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# The Nemesis of Infallibility

BY THE RIGHT REV. WILLIAM SHAW KERR, D.D.

## I

THE promulgation of a new article of the creed, nearly two thousand years after the coming of Christ, has horrified Christians outside the Roman fold—and unknown numbers inside it too. The substance of the new dogma adds to the amazement. The grounds relied on for its authentication are a startling breach with traditional Christianity.

Up to the present Rome emphatically maintained that its tenets were guaranteed by Scripture and tradition. The Catechism of the Council of Trent<sup>1</sup> laid down: "But every sort of doctrine which is to be delivered to the faithful is contained in the word of God, which is divided into Scripture and Tradition". The Vatican Council stressed that its decisions were "in accordance with the ancient and constant faith of the universal Church"; "according to the testimony of the Gospel"; "resting on plain testimonies of the sacred writings and adhering to the plain and express decrees . . . of the General Councils"; "Ecumenical Councils also have declared". Moreover, the denial that the Church could add to the deposit of the faith is expressly taught in Chapter IV, which defines the nature of the Pope's Infallibility. The past definitions of the Roman Pontiffs are stated to have been "conformable with the Sacred Scriptures and Apostolic Traditions. For the Holy Spirit was not promised to the successors of Peter that by His revelation they might make known new doctrines, but that by His assistance they might inviolably keep and faithfully expound the revelation or deposit of faith delivered through the Apostles". The decree goes on to claim the sanction of the venerable Fathers and holy Orthodox Doctors.

This of course is in keeping with the Roman claim that it preserves the ancient faith of the Church. In 1931, Pope Pius XI in his *Lux Veritatis* Encyclical wrote of history as "the light of truth and the witness of the ages" and as "the guide of life".

Newman in his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* ingeniously attempted to show that the peculiar doctrines of Romanism were a legitimate and logical growth and complement ("germination and maturation") of the first principles of Christianity. But all through he maintained that Scripture and tradition were the original authoritative sources. The truth was "communicated to the world once for all by inspired teachers", but it could not be comprehended "All at once by the recipients";<sup>2</sup> "all parties appeal to scripture".<sup>3</sup> His argument is to prove "the intimate connexion, or rather oneness, with primitive Apostolic teaching of the body of doctrine known at this day by the name of Catholic".<sup>4</sup> "The divines of the Church are

<sup>1</sup> Preface, Question XII

<sup>2</sup> *Development*, p. 30 (1900 Ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 58.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 169.

in every age engaged in regulating themselves by Scripture, appealing to Scripture in proof of their conclusions." He boldly made his appeal to historical Christianity. "To be deep in history is to cease to be a Protestant."<sup>1</sup>

It is well to bear in mind how the Fathers continually and emphatically proclaimed the all-sufficiency of Scripture as containing "all things necessary to salvation". All doctrine had to be guaranteed by it. Let two instances suffice as representative of the rest. Athanasius—"The holy and divinely-inspired Scriptures are of themselves sufficient to the enunciation of truth". "These are the fountains of salvation, that he who thirsts may be satisfied with the oracles contained in them. In these alone the doctrine of salvation is contained. Let no man add to or take from them." Jerome—"This because it has not authority from the Scriptures is with the same easiness despised as approved".

For the rule of the Early Church we can take the testimony of the fifth century St. Vincent, who held that the canon of Scripture is in itself perfect and sufficient, yet because of differences of interpretation the tradition of the Catholic Church should be a guide, and we should follow the teaching that has universality, antiquity, consent. "This has always been and is to-day the custom of Catholics, namely to prove the true Faith in these two ways: first by the authority of the Divine Canon, and secondly by the tradition of the Church Catholic. Not that the Canon alone is insufficient by itself for everything, but because those who interpret the Divine Words for the most part according to their own caprice improvise conflicting beliefs and errors."<sup>2</sup>

When Bishop Jewel in the sixteenth century undertook his defence of the Reformed doctrine on "God's holy Gospel, the ancient bishops and the primitive Church"; when he challenged his opponents—"Why do they not convince and master us by the Divine Scriptures? Why do they not call us again to be tried by them? Why do they not lay before us how we have gone away from Christ, from the Prophets, from the Apostles, and from the holy fathers?"<sup>3</sup>—he was taking his stand on the field where by common consent the issue was to be decided. It was on that ground that the Romanist champion, Harding, attempted to meet him in the "Confutation of the Apology".

The calling of General Councils is another incontrovertible evidence that the primitive Church knew nothing of the theory that God had given, in the Bishop of Rome, a supreme infallible authority to define the faith—or even that this bishop was the divinely appointed governor of the Church—or that these bishops had advanced any such claims then. Constantine explains why he summoned the Council of Nicaea in order that there should be one faith in the Church. "But I perceived this could not be firmly and permanently established unless all, or at least the greatest part of the bishops, could be convened in the same place and every part of our most holy religion should be discussed by them in Council."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Commonitorium*, ch. 29.

<sup>3</sup> *Apology of the Church of England*, Part I.

<sup>4</sup> *Socrates, Eccles. Hist.*, Bk. I, chap. 9.

Now we witness a crucial revolutionary change of front. The appeal to Scripture and the primitive Church is abandoned. Rome has cut herself loose from such restraints. Her mania for the manufacture of new doctrines is no longer handicapped by the authority of Scripture and Tradition. The *ipse dixit* of the Pope is now accepted as all that is needed for additions to the creed. The faith which was once delivered to the saints can be supplemented at his will. To him it belongs to impose brand-new tests for the salvation of mankind.

## II

This is an astounding and horrifying event in the history of the Christian religion. Is the word 'apostasy' too strong to apply to such a break with the hitherto universally acknowledged grounds of belief? The making of the bodily ascension of Mary an essential article of the creed is nothing less than a repudiation of the foundations on which Christian doctrine has been based. There is not a particle of Scripture proof for it. It was not recognised by the great teachers of the Church for almost six centuries, and then narrated by a credulous French bishop whose compilations of miraculous stories are unworthy of serious consideration. In the Breviary until 1570 there was incorporated a lection discountenancing the story, and Pope Benedict XIV in the 18th century declared the tradition was not of a kind sufficient to rank as an Article of Faith. Yet in 1950 Pope Pius XII announces it is a truth revealed to the Church by the Holy Ghost; and the millions of his spiritual subjects receive his decree as final, unquestionable, divinely authorised. It is his prerogative to add to the original Gospel.

The Hierarchy of the Irish Roman Catholic Church issued a statement last October declaring that the fact of Mary's Assumption into heaven can be guaranteed to us not by human testimony but by divine revelation. "The teaching authority of the Church, aided and guided by the Holy Spirit, is the divinely appointed guardian and interpreter of revealed truth; it is for this authority, and it alone, to declare what is contained in sacred Scripture and tradition. The solemn definition of Our Lady's Assumption means that the supreme teaching authority in the Church now declares with infallible certainty that the doctrine is contained in divine revelation, that it is vouched for by God Himself, and that we can and must accept it on the authority of Him who cannot deceive or be deceived."

The Roman Catholic church now takes the position that Scripture and the teaching of the primitive Church are no longer to count as tests of revealed truth, that only the Pope can tell us what is contained in Scripture and Tradition, and that what he tells us is vouched for by God Himself. Here we have an overturning of the fundamental principles of historical Christianity, an audacious rejection of the sacred original sources of the Faith and the substitution therefor of whatever an Italian Bishop decides to proclaim.

If this is not an heretical perversion, what can be? It throws overboard the divine testimonies which from the beginning have ministered the story of Christ's redemption to men, and exalts instead as the oracle of God an official whose pretensions are confuted by

Scripture and history. The words of St. Paul are peculiarly applicable when he warns his converts against receiving a different gospel. "But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema."<sup>1</sup> (This is the Epistle in which St. Paul tells how he had to resist Peter to the face "because he stood condemned". Paul was not aware that what St. Peter taught was "vouched for by God himself".) Writing to Timothy, St. Paul warns him not to allow certain men "to teach a different doctrine", nor to give heed to myths;<sup>2</sup> and again, he cautions against profane and old wives' myths.<sup>3</sup> How grotesque and numerous were the myths in the earlier centuries can be seen from such a book as *The Apocryphal New Testament* by M. R. James. Among those condemned as heretical by the Gelasian decree are "The Passing of Saint Mary", and many other repellent fables as the "Book concerning the birth of the Saviour and Mary, or the midwife", the "Book concerning the Infancy of the Saviour". It is one of these condemned myths that now is declared an Article of the Faith. We see in it all the fulfilment of another saying of St. Paul: "God sendeth them a working of error (ἐνέργειαν πλάνης) that they should believe a lie".<sup>4</sup>

After the Vatican decree of the personal infallibility of the Pope, Dr. Salmon acutely pointed out that this is now the one decisive question in the controversy with Rome. "Suppose we make what seems to ourselves a quite convincing proof that some doctrine of the Roman Church is not contained in Scripture. What does that avail if we are forced to own that the Church has access to other sources of information beside Scripture as to the doctrine taught by our Lord and His Apostles?"<sup>5</sup> We have seen this is just what has happened about the dogma of the Assumption. Proofs from Scripture or Tradition were regarded as needless. All that was wanted was the Infallible Voice.

A very astute contemporary of Dr. Salmon, within the Roman Church, Cardinal Manning, perceived the advantages of the Infallibility dogma and expressed it with sufficient lucidity. Here was a weapon which relieved Romanism of showing that its doctrines were either Biblical or primitive. "It was the charge of the Reformers that the Catholic doctrines were not primitive, and their pretension was to revert to antiquity. But the appeal to antiquity is both a treason and a heresy. It is a treason because it rejects the Divine voice of the Church at this hour, and a heresy because it denies that voice to be divine. How can we know what antiquity is except through the Church?"<sup>6</sup> "All appeals to Scripture alone, or to Scripture and antiquity, whether by individuals or by local Churches, are no more than appeals from the Divine voice of the living Church and therefore essentially rationalistic."<sup>7</sup> The Cardinal's words are well known and

<sup>1</sup> Gal. i. 8.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. i. 3, 4.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 7.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Thess. ii. 11.

<sup>5</sup> *Infallibility*, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> *The Temporal Mission of the Holy Ghost*, p. 238 (1892 Ed.).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

have been regarded as an exaggerated, high-flying claim for his Church's authority. We see now that he correctly stated the lines on which Romanism was henceforth to proceed. All requirements to justify doctrine by showing that it was in harmony with the teaching of Christ and His Apostles were rendered obsolete and impious.

### III

One thing is clear : the Roman Catholic Church has retreated from the traditional position of maintaining that its tenets were founded on the teaching of Christ and the principles of the primitive Church. It has tacitly abandoned the ground contested so long. The contest in the open field has gone so conclusively against it that it has taken refuge in a last Maginot line of defence. The manoeuvre is a desperate one. The abandonment of the appeal to Scripture and antiquity cannot for long avert its final discomfiture. The citadel it has retired to is not capable of lasting defence.

The substitution of the authority of the Pope for the authority of our Lord's words, the teaching of His Apostles and the witness of the ancient Church is too frantic a device to obtain credence. It must perforce try to justify itself from the sources it aims at superseding. This is a new form of Roman arguing in a circle, and Romanism has never tried any more hopeless task than to prove that the Bishop of Rome has the supernatural prerogatives attributed to him. Scripture knows nothing of them and excludes them. They are irreconcilable with the beliefs and practices of antiquity. They can be shown to have originated and developed through human ambition and aggression—to have been bolstered up by gross forgeries in ages of ignorance. So far from the Popes having been immune from error some of them fell into deadly heresy and one was execrated by Church Councils and successive Popes. What claim can be made for Pius XII that is not valid for Leo X or Alexander VI or Julius II or Urban VI or John XXIII or Benedict IX or John XII or Sergius III? If he is the "true Vicar of Christ", "Father and Teacher of all Christians", so are they. It is easy to protest against raking up old scandals. The scandals would be left in charitable obscurity were not such insensate, preposterous claims made for all holders of the Papacy.

We need look no further than the *Pastor Aeternus* and the decrees of the Vatican Council to see how the dogmas of Papal Supremacy and Infallibility are based on fallacious arguments, on misinterpretation of Scripture, on misrepresentation of patristic sources, on unscrupulous manipulation of documents cited. Not by such methods can the Pope be endowed with the marvellous prerogatives now attributed to him. Such stupendous unfounded pretensions are an insult to intelligence and have to be denounced as a monstrous imposition, a contradiction of historic Christianity. The last citadel of Romanism is no more defensible than its previous fortifications.

### IV

The Infallibility decree of 1870 was assumed to be necessary for the urgent needs of the Church. For the first time after eighty years Pius XII has exercised the prerogative.

The new dogma differs from any previous additions to the creed. It is not a refutation of a dangerous heresy like those enacted by the ecumenical Councils. It is not a proclamation of doctrines like the affirmation of the twelve new articles in the Creed of Pope Pius IV, such as Transubstantiation, Purgatory, Indulgences, etc. It is the assertion that a certain event has taken place. Now it is either true or not that the body of the Blessed Virgin was raised to heaven some time in the first century. Being an event that must have taken place at a definite time or place, then it could be proved only by creditable contemporary evidence. But such evidence is entirely lacking. The earliest apocryphal stories tell of the miraculous transporting of the Apostles to Mary's bedside. None of the Apostles have mentioned it. The orthodox writers of the first centuries were not aware of it. So here is a story, unsupported by any evidence, which the Pope now declares to be a fact and one that must be believed by the universal Church. How can we believe that a pronouncement nineteen centuries after a supposed event can make it true? Is this what Infallibility is for? The critics of the Vatican decree could not have imagined that the first exercise, after the Council, of the gift would be of so fantastic a type.

It has been well-known that for many years a campaign, favoured by Rome, has been carried on to collect petitions for making the Assumption *de fide*. How the votes of unlearned—or for that matter, learned—people all round the world could have weight to decide that the event took place is difficult to understand. The *Universe* of June 21, 1946, had an announcement that “thousands of people—including many civic leaders—attended devotions in a Madrid Park in honour of Our Lady's Assumption and asked the Bishop to petition the Holy Father for the definition of the dogma”. The same issue of the *Universe* had a notice sent out by the Cardinal Archbishop to the clergy of the Westminster diocese giving a form of petition for the faithful to sign, finishing thus—“Humbly prostrate at the feet of your Holiness we earnestly pray that this doctrine of the bodily Assumption of Our Blessed Lady, may, for the glory of God and the exaltation of His Holy Mother, be defined as a dogma of faith”. When doctrine had to be formulated in the days of the ecumenical Councils it was by the agreement of the assembled bishops, meeting as equals, considering themselves bound by the standards of Scripture and the teaching of their predecessors. The newer methods do not commend themselves.

## V

“The exaltation of His Holy Mother.” Did this need a new dogma in the Roman Church? There is no feature of Romanism that excites more aversion in non-Roman minds than the already exaggerated devotion to Mary. As the Archbishops of Canterbury and York stated, “The Church of England renders honour and reverence to the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ”. But we are shocked by the diversion to her of devotion and worship that infringe on what is due to God. We are repelled by the unwarranted ascription to her of maternal influence over Christ's divine mission. The cult of Mary is admitted by thoughtful Roman Catholics to have already proceeded

to "perilous lengths". Just as Anglicans familiar with the Church order of the New Testament and the patristic writings are revolted by the "absolute monarchy" usurpation of the Papacy, so also are they by the exaltation of Mary to be a sharer in the unique glory of our Lord. It has been pointed out that whereas in papal encyclicals there is continual invocation of and honours ascribed to Mary, her name is not mentioned in the twenty-one Apostolic letters in the New Testament. Pope Pius XI even in his encyclical on "Fostering True Religious Union" calls for the intercession of Mary, "Mother of divine grace, Help of Christians, victorious over all heresies". In the same document he stated that all true followers of Christ will believe the dogma of the Immaculate Conception with the same faith as they believe the mystery of the august Trinity. Pius IX in his Bull "Ineffabilis" exhorts to increased zeal "to this sweetest Mother of Mercy and Grace. For nothing is to be feared . . . when she leads the way, when she guides our course, when she is favourably disposed, when she stretches her protecting hand. . . . She with the entreaties of a mother most powerfully pleads our cause—she obtains, too, whatever she asks, and she cannot be disappointed". Mary is "the safest refuge for all who are in peril, the most trusty aid, and with her only-begotten Son, the most powerful mediatrix and reconciler of the world". It might have been supposed that the Pope of 1854 had left nothing wanting to the exaltation of Mary, but his successor of 1950 has found what Pius IX was not aware of, that her ascension is part of revealed truth.

In a book published, with imprimatur 1906, *The Mother of Jesus*, by J. Herbert Williams, it is told that when the Lord's Prayer is used it is "offered to God through our Lady's mediation", and that the Rosary with its ten Hail Marys for one Our Father is taken as showing we "seem largely to pray to God indirectly by proxy".<sup>1</sup> "Why," wrote Dr. Pusey to Newman, "in books of your communion does the Blessed Mother of God so often stand where we should expect to find her Son?"<sup>2</sup>

## VI

What is to be the effect of the new dogma inside and outside the Roman Church? The numbing delusion of Infallibility has produced a strange sort of apathy among the adherents of that communion. Religion among them is no longer the response of the individual to the Gospel of Christ, the homage of minds that are convinced by the evidence for the faith. It is instead the obedient acceptance of what is certified by an external authority. This is far from the method that our Lord used to win allegiance. It enforces a unity by compulsion, by denial of enquiry and the rights of reason and conscience. "The only agreement worth having is that of men who possess the right to differ." The external discipline of the autocratic Papal authority may seem to continue its triumphant efficiency. But the rightful claims of the intellect cannot always be suppressed.

It is one of the gravest defects of Romanism that multitudes of its children now seem prepared to swallow whatever new dogma is offered

<sup>1</sup> P. 149.

<sup>2</sup> *Is Healthful Reunion Impossible?*, p. 333.

to them. This does not display consent and agreement but indifference and a more or less sceptical *laissez-faire*. At the Vatican Council powerful exposures of the untruth of the Infallible theory were put forward by the bishops. But they all submitted.

A book by two Roman Catholics<sup>1</sup> entitled *The Assumption of Our Lady and Catholic Authority* has recently attracted much attention. The writers show conclusively that the origins of the Assumption story are due to apocryphal myths and forgeries, and they make fairly evident their opinion that the defining of the dogma would be a grievous folly. "As well as being defective in all the relevant fields of evidence, the Assumption, if raised to a dogma would have . . . unhappy repercussions on the prestige of the Papacy, on the general trend of Roman Catholic devotion, and on what is a burning question for the twentieth century, the reunion of Christendom."<sup>2</sup> "Failing the discovery of any more nearly contemporary documents or archaeological records it may be concluded that there is no historical evidence of a serious kind to support the legend of the Corporeal Assumption."<sup>3</sup>

These writers must be representative of many in the Roman Communion. Whether such people will acquiesce in the latest addition to what is necessary to salvation remains to be seen.

Sometimes we are compelled to wonder about the nature of such acquiescence. For instance, there appeared in the *Guardian* (20th October, 1950) a letter from "A Catholic Correspondent", pointing out that in the Sarum Breviary and in the Roman Breviary until 1570 the excerpts read from the forged letter of St. Jerome expressed doubts as to what had become of the body of Mary. The writer stated that this liturgical fact does not prevent those who accept Papal Infallibility from accepting the dogma. "For they will conclude that the Holy Spirit has since 1570 made known to the Church that a truth is contained implicitly in the deposit of revealed truth which at any rate until 1570 she did not know to be contained in it, and therefore officially admitted an ignorance since divinely removed." Is this satire or credulity?

From time to time there are clear indications that members of the Roman Church find the tyranny of authority over reason and conscience more than they are able to bear. George Tyrrell was a notable instance. Christ "who restored to us our personality and spiritual liberty cannot rob us of our rights as free citizens in the Kingdom of God".<sup>4</sup> Previous to 1944 the Rev. Dr. John V. Simcox had been for twenty-three years Professor of Canon Law of St. Edmund's College, Ware. In his pamphlet *Is the Roman Catholic Church a Secret Society?* he tells of his break with his Church because he undertook to fight "the battle of Truth against Authority". "The only case now maintained against me by the Archbishop and his advisers is that a Catholic priest has no right to maintain or to preserve the truth against the wish of his bishop. I don't believe that this is Catholicism."<sup>5</sup> "If Catholics will not dare to say a word for

<sup>1</sup> Victor Bennett and Raymond Winch.

<sup>2</sup> P. 14.

<sup>3</sup> P. 55.

<sup>4</sup> *Medievalism*, p. 140.

<sup>5</sup> P. 15

truth and honesty, what can men of goodwill outside the Church suppose but that even we Catholics ourselves do not believe in the Church? God does not need our lies; and Catholics who fear truth in matters of religion confess that they do not really believe Catholicism to be from God."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Warren Sandell is a convert to Rome. In the same pamphlet is to be found an indignant protest from him. He writes of "the spirit of ignorance and advocacy which informs our presentation of history to-day"; of "the fundamental dishonesty of mind, the indifference to truth, which marks not the bad or indifferent Catholic, but the most zealous". "So long as the laity are docile and ignorant enough to be devotees of frivolous and puerile pieties which are as dishonouring to our Lord and His Blessed Mother as they are a scandal to the outside world, all is regarded as well. Truth and honesty are of no account; indeed, their connotation is scarcely understood."<sup>2</sup> Reliance on infallible authority to extort blind obedience, to override the natural rights of reason, is a policy involving sooner or later revolt and disaster.

In the Anglican and other Christian communions it is felt that a lamentable injury has been done to the cause of our common Christianity. So great a Church as the Roman cannot solemnly declare a doctrine of such doubtful repute to be an essential part of the faith, without bringing discredit and ridicule on the Christian religion. The abhorrence that is felt is not confined to any one section of the English Church. One of the strongest denunciations was by the *Church Times*. "To assert as historical an event for which there is no historical evidence is folly. To exalt a pious but unscriptural opinion into an essential dogma is heresy. To disguise expediency as an act of Providence is near blasphemy. And on Wednesday Rome finally insisted on doing these things."<sup>3</sup>

The reaction of enlightened secular thought, well-disposed to religion, was expressed by an editorial note in the *Spectator* (Sept. 8, 1950). It protests against the dogma as little less than a proclamation of the complete divorce of the Christian religion from intellect and reason. "The whole Christian faith is brought into discredit if not derision by such actions as this." One inevitable result of this deplorably fatuous proceeding will be to furnish infidelity with a new plausible weapon.

## VII

We have sorrowfully to recognise that the claims made by the Papacy and the doctrines propounded by it are inconsistent with primitive Christianity. Rome now represents a "different Gospel". It is a perversion of the faith once delivered. By its novelties and distortions of doctrine it has heretically altered the way of salvation. Its pretension to have an infallible source for discovering fresh revelations, as well as the nature of the doctrines thus prescribed, compel us to bear our witness in no uncertain way "for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus." Loyalty to Christ constrains us to be Protesters.

<sup>1</sup> P. 30

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 34, 36.

<sup>3</sup> Nov. 3, 1950.

Christianity depends on the acceptance of what Christ proclaimed, as the supreme unalterable standard of truth. It cannot be added to nor detracted from. "These are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in His name."<sup>1</sup> "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."<sup>2</sup> "Let that abide in you which ye heard from the beginning. If that which ye heard from the beginning abide in you, ye also shall abide in the Son and in the Father."<sup>3</sup> The norm and standard of truth is enshrined in the revealed Word. The Catholic creeds have safeguarded it. We abhor the impious daring of manufacturing new articles of faith and presuming to discover further revelations. In less than a century three of these spurious or dubious doctrines have been promulgated and there is no reason to think the process has reached its limit.

In opposing Roman errors there has been for many years a tendency to refrain from former plainness of language, and to prefer polite inoffensive expostulations. The controversy was often frowned on altogether. Theories of appeasement were as popular, and as futile, in theology as in politics. Such decorous half-hearted methods are trifling with the realities of the situation. The struggle is "that the truth of the gospel might continue with you". Loyalty to that truth, as it is in Jesus, compels us to withstand, without hesitation or ambiguity, all that corrupts or obscures His teaching. We should be ready to take our stand with the Reformers and Caroline divines in their outspoken denunciations. We have even more reason than they to condemn the "blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits" and whatever, old or new, is "a fond thing vainly invented and grounded upon no warranty of scripture but rather repugnant to the word of God". Is there not still a valid sense in which we should witness against the "detestable enormities" of the Bishop of Rome?

<sup>1</sup> John xx. 31.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John i. 3.

<sup>3</sup> 1 John ii. 24.

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## The Growth and Significance of Mariolatry

BY THE REV. R. J. COATES

THE reports of the Rome correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*, describing the scenes of religious fervour about the time of the definition of the Assumption dogma, confirmed the extent to which the cult of Mary dominates the Roman Church, and also indicated the source of its strength. In a huge procession consisting of members of the various religious orders and secular priests only one emblem of the founder of Christianity was carried. Each group, apart from the Benedictines who carried a cross, had some representation of the Virgin. The correspondent, giving his impressions, remarks on the fact that the most enthusiastic element in the concourse consisted of