

**THE PONTIFICAL DECREES
AGAINST THE DOCTRINE OF THE
EARTH'S MOVEMENT, AND THE
UNTRAMONTANE DEFENCE OF
THEM**

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Defence of Them by William W. Roberts

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WILLIAM W. ROBERTS

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AGAINST THE

Doctrine of the Earth's Movement,

AND THE

ULTRAMONTANE DEFENCE OF THEM.

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM W. ROBERTS.

ἡ ἀλήθεια ἐλευθερώσει ὑμᾶς.—Ιωαν. viii. 32.

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In rebus obscuris atque a nostris oculis remotissimis, si qua inde scripta etiam divina legerimus quae possint salva fide qua imbuimur, alias atque alias parere sententias; in nullam earum nos præcipiti affirmatione ita projiciamus, ut si forte diligentius discussa veritas eam recte labefactaverit, corruamus.—S. Aug. *De Gen. ad Lit.* lib. i. c. xviii. 37.

INTRODUCTION.

I CANNOT republish my essay of 1870 and not notice Dr. Ward's rejoinder. And the apology I have to offer for doing both these things is that the explanation of the case my critic defended against me has recently been adopted in a work that is likely to hold a high place in Roman Catholic literature. I refer to the admirable *Catholic Dictionary*, by Father Addis and Mr. Thomas Arnold. When so accomplished and honest a writer as the last-named gentleman can think that his article on "Galileo" adequately represents the anti-Roman argument supplied by the facts narrated, and that Dr. Ward's answer is satisfactory, such a reconsideration of the subject as the following pages may promote can hardly be deprecated as uncalled for and out of date. Taking, then, my essay as read, I will at once deal with Dr. Ward's remarks on it. They will be found in two articles of the *Dublin Review* of the year 1871, entitled respectively "Copernicanism and Pope Paul V.," and "Galileo and the Pontifical Congregations."

I object in limine to my opponent's account of one of the main points at issue. "This pamphlet," he observes, "is directed to the establishment of two principal conclusions: firstly, that Paul V. condemned heliocentricism *ex cathedrâ*; and secondly, that even were the case otherwise, the Roman Congregations so acted in the matter of Galileo as to show themselves utterly unworthy of that intellectual submission which has been claimed as due to them by Pius IX., speaking *ex cathedrâ*."

I recognise as mine this second conclusion,* but assur-

* *I.e.* as against those who hold that the Günther Brief, the Munich Brief, and the Syllabus are certainly *ex cathedrâ* utterances.

edly not the first, in the sense my opponent would hold me responsible for it; for in the next page he would make me mean that "Paul V. defined it to be a dogma of the Faith that the sun moves round the earth precisely as Pius IX. long afterwards defined it to be a dogma of the Faith that Mary was immaculately conceived." Had my thesis been this, my opponent's expressions of surprise at my supposing it arguable would be most natural. When the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was defined, all the conditions of an *ex cathedrâ* Act were so abundantly and clearly fulfilled that no Roman Catholic theologian would be permitted to raise a doubt on the subject. I do not for a moment pretend that heliocentrism was condemned by any judgment of which the same may be said; neither have I attempted to prove that it was. My contention was a very different one; and I will try to explain and vindicate it.

I found it laid down by such distinguished representatives of the Ultramontane school as Cardenas, La Croix, Zaccaria, and Bouix, that Congregational decrees, confirmed by the Pope and published by his express order, emanate from the Pontiff in his capacity of Head of the Church, and are *ex cathedrâ* in such sense as to make it infallibly certain that doctrines so propounded as true, are true. This, according to D. Bouix, is the opinion to be held. The contrary, though not condemned, is, he says, "*futilis et certo falsa*." Moreover, it seemed to me, as it did to Dr. Ward, that this opinion was powerfully supported by certain utterances and Acts of the Holy See itself. Take, for instance, the language I quoted in my pamphlet, used by Pius IX. in the Brief *Eximiam tuam*, in reference to the original decree prohibiting Guntler's works. That decree was a simple edict of the Index, having the usual notice that the Pope had ratified the decision and ordered its publication. Yet the Pope speaks of it as having been approved "by his supreme authority;" and remarks that, "sanctioned by our authority and published by our order, it plainly ought to have sufficed that the whole question should be judged

finally decided—*penitus dirempta*, and that all who boast of the Catholic profession should clearly and distinctly understand . . . that the doctrine contained in Günther's books could not be considered sound," "sinceram haberi non posse doctrinam Güntherianis libris contentam." How, in the name of common sense, could a decree possibly erroneous have made it clear to all Catholics that the doctrine of the books thereby prohibited could not be sound? And how could such a decree have plainly sufficed to determine the whole question at issue?

A still more striking case in point is afforded by the history of the decrees condemnatory of Louvain traditionalism. Two accounts of what happened, the one in a measure supplementing the other, together with the authoritative documents cited, will be found in the first volume of the *Dublin Review* for 1868. From these it appears that, in June 1848, Professor Ubaghs, of the University of Louvain, received notice that the Congregation of the Index had decreed that his works on *Theodicea* and *Logic* contained errors he would be required to correct in a future edition. The points to which his attention was directed on this occasion were his deliverances touching the impossibility of demonstrating, in the proper sense of the term, external metaphysical truths in general, and God's existence in particular. The professor accordingly made some changes; but the Congregation was still dissatisfied with his language, and passed another decree to the effect that he had not made the corrections required. We gather from a later document (Cardinal Patrizi's letter of Oct. 11, 1864) that both these decrees were confirmed by Gregory XVI.

After this the contention between the supporters and opponents of the professor's opinions was allowed to go on for some years. But the publication, in 1859, of a work by Canon Lupus, entitled *Traditionalism and Rationalism Examined*, and the judgment of an eminent Roman theologian that no sound Catholic could hold the opinions on traditionalism taught at Louvain, drove four of the professors to send an exposition of their doc-

trine to Cardinal de Andrea, Prefect of the Index, to be submitted to the Congregation. Instead, however, of doing so, the Cardinal contented himself with the judgment of certain theologians, and returned an answer on his own account, wherein he praised the professors for their submission to the Apostolic See, and declared that the doctrine referred to him "is among those that may be freely disputed on either side by Christian philosophers." But his letter, having no authority—for it did not even profess to be from the Congregation—only supplied fresh matter for contention.

In the following year, July 31, 1861, the Belgian Bishops wrote to the Rector of the University of Louvain, with a view to restore peace. The professors engaged to adhere to all the counsels and rules laid down for them. Then the Pope himself interposed with an Apostolical Letter, dated Dec. 19, 1861, in which he utterly disavowed Cardinal de Andrea's letter, as having no authority whatever. He declared that "the definitive examination and judgment of the doctrines in dispute appertained solely to the Apostolic See," "*Quarum definitivum examen et iudicium ad hanc Apostolicam Sedem unice pertinent.*" That until the Holy See should definitively pronounce judgment on the matter, neither the advocates nor opponents of the opinions in debate were to say that what they taught was the one, true, and the only admissible doctrine on the subject: "*Volumus atque mandamus, ut eorumdem doctrinarum tum fautores tum oppugnatores, donec definitivum de ipsis doctrinis iudicium hæc Sancta Sedes proferre existimaverit, se omnino absteineant sive docendo . . . sive factis sive consiliis, aliquam ex prædictis philosophicis ac theologicis doctrinis exhibere ac tueri, veluti unicum, veram, et solam admittendam, ac veluti Catholicæ Universitati propriam.*" Observe, the Pontiff here plainly asserts that no judgment but a judgment exclusively (*unice*) of the Holy See ought to be accepted as decisive on the points at issue. He implies, therefore, that the decrees he subsequently required the professors to accept as decisive, were to be recognised

as expressive of the judgment exclusively (*unice*) of the Holy See.

The Pope then commissioned the Congregations of the Inquisition and Index to examine the whole matter; and on Oct. 11, 1864, Cardinal Patrizi wrote to the Belgian Bishops, announcing the result. The united Congregations resolved that Professor Ubaghs had not really corrected the errors censured in 1843 and 1844. They, therefore, commanded him to do so. They further said that they must not be understood to approve certain other opinions advocated in the more recent editions of the professor's works. His Holiness Pope Pius IX., it was added, has ratified and confirmed with his authority this their sentence.

Professor Ubaghs again set himself to prepare a fresh edition of his works, and in 1865 placed copies of it in the hands of the Roman authorities, intending to publish should his corrections be approved. But the judgment he elicited on this occasion was even more unfavourable to him than that of 1864. The Congregations ruled that the new edition still contained, in substance, the errors previously noted; and they added that they observed in the professor's works teachings very similar to some of the seven propositions condemned by the Holy Office in Sept. 1861; and other opinions were there to be found, at least incautiously expressed, concerning traducianism and the vital principle in man. The two Congregations, therefore, pronounced judgment, "That in the philosophical works hitherto published by G. C. Ubaghs, and especially in his *Logic* and *Theodicea*, doctrines or opinions are found that cannot be taught without danger," "quæ absque periculo tradi non possunt;" "and this judgment our Holy Lord Pope Pius IX. has ratified and confirmed by his supreme authority." "Quare Eminentissimi Cardinales in hanc devenere sententiam:—In libris philosophicis a G. C. Ubaghs hactenus in lucem editis, et præsertim *Logica* et *Theodicea* inveniri doctrinas seu opiniones, quæ absque periculo tradi non possunt. Quam sententiam SSsmus. D. N. Pius Papa IX. ratam habuit et suprema sua