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**From Chapter XX – The Church on Earth  
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**PART II (pp. 710-720)  
The Juridical Structure of the Church  
VII: Preliminary: The Authority of the Church**

WE must now consider how Christ rules the Church visibly through his Vicar, the Pope, and the Bishops in their respective dioceses. Nor shall we lose sight of the fact that "in the first place, in virtue of the juridical mission by which the divine Redeemer sent forth his Apostles into the world as he himself had been sent by the Father<sup>1</sup>, it is indeed he who baptises through the Church, he who teaches, governs, absolves, binds, offers, makes sacrifice."<sup>2</sup> Although it must be admitted that "the structure of the Christian society, proof though it is of the wisdom of the divine Architect, is nevertheless something of a completely lower order in comparison with the spiritual gifts which enrich it and give it life,"<sup>3</sup> we have seen how complete is the error of those who would detach the inner mystery of the Mystical Body from the outward framework of the Church.<sup>4</sup> Both are so closely connected that it is impossible truly to love the one without loving the other;<sup>5</sup> they are as integral to the Church as body and soul to man, as divinity and humanity to Christ, who is the Head and Pattern of his Church.<sup>6</sup>

To enable the Church to carry out Christ's commission of leading mankind to salvation she has been vested by him with a threefold power, corresponding to his own office of Prophet, Priest and King : that of teaching, her *doctrinal* authority; that of order, her *ministerial* authority; that of government, her *jurisdictional* authority. We may note in passing that some theologians make further subdivisions within these three powers and arrange them differently,<sup>7</sup> while others point out that they are fundamentally reducible to two, that of order and that of jurisdiction.<sup>8</sup> But the classification here given<sup>9</sup> perhaps lends itself to the clearest treatment in the space at our disposal. Further, as the power of order, which is concerned directly with the sanctification of the Church, is discussed elsewhere in this volume,<sup>10</sup> there remain for our consideration only the Church's (a) doctrinal authority and (b) jurisdictional authority.

**(A) Doctrinal Authority**

The doctrinal authority, or *magisterium*, with which Christ has equipped his Church includes all the rights and privileges necessary for the effective teaching of divine revelation and guarding intact the deposit of faith. He has willed that the human race as a whole should acquire God's truth, not by

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<sup>1</sup> John xvii 18 ; xx 21.

<sup>2</sup> MCC 52.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 61.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. p. 685 ; cf. MCC 63.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 91.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 62.

<sup>7</sup> Schultes, op. cit., pp. 329-332.

<sup>8</sup> Billot, De Ecclesia Christi (tome i, editio 5), pp. 339-342.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Tanquerey, Synopsis Theologies Dogmatics (tome i, editio 23), p. 552.

<sup>10</sup> Essay xxix : The Sacrament of Order.

individual inspiration, nor by the private interpretation of Scripture, but by attending to the living voice of the Church. Hence, as a corollary, he has ensured that that voice shall not err; in other words, he has endowed his Church with the gift of infallibility. This infallibility extends, in principle, to the tradition of Christian belief (*faith*) and the manner of life (*morals*); it is concerned with what men must believe, and what they must do, if they are to be saved.

As, however, the Church derives her teaching on these points from the original deposit, "the faith once delivered to the saints,"<sup>11</sup> she must know how to preserve her sacred trust from contamination by "philosophy and vain deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the elements of the world and not according to Christ."<sup>12</sup> That is to say, the teaching Church (*Ecclesia docens*) may pass an infallible judgement, not only upon truths of revelation, but on matters so intimately connected with those truths that, were an authoritative decision upon them lacking, men's hold upon revelation itself would be endangered. Such activities as the formulation of creeds, the public condemnation of errors, the prohibition of certain books as dangerous to faith and morals, are all functions of the Church's doctrinal magisterium. It is by the same authority that she sends out missionaries, both to the faithful and to unbelievers, that she opens her schools and, in general, supervises with such vigilance the education of the young.

But, as it has often been misunderstood, we must examine in greater detail the meaning and extent of the Church's infallibility. We recall that it has for its object all the truths, collectively and individually, which are formally contained in the sources of divine revelation; indirectly it bears also upon such other truths as are necessary for our knowledge so that the deposit of revelation may be safeguarded. Be it noted that infallibility is a gift, a charism, bestowed upon the Church, the effect of which is to exclude the possibility of error from her teaching with regard to faith and morals. It implies the assistance of the Holy Spirit, and so may be called a supernatural grace;<sup>13</sup> its function, however, is not, as such, to sanctify the Church or her individual members, but to ensure that she does not teach false doctrine. Infallibility should further be carefully distinguished from *revelation* and *inspiration*. Revelation is the new manifestation of truth by God. Scriptural inspiration implies a divine prompting of the sacred author in the very act of writing, so that what results is literally the "word of God," even though what is contained in it need not always be a revelation. Or, to put the matter another way: revelation belongs exclusively to God ; inspiration is a joint divine-human act, the writer playing the role of God's instrument ; infallibility, as being proper to the Church and the Roman Pontiff, concerns a human activity wherein God is neither revealer nor inspirer, but in which he assists (*Deo adiutore*).

In the popular mind it is *Papal* infallibility which most arrests attention. But it should be remembered that, when the Pope defines infallibly, he does so as the mouthpiece or organ of an infallible Church. Technically, he may use his official prerogative without first consulting the Church; nor do his decrees depend for their validity upon the Church's subsequent ratification; but he cannot be thought of as defining doctrine *apart* from the Church for "he enjoys that infallibility with which the Divine Redeemer willed *his Church* to be endowed."<sup>14</sup> Infallibility, then, belongs fundamentally to the Church, and to the Pope in his capacity of visible Head of the Church. In harmony with the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ, it is a gift bestowed upon Head and members. Thus the Church enjoys not only an active infallibility in teaching, but also a passive infallibility in believing.

The *direct object* of the Church's infallibility includes, in addition to the revealed truths, such matters as the drawing up of the official Creeds or Symbols, the determination of the terms to be

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<sup>11</sup> Jude 3.

<sup>12</sup> Col. ii 8 ; cf. i Tim. vi 20.

<sup>13</sup> Gratia gratis data ; cf. I-II, Q. in, art. i.

<sup>14</sup> Denzinger, 1839.

employed in dogmatic canons and definitions, the manner of interpreting Scripture and Tradition, the decision as to what is to be included in the Canon of Scripture, the condemnation of heresy. All these are but instruments for the expression and clarification of revealed truth; were the Church deprived of them her doctrinal authority would be nullified and without effect. Accordingly they form an indispensable part of the Church's teaching office.

We must now briefly summarise the implications of what theologians call the *indirect object* of infallibility. This covers *inter alia* matters which, strictly speaking, are the concern of the natural philosopher, but error in which would undermine the rational structure on which faith is built; e.g. the spirituality of the soul, which is the natural foundation for its immortality and future life. On occasion the Church, without stigmatising a proposition harmful to faith and morals as *heretical*, will attach to it a censure such as, *proximate to heresy, erroneous in faith, false*; in so doing she judges infallibly, for she thus defines, though negatively, a truth as closely affecting divine revelation.

*Dogmatic facts* fall likewise within the scope of this infallibility. These concern such information as is necessary for our knowledge if our belief in dogma itself is to be safeguarded; e.g. the legitimacy of a Pope, the oecumenicity of a General Council. Clearly, were there uncertainty on such points, we should have no guarantee of the authenticity of doctrinal definitions emanating from these sources. Similarly the Church can decide infallibly whether a given book, objectively considered, contains orthodox or heterodox doctrine and this without prejudice to what the author meant to say. Thus the Fathers at Nicaea condemned the Thalia of Arius, and Innocent X certain propositions from the Augustinus of Jansen. The moral precepts of the Church, as affecting the conduct of all the faithful, are backed by her infallibility; so also is the Church's definitive approval of the various Religious Orders. Though what is here guaranteed is the essential goodness of what is proposed, the fidelity with which a given religious rule reflects the evangelical counsels, but not necessarily its suitability for all times and places ; since this is a matter, not of infallibility, but of practical prudence. In the same connection the Church exercises her infallibility in the solemn canonisation of saints. For it is unthinkable that the lives of those whom the Church upholds as models of heroic sanctity should be other than she declares them to be.

We have yet to touch upon a subject which, after the original deposit of faith itself, first engages the attention of the Church's doctrinal authority, viz., *theological conclusions*, sometimes called *truths virtually revealed*. They are propositions not formally contained in, but deduced from, divine revelation. Often the mind reaches them by means of a reasoning process, or syllogism, of which one premise is known by faith, the other by reason. For instance, that "God will render to each according to his works" is a truth formally revealed. With this I may connect the thought: "God can only so act on the supposition that man is free," and draw from these two statements together the inference: "Therefore man is free." This is a theological conclusion. Some famous examples of truths arrived at in this way are the following: "Christ never lacked efficacious grace"; "Christ is impeccable"; "Christ's knowledge is immune from error." Now these conclusions fall within the scope of the Church's infallibility. In a matter so closely connected with the deposit of faith, involving also the whole process of the development of dogma,<sup>15</sup> it is imperatively demanded that the Church should have the deciding voice; without it her teaching authority would be gravely deficient. Finally, we should note that infallibility in this connection guarantees that the truth in question is in fact virtually<sup>16</sup> revealed, but it says nothing about the validity of the arguments by

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<sup>15</sup> See Essay i, Faith and Revealed Truth, pp. 33-5

<sup>16</sup> Or mediately, as distinguished from immediately (i.e. formally), revealed. The theologians further distinguish, within the sphere of formal or immediate revelation, between what is explicitly and what is implicitly revealed. But this complex, though highly important, subject cannot be pursued further here. Cf. Schultes, *Introductio in historiam dogmatum*, pp. 99-115; 166-179; F. Marin-Sola, *V Evolution homogene du Dogme Catholique*, I, pp, 61 et seq.

which the mind may have deduced it. The charism of infallibility safeguards, not the reasoning processes of theologians, but what the Pope and Bishops, as custodians of divine revelation, teach to the faithful throughout the world.

#### (B) Jurisdictional Authority<sup>17</sup>

In addition to her authority to teach men the way of salvation the Church has been given effective power to guide them along its course. The right to rule, no less than the right to teach, is an integral part of her saving mission. So Christ very clearly laid it down : "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you."<sup>18</sup> "Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven."<sup>19</sup> "Going therefore, teach ye all nations . . . *teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*"<sup>20</sup> We shall see more clearly how this power of rulership is exercised when we come to consider the functions of the Pope and the Bishops, in whom it is chiefly vested. For the moment we may note that the practical government of the Church falls under three heads : the authority which she possesses is legislative, judicial and coercive.

The Church's *legislative authority*, as its name implies, means authority that she has power to make laws binding in conscience, for the general good of the Christian community. It includes also the right to impose precepts; that is, to apply the law to individuals in the form of a command. Every properly constituted society must, from the nature of the case, be able to legislate for its members. Least of all can this right be denied to the Church, which is a divine society organised for the most vitally significant of purposes: the eternal salvation of mankind. Nor may it be objected that the words of Christ and the precepts of the Gospel should be sufficient without any further commandments being added. It is true that the fundamental principles of the Christian law are to be found in these sources; but the Church has been promised the assistance of the Holy Spirit in adapting, interpreting and developing these for the benefit of the faithful according to the diversity of time and place. Confident of the divine guidance, she has exercised this prerogative from the beginning, e.g., in the decrees of the apostolic assembly at Jerusalem with regard to the Mosaic observance,<sup>21</sup> as also in the so-called "Pauline privilege."<sup>22</sup> So the Church has continued to act through the ages, assured that her charism of infallibility will protect her from enacting what is contrary to Christ's Gospel.

As a consequence of the Church's power to legislate there follows her *judicial authority*. This may be defined as the right, and duty, authority of deciding definitively in a given case the true meaning of her own laws, and of the conformity, or non-conformity, of the actions of her subjects with the law. Our Lord himself gave an indication of the exercise of this sort of power<sup>23</sup> with reference to wrongdoing among the faithful. The offending brother is first to be corrected privately, then, if he refuse to amend, the case is to be brought before the Church. Ecclesiastical authority must next pronounce judgement. Should the guilty party refuse to abide by it, there is the appropriate sanction: he is to be regarded "as the heathen and the publican." St Paul acted as judge in this way in the case of the incestuous Corinthian,<sup>24</sup> and he gives explicit advice to Timothy as to the correct procedure.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> The Church's Jurisdictional authority, strictly speaking, includes her doctrinal authority ; for she teaches by divine right (*ius*). We here use the term in its more restricted sense of power of rulership (*potestas regendi seu regiminis*) ; to be distinguished again from the power of order.

<sup>18</sup> John xx 21.

<sup>19</sup> Matt, xviii 18.

<sup>20</sup> Matt, xxviii 19-20.

<sup>21</sup> Acts xv 28 ff.

<sup>22</sup> I Cor. vii 12 ff.

<sup>23</sup> Matt, xviii 15 ff.

<sup>24</sup> I Cor. v 3.

<sup>25</sup> I Tim. v 19.

Again, as an inevitable corollary to the foregoing powers, we find the Church possessed of *coercive authority*. In fact, the words of our Lord just quoted and the behaviour of St Paul illustrate the Church's judicial and coercive powers operating together. What is here meant is not that the Church can bring direct physical compulsion to bear upon her subjects, but that she has the right to punish them when they offend against her ruling. Unpalatable as this doctrine may be to the mind of the modern man, living as he does in a world contemptuous of all ecclesiastical authority, it is nevertheless bound up with the Church's function of government. It is only the counterpart, on a higher plane, of the right of civil society to attach to its laws the sanction of a penalty for their infringement. Canonical punishment normally consists in the wrongdoer being deprived by legitimate authority of some spiritual or temporal benefit.<sup>26</sup> Excommunication is an example of a spiritual penalty, the imposition of fasting of a temporal. The object of such punishment, it need hardly be said, is not any arbitrary exercise of power, but the correction of the delinquent and the restitution of the order of justice broken by his offence. St Paul's second Epistle to the Corinthians shows him conscious of the possession of coercive authority as here understood.<sup>27</sup>

With the power of the Church in temporal affairs we shall deal more fully when we come to consider her relations with the State. Here it will suffice to note that those directly subject to the Church's *potestas regiminis* are baptised persons; for these only, as we have seen, are in the proper sense of the word members. Finally, it should be borne in mind that governmental authority was given directly and immediately by Christ to the Apostles and their successors, and not to the Church as a whole or to the collectivity of the faithful. In other words, this power is now vested in the Bishops, who are not delegates of the Church's members, but appointees of God. The constitution of the Church is thus not democratic,<sup>28</sup> but hierarchic, its pastors deriving their office from above, not from below. To this must be added, as a qualification, the principle of monarchy, inasmuch as the fulness of authority was given solely to Peter, Prince of the Apostles, and to his successors, the Bishops of Rome.

### **VIII: The Pope: Vicar of Christ<sup>29</sup>**

IT is the belief of Catholics that our Lord promised to Peter a primacy of jurisdiction over his Church,<sup>30</sup> a primacy which he actually conferred after his resurrection;<sup>31</sup> they hold, moreover, that it was given, not to Peter alone, but to the successors in his office and that it is vested for all time in the Roman Pontiff, who is the visible Head of the Church. No article of the Christian faith is more fully substantiated in Scripture and Tradition than this. Our present task, however, is not to set out exhaustively the evidence for the doctrine,<sup>32</sup> but briefly to explain its meaning.

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<sup>26</sup> C.I.C., can. 2214-2219.

<sup>27</sup> 2 Cor. xiii 10; *cf.* x 6.

<sup>28</sup> Though there is a very real element of democracy in the appointment to the chief offices of the Church : the Pope and the Bishops, not being hereditary officials, are drawn from all nations and every condition and walk of life. Election by voting has also its part in the procedure.

<sup>29</sup> "Moreover it is absolutely (*omnino necessarium est*) necessary that there should be the supreme Head, visible to all, effectively directing the mutual co-operation of the members to the attainment of the proposed end ; and that visible Head is the Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth. For just as the divine Redeemer sent the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth, to undertake in his name (John xiv 16, 26) the invisible guidance of the Church, so he gave mandate to Peter and his successors, representing his person on earth, to conduct also the visible government of the Christian commonwealth." MCC 69.

<sup>30</sup> Matt, xvi 18-19.

<sup>31</sup> John xxi 15 ff.

<sup>32</sup> This has been compendiously done in, e.g., Dieckmann, *De Ecclesia*, I, pp. 285-319.

Let us recall the words of the principal Petrine text: "And I say to thee: That thou art Peter (Aramaic: *kepha*) and upon this rock (*kepha*) I will build my church. And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven."<sup>33</sup> Our Lord here makes known his will in a series of three metaphors whose meaning, clear enough to us, would be still clearer to listeners familiar with Old Testament Scripture and the teaching methods of the Rabbis. He first compares his Church to a building of which Peter is to be the foundation; he next employs the comparison suggested by "the keys," which will be handed to Peter as a sign of his power over Christ's house; finally comes the reference to "binding and loosing," a symbol of the moral nature of the office, which is furthermore backed by a divine sanction.

The comparison of the Church to a *house* – that is, of *Israel* – is derived from the Old Testament and occurs frequently in the New.<sup>34</sup> Equally scriptural is the idea of a *foundation* to the building.<sup>35</sup> To the strength of this foundation the house owes its firmness and stability, enabling it to withstand rain, wind and floods, "for it was founded upon a rock."<sup>36</sup> Similarly it is from its foundation that the unity of the house arises, the walls, roof and whole structure being bound together in one single edifice in virtue of the rock on which it is based. All this illustrates the relation between the Church and Peter. He who was Simon is given the role of foundation to the building erected by Christ ; hence he receives the name of "Peter," which means "rock." By him the new House of Israel is to be unified and stabilised so that nothing, not even "the gates of hell,"<sup>37</sup> symbol of all that is opposed to Christ's Kingdom, can prevail against it.

"Feed my lambs. . . . Feed my lambs. . . . Feed my sheep."<sup>38</sup> So the promised primacy was conferred in the words of the risen Christ. He who had spoken of himself as the "good shepherd"<sup>39</sup> who desired that there should be "one fold and one shepherd,"<sup>40</sup> was handing over the sheepfold to Peter's care; for he himself was to ascend to the Father.<sup>41</sup> True, he was only withdrawing his visible presence; he would still take care of his own as their chief pastor; hence the commission: "Feed my sheep." But Peter had become shepherd of the flock of Christ in the same way as he was the foundation of his

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<sup>33</sup> Matt. xvi 18-19. The gospel text, of course, is in Greek, the words respectively for "Peter" and "rock " being Πέτρος and πέτρα. M.-J. Lagrange (Saint Matthieu, pp. 323-324) comments as follows: "Πέτρος n'existait pas comme nom propre ni en grec, ni en Latin, et ne peut pas être dérivé du latin *Petronius*. C'est donc un nom nouveau qui paraît dans l'histoire. Le nom commun πέτρος signifiait pierre, et πέτρα rocher. Mais πέτρος convenait mieux pour un homme, et πέτρα convenait mieux comme fondement de l'Eglise. En araméen, on ne pouvait réaliser cette élégance. Nous savons par le N.T. que Simon était nommé Céphas dans l'église primitive (John i 42 ; Gal. i 18 ; ii 9 ; i Cor. ix 5 etc.) . . . On comprend donc très bien . . . que Jésus ait pu dire et Ma. écrire : Tu es Céphas et sur ce Céphas je bâtirai mon Eglise, et que le traducteur grec ait gardé en même temps πέτρα qui répondait mieux à la situation, et πέτρος qui avait prévalu en grec comme nom masculin."

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Acts ii 36 ; vii 42 ; i Tim. iii 15 ; Heb. iii 6.

<sup>35</sup> See especially Eph. ii 19 ff.; cf. iii 17; Col. i 23; i Cor. iii 10.

<sup>36</sup> Matt, vii 25. An interesting text, showing our Lord himself using "rock" in the same sense as in xvi 18. Cf. Luke vi 48.

<sup>37</sup> Matt, xvi 18. See the striking corroboration of this text in Luke xxii 31-32: "And the Lord said: Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you (plural), that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for thee (singular), that thy faith fail not: and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren." We may note the parallels: Satan hath desired you the gates of hell; I have prayed for thee I will build upon this rock; confirm thy brethren Peter the stabilising force in the Apostolic college. Cf. Dieckmann, op. cit., p. 313.

<sup>38</sup> John xxii 15-17.

<sup>39</sup> 2 John x II.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 16 ; cf. xi 52 ff.

<sup>41</sup> John xx 17 ; cf. xiv i ff. ; xvi 28 ; xvii 4 ff. ; xviii 21 ff.

Church. Christ remains, in the words of the selfsame Peter, "the prince of pastors,"<sup>42</sup> but he now acts as the Lord's representative, his Vicar, and he, together with the rest of the Apostles under his leadership, is a true pastor of souls.<sup>43</sup> Nor can it be argued that this pastoral office was to terminate with the death of Peter. For the Kingdom of God was to endure until the end of ages.<sup>44</sup> Accordingly, unless the gates of hell were to prevail, there could never come a time when Christ's sheepfold would be deprived of its shepherd, his Church of its rock foundation.

When, four centuries later, the Fathers at the Council of Chalcedon, on receiving the *Tome* of Leo, acknowledged its author as "the interpreter of Peter,"<sup>45</sup> they summarised in a phrase the traditional belief of Christians in the position of the Pope. It is true that in an earlier age the great Patriarchs and Bishops acted with less frequent reference to Rome than is now the case, but they were none the less fully conscious of their subordination to the Apostolic See, "mother and mistress of all the churches."<sup>46</sup> In the Middle Ages the conspicuous exercise of the power inherent in their office by such pontiffs as Gregory VII and Innocent III was, in effect, no more than the Church's assertion of the primacy of the spiritual over the temporal order. In modern times the breakdown of Christendom at the Reformation and the disruptive influence of the various National Churches, together with the development of easy and rapid communications, has indeed produced a highly centralised ecclesiastical organisation hitherto unknown. But this "ultra-montanism," as it has sometimes not very happily been called, serves only to emphasise the primacy, not merely of honour, but of jurisdiction, which belongs to the Pope in virtue of Christ's commission to St Peter. The Pope's rulership over the Church is thus not simply directive, it is wholly authoritative (*potestas iurisdictionis*); moreover, it concerns, in addition to faith and morals, matters of discipline and government as they affect the Church in every part of the world.

The Church's doctrinal and jurisdictional authority, which we have briefly examined, is vested also in the Roman Pontiff. It is with regard to the first of these, as touching the Pope's office as teacher, that he enjoys the charism of infallibility. On this point it will suffice to quote the words of the Vatican definition : "We teach and define it to be a dogma divinely revealed that the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when acting in his office of pastor and teacher of all Christians, by his supreme Apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the whole Church, through the divine assistance promised him in Blessed Peter, he enjoys that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed his Church to be endowed in defining doctrine concerning faith and morals ; and therefore such definitions of the said Roman Pontiff are irreformable of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church."<sup>47</sup>

Every word of this pronouncement was weighed and debated by the Fathers of the Vatican Council. It should be studied with equal care by those who would grasp the Church's teaching on Papal infallibility. Much of the hostility to which it has given rise has its source in ignorance or misunderstanding of the scope and limitations clearly indicated in the definition itself. An *ex cathedra* definition is one in which the Pope employs the fulness of his apostolic authority to make a final and irrevocable decision (*definit*) on a question of faith or morals, with the clear intention of binding all the faithful to its acceptance, as involving, directly or indirectly, the deposit of faith. It will be obvious that this does not necessarily include the normal teaching authority by which he is frequently addressing the faithful, either directly or through the medium of the Roman

<sup>42</sup> I Peter v 4 (lit. " chief shepherd ") ; cf. ii 25.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Matt, xviii 18 ; ix 36-38.

<sup>44</sup> Matt, xxviii 18-20 ; cf. xiii 38 ff. ; xiii 47 ff.

<sup>45</sup> Synodal Letter to Leo; No. 98 in the collection of Leo's letters; P.L. 54, 951-960. Cf. Hefele, History of the Councils (Eng. trans. Vol. 3), p. 429 ff.

<sup>46</sup> Denzinger, 999.

<sup>47</sup> Denzinger, 1839.

Congregations. Teaching of the latter kind, though it is to be received with all reverence, does not enjoy the charism of infallibility. The Holy Father may speak, for example, merely as Bishop of Rome; or, as Pope, he may give instruction to only a section of the universal Church; or again, he may address the whole Church, but without the intention of defining anything as of faith. In none of these activities does he enjoy, within the terms of the definition, immunity from error. The same may be said of the occasions when the Pope expresses his mind *motu proprio*, i.e. by initiating a question himself, or, it may be, in response to queries submitted to him by others. Teaching which is; technically, on infallible may be imparted in Pontifical Decrees and Instructions and in Encyclical Letters, for all of which the Pope is the responsible author. His authorisation of the decisions of the Roman Congregations, notably that of the Holy Office and, of equal authority within its prescribed limits, the Biblical Commission, is not to be regarded in the light of a solemn definition. To these decisions, on account of their great weight, a respectful internal assent is demanded of the faithful; but they are not necessarily irrefragable and have not the sanction of infallibility behind them.

Of the Pope's legislative, or jurisdictional, authority it will be enough to remark that all the power of rulership possessed by the Church is vested in his office ; adding that while he is subject to none, save God himself, all the members of the Church, not excluding the Bishops, are subject to him. He may appoint and depose Bishops and send Legates, with authority delegated by him, wherever he deems fit. In a word, his jurisdictional authority is supreme. But, though authoritarian and absolute within its own sphere, the Papal power cannot be fairly described as arbitrary or despotic. The Pope is as subject as the least member of the faithful to the prescriptions of the divine and natural law; from these he can dispense neither himself nor any member of his flock. His jurisdictional authority is such that the canons and positive laws of the Church have no coercive sanction in respect of his actions, but they have for him their directive force none the less ; and he is bound to use his great powers with the charity and prudence of one ever conscious of his grave responsibility before God. To enable him to do – so how otherwise could he hope to succeed? – he enjoys the assistance of the Holy Spirit, as a guarantee that his rulership will be "unto edification and not unto destruction."<sup>48</sup>

Finally, be it remembered that nothing we have said concerning the successor of St Peter militates against the supreme power over the Church exercised by Christ himself. He is the Head of the Church in his own right ; Peter and his successors only in virtue of the power received from him. Thus the Pope is the *Vicar* (i.e. representative), not the successor, of Christ. Christ is Head as Redeemer and Mediator of all men ; "and therefore," writes Pius XII, "this Body has only one principal Head, namely Christ, who, continuing himself to govern the Church invisibly and directly, rules it visibly through his personal representative on earth."<sup>49</sup> Christ is the Head of all men throughout all time,<sup>50</sup> the successor of Peter only of those living under his Pontificate. Christ is Head alike of the Church militant on earth, suffering in Purgatory, and triumphant in Heaven; the Pope's headship is concerned only with the Church militant. The Pope, as visible Head, rules the Church visibly; but Christ, though hidden, rules it still, bringing to bear upon his Mystical Body all those unseen influences, of grace and light and strength, which can emanate only from the Incarnate Son of God and his life-giving Spirit.

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<sup>48</sup> Cor. xiii 10.

<sup>49</sup> MCC 38.

<sup>50</sup> *Summa Theologica*, III, Q. viii, art. 3