

**MGR. THE BISHOP OF ORLEANS, AND  
MGR. THE ARCHBISHOP OF MALINES.  
FIRST LETTER TO MONSEIGNEUR  
DECHAMPS; FOURTH LETTER TO  
MONSEIGNEUR DECHAMPS**

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Mgr. the bishop of Orleans, and Mgr. the archbishop of Malines. First letter to Monseigneur Dechamps; Fourth Letter to Monseigneur Dechamps by A. Gratry

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**A. GRATRY**

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FIRST LETTER  
TO  
MONSEIGNEUR DECHAMPS,

BY  
A. GRATRY,

*Prêtre de l'Oratoire, Membre de l'Académie Française.*

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TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY

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*Priest of the Church of England.*

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It is understood that this letter, like all my other works, simply represents the opinion of the author, and does not bind the Oratoire in any way.

A. GRATRY,

Priest of the Oratoire,  
Member of the Academy:

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

As several of the translations, of which the Latin text is given, are not strictly literal, I think it right to add that the translations are made from the French of Father Gratry, and not exclusively from the Latin.

T. J. B.

SEP 27 1953

FIRST LETTER TO MONSEIGNEUR THE  
ARCHBISHOP OF MALINES.

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MONSEIGNEUR,

In your reply to the *Observations* of the Bishop of Orleans, you complain of the cry of alarm raised by the illustrious Bishop at the aspect of the present danger of the Church. You are filled with grief on this account, and you tell him that there is neither danger nor doubt in the path in which you bid him follow your steps.

To me, Monseigneur, it seems the contrary; and this I now endeavour to prove to you, praying you to grant me all the attention of your enlightened mind and generous heart. I ask you to allow me to enjoy the benefit of that charming humility which is characteristic of you, and which will permit you to listen to an opponent, placed, in every way, so far below you.

I hope to be able to show you, Monseigneur, that, in your reply to the Bishop of Orleans, you have been working upon false documents. By reason of the rapidity of that work for which "at this moment you had not sufficient leisure," you have not been able yourself to verify all the passages. They have abused your confidence. Did not the same thing happen to S. Thomas Aquinas, in regard to his tract, "*Contra*

*errores Græcorum?*" The Dominican de Rubeis admits the fact in the edition of 1754.<sup>1</sup> He only defends the good faith of the great and holy doctor, which was in no wise necessary, any more than it is needful, Monseigneur, to defend your own. The greatest minds and the noblest hearts are always more easily deceived than others. They never suspect a fraud. They do not imagine a falsehood, and so do not believe it. Now, Monseigneur, the same passages which deceived Saint Thomas—and many other falsifications, both ancient as well as recent ones—have deceived you directly or indirectly.

I speak, Monseigneur, of falsifications properly so called. I speak of interpolations and fraudulent mutilations, introduced into the most certain and most venerable texts. This you shall see for yourself, and there can be no dispute.

I affirm—and you will see it too, Monseigneur—I affirm that there is a school of apologetics, amongst whom are found holy men, some of the greatest minds, and many excellent Christians, who are all deceived together by the blind passion of a certain number of writers and theologians, by the partial good faith of several of them, and, lastly, by falsehoods properly so called and by falsifications knowingly practised.

All this is necessary, Monseigneur, to explain what this school both says and commits to print

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See "Admonitio prævia ad opusculum primum." Father Nicolai, in the edition of 1660 (Paris), was already upon the traces of the frauds which deceived Saint Thomas.



upon one of the grandest facts of all ecclesiastical history—upon the fact of Pope Honorius and the VI. Council. All this is necessary, to explain what Mgr. Manning has written upon this subject, as well as to explain your own reply upon that point and others, to the Bishop of Orleans.

The facts are as follows :—

I. The question is, whether Pope Honorius was condemned as heretical by the VI. Council, or no. Now, the school of which I speak, and whose arguments you adopt, without having, I am bold to say, sufficiently verified them for yourself—this school, I say, now undertakes this: It maintains and intends to prove that Honorius was not heretical, although he was condemned as such by three Œcumenical Councils approved of by Popes, and, moreover, by two Roman Councils over which Popes presided.

They admit, mark it well, that Honorius was condemned, in express terms, as heretical by those three Councils; but they maintain, in spite of that, that he is not heretical. “Certainly,” says one of the defenders of this argument, “I read in the VI. Council these words: ‘Anathema to the heretic Honorius;’ ‘*Anathema Honorio hæretico.*’ But the question is, What is the meaning of this word ‘*hæretico*’? We must again determine the sense of the word by the circumstances under which it was pronounced, instead of inferring the nature of the

“crime condemned from the word employed to express it.”<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, according to this mode of arguing, when I hear read a sentence of condemnation for theft or homicide, I am not to “infer the nature of the crime from the word employed to express it.” The man condemned in express terms for homicide is perhaps only condemned for theft.

Thus, from the fact of the VI. Council, as they admit, declaring Honorius heretical, I have not the right to infer that Honorius was condemned as heretical. Instead of “inferring the nature of the crime from the word employed to express it,” I must first examine the word, and see whether it could not mean something else besides heretical, which would allow me to say, with due respect to the VI. Council, and, in fact, relying upon it for support, that Honorius was not heretical. Unhappily for this absurd argument, it is, in this particular case, absolutely impracticable; for, as the Council enumerates all the heretics which it condemns on the ground of monothelism, and condemns them all uniformly and consecutively by the same word, “*Anathema Sergio hæretico, anathema Honorio hæretico, anathema Pyrrho hæretico,*” it is impossible to maintain that the word “heretical” in this continuous passage has two different meanings—one for Sergius and Pyrrhus and the other for Honorius, who stands between

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<sup>1</sup> “*Etudes religieuses,*” Décembre, 1869, p. 841.

them both. It is a pitiful evasion, which I am, perhaps, wrong to qualify in such gentle terms.

Another supporter of the same system, whilst admitting, as he must do, the fact of the condemnation, gets out of the difficulty in this way: Yes, the Pope was wrong. The fault of this Pope consists in "a, perhaps exaggerated, consideration (des *ménagements* peut-être exaggués). . . . It "is this which authorised the Fathers to envelope "him in the anathemas against the heretics. . . . "Once assimilated to these, he could be treated as "they were."

Therefore, a Pope who should only be guilty of having entertained, either for doctrines or persons, "*a, perhaps exaggerated, consideration*"—this Pope, for that alone, authorises his judges to envelope him in the crime of heresy. Once enveloped thus amongst heretics and assimilated to them, there is no longer anything to *be cautious about*. He may be overwhelmed, his writings burnt, himself anathematized and expelled from the Catholic Church. An innocent man may thus be at first *enveloped*, then *assimilated*, and then *condemned*.

See, then, whither the wish to solve the following problem may lead: 1st, to admit the authority of Œcumenical Councils; 2nd, to admit, as one is compelled to do, that these Councils condemned Honorius as heretical; and, 3rd, to maintain that Honorius was not a heretic. This, Monseigneur, is the dilemma in which they have succeeded in placing you.