THE VATICAN DECREES IN THEIR BEARING ON CIVIL ALLEGIANCE

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CIVIL ALLEGIANCE.

BY

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PREFACE.

A TASK both difficult and unlooked for has suddenly fallen to my lot; that is, to gain a fair hearing on subjects about which the opinions, and still more the feelings, of so many men are not only adverse, but even hostile. I must, therefore, ask for patience from those who may read these pages.

The topics here treated have not been chosen by me. They have been raised by Mr. GLADSTONE, and perhaps, in all the range of Religion and Politics, none can be found more delicate, more beset with misconceptions, or more prejudged by old traditionary beliefs and antipathies. Some of them, too, are of an odious kind; others revive memories we would fain forget. And yet, if Mr. GLADSTONE'S appeal to me is to be answered, treated they must be. My reply to the argument of the Expostulation on the Vatican Council will be found in the first, second, and fifth chapters; but as Mr. GLADSTONE has brought into his impeachment the present conflict in Germany, and has reviewed his own conduct

in respect to the Revolution in Italy, I have felt myself obliged to follow him. This I have done in the third and fourth chapters. Apart from this reason, I felt myself bound to do so by the terms of the two letters printed at the opening of the following pages. I hold myself pledged to justify their contents. Moreover, these two topics fall within the outline of the subject treated by Mr. GLADSTONE, which is, the relation of the Supreme Spiritual Power of the Head of the Christian Church to the Civil Powers of all countries. So much for the matter of these pages.

As for the manner, if it be faulty, the fault is mine: and yet there ought to be no fault imputed where there has been no intention to wound or to offend. I can say with truth that, to avoid offence, I have weighed my words, and if there be one still found which ought not to have been written, I wish it to be blotted out. The subject-matter is beyond my control. I can blot out words, but I cannot blot out truths. What I believe to be truth, that I have said in the clearest words and calmest that I could find to give to it adequate expression.

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INTRODUCTION.

MR. GLADSTONE, in his Expostulation with the Catholics of the British Empire on the Decrees of the Vatican Council, writes as follows:—

'England is entitled to ask and to know in what way the obedience required by the Pope and the Council of the Vatican is to be reconciled with the integrity of Civil Allegiance.'[1]

When I read these words, I at once recognized the right of the English people, speaking by its legitimate authorities, to know from me what I believe and what I teach; but in recognising this right I am compelled to decline to answer before any other tribunal, or to any other interrogator. If, therefore, I take the occasion of any such interrogation, I do not address myself to those who make it, but to the justice and to the good sense of the Christian people of this country.

[1] *The Vatican Decrees in their Bearing on Civil Allegiance.* By the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone. P. 43.