

**THE AUTHORITY OF DOCTRINAL
DECISIONS WHICH ARE NOT
DEFINITIONS OF FAITH: CONSIDERED
IN A SHORT SERIES OF ESSAYS FROM
"THE DUBLIN REVIEW"**

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The Authority of Doctrinal Decisions which are Not Definitions of Faith: Considered in a Short Series of Essays from "The Dublin Review" by William George Ward

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CONSIDERED IN A SHORT SERIES OF ESSAYS REPRINTED FROM

"THE DUBLIN REVIEW."

BY

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DEDICATION.

TO THE MOST REVEREND HENRY EDWARD,
LORD ARCHBISHOP OF WESTMINSTER.

MY DEAR LORD ARCHBISHOP,

THERE is nothing which you have more earnestly taught us, than that the interests of "truth" come before those of "peace"; or rather, that all Christian peace, really such, is based on Christian truth. Nor have you been less emphatic in inculcating, that there is no security for religious truth, except in the most humble and unreserved submission to the Church, on all matters which are related ever so remotely to faith and morals. Since, therefore, in the following pages, I have treated a

small portion of this large subject, it is not unnatural that I should have solicited you to accept its dedication. I esteem your compliance with that request as one of those kindnesses, which during late years you have shown me in such abundance, and for which I shall ever be most grateful.

I trust I may consider that, in according this permission, you have given your blessing both to me and to my little work; and I sincerely hope that you will approve its contents.

That you may be long spared us to exhibit and teach that devoted loyalty to the Holy See, which is our one protection against the misbelief and unbelief of our unhappy age, is the constant prayer,

My dear Lord Archbishop,

Of your Grace's dutiful and affectionate Servant,

WILLIAM GEORGE WARD.

PREFACE.

THOSE who differ most strongly from the views maintained in this volume, will be forward in admitting the extreme and inappreciable importance of the question at issue. They will be glad, therefore, to see collected in one, the arguments which I have been putting forward on it from time to time in the *Dublin Review*, for the last year and a half. In order that I may more facilitate reference to those arguments, I will here say a few words on the precise doctrine for which I have been contending; and also on the place held in my general reasoning by those respective Essays, which are here again presented to the public.

“There are two questions, totally distinct from each other, and requiring an examination altogether distinct:—the ‘subject’ and the ‘object’ of infallibility. When I am considering the former, I am considering who *possesses* infallibility; whether *e. g.* the Pope alone, or not without episcopal concurrence:

but when I am considering the latter, I am considering *over what objects* infallibility extends; whether *e. g.* it is confined to definitions of faith, or extends much further" (p. 192).

Now, with the former of these questions the present volume is not at all concerned. For myself, undoubtedly, I am of the Ultramontane school; and hold most confidently, that the Pope's declaration *ex cathedrâ* is at once and *ipso facto* the Church's infallible teaching. But hardly any part of these Essays is intended as an argument for Ultramontanism. On the contrary, I consider that all my reasoning, or very nearly all, possesses the same force for Gallicans as for Ultramontanes, if, wherever I speak of a Papal declaration, they will but add their characteristic qualification; if they will consider me to speak only of such a Papal declaration, as has been accepted expressly or tacitly by the Catholic Episcopate. I have expressed this, indeed, repeatedly throughout.

I am here, then, exclusively treating the "object" of infallibility. And on this I make three preliminary remarks. (1.) When it is said that the Pope issues some instruction *ex cathedrâ*, neither more nor less is meant than that he issues it *in his capacity of Universal Teacher*. (2.) It is admitted by all Catholics, that every instruction put forth by him *ex cathedrâ*, and accepted expressly or tacitly by the Episcopate, is infallibly true. (3.) It is also admitted by all Catholics without exception, that no instruction put forth by

the Pope in any other capacity than that of Universal Teacher, possesses this divine promise of infallibility. It is plain, therefore, that to discuss the "object" of infallibility, is precisely to examine the question, in what cases the Pope speaks *ex cathedrâ*. On this question, three different opinions may be held by a Catholic, without the actual abandonment of his Catholic profession.

(1.) "The Pope speaks *ex cathedrâ*, only in his actual definitions of faith; in cases, that is, where he so teaches a doctrine, as to pronounce its contradictory *heretical*. Under such circumstances, he expressly or virtually *anathematizes* the wilful upholders of that contradictory tenet."

(2.) "He speaks *ex cathedrâ*, whenever he formally and precisely instructs the flock to beware of certain tenets, as *theologically unsound*; even though he does not condemn them as actually *heretical*. But his Allocutions, Encyclicals, &c. &c. never contain any such formal and precise instruction: much less does any letter, formally addressed by him to an individual bishop. He never, therefore, speaks *ex cathedrâ* in Allocutions, Encyclicals, and the like; still less in any letter formally addressed to an individual bishop." This opinion will be found drawn out at greater length in pp. 40 and 44.

(3.) "Various official addresses of the Pope—such as Allocutions, Encyclicals, and the like—are not, even in form, addressed to one individual or one nation in