusion bears some resemblance to Maurice Wiles' suggestion that 'the test of a true development in doctrine is . . . whether it continues the objectives of the Church in her earlier doctrinal work in a way which is effective and creative in the contemporary world'.³⁶ But whereas Wiles believes that sometimes in formulating dogmas the Church has failed to achieve these objectives, the doctrine of infallibility affirms that at important, recognizable moments the Church has been preserved from error.

³⁴ *Op. cit.*, pp 136-38.

³⁵ *Op. cit.*, p 138 (italics mine).

³⁶ *The Making of Christian Doctrine: a Study in the Principles of Early Doctrinal Development* (Cambridge, 1967), p 177.

The purpose of infallibility

Usually the occasion for the definition of dogmas has been the need to articulate the Church's faith in opposition to some heresy; thus the Nicene Creed was proclaimed in opposition to Arianism, and the Chalcedonian formula in opposition to monophysitism. This fact sometimes gives rise to doubts about the propriety or even the validity of definitions which cannot be shown to have been touches on the tiller needed to steer the Church away from unorthodoxy.

Jean Tillard, while conceding that definitions are usually associated with the rebuttal of heresy, suggests that they can also be justified as articulations of the *sensus fidelium*, and that such was the purpose of the definitions of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption.³⁷ Chirico goes further, and sees the primary function of any definition as the 'proclamation of the truth that is in the whole Church. Only *per accidens* should it be the means of indicating heretics'. Thus, dogmas should be seen as 'a liberating factor in the Church and not a restricting one'.³⁸

Rahner also derives the purpose of infallible teaching from the nature of the Church. God has communicated himself to mankind with a 'historical tangibility' in Jesus Christ. The Church is 'the ongoing presence and the historical tangibility of this ultimate and victorious word of God in Jesus Christ'. (In saying this, Rahner is expressing in different terms the teaching of Vatican II that Christ is the sacrament of God and the Church is the fundamental sacrament of Christ). By virtue of the resurrection, the Church shares in the victory of God's offer of himself. This triumph of love includes a triumph of truth over 'human dishonesty'; God 'will maintain this victory of Christ as an eschatological act of salvation'. When the Church in its teaching 'confronts man . . . with an *ultimate* demand in the name of Christ' by defining a dogma, 'God's grace and power prevent this teaching authority from losing the truth of Christ'. In this way, the Church acts as 'the concrete organ and the embodiment of the historical tangibility of the whole Church's understanding of the faith, and this understanding is ultimately mediated to it by the Spirit of Jesus Christ and through the victory of his grace'.³⁹

In our final instalment we shall consider how this infallibility is exercised through the Pope.

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³⁷ *Sensus Fidelium* (a working paper presented to the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission).

³⁸ *Op. cit.*, pp 294-95.

³⁹ *Foundations of Christian Faith* (London, 1978), pp 379-81.