

Pius IX and Papal Infallibility:

La Tradizione Son' Io!

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History 493: Honors Thesis

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“*Tradizione!*” shouted Pope Pius IX, “*La tradizione son’ io!*” Pius IX’s famous outburst, “I am tradition!” directed at Cardinal Filippo Maria Guidi of Bologna, a prominent liberal Catholic, in response to his criticisms of papal infallibility at the First Vatican Council in 1870, represents the pontiff’s lifelong misinterpretation of Church history and of his role as pope. Throughout his thirty-two year pontificate, Pius IX attempted to stem the spread of liberal political and social ideals by promoting religious policies which he believed obeyed medieval tradition. His promotion of the Immaculate Conception of Mary and the *Syllabus Errorum* illustrated his mentality that the Church was under siege from the modern world. These policies culminated in Pius pushing the dogma of papal infallibility through the First Vatican Council, which he believed would strengthen the Church in the battle against modernism. Although many hailed Pius IX as the greatest defender of Catholic tradition and the Golden Age of Thomas Aquinas, his crowning achievement, the definition of papal infallibility, was actually a radical innovation unfounded in Scripture or tradition. Pius IX believed that papal infallibility would simultaneously strengthen the Church, halt the spread of liberalism, and define formally a belief that had been widely held in the Middle Ages. An analysis of the conciliar movement of the fourteenth century and the Franciscan foundations of papal infallibility in the medieval period definitively proves that the pope was not always considered the infallible leader of the Catholic Church. The primacy of the Roman Pontiffs, papal sovereignty, and papal infallibility were three very different and sometimes mutually exclusive ideas, but Pius IX sought to expand and enforce each one. Pius IX’s lifelong conviction that he was acting in keeping with medieval traditions of papal authority reveals his tragic misunderstanding of Scripture, the traditional powers of the papacy and papal infallibility.

Part I:

The Popes, the Councils, and Infallibility in Perspective

The foundations of the institution of the papacy and the primacy of Rome were based on the idea that Jesus favored Peter, the first Bishop of Rome, over the other apostles. The pope is believed to be superior to all other bishops because it was Peter to whom Christ trusted building the Church after his death. The early popes relied heavily on the passage in Matthew 16: 18-19: “And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” This passage, however, is problematic. Though Jesus gave the keys of heaven to Peter, it was to the Church as a whole that he gave protection against the powers of hell.¹ This would seem to indicate that the Church on earth was founded primarily on Christ and only secondarily on Peter. Nevertheless, this power of “binding and loosing” and the idea of the “Petrine succession” gave popes primacy over all other bishops as the successors of Saint Peter. The succession from Peter to each consecutive pope was clear and uncontested, and the popes had been a bodily presence in Rome since the fourth century. The role of the pope as the “universal bishop,” and therefore the primacy of Rome, was widely accepted in the Middle Ages.²

The Code of Justinian, first published in 529, which stated, “Whatsoever pleaseth the prince has the force of law,” supported the doctrine of papal sovereignty. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, canonists began to apply Justinian’s ideas to the papacy. They believed that the pope was a sovereign civil ruler of the Italian state who could act as he pleased, unbound by tradition or the actions of his predecessors. During the vast expansion of the papacy between

¹ Brian Tierney, *Foundations of the Conciliar Theory: The Contribution of the Medieval Canonists from Gratian to the Great Schism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1955), 26.

² R.W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (New York: Penguin Books, 1970), 94.

1050 and 1300, instigated by Leo IX, the pontiffs transformed from religious icons, the symbolic successors of Saint Peter, to independent, sovereign rulers. The papacy embraced the Code of Justinian and became a large, powerful bureaucracy.³ It became the primary judicial office for an increasing number of cases, and every notable pope between 1159 and 1303 was a lawyer.⁴ Before 1050, the local clergy received little direction from Rome. Their instructions came instead from secular rulers and relatively independent local bishops.⁵ As the institutional papacy grew, popes exercised their role as the civil ruler of the Church and directed it more closely. Many, most notably Bernard of Clairvaux, criticized the popes for acting as the successors of Constantine rather than Peter, and for studying the laws of Justinian rather than those of God.

The peak of papal authority, which represented the most power the papacy ever exercised, took place between 1180 and 1250, especially during the pontificate of Innocent III from 1198 to 1215. He was the first pope to take the title “Vicar of Christ,” but he was a lawyer and exercised his papal authority in civil affairs and the temporal realm.⁶ He limited the sale of indulgences, reformed Benedictine houses, shaped canon law, nominated bishops personally, and exercised an unprecedented amount of power over secular empires.⁷ He asserted his dominance over all secular kings, successfully forcing King John of England to acknowledge him as feudal overlord in 1215 and interfering in the succession of Holy Roman Emperors, favoring Otto of Brunswick and then Frederick II of Sicily.⁸ He established that kings were subject to moral laws when he forced Philippe Augustus of France to reconcile with his wife, Ingeborg of Denmark.⁹ In a letter to the nobles of Tuscany in 1198 Innocent III wrote of his role as pope,

³ Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*, 143.

⁴ Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*, 131.

⁵ Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*, 96.

⁶ Thomas Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 127.

⁷ Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*, 158.

⁸ Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church*, 127.

⁹ Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church*, 130.

Just as the founder of the universe established two great lights in the firmament of heaven, the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night, so too He set two great dignities in the firmament of the universal church...the greater to rule on the day, that is, souls, and the lesser to rule the night, that is, bodies. These dignities are the papal authority and the royal power. Now just as the moon derives its light from the sun and is indeed lower than it in quantity and quality, in position and in power, so too the royal power derives the splendor of its dignity from the pontifical authority.¹⁰

In this passage, Innocent III defines the idea of papal sovereignty. After this period, the papacy was no longer looking back to preserve the ancient tradition of Saint Peter, but looking forward to enforce its temporal and ecclesiastical sovereignty. Every innovation of the twelfth century, including the Crusades, developments in law and theology, new religious orders, and devotional and scholastic experiments, resulted in an increase of papal sovereignty.¹¹

In tandem with the increase of sovereign papal power, the persona of the popes also underwent a radical change during this period. Until 1100, the Church had been centered in Rome, not because it was the seat of the papacy, but because it was the location of the tomb and body of Saint Peter. Official documents emphasized that the pope was the Vicar of Saint Peter, a mouthpiece for Peter's laws rather than an independent ruler.¹² After 1100, popes began to style themselves as the vicars of Christ rather than Saint Peter, and claimed to draw their authority from their role as Jesus' representative on earth rather than from the Petrine succession.¹³ Pope Gregory VII's insisted in 1073 that he ruled on Christ's mandate, not Constantine's.¹⁴ This emphasis on the mandate of Christ gave popes uncontested, universal authority as sovereign rulers rather than as religious icons. This role, though grounded in their religious authority, gave the popes equal power as secular kings, and many popes believed that their religious authority

¹⁰ Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church*, 130.

¹¹ Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*, 169.

¹² Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*, 95.

¹³ Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*, 104.

¹⁴ Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*, 101.

gave them power over the European kings. Innocent III illustrates this change, writing at the end of the twelfth century, “We are the successor of the Prince of the Apostles, but we are not his vicar, nor the vicar of any man or Apostle, but the vicar of Jesus Christ himself.”¹⁵ However, most medieval theologians, following the example set by Bernard of Clairvaux, qualified the pope’s expanding sovereign power by emphasizing that, though the most important, he was one of the bishops, not the ruler of them.¹⁶ Though the pope led the Catholic Church on earth, Rome was the mother, not the ruler, of all churches. The vast expansion of power increased papal sovereignty, but medieval popes never claimed to be infallible.

Papal infallibility was first promoted by radically conservative Franciscans in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. After the height of papal power which Innocent III typified, most theologians and canonists focused on papal sovereignty and the rights of the popes to temporal power. Franciscans promoted the theory of papal infallibility in response to the excesses of the medieval popes, specifically their domination over the Franciscan order. They believed that infallibility would limit each pope’s independence, making them adhere to the decisions of their predecessors and keeping them from making arbitrary decisions. Few theologians or canon lawyers took note of this theory at the time, and no pope promoted the idea that he was infallible. Infallibility in medieval times was really a radical side note, little noticed, in a Church focused on papal sovereignty.¹⁷

The Great Schism, which lasted from 1378 until 1415, hurt the credibility of the papal office and challenged papal sovereignty. Gregory XI brought the papacy back to Rome in 1377

¹⁵ Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*, 105.

¹⁶ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* vol. 2: *The Growth of Medieval Theology 600-1300* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), 300.

¹⁷ Brian Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility, 1150-1350: A Study on the Concepts of Infallibility, Sovereignty and Tradition in the Middle Ages* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1972), 1.

after a nearly seventy-year exile to Avignon, France. Upon his death in 1378 a faction of cardinals desiring an Italian pontiff elected Urban VI. Following Urban's election, a group of cardinals left Rome and elected Clement VII, who reestablished the papal court at Avignon. Unlike some controversial elections of the self-proclaimed antipopes of the past, a legitimate body of cardinals had elected each claimant, and each pope established a curia and elected successors. A council at Pisa, never officially recognized by the Church as a legitimate ecumenical council, convened in 1409 and an independent group of cardinals had attempted, unsuccessfully, to resolve the schism by electing Alexander V. The council failed to depose the other two claimants, creating three semi-legitimate popes in Rome, Pisa, and Avignon. The Schism, though on the surface only a conflict between two factions within the Church, drove many theologians to probe past the Schism and question the nature of ecclesiastical authority, papal sovereignty, and the form of Church government.¹⁸ Papal sovereignty was impossible to reconcile with three popes who were supposedly above human judgment. The Schism transformed a conflict of three papal claimants into a battle of principles and forced bishops to decide, not only which of the three popes should reign, but if the pope should govern as a sovereign in the old way.¹⁹ In response, many turned to alternate theories that had been developing over the course of the past two centuries which stated that authority rested in the hands of the universal Church and that nobody, not even those of papal dignity, could act against its wellbeing.²⁰

Conciliar theory, which emerged in the fourteenth century, held that an ecumenical Council representing the universal church could solve the maladies plaguing the Church more

¹⁸ Tierney, *Foundations of the Conciliar Theory*, 3.

¹⁹ Tierney, *Foundations of the Conciliar Theory*, 3.

²⁰ Tierney, *Foundations of the Conciliar Theory*, 2.

effectively than a pope. Councils had been common since the First Council of Nicaea on 325, but the popes had little control over the ancient councils and no pope attended a council before the First Lateran Council in 1123. The first eight Church councils were held in Asia Minor, conducted in Greek, and convoked by an emperor or empress.²¹ The next thirteen councils were held in the west and conducted in Latin. The western councils were convoked by the pope but were led by bishops and heavily influenced by secular leaders.²² From First Lateran Council in 1123 through the Council of Vienne in 1311, the reigning pope presided over these great conferences that served primarily to expand papal jurisdiction and authority. The canonists between 1150 and 1250 often used phrases like, “A council is greater than a pope.” Conciliar theorists in the fourteenth century saw this as evidence for the legitimacy of conciliarism, but the canonists most often meant that a pope and a council working together were more powerful than a pope reforming unilaterally. When referring to general councils, medieval canonists looked to the ancient councils as successful models rather than the weaker ones of their day.²³

Conciliar theorists believed that the College of Cardinals or a General Council had authority superior to any individual in the Church, including the pope.²⁴ The mind of the Church was perfectly expressed by a General Council, even if it was acting against a pope.²⁵ The most influential early conciliar theologians, Konrad von Glenhausen and Heinrich von Langenstein, wrote in the fourteenth century that, although a pope could only be deposed if he had lapsed into heresy, a council could determine when this had occurred.²⁶ The “Conciliar Movement” was actually a diverse set of theories founded on the same principle – that the whole Church

²¹ John W. O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 25.

²² O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 26.

²³ Tierney, *Foundations of the Conciliar Theory*, 47.

²⁴ Tierney, *Foundations of the Conciliar Theory*, 1.

²⁵ Tierney, *Foundations of the Conciliar Theory*, 67.

²⁶ Hubert Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent* vol. 1 (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1949), 10.

community should have authority over any single prelate, however exalted.²⁷ Conciliar theorists differentiated between the Universal Church and the Roman Church, appealing to the base of the Church, the *congregatio fidelium*.²⁸ They cited the Roman law, “What touches all should be approved by all,” to prove that a general council had more right to create Church law than the unilateral decision of a sovereign pope.²⁹ The theory held that the pope should be a servant of the Church, not its master. Widely held medieval beliefs emphasized that a ruler, though the supreme judicial force, was still “a subject under the law.”³⁰ Extreme proponents of conciliar theory stated that the pope did not have absolute power, but rather only the powers which the universal church conferred upon him. The pope could only exercise the authority that was absolutely necessary for the edification of the Church, and a council had the power to either correct or depose him should he err.³¹ The medieval canonists had written that a heretical pope could be deposed in the event of a schism, but they had specified that a schism was heresy, making schismatic popes heretics unworthy of the papacy.³² In the context of 1378, this theory meant that all three popes were heretical and that a council needed jurisdiction over each to solve the crisis, meaning it needed supreme authority over the papal office. Conciliar theory was not an accidental or external movement. The outburst of conciliarism in 1378 was rooted in canon law and doctrine and was the logical culmination of the events and theological movements of the previous two centuries.³³ The Council of Constance, which convened in 1414 to deal with the Schism, put conciliar theories into practice.³⁴

²⁷ Tierney, *Foundations of the Conciliar Theory*, 6.

²⁸ Tierney, *Foundations of the Conciliar Theory*, 4.

²⁹ Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility*, 48.

³⁰ Tierney, *Foundations of the Conciliar Theory*, 50.

³¹ Tierney, *Foundations of the Conciliar Theory*, 5.

³² Tierney, *Foundations of the Conciliar Theory*, 9.

³³ Tierney, *Foundations of the Conciliar Theory*, 13.

³⁴ O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 29.

The Council of Constance represents the high water mark of the conciliar movement. The Pisan pope, John XXIII, convoked a council which began at Constance, Germany on November 16, 1414. The council recommended that all three claimants abdicate for the sake of Church unity, and after John XXIII fled Germany it persuaded both John XXIII and Gregory XII, the Roman claimant, to resign their claim. Avignon Pope Benedict XIII refused to resign and was excommunicated. In the decree *Frequens*, the council mandated that a council meet every ten years. It stated, “The frequent holding of general councils is a pre-eminent means of cultivating the Lord’s patrimony...they are to be held every ten years...in places which the supreme pontiff is bound to nominate and assign...with the approval and consent of the council, or which, in his default, the council itself is bound to nominate.”³⁵ The Council elected Martin V to the Holy Office, asserting the council’s dominance over the papacy and setting the precedent for the ability of a council to depose and elect popes. Not all representatives at Constance adhered to conciliar theories, and some only participated because a council was the best hope for ending the Schism. The most important decree of the Council of Constance, *Haec Sancta Synodus*, published April 6, 1415, represents the greatest victory of conciliar theory. *Haec Sancta* stated,

Legitimately assembled in the Holy Spirit, constituting a general council and representing the Catholic church militant, it has its power immediately from Christ; and that everyone of whatever state or dignity, even papal, is bound to obey it in those matters which pertain to the faith, the eradication of the said schism, and the general reform of the said Church of God in head and members.³⁶

The decree gave primacy to a council over the papacy in crisis situations and allowed the council to function without the approval of a legitimate pope. The decree itself acknowledged the necessity of a pope to convoke a council, but gave the council the right to continue in a time of

³⁵ Norman P. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 438-9.

³⁶ Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* vol. 1, 409.

crisis until a solution could be found, such as after John XXIII fled to Germany.³⁷ Perhaps most forcefully, the decree declared that the council derived its authority directly from Christ. The decree could be interpreted to assert the dominance of the council over anyone of papal dignity and bind the pope to obey the decrees of a legitimate council.³⁸ *Haec Sancta* was a success in that it solved the schism and elected a new, legitimate pope, but its vague assertions would create confusion and tension between the papacy and future councils.³⁹

The decree was intentionally vague to neutralize dissent in a diverse group of bishops. In reality, *Haec Sancta*'s purpose was to unite as many bishops as possible to solve the Schism, to check abuses of papal authority and corruption, and to prevent another schism. Though some bishops sought to use the council to legitimize conciliar theories, they were forced to accept limitations to the decree to gain consensus.⁴⁰ However, the vague decree created problems for future relations between popes and councils, who could interpret the decree to mean that a council could always depose a pope. The decree could be interpreted as dogma or law, permanent or only valid in a specific situation.⁴¹ In the aftermath of the Council of Constance, widespread theological movements supported the idea that supreme power and infallibility belonged to a council because Jesus had given his blessing to any gathering of the faithful, citing Matthew 18:20 – “For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.” Councils represented all Christians, which the corrupt popes of the Middle Ages often did not.⁴² Though the Council of Constance successfully solved the Schism, *Haec Sancta* introduced

³⁷ Michiel Decaluwe, “Three Ways to Read the Constance Decree *Haec Sancta* (1415): Francis Zabarella, Jean Gerson, and the Traditional Papal View of General Councils,” in *The Church, The Councils, and Reform: The Legacy of the Fifteenth Century* ed. Gerald Christianson, Thomas M. Izbicki and Christopher M. Bellitto (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 130.

³⁸ Decaluwe, “Three Ways to Read the Constance Decree *Haec Sancta* (1415),” 132.

³⁹ Decaluwe, “Three Ways to Read the Constance Decree *Haec Sancta* (1415),” 123.

⁴⁰ Decaluwe, “Three Ways to Read the Constance Decree *Haec Sancta* (1415),” 134.

⁴¹ Decaluwe, “Three Ways to Read the Constance Decree *Haec Sancta* (1415),” 124.

⁴² Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent* vol. 1, 23.

subsequent popes to the idea that a council could revolt against the monarchical papacy.⁴³ A powerful council with theoretical ability to depose a pope proved to be a major fear of popes between 1378 and 1870.

Martin V called a council at Basel, Switzerland in 1431 as per the terms of *Frequens*, but did not live to see it open. The Council of Basel convened in the wake of the conciliar victories at Constance and with a weak pope in Rome, and many expected the council to reassert its dominance over the papacy to achieve reform. The problems created by the vague decrees of the Council of Constance came to a head at the Council of Basel, which used *Haec Sancta* to attack and attempt to depose the unrivaled pope Eugenius IV, who was extremely unpopular for opposing the conciliar movement.⁴⁴ In reaction to the increasingly anti-papal actions at the council, Eugenius attempted to suspend the council and fled to Rome on June 6. After Eugenius' flight, the council passed measures to establish officially the authority of a council over the pope, confiscate tax revenues collected by the papal office, create an oath of obedience for popes to the council, and limit the powers of the pope and the curia.⁴⁵ The Council of Basel put conciliar theory into practice against the will of the pope and attempted to assert its authority over the papacy.

In September 1437 in the bull *Doctoris Gentium*, Eugenius decreed that the council move to Ferrara in northern Italy, and most council delegates reconvened there on April 9, 1438. Some bishops continued to meet at Basel, however, claiming to be the true council. In June of 1438 the dissenting "council" at Basel deposed Eugenius and elected Duke Amadeus VIII of Savoy as

⁴³ Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent* vol. 1, 72.

⁴⁴ Decaluwe, "Three Ways to Read the Constance Decree *Haec Sancta* (1415)," 123

⁴⁵ Morimichi Watanabe, "Pope Eugenius IV, the Conciliar Movement, and the Primacy of Rome," in *The Church, The Councils, and Reform: The Legacy of the Fifteenth Century* ed. Gerald Christianson, Thomas M. Izbicki and Christopher M. Bellitto (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 182.

antipope Felix V.⁴⁶ A year later, Felix V refused to take the oath of obedience the council had created and resigned. Although the rebellion at Basel came to nothing, it had threatened the unity of the Church and confirmed papal fears that a rebellious council could attack the papacy.⁴⁷ The legitimate council at Ferrara was transferred to Florence less than a year later, ostensibly for financial reasons, but probably because Eugenius hoped to regain control of the council by bringing it closer to Rome. At the Council of Florence, Eugenius added a statement of papal primacy to the decree *Laetentur Caeli*, which dealt primarily with reconciliation with the Greek Orthodox Churches. It stated,

The holy, apostolic See and the Roman Pontiff holds the primacy over the whole world and the Roman Pontiff is the successor of blessed Peter prince of the Apostles, and that he is the true Vicar of Christ, head of the whole Church and the father and teacher of all Christians, and to him was committed in blessed Peter the full power of tending, ruling and governing the whole church, as is contained also in the acts of ecumenical councils and in the sacred canons.⁴⁸

The decree reaffirmed the pope's role as the supreme ruler of the Church on earth, but its existence illustrates the fact that the conciliar movement had shaken the papacy to its very roots.⁴⁹

The failure of the Council of Basel and Eugenius' success at the Council of Florence sealed the fate of the conciliar movement.⁵⁰ Although the papacy had overcome the conciliar movement and reasserted its dominance at Florence, the shadows of the rebellion at Basel continued to haunt the papacy until Vatican I. The Fifth Lateran Council convened in 1512 to deal with disciplinary issues concerning Church officials. It took place in Rome closely

⁴⁶ Watanabe, "Pope Eugenius IV, the Conciliar Movement, and the Primacy of Rome," 190.

⁴⁷ Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent* vol. 1, 28.

⁴⁸ Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* vol. 1, 528.

⁴⁹ Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent* vol. 1, 19.

⁵⁰ Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent* vol. 1, 79.

supervised by Julius II and proclaimed no doctrine other than reaffirming the superiority of the pope over conciliar powers. Francisco de Vitoria, a prominent Spanish theologian, wrote in the sixteenth century, “Ever since the popes began to fear a council, the church has been without one and will remain without one, to the detriment and utter ruin of religion.”⁵¹

One of the most important ecumenical councils in Catholic history, the Council of Trent, convened in a time of extreme crisis to deal with the Protestant Reformation. Martin Luther, John Calvin and their contemporaries criticized the Church for straying too far from Scriptural and apostolic tradition. The Council of Trent had to overcome the looming shadows of conciliarism to respond to Luther’s criticisms of Catholic dogma and discipline and to institute much needed reforms. The meeting of the council was delayed nearly thirty years because Clement VII feared that Holy Roman Emperor Charles V would use a council to depose him.⁵² The council strove to fulfill the bull of convocation, which stated as its purpose to

Ponder, discuss, execute and bring speedily and happily to the desired result whatever things pertain to the purity and truth of the Christian religion, to the restoration of what is good and the correction of bad morals, to the peace, unity and harmony of Christians among themselves, of the princes as well as of the people, and whatever is necessary to repulse those attacks of barbarians and infidels whereby they seek the overthrow of all Christendom.

Though these goals seem somewhat vague, they illustrate the crisis in faith, in “morals” and “peace,” that the Protestant Reformation had caused. The bull clearly stated that the council would respond to the current situation and convened to respond to Luther’s criticisms and the problems they had caused. The council was never free from political pressure and was therefore not a solely religious event.⁵³ Attempts to safeguard the council from imperial influences,

⁵¹ Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent* vol. 1, 287.

⁵² O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 30.

⁵³ Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent* vol. 2, 396.

especially those of Charles V, were never totally successful.⁵⁴ The papal secretary, Sanga, wrote that Clement VII was always opposed to a council and only consented to keep peace with Charles V.⁵⁵ The location of the council at Trent was in itself a compromise. Though located in the Holy Roman Empire, Trent was predominantly Italian.⁵⁶ Over one hundred years after the short-lived conciliar victories at Constance, the papacy still feared a council.

Paul III promulgated the bull of convocation on June 29, 1542, but the council did not open until 1545. Only a council could attempt to solve the problems presented by the Protestant Reformation, but the pontiff deliberately barred the formation of a council for an entire generation until few believed a council would ever actually convene.⁵⁷ The most important historian of the council, Hubert Jedin, claimed that the delay caused by papal fears of the council proved to be fatal to the cause of reconciliation with the Protestants.⁵⁸ During the thirty years between Luther's publication of his *Ninety-Five Theses* and the convocation of the council, Protestant ideals had transformed from a disorganized popular movement to an organized, entrenched, and impassioned religion with a clear system of beliefs.⁵⁹ When the Council of Trent finally convened, Charles V still favored reconciliation with the Protestants. In reality, as Pope Paul III believed, it was probably impossible to bring Protestants back into the fold unless the council had made significant theological concessions, which its leaders were never willing to do.⁶⁰ It is likely that Charles V did not really understand the ideals of the Reformation and favored reconciliation for political purposes without realizing that ideologically this was

⁵⁴ Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent* vol. 2, 489.

⁵⁵ Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent* vol. 1, 267.

⁵⁶ R. Po-Chia Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal: 1540-1770* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 13.

⁵⁷ Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent* vol. 1, 196.

⁵⁸ Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent* vol. 1, 196.

⁵⁹ Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent* vol. 1, 245.

⁶⁰ Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal*, 12.

impossible in 1545.⁶¹ Though a few Protestant leaders arrived at Trent in January of 1552, they were denied the vote and their presence did nothing to change the council's policies.⁶² The council had the best chance of reconciliation with the Protestants during the first period from 1545 to 1547, but thereafter the conservative, militant Jesuit influence was too substantial to pass reconciliatory measures.

Many of the bishops at Trent saw any papal intrusion as an obstacle to a successful council.⁶³ Cardinal Ercole Gonzaga, the chief legate of the first period of the council, supported minimizing papal influence but believed in cooperation with the papacy for the sake of Church unity.⁶⁴ Gonzaga's papers contain echoes of conciliarism in illustrating his desire to set limits on when a pope could disobey the decisions of a legitimate council and to forbid a pope from hindering a productive council. He sarcastically wrote of Paul III's reluctance to convoke the council, "If, however, the pope wants a council in word but not in effect...to what purpose would it be done but that His Holiness and the popes that succeed him can depart from the council at their pleasure?"⁶⁵ He astutely points out that if popes are not bound by the councils they have no reason to heed the council's decrees. The cardinals agreed to set aside questions of the pope's authority in favor of dogmatic and disciplinary reform, fearing that such a discussion would stall productivity and result in a schismatic council similar to Basel. Unity between pope and council was absolutely necessary to overcome the Protestant threat.⁶⁶ The all-important question throughout the council was if the bishops would obey the pope's orders, and if the reigning pope would affirm the council's decrees. Protestant theologians had attacked the papacy as the root of

⁶¹ Wim Blockmans, *Emperor Charles V, 1500-1558* (London: Oxford University Press, 2002), 111.

⁶² Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal*, 16.

⁶³ Paul V. Murphy, *Ruling Peacefully: Cardinal Ercole Gonzaga and Patrician Reform in the Sixteenth-Century Italy* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 202.

⁶⁴ Murphy, *Ruling Peacefully*, 205.

⁶⁵ Murphy, *Ruling Peacefully*, 212.

⁶⁶ Murphy, *Ruling Peacefully*, 210-12.

corruption in the Church, and there was no agreement between Protestants and Catholics concerning the role of the papacy in dogma or reform.⁶⁷ Luther had attacked the papacy as having arbitrary sovereign authority based on tradition rather than Scripture.⁶⁸ The Council of Trent inadvertently reaffirmed papal supremacy in its denial of Luther and Calvin's criticisms of the papacy.⁶⁹ The bishops at Trent saw the pope asserting his role as sovereign and dominating the council, encroaching on their authority as an independent body representative of the universal church. On January 27, 1563, Pius IV sent an instruction to Trent stating that the pope's official title of "pastor of the universal Church" could not be left out of any official canon.⁷⁰ With this parting shot, the papacy ended the Council of Trent with a final assertion of its dominance over conciliar powers. The council voted in the last session to seek confirmation from the pope to validate all of its decrees and emphasized that their decrees were only canonically binding if approved by the pope.⁷¹

The Council of Trent had a direct and long-term impact on modern Catholicism that transcended the influence of any single person or age.⁷² About half of the council's decrees dealt with reforms that had been desired universally for a generation, but the fear of conciliarism stalled the convocation of a reform council.⁷³ In the first period of the council, the delegates doubted whether Paul III would allow them to carry out reforms, and Paul's instructions to his legates hardly revealed a heartfelt desire for reform.⁷⁴ The decrees pertaining to reform reflected

⁶⁷ Robert Bireley, *The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450-1700: A Reassessment of the Counter-Reformation* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 60.

⁶⁸ Michael A. Mullett, *The Catholic Reformation* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 40.

⁶⁹ James Corkery and Thomas Worchester, *The Papacy Since 1500: From Italian Prince to Universal Pastor* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 4.

⁷⁰ Murphy, *Ruling Peacefully*, 240.

⁷¹ Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent* vol. 2, 482.

⁷² John W. O'Malley, *Trent and All That: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 135.

⁷³ O'Malley, *Trent and All That*, 18.

⁷⁴ Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent* vol. 2, 10.

problems with the Church that had been widely criticized by both Catholics and Protestants over the course of the past century. The stated purpose of the council's reform measures was to create measures "good for the salvation of souls."⁷⁵ The Council of Trent required that bishops live in their diocese, eliminated multiple benefices, set moral strictures for convents, set education requirements for the clergy, and limited the sale of indulgences. The council also confirmed the authenticity of the Vulgate Bible, which Luther had recommended abandoning in favor of returning to original language sources.⁷⁶ The decree favored following the tradition set down by "the orthodox fathers" and "Christ himself," but gave the papal office the authority to revise the Vulgate, which Clement VIII did in 1592.⁷⁷ The Council of Trent's reforms wrought a new type of Church focused on pastoral and missionary work with more emphasis on the local clergy.⁷⁸

The decrees of the Council of Trent, especially those pertaining to dogma, formed the foundation of the Catholic Reformation and the modern Church leading up to Vatican I in 1869. The Council of Trent reaffirmed the seven sacraments, five of which Luther had rejected as inventions of the scholastics.⁷⁹ The decree on the sacraments set as its aim "the removal of errors and the rooting out of heresies, which have arisen at the present time."⁸⁰ The reaffirmation of all seven sacraments strengthened the Catholic faith, but stoutly rejected Luther. The council's decree on original sin, which influenced Pius IX's definition of the Immaculate Conception of Mary in 1854, affirmed that, though baptism erases original sin completely, humans are left with a weakness in their nature and a propensity for sin.⁸¹ The decree's stated purpose was to "call

⁷⁵ O'Malley, *Trent and All That*, 64.

⁷⁶ Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent* vol. 2, 84.

⁷⁷ Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* vol. 2, 663.

⁷⁸ O'Malley, *Trent and All That*, 64.

⁷⁹ Mullett, *The Catholic Reformation*, 47.

⁸⁰ Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* vol. 2, 684.

⁸¹ Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent* vol. 2, 150.

back those who are going astray and to strengthen the hesitant.”⁸² The decree also added the threat of anathema to any who claimed that baptism only covered up sin.⁸³ The reaffirmation and explanation of the seven sacraments and the Church’s stance on original sin threw the differences between Catholic and Protestant beliefs into even sharper relief.⁸⁴ The most important point in the battle between Catholic and Protestant ideologies was justification. Justification by faith alone was the cornerstone of Luther’s philosophy. The Council of Trent answered Luther with a staunch confirmation of the necessity of good works and receiving the sacraments over a lifetime to restore God’s grace damaged by original sin.⁸⁵ While God sent Jesus to die for the total remission of sin, people had to perform good works to merit Jesus’ sacrifice.⁸⁶ The decree obliquely references Luther by citing the “loss of many souls and serious damage to the unity of the Church” as the reason for the reaffirmation of the necessity of good works.⁸⁷ While the council admitted that faith was important, faith in salvation was not of equal importance with good works. The absolute necessity of good works and the sacraments in earning eternal life represented a radical break with the entrenched Protestant ideology.⁸⁸

The Catholic Reformation that followed the Council of Trent espoused many of the values associated with the thirteenth century. The intransigent stance of the Catholic Church made Protestantism the religion of modernism and liberalism, helping it to gain followers.⁸⁹ Already at Trent and thereafter many idealized the thirteenth century, especially Thomas Aquinas and his fellow scholastics, who were actually progressives in their day, as the “Golden

⁸² Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* vol. 2, 665.

⁸³ Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent* vol. 2, 155.

⁸⁴ Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal*, 15.

⁸⁵ Mullett, *The Catholic Reformation*, 46.

⁸⁶ Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent* vol. 2, 184.

⁸⁷ Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* vol. 2, 671.

⁸⁸ Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent* vol. 2, 285.

⁸⁹ O’Malley, *Trent and All That*, 27.

Age of Catholicism.” Aquinas wrote near the end of the vast expansion of papal authority in 1250. This idealism of the medieval papacy was especially prevalent under Pius IX, who styled himself in the image of this supposed golden age of papal sovereignty. Though the post-Trent Church focused on pastoral and missionary work, the papacy became more monarchical, thoroughly espousing papal sovereignty and temporal rule. Since their victory over the councils, the popes styled themselves even more radically as princes, completely embracing their role as king of the Papal States and of the Church. The popes created the ceremonial Swiss Guard, were carried on thrones in procession, demanded trumpets at their entrance, and required that visitors bow twice and kiss their foot before addressing them.⁹⁰ However, as the papacy expanded its ceremonial power, its sovereign power and influence over European governments was steadily declining. The emerging Jesuit order, militant and fiercely loyal to the papacy, promoted neo-scholasticism and the theory of papal infallibility throughout Europe. The Jesuits and the Dominicans exerted enormous influence over Catholic education in the period between councils. The medieval, monarchical stance of the papacy hurt its reputation throughout Europe in the years following Trent. In the nearly three hundred years between the Council of Trent and the First Vatican Council, the world surrounding the Catholic Church changed radically while the Church remained staunchly conservative.

The idea that there was an insurmountable ideological barrier between Catholicism and liberal ideals created massive problems for the Church that came to a head in 1848 under Pius IX.⁹¹ Both the Church and the papacy suffered setbacks from spreading Enlightenment ideals of

⁹⁰ Corkery, *The Papacy Since 1500*, 5.

⁹¹ Alec R. Vidler, *The Church in an Age of Revolution: 1789 to the Present Day* (London: Penguin Books, 1961), 74.

toleration, rationalism and liberty and the effects of the French Revolution.⁹² The religious upheaval caused by the intense anti-clericalism of the French Revolution destroyed old patterns of belief and taught the Church to fear liberal values.⁹³ Catholic monarchs and liberal governments wanted to limit papal authority and gain control of state churches. Different sects of Catholics and Protestants urged the Church to change its policies.⁹⁴ Gregory XVI, who reigned from 1831 to 1846, condemned all liberalism, religious freedom, and political equality.⁹⁵ Despite the “siege mentality” of the Church, the early 1800s witnessed a burst in Liberal Catholicism, a movement embraced by many faithful Catholics who wanted to find a way for the Catholic Church to exist in the new world order, embrace liberal reforms, and move into the modern age.⁹⁶ Liberal thought had won over the educated population in most parts of Europe by the 1830s, yet Gregory XVI embraced very conservative policies.⁹⁷ Pius IX, though elected as a moderate, would grow to embrace the types of policies that had been so unpopular under his predecessor and take them to a new extreme at Vatican I.

Part II:

Beloved Pio Nono

The character of Pius IX was central to the debate over papal infallibility at Vatican I. Pius IX was elected to the papacy on June 17, 1846 in a relatively short conclave. Cardinal Giovanni Maria Mastai-Ferretti of Imola was the dark horse candidate for the papacy. Giovanni was born on May 13, 1792, the youngest of nine children from a wealthy family near Sengallia,

⁹² August Bernhard Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible: Pius IX and the Politics of Persuasion* (New York: Doubleday, 1981), 39.

⁹³ Corkery, *The Papacy Since 1500*, 94.

⁹⁴ Corkery, *The Papacy Since 1500*, 108.

⁹⁵ Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, 42.

⁹⁶ Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church*, 294.

⁹⁷ J.B. Bury, *History of the Papacy in the 19th Century: Liberty and Authority in the Roman Catholic Church* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), 1.

Italy. Pius IX created a new aspect of the papacy, a cult of personality surrounding the pope. The beloved “Pio Nono” was practically a saint to the people of Rome. He was charming, likeable, and had earned a reputation as a loving, open leader of the Church in Imola and Spoleto. Francis Newman said Pius IX was so popular because “his personal presence was of a kind that no one could withstand... the main cause of his popularity was the magic of his presence...his uncompromising faith, his courage, the graceful mingling in him of the human and the divine, the humor, the wit, the playfulness with which he tempered his severity, his naturalness, and then his true eloquence.”⁹⁸ Unlike most of his predecessors, Pius had a vibrant social life, taking frequent walks around Rome, granting an unprecedented number of audiences, hosting weekly parties in the Quirinal gardens, and speaking daily to crowds in the Piazza.⁹⁹ This curious blend of dignity and informality endeared him to many.¹⁰⁰ R.W. Church wrote on a trip to Italy in 1848, “the enthusiasm of the population for Pio Nono is quite medieval: they can talk of nothing else; ‘Via Pio Nono’ was written over almost every door ... and there is no title too grand for him in the various inscriptions in his honor.”¹⁰¹ He earned himself the nicknames, “The Pope of Prayer” and “The Pope of the Cross” for his spirituality, and his pontificate represented the height of missionary work to that time. The personal devotion to the pope himself was an innovation of Pius’ time that characterizes the modern papacy.

Though gregarious and extremely pious, Pius IX had little political or diplomatic training and was considered of low intelligence by many, including Klemens von Metternich.¹⁰² Though all who knew him spoke of his sanctity, prayer and profound faith, his theological education was cursory at best, and his diplomatic training even worse. He received only three years of

⁹⁸ Vidler, *The Church in an Age of Revolution*, 146.

⁹⁹ Vidler, *The Church in an Age of Revolution*, 153.

¹⁰⁰ Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church*, 320.

¹⁰¹ Vidler, *The Church in an Age of Revolution*, 148.

¹⁰² Vidler, *The Church in an Age of Revolution*, 147.

theological training as an unregistered student with the Piarists of Volterra before becoming a secretary to Mgr. Giovanni Muzi.¹⁰³ His uncles, two of whom were cardinals, likely helped him to his high position.¹⁰⁴ His political ineptitude combined with a very short fuse and a furious temper to create a pope who refused to compromise.¹⁰⁵ Pius' suffering at the hands of liberal politics made him a martyr for traditional Catholic values and fed his reputation as beloved Pio Nono.¹⁰⁶ British envoy Odo Russel praised Pius IX for his martyrdom, associating him with the ancient martyrs whose sacrifice all devout Catholics praised. He wrote, "Pius IX has the faith that moves mountains and believes in his divine mission. Martyrdom at the end of his Pontificate would be the reward that he has prayed for all his life. His stand-point is that of a divine teacher ready to suffer and die for his faith, and he cannot yield to the advice of the temporal sovereigns of the earth to whom his life is to serve as an example."¹⁰⁷ For better or worse, Pius IX would make himself a martyr to the modern world by the end of his pontificate.

Pius IX had many health problems that may have affected his papacy, especially during the First Vatican Council. From 1807 to 1825 he suffered epileptic seizures and complained of poor memory and lack of concentration as a child. He was denied admission into the pope's Noble Guard in 1816 because of his illness and decided to become a priest, receiving holy orders in July of 1819. Because of his fits, he was not allowed to celebrate the mass alone.¹⁰⁸ Pius later claimed that the healing waters of Jesus of Nazareth healed his epilepsy and was thereafter very interested in mysticism, often giving too much credence to female mystics and their

¹⁰³ De Mattei, *Blessed Pius IX*, 9.

¹⁰⁴ Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church*, 320.

¹⁰⁵ Kertzer, *Prisoner of the Vatican*, 5.

¹⁰⁶ Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, 109.

¹⁰⁷ David I. Kertzer, *Prisoner of the Vatican: The Pope's Secret Plot to Capture Rome from the New Italian State* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2004), 28.

¹⁰⁸ Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, 105-6.

prophesies.¹⁰⁹ He suffered from fainting fits in 1849 and there were rumors of his epilepsy returning in 1870. Pius' medical history was one of the major factors feeding into criticisms of his behavior at the First Vatican Council.¹¹⁰ Many argued that his childhood epilepsy had lasting effects, both physically and psychologically, that caused his erratic behavior at the council and his monomaniacal desire to define papal infallibility. Although he was one of the most beloved popes in history, witnesses claimed that he was impressionable, capricious, impulsive, and unpredictable during Vatican I.¹¹¹ British envoy Odo Russel wrote in 1865 that the aging pope "bore the unmistakable signs of the approach of second childhood," or senility.¹¹² Even his closest advisors and supporters feared his irritability and mood swings.

One of the most curious features of Pius IX's pontificate is his abrupt shift from liberal to reactionary policies after 1848. For the first two years of his pontificate, Pius instituted many liberal policies in the Papal States and lived up to his reputation as a moderate upon election. In a sharply divided conclave, Mastai-Ferretti was the moderate choice, winning over the conservative Luigi Lambruschini and the radical Pasquale Tommaso Gizzi. He had earned a reputation as a liberal as bishop of Spoleto and Archbishop of Imola, where he had publicly criticized Gregory's hyper-conservatism and dealt with uprisings with moderation.¹¹³ After a decade and a half of Gregory XVI's oppressively conservative policies, liberal Catholics across Europe celebrated the election of a supposed "reforming pope," and waves of joy swept Europe in the summer of 1846, especially among entrenched liberal Catholics in France.¹¹⁴ Pius IX's reputation as a liberal made him the idol of Italian nationalists, and many thought he could

¹⁰⁹ Bury, *History of the Papacy in the 19th Century*, 51.

¹¹⁰ Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, 107.

¹¹¹ Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, 107.

¹¹² Kertzer, *Prisoner of the Vatican*, 17.

¹¹³ De Mattei, *Blessed Pius IX*, 9.

¹¹⁴ E. E. Y. Hales, *Pio Nono: A Study of European Politics and Religion in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Image Books, 1962), 19.

become the first president of the Italian states.¹¹⁵ He was the first pope to travel to the New World, having assisted Mgr. Giovanni Mazi on a trip to Chile early in his career as a priest in Spoleto.¹¹⁶ In his first month in office he granted amnesty to one thousand of Gregory's political prisoners.¹¹⁷ In 1846 he introduced gas streetlamps and railroads into the Papal States, both of which Gregory had forbidden.¹¹⁸ He relaxed social and religious restrictions for Jews, revised the criminal code and judiciary system, created an agricultural institute, encouraged education, established inspection of prisons, and granted habeas corpus and freedom of the press.¹¹⁹ Pius created a *consulta* body of twenty-four indirectly elected laymen to govern and a "Home Guard" militia. He created a provisional government and granted a constitution for the Papal States only to avoid bloodshed at the beginning of the 1848 revolution, though he made it clear that he would take no part in the new government.¹²⁰ There was little political middle ground in Italy at this time, and in granting small, much-needed reforms he undermined the conservative policies of his predecessor and aligned himself with the liberals.¹²¹ Pius' small concessions to liberalism do not represent a heartfelt desire for sweeping liberal reforms. For instance, he was never willing to grant freedom of religion.¹²² Despite claims to the contrary, Pius IX was never a liberal himself, but he sympathized with liberal reform for the first two years of his pontificate.

The revolutions of 1848 in Italy, France and Germany shook Europe to its foundations and had lasting effects on Pius IX and his policies that culminated at Vatican I. In 1848 as Italian nationalist forces surrounded Rome, Pius fled the Quirinal Palace dressed as a simple priest and

¹¹⁵ Vidler, *The Church in an Age of Revolution*, 148.

¹¹⁶ Roberto de Mattei, *Blessed Pius IX* (Herefordshire: Gracewing, 2000), 9.

¹¹⁷ De Mattei, *Blessed Pius IX*, 13.

¹¹⁸ Kertzer, *Prisoner of the Vatican*, 9.

¹¹⁹ Hales, *Pio Nono*, 62.

¹²⁰ De Mattei, *Blessed Pius IX*, 31.

¹²¹ Hales, *Pio Nono*, 75.

¹²² Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church*, 305.

lived in exile in Gaeta for nearly two years. From Gaeta, Pius excommunicated all active participants in the fledgling “Roman Republic,” which was openly hostile to the Church. When he returned to Rome with French military support in 1850, any sympathetic feeling he had held towards Italian unification or liberalism had evaporated.¹²³ Pius’ flight for his life cemented his hate of revolutionaries and democratic politics.¹²⁴ After the 1848 revolutions, Pius IX turned against liberal Catholics. In the aftermath of the revolution in Italy that had threatened his temporal rule, his religious seat, and his life, Pius IX shifted from openness with the modern world to a “citadel mentality.”¹²⁵ It is obvious that Pius decided that the only hope for the Church was to barricade out all new ideas and democratic reforms. Despite early hope that Pius IX could reconcile with the modern age, his intransigence after 1848 convinced many liberals that the Church could not, or would not, change from what it had been in the Middle Ages.¹²⁶ Of course, to conservative Ultramontanes this was joyous news. Pius IX was always a controversial leader, with his conservative policies pleasing some and enraging others. While the Revolution of 1848 in Italy convinced Pius that liberalism was a threat to the Church, it convinced many liberal Catholics that the Church must form a positive relationship with liberalism or it would become obsolete.¹²⁷ Pius IX was not alone in making this turn to conservatism in the wake of the Revolutions of 1848. Pius supported the radically conservative Bishop Louis-Edouard Pie, the Bishop of Pontiers in France, who played a large role in crafting the *Syllabus Errorum*. Bishop Pie represents Pius IX in miniature and proves that Pius’ conservative policies, though offensive

¹²³ Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church*, 306.

¹²⁴ Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, 109.

¹²⁵ Vidler, *The Church in an Age of Revolution*, 78.

¹²⁶ O’Malley, *Trent and All That*, 22.

¹²⁷ Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church*, 302.

to many liberals, did actually represent a widespread movement in the Church.¹²⁸ Pie led the Ultramontane movement in France, resisting the liberal government of Louis Philippe and secular control of education and marriage. Pie championed the superiority of Christian life and teaching.¹²⁹ The French Revolution and the Revolutions of 1848 had inspired a conservative reaction in the Church to which Pius IX responded.

Pius IX held onto his role as sovereign ruler of the Papal States with surprising tenacity. After the 1848 revolutions, the Papal States were effectively lost except for the city of Rome, and the concept of a temporal papal kingdom was an anachronism anyway. Pius refused on principle to trade the Papal States to Camillo Benso, Count of Cavour, who in 1848 offered Pius complete autonomy and jurisdiction over the clergy and education, continued ownership of traditional Church property, and a set income for the papal court in return for territory in the Papal States. Temporal rule was no longer necessary to ensure the pope's spiritual power as it had been in the Middle Ages, and the kingdom was an increasing burden to Pius.¹³⁰ Long after the Papal States were a lost cause, Pius refused to give up his attempts to recover them. It is likely that Pius, misunderstanding the medieval roots of both sovereignty and infallibility, sought to compensate for the loss of his temporal power by defining papal infallibility at Vatican I.¹³¹ The Revolution of 1848 and its aftermath planted the ideas behind the *Syllabus Errorum* and the absolute necessity of strengthening the besieged Church against liberal attacks.¹³²

The encyclical *Qui Pluribus*, published on November 9, 1846 represents one of Pius IX's

¹²⁸ Augustin Gough, "Bishop Pie's Campaign Against the Nineteenth Century: Catholic Legitimism and Liberal Bonapartism at Pontiers during the Second Empire" in *Conflicts in French Society: Anticlericalism, Education and Morals in the Nineteenth Century* ed. Theodore Zedlin (London: George Allen and Unwin LTD, 1970), 100.

¹²⁹ Gough, "Bishop Pie's Campaign Against the Nineteenth Century," 100.

¹³⁰ Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church*, 307.

¹³¹ Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church*, 317.

¹³² Hales, *Pio Nono*, 142.

earliest condemnations of modernism. *Qui Pluribus* formed the basis of the condemnations later published in the *Syllabus Errorum* and illustrates Pius IX's earliest misunderstandings of Church history and medieval theology. Pius IX published this condemnation during his most liberal phase, only five months after his election. He was following in his predecessor's footsteps in condemning the aspects of modernism that contradicted Church teachings. In this encyclical, Pius IX condemned absolute rationalism and naturalism. Pius IX said of philosophers,

They feel as if philosophy, which is wholly concerned with the search for truth in nature, ought to reject those truths which God Himself, the supreme and merciful creator of nature, has designed to make it plain to men as a special gift. With these truths, mankind can gain true happiness and salvation. So, by means of an obviously ridiculous and extremely specious kind of argumentation, these enemies never stop invoking the power and excellence of human reason; they raise it up against the most holy faith of Christ, and they blather with great foolhardiness that this faith is opposed to human reason.¹³³

Pius redefined the pope's role in the Church, saying, "The leadership of the Apostolic See has always been active, and therefore because of its preeminent authority, the whole Church must agree with it." Pius conveniently ignored the conciliar period and the medieval conception of the pope as the most prominent of bishops rather than the lord of them all. He looked to the height of papal power from 1180 to 1250 as the traditional and proper role of the pope, disregarding the fact that this period was the exception rather than the rule and that popes during this period were judicial authorities. In *Qui Pluribus* we see premonitions of Pius' belief in infallibility.

Pius IX tested the strength of his papal authority with the proclamation of the Immaculate Conception of Mary in 1854. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception was a matter of contention between religious orders in the Middle Ages. Most theologians and bishops deferred the matter to the popes to decide.¹³⁴ Mary's important role in salvation made her an intermediary

¹³³ <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9quiplu.htm>

¹³⁴ Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 10.

between God and man, and in the medieval period the “cult of Mary” and worship of “Mary of Mercy” developed a strong following. The worship of Mary was a widespread belief of the extremely pious, but theologians had always argued about the exact process by which Mary was preserved from sin.¹³⁵ Traditional Scripture and the works of Augustine and the other scholastics held that Christ was the only one to be conceived without sin, but most believed that Mary, while conceived in sin, did not “contract” it.¹³⁶ However, many schools of theology differed on what exactly happened when Mary was preserved from original sin.¹³⁷ The matter of Mary’s conception was a controversial issue throughout the Middle Ages, especially from 1100 to 1200 between the Dominicans and the Franciscans, but it was not resolved until 1854.¹³⁸

The manner in which Pius IX declared the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary was more significant than the dogma itself. Pius sent the encyclical *Uni Primum Nullis* to all bishops from Gaeta on February 2, 1849 to gauge popular approval. The response was overwhelmingly positive, with 546 of 603 bishops approving the dogma. Despite the favorable response, Pius IX was hesitant to allow a full discussion of the issue, fearing opposition from the entrenched liberals in Germany.¹³⁹ Pius, who had always been especially devoted to Mary, decided to declare the Immaculate Conception while in exile at Gaeta, feeling that this would heal the Church and inspire faith in a time of revolution.¹⁴⁰ After five years of consideration, polling bishops, and refining his ideas, Pius declared the dogma in *Ineffabilis Deus* on December 8, 1854 in the presence of two hundred bishops, preserving Mary from any original

¹³⁵ Bury, *History of the Papacy in the 19th Century*, xxxi.

¹³⁶ Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 71.

¹³⁷ Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent* vol. 2, 139.

¹³⁸ Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 72.

¹³⁹ Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, 45.

¹⁴⁰ De Mattei, *Blessed Pius IX*, 94-5.

sin.¹⁴¹ All witnesses claimed that Pius was bathed in light at the moment of his proclamation, though this was impossible given the window placement in Saint Peter's Basilica and the angle of the December sun.¹⁴²

In *Ineffabilis Deus*, Pius IX claimed to base his argument in tradition, but he was actually misinterpreting the medieval period and the Council of Trent. The encyclical states,

Before time began, the eternal Father chose and prepared for this only-begotten Son a Mother in whom the Son of God would become incarnate from whom, in the blessed fullness of time, he would be born into this world. Above all creatures did God so loved her that truly in her was the Father well pleased with singular delight. Therefore, far above all the angels and all the saints so wondrously did God endow her with the abundance of all heavenly gifts poured from the treasury of his divinity that this mother, ever absolutely free of all stain of sin, all fair and perfect, would possess that fullness of holy innocence and sanctity than which, under God, one cannot even imagine anything greater, and which, outside of God, no mind can succeed in comprehending fully.¹⁴³

Pius IX asserted that this belief had always been held and promoted by the popes and the Church, and that he was merely formally defining the dogma. "The same Roman Church, therefore, desired nothing more than by the most persuasive means to state, to protect, to promote and to defend the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. This fact is most clearly shown to the whole world by numerous and significant acts of the Roman Pontiffs." The decree offers no specific evidence of popes defending the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception or wanting to define it emphatically. Pius IX spoke of his predecessors instituting the Feast of the Conception, allowing cities to choose her as their patron saint, and approving religious organizations devoted to her as evidence that the Immaculate Conception had always been widely believed. Though some medieval popes were especially devoted to Mary and all loved her, this does not indicate that all believed in her Immaculate Conception. The decree continues, "The Roman Pontiffs, therefore,

¹⁴¹ Corkery, *The Papacy Since 1500*, 136.

¹⁴² De Mattei, *Blessed Pius IX*, 97.

¹⁴³ <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9ineff.htm>

while directing all their efforts toward an increase of the devotion to the conception, made it their aim not only to emphasize the object with the utmost zeal, but also to enunciate the exact doctrine.” Pius cited Alexander VII’s special devotion to Mary and falsely equates this to endorsing the dogma of her Immaculate Conception. It calls the new dogma “a veneration which is in keeping with the piety unchanged in the Roman Church from the day it was instituted.” The document cites Mary’s importance in Scripture as evidence that the dogma of her Immaculate Conception was scripturally based. Although many popes, religious orders, and groups devoted special attention to Mary and believed in her Immaculate Conception, it was never officially promoted by the papacy as dogma.

Pius IX’s distortion of history concerning Mary is most obvious in his discussion of medieval beliefs and the decrees of the Council of Trent. He stated in the “Testimonies of the Catholic World,” “All are aware with how much diligence this doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God has been handed down, proposed and defended by the most outstanding religious orders, by the more celebrated theological academies, and by very eminent doctors in the sciences of theology.” He also claimed that “all know” that Mary was “never subject to original sin, but was completely preserved from the original taint, and hence she was redeemed in a manner more sublime.” Pius IX attributed to the entire Catholic world a belief that, though prevalent, was never so widespread as he claimed. Pius said of the Council of Trent,

When it promulgated the dogmatic concerning original sin, following the testimonies of the Sacred Scriptures, of the Holy Fathers and of the renowned Council, decreed and defined that all men were born infected with original sin; nevertheless, it solemnly declared that it had no intention of including the blessed and immaculate Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, in this decree and in the general extension of its definition. Indeed, considering the times and circumstances, the Fathers of Trent sufficiently intimated by this declaration that the Blessed Virgin Mary was free from the original stain; and thus they clearly signified that nothing could be reasonably cited from the Sacred Scriptures, from Tradition, or from the authority of the Fathers, which would in any way be opposed

to so great a prerogative of the Blessed Virgin.

Pius admitted that the Council of Trent had no intention of including Mary in its decree on original sin, which, of course, it did not. The council, besieged by many more pressing issues, did not intend to make any decision on the Immaculate Conception, which was then a divisive issue between the Dominicans and the Franciscans. However, Pius took the lack of a decree against the Immaculate Conception at Trent as definitive proof that the council gave its approval to the dogma. The evidence from Trent indicates nothing of the kind. The lack of opposition does not indicate that the council agreed upon, or even discussed this issue. The decree from Trent explicitly states, “The same holy council, however, also declares that it is not its intention to include in this decree, when it is dealing with original sin, the blessed and immaculate Virgin Mary, mother of God.”¹⁴⁴ The decree confirms the medieval belief that Mary did not contract original sin by admitting that she is not included in its universal definition original sin. The council called her “Immaculate” in that she was preserved from original sin, but this is very different from being immaculately conceived. Pius also stated of Church tradition, “The Church of Christ, watchful guardian that she is, and defender of the dogmas deposited with her, never changes anything, never diminishes anything, never adds anything to them.” He went on to say that only “if they are really of ancient origin and if the faith of the Fathers has transmitted them, she strives to investigate and explain them in such a way that the ancient dogmas of heavenly doctrine will be made evident and clear, but will retain their full, integral, and proper nature.” With respect to the Immaculate Conception of Mary and the definition of papal infallibility, Pius IX claimed to be confirming a dogma already widely held that was, in fact, an innovation.

¹⁴⁴ Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* vol. 2, 667.

Mary always had a special devotion, especially in France.¹⁴⁵ Pius declared the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary without consent from a council. The support for the declaration of Mary's Immaculate Conception came from below and abroad rather than from a faction of high clergymen. This was the first such declaration in history and reveals Pius actually using the doctrine of papal infallibility to make an infallible declaration on an article of faith before the dogma of infallibility was formally defined at Vatican I. In this sense, Vatican I's definition of infallibility could be seen as the ratification of a *fait accompli*.¹⁴⁶ At the ceremony declaring the dogma, Cardinal Vincenzo Macchi, dean of the Sacred College, spoke of the supreme, infallible judgment of the pope.¹⁴⁷ About ninety percent of the bishops supported the proclamation when Pius asked for their opinions, and few bishops complained about the pope's unilateral decision to promote the dogma alone.¹⁴⁸ The lack of opposition to Pius IX's infallible declaration gave him the confidence to push farther at Vatican I and define the dogma of infallibility itself.¹⁴⁹

As his pontificate progressed, Pius IX revealed his adoption of the "siege mentality" in the language of his encyclicals, persistently claiming that the Church was at war with the modern world. Pius IX began his encyclical *Quanto Conficiamur Moerore* of 1863 by saying, "How much cause we have to grieve over the most cruel and sacrilegious war brought upon the Catholic Church in almost all regions of the world during these turbulent times, and especially declared upon unhappy Italy before our very eyes."¹⁵⁰ The encyclical continued to condemn those who "seek their own advantage and profit with clearly no regard for their neighbor" and

¹⁴⁵ Hales, *Pio Nono*, 152.

¹⁴⁶ O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 31.

¹⁴⁷ Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, 45.

¹⁴⁸ Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, 45.

¹⁴⁹ Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, 45.

¹⁵⁰ <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9quanto.htm>

liberal clergy members, especially those in Italy, who, “forgetful of their vocation, do not blush in the least to spread abroad false doctrine, even in subversive writings. They arouse the people against us and this Apostolic See; they oppose our civil rule and that of the Chair itself; they shamelessly and zealously support the wicked enemies of the Catholic Church and this same See.” His condemnations and his warlike language reveal, even before Vatican I, that Pius IX believed that he needed to take action to strengthen the Church.

In a letter to the Archbishop of Munich in 1863 Pius IX spoke of the Munich Congress, an independent theological meeting that precipitated the *Syllabus Errorum*. Pius IX expressed his concerns over what a gathering “assembled independently of the ecclesiastical authority” might do to his authority as sovereign leader of the Church. However, he praised its members for “in their writings [obeying] the dogmatic decrees of the Catholic Church, which is infallible” and “to the points defined by the infallible judgment of the Church as dogmas of faith which all men must believe.”¹⁵¹ In this letter, he outlined points that would become important in the debate over infallibility six years later. He stated that faith “cannot be limited merely to points defined by the express decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, or of the Roman Pontiffs and of this Apostolic See” but faith also includes “all that has been handed down as divinely revealed by the ordinary teaching authority of the entire Church spread over the whole world, and which, for this reason, Catholic theologians, with a universal and constant consent, regard as being of the faith.” In this letter, Pius IX revealed more clearly than in any encyclical his perception of his role as pope. The idea of “divinely revealed” truths, or beliefs widely held throughout the Catholic world but never officially endorsed, was important to Pius IX’s definitions of the Immaculate Conception of Mary and papal infallibility. In both cases, Pius used universal belief to justify defining them

¹⁵¹ <http://www.cathinfo.com/index.php/Tuas-libenter>

officially. Unlike the medieval popes, who were the supreme teachers but rarely a source of dogma independent from Scripture, Pius IX styled himself as the creator of dogma that held equal weight with the decrees of the ecumenical councils and Scripture. Catholics had emphasized the importance of tradition for centuries, but Pius IX misconstrues the height of papal power in the twelfth century by believing that he had the power to define faith.

Quanta Cura, the encyclical that accompanied the *Syllabus Errorum*, represents Pius IX's most reactionary encyclical. In *Quanta Cura* Pius embraced the traditional role of the pope. He claimed to be following "the Roman Pontiffs, our predecessors, fulfilling the duty and office committed to them by the Lord Christ Himself in the person of most Blessed Peter, Prince of the Apostles, of feeding the lambs and the sheep, having never ceased sedulously to nourish the Lord's whole flock with words of faith and with salutary doctrine," which he claimed was "known to all."¹⁵² He said of his motives as pope,

Scarcely had we been elevated to this Chair of Peter, when, seeing with the greatest grief of Our soul a truly awful storm excited by so many evil opinions, and be the most grievous calamities never sufficiently to be deplored which overspread the Christian people from so many errors, according to the duty of Our Apostolic Ministry, and following the illustrious example of Our Predecessors, We raised Our voice, and in many published Encyclical Letters and Allocutions delivered in Consistory, and other Apostolic Letters, we condemned the chief errors of this most unhappy age.

His purpose in publishing *Quanta Cura* and the *Syllabus Errorum*, then was to reaffirm all of his previous condemnations of the modern world in keeping with papal tradition. Though rooting out heresy had always been a goal of the popes, Pius IX went a step further in condemning the errors of Catholics and non-Catholics alike. He soundly denounced the claim that "the Church's laws do not bind in conscience unless they are promulgated by the civil power; that acts and decrees of the Roman Pontiffs, referring to the religion and the Church, need the civil power's sanction

¹⁵² <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9quanta.htm>

and approbation, or at least its consent.” Pius considered it his right to condemn the modern ideals that threatened his office:

Amidst, therefore, such great perversity of depraved opinions, we, well remembering our Apostolic Office, and very greatly solicitous for our most holy Religion, for sound doctrine and the salvation of souls which is intrusted to us by God, and for the welfare of human society itself, have thought it right again to raise up our Apostolic voice. Therefore, by our Apostolic authority, we reprobate, proscribe, and condemn all the singular and evil opinions and doctrines severally mentioned in this letter, and will and command that they be thoroughly held by all the children of the Catholic Church as reprobated, proscribed and condemned.

This condemnation justified the pope’s authority to publish the *Syllabus Errorum* by invoking his right to direct the Church on earth. *Quanta Cura* gave official weight to the Syllabus and illustrated, perhaps more clearly than any other official document of his pontificate, Pius IX’s intransigent attitude with respect to modernism.

The *Syllabus Errorum* summarized the doctrines that other encyclicals and allocutions had already condemned, definitively denouncing liberalism in all of its forms and contributing to the liberal perception of Pius IX as an irrational, reactionary dictator. The Syllabus appeared on December 8, 1864 as a corollary to *Quanta Cura*. The Munich Congress had convinced Pius IX that the liberal virus was rapidly infecting the Church and that strong condemnations would strengthen the Church against such threats.¹⁵³ The Syllabus itself listed eighty errors condemned in other encyclicals without explaining why. In ten sections, it announced blanket denunciations of pantheism, naturalism, absolute rationalism, moderate rationalism, indifferentism, latitudinarianism, socialism, communism, secret societies, Biblical societies, liberal clerical societies, separation of Church and state, and modern liberalism. It also condemned all those who stated that the pope should not have temporal sovereignty in the Papal States, that the

¹⁵³ Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church*, 314.

Church should not have power over secular governments, education, and criminal cases involving clerics, that marriage should not be a Christian ceremony, and that morals did not come from divine law. The eightieth and final thesis condemned any individual who claimed that “The Roman Pontiff can, and ought to, reconcile himself, and come to terms with progress, liberalism and modern civilization.”

Presented in this way, without any explanation of the theories condemned, the declaration seemed to liberals to be needlessly reactionary, completely unreasonable and absurd and created a huge outburst of fury from liberal Catholics and intellectuals.¹⁵⁴ With his attention fixed on proclaiming anathema on all liberals threatening his temporal power, Pius IX was surprised by the negative popular response to the Syllabus.¹⁵⁵ The Syllabus intentionally condemned liberals and liberal Catholics alike.¹⁵⁶ It made it perfectly clear that Pius refused to amend his medieval policies to work with “progress” or “modern civilization,” both of which were in the mainstream of European intellectual circles by 1864. The Syllabus made it clear that no compromise between liberalism and Catholicism could be reached with Pius IX in power, and discredited liberal Catholics abroad.¹⁵⁷ With the publication of the *Syllabus Errorum*, Pius IX’s siege mentality was complete.¹⁵⁸ In many ways, the *Syllabus Errorum* was a better indication of Pius IX’s conservatism than either the declaration of Immaculate Conception of Mary or the definition of papal infallibility because it responded to politics and modern thought, not matters of religion.¹⁵⁹ The Syllabus did check, though it failed to destroy completely, the liberal Catholic movement.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁴ Hales, *Pio Nono*, 266.

¹⁵⁵ Vidler, *The Church in an Age of Revolution*, 152.

¹⁵⁶ Vidler, *The Church in an Age of Revolution*, 152.

¹⁵⁷ Zedlin, *France, 1848-1895*, 986.

¹⁵⁸ Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church*, 294.

¹⁵⁹ Hales, *Pio Nono*, 266.

¹⁶⁰ Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church*, 316.

Pius IX's intransigence as sovereign of the Papal States is best illustrated in his mistreatment of Jews, especially in his handling of the bizarre case of Edgardo Montara.¹⁶¹ Edgardo Montara Levi, a Jewish boy from Bologna born on August 26, 1851, was taken from his parents in accordance with papal law because he was supposedly baptized by his Christian nurse. Such kidnappings were common in Italy during the Catholic Reformation.¹⁶² The inquisitor's forces in Bologna claimed that Anna Morisi, a Christian nurse working in the Montara household, had baptized Edgardo in August of 1852 while he was sick and apparently dying. Afterwards, Edgardo recovered and Anna told no one of her secret baptism until 1858, when a fellow maid passed the information to the inquisitor of Bologna, Pier Gaetano Feletti. According to papal law, a Christian could baptize a Jewish child without parental consent *in articulo mortis*, or if the child's life was in danger. The inquisitor ruled the baptism valid, making Edgardo a son of the Church requiring a Christian education. According to papal law, a Christian child could not be raised in a Jewish household. The inquisitor sent forces to snatch six-year-old Edgardo from his home on the night of June 24, 1858. Without his parents' knowledge, Edgardo was sent to Rome to the Catechumens, a house for the conversion of Jews, where he immediately met the pope. Pius IX refused to return Edgardo to his parents despite the fact that they travelled to Rome and attempted to gain custody.¹⁶³

Edgardo's controversial case was widely publicized, and his freedom became a holy mission for Jews throughout Europe and his education a sacred cause to the pope.¹⁶⁴ Anna, only eighteen herself at the time of the supposed baptism, claimed that she asked the local grocer, Lesare Lepori, how to perform a baptism. All that was required to baptize a child was for a

¹⁶¹ De Mattei, *Blessed Pius IX*, 153.

¹⁶² David I. Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Montara* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 34.

¹⁶³ De Mattei, *Blessed Pius IX*, 153.

¹⁶⁴ Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Montara*, 122.

Christian with the proper intentions to sprinkle water, not even sanctified water, on them and say “I baptize you in the name of the Father, the son, and the Holy Ghost.”¹⁶⁵ Anna later stated that she did these things, feeling silly, while Edgardo’s parents were out of the room. However, when the case went to court the grocer, Lepori, and the fellow maid, Regina, denied ever talking to Anna about the baptism.¹⁶⁶ The Montaras’ lawyers proved Anna to be a prostitute and a thief, and discovered that Anna had been pregnant while working for the Montaras in 1855.¹⁶⁷ Neighbors and witnesses claimed that Edgardo was never in danger of dying in 1852 and that Anna herself had been sick in bed at the time, and his parents claimed that she was never in a room alone with him.¹⁶⁸ Church officials ignored this evidence and never tried to verify Anna’s story.¹⁶⁹ Officials claimed that Edgardo was happy on his trip to Rome and very zealous in his Christian education at the Catechumens. They claimed that he never asked to see his parents except in hoping for them to convert also.¹⁷⁰ His parents, who were granted visitation when they came to Rome, claimed that he cried and asked to be taken home. When Rome fell in 1870, Edgardo fled the city to avoid being returned to his family and thereafter refused to see them.¹⁷¹

Though Pius IX had no knowledge of the case before Edgardo was brought to Rome, his refusal to return Edgardo earned him the censure of the liberal press and Jews throughout Europe.¹⁷² Pius developed a close relationship with Edgardo, often visiting and exchanging letters. Edgardo’s later correspondence indicates that he thought of Pius IX as a father figure,

¹⁶⁵ Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Montara*, 33.

¹⁶⁶ Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Montara*, 94.

¹⁶⁷ Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Montara*, 95.

¹⁶⁸ Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Montara*, 97.

¹⁶⁹ Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Montara*, 226.

¹⁷⁰ Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Montara*, 51.

¹⁷¹ Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Montara*, 264.

¹⁷² De Mattei, *Blessed Pius IX*, 154.

taking the name “Pio Edgardo Montara” in Pius’ honor when he received holy orders in 1873.¹⁷³ Pius defended the decision of the local officials, citing established Church law providing that in the case of a legally baptized Christian child, the right of the Church superseded the rights of the parents. Pius himself was shocked at the outburst of rage about the case. Early in his pontificate he had lifted the *predica cotta* requiring Jews to attend a Christian sermon every Saturday and had torn down the walls of the Jewish ghetto in Rome.¹⁷⁴ He had been a friend to the Jews and saw no reason he should be vilified for upholding Church law.¹⁷⁵ Certainly there was evidence that the baptism had not been valid, but illegal baptisms had often been upheld by popes in the past.¹⁷⁶ Although the pope was the titular head of the Holy Office of the Inquisition and was consulted on major cases, the Montara case was routine by the time Edgardo arrived in Rome.¹⁷⁷ Pius made the custody and education of Edgardo a sacred mission and refused to release the boy in the face of convincing evidence.¹⁷⁸ This episode helped to cast Pius IX as an arch-conservative determined to shut out the modern world. This perception took hold of liberals and liberal Catholics alike and had a huge impact on events at the First Vatican Council.

Part III:

Papal Infallibility at the First Vatican Council

When Pius IX announced the First Vatican Council in 1868, many thought its purpose was to give official support to the *Syllabus Errorum*.¹⁷⁹ Liberals rejoiced, thinking that a free council could achieve reconciliation with modernism even if an uncompromising pope refused. Pius IX published the bull convoking the council, *Aeterni Patris*, on June 29, 1868. The Council

¹⁷³ Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Montara*, 295.

¹⁷⁴ Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Montara*, 49.

¹⁷⁵ Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Montara*, 157.

¹⁷⁶ Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Montara*, 90.

¹⁷⁷ Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Montara*, 84.

¹⁷⁸ Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Montara*, 85.

¹⁷⁹ Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church*, 322.

first met on December 8, 1869 in Saint Peter's Basilica within the walls of the Vatican. The location itself is significant. Though the five Lateran Councils had been held in Rome, no other council had been held in Saint Peter's itself. The council was, literally, under the pope's nose from the moment of its inception. The acoustics in the Vatican were terrible, and the bishops often could not hear each other. The proceedings were also conducted in Latin, which many bishops could not speak correctly, making speeches even more difficult to understand.¹⁸⁰ The papal office made no efforts to alleviate these problems. Vatican I was a free council in the sense that Pius IX did not attempt to control the voting. However, his tactics of intimidation and the feeling among bishops that they lacked the freedom to express their opinions suggest that papal interests influenced the proceedings, even though they did not change the outcomes.¹⁸¹

According to Church tradition, Pius IX needed the support and consent of a council to establish such an important dogma as papal infallibility. While he did not control them, at every turn he seemed willing to influence the bishops to get the definition he wanted. The invitations to the council were issued to bishops but not to any secular leaders for the first time in history.¹⁸² This represented the modern break between Church and state, but contradicted what Pius IX had condemned concerning Church and state in the *Syllabus Errorum*, which explicitly denounced as an error the idea that the Church had "not any temporal power, direct or indirect" and that "The Church ought to be separated from the State, and the State from the Church." Though he defended his right to be the sovereign ruler of the Papal States, he excluded secular rulers from the council. Pius invited both the eastern churches and the Protestants, but both declined.¹⁸³ The decree at the opening of the council stated as its purpose,

¹⁸⁰ Lillian Parker Wallace, *The Papacy and European Diplomacy, 1869-1879* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1947), 70.

¹⁸¹ Wallace, *The Papacy and European Diplomacy*, 75.

¹⁸² Wallace, *The Papacy and European Diplomacy*, 56.

¹⁸³ Wallace, *The Papacy and European Diplomacy*, 56.

To most carefully examine and provide what in these hard times may promote the greater honor of God, the purity of faith, the dignity of divine service, the salvation of souls, the discipline of secular and regular clergy, their training, the observation of ecclesiastical canons, the improvement of morals, the Christian education of youth, and the common peace and concord of the whole world. So, too, measures shall be most zealously taken to remove all exile from the Church and civil society, to revoke the erring to the right way, to extirpate vice and crime and revive religion.¹⁸⁴

Most past councils had been convoked to deal with a specific issue or crisis in faith facing the Church, settle a disputed point, or deal with a particular abuse.¹⁸⁵ While the Council of Trent clearly stated that it convened to deal with the Protestant reformation, or “the restoration of what is good and the correction of bad morals,” Vatican I supposedly met to reaffirm faith, discipline and “erring,” none of which were particularly urgent issues in 1869. While modernism was threatening the Church, there was no specific event that precipitated the council. Pius alludes to the movement for Italian unification with the phrase “to remove all exile from the Church,” but if this event precipitated the council the timing does not make sense. A council to deal with “exile” should have come logically much earlier in his pontificate. The bull hides the real object of the council and makes no mention of defining infallibility.

The prospect of the council declaring papal infallibility was never officially promoted by the official Vatican sources before the council began. However, many newspapers on the papal payroll, especially the Jesuit controlled *Civiltà Cattolica*, had been pushing for a council to define papal infallibility since 1867.¹⁸⁶ Books opposing infallibility were officially banned by the papal office.¹⁸⁷ Discussion for and against the dogma began long before the bishops convened in Rome, and many factions formed upon this issue before the council opened. Many people suspected that Pius’ true motive in calling a council was to define papal infallibility, and he did

¹⁸⁴ Bury, *History of the Papacy in the 19th Century*, 56.

¹⁸⁵ Bury, *History of the Papacy in the 19th Century*, 56.

¹⁸⁶ Wallace, *The Papacy and European Diplomacy*, 54.

¹⁸⁷ Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, 62.

not keep his feelings on this issue a secret. He had been considering the declaration since the 1854 declaration of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, perhaps even since 1848. In his appointment of members of the College of Cardinals, he was careful to select only conservative Ultramontanes who would promote the doctrine.¹⁸⁸ Pius IX did not announce that the council would discuss papal infallibility, a heavily theological issue, in time for bishops to consult theologians before they left their dioceses. Pius did not allow theologians to attend the council and address the bishops as all previous councils had.¹⁸⁹ This put the bishops at an immediate disadvantage in making an informed decision on infallibility. Secrecy was strictly observed at the council, but four bishops in favor of infallibility were released from the vow of secrecy to publish propaganda anonymously attacking the minority in the infamous “Roman Letters on the Council.”¹⁹⁰ Pius IX’s needed to define infallibility to ensure that his declaration of the Immaculate Conception of Mary could not be reversed after his death.¹⁹¹

Despite the fact that the council was free, many people abroad and among the representatives at the council accused Pius IX of dominating the council. There was a very strong minority opposed to the definition from the start, and this encouraged accusations that Pius IX was unfairly controlling the council. When he polled the Congregation of Rites on December 8, 1864 concerning the doctrine, only one of fifteen cardinals and seven of thirty-two bishops recommended defining infallibility.¹⁹² Many feared that if Pius IX pushed infallibility, a schismatic council would result, with one rumored to occur in Germany if the pope pushed the dogma.¹⁹³ Only about fifty hardcore infallibilists supported the doctrine at the opening of the

¹⁸⁸ Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, 43.

¹⁸⁹ O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 27.

¹⁹⁰ Wallace, *The Papacy and European Diplomacy*, 68.

¹⁹¹ Bury, *History of the Papacy in the 19th Century*, 51.

¹⁹² Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, 53.

¹⁹³ Wallace, *The Papacy and European Diplomacy*, 56.

council, with about 130 vehement opponents and about five hundred undecided.¹⁹⁴ The initially undecided faction was persuaded by the arguments or swayed by the pope's aggressive backing of the definition.¹⁹⁵ The opponents of infallibility broke into two camps – the “inopportunist” opposed to defining the dogma at the time, and those theologically opposed to the doctrine.

There was a strong feeling among the bishops that Pius IX never really wanted a discussion of the dogma, and that he simply wanted a council to agree exactly to the definition he desired.

Bishop Francois Lecourtier wrote,

Our weakness at this moment comes neither from Scripture nor the tradition of the Fathers nor the witness of the General Councils nor the evidence of history. It comes from our lack of freedom, which is radical. An imposing minority, representing the faith of more than 100,000,000 Catholics, that is, almost half of the entire church, is crushed beneath the yoke of a restrictive agenda, which contradicts conciliar traditions.¹⁹⁶

Many people, both inside and outside the council, felt that the First Vatican Council was radically out of step with the great councils of the Middle Ages and that Pius IX had thoroughly rejected conciliarism. Bishop Felix Dupanloup, a prominent opponent of the dogma at the council, wrote on January 2, 1870, “the pope thought people would only come to Rome to say ‘Amen.’”¹⁹⁷ Ferdinand Gregorovius, a prominent Catholic historian present at the council, wrote in his diary in June of 1870, “The pope recently got the urge to try out his infallibility...I really believe he's insane.”¹⁹⁸ Archbishop Jacques Marie Achille Ginoulhiae of Lyon wrote, “the pope is devouring us.”¹⁹⁹ Many bishops petitioned their foreign ministers or secular leaders about their lack of freedom, and the liberal presses throughout Europe censured Pius IX for controlling the council too closely. Though the council remained free and a vast majority did support

¹⁹⁴ Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, 57.

¹⁹⁵ Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, 57.

¹⁹⁶ Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, 131.

¹⁹⁷ Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, 79.

¹⁹⁸ Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, 125.

¹⁹⁹ Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, 135.

infallibility by the end of the Council, Pius IX had an unprecedented amount of control over the council.

Pius IX's behavior at the Council fuelled the exaggerated claims that the council was not free and was not a legitimate representation of the universal church. He was vain, stubborn, authoritarian, and nearly impossible to deter once he had an idea fixed, as he had demonstrated in the matter of Mary's Immaculate Conception. Pius IX made it perfectly clear that he would declare the dogma he wanted no matter what the council said. He stated near the end of the council, "My mind is so made up that if need be I shall take the definition upon myself and dismiss the council if it wishes to keep silent."²⁰⁰ He most likely decided that he should be infallible before his *ex cathedra* definition of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, and it is obvious by the time of the council that he was not to be deterred no matter what the bishops said. He had hoped that the bishops would proclaim the dogma by acclamation without a discussion. The council dragged on longer than he had thought it would, and when an outbreak of malaria in Rome in the summer of 1870 threatened the council and the health of the bishops, he supposedly said, "*one crepino pure,*" or "let them croak."²⁰¹ The bishops knew he was not going to suspend the council until he had the definition he wanted. He considered any opponent of the dogma a personal enemy and treated them with incredible cruelty in public and private audiences. He saw opponents as impious, his verbal insults varying from "crazy" and "ass" to "traitor and "chief of the sectarians."²⁰² Not all opponents of the dogma, of course, were disloyal to Pius IX or to the papacy. His frequent outbursts, tantrums, and mood swings, most often directed at the opposition, worsened during the council, and there were many rumors that his epilepsy had

²⁰⁰ Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, 81.

²⁰¹ Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, 116.

²⁰² Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, 117.

returned, that he was mentally unstable, or that he was losing touch with reality.²⁰³ By July 1870, his health was certainly declining. The pope seemed to have no short-term memory and trouble speaking, and his speeches often made no sense.²⁰⁴ He claimed that he wanted the council to be free, but his cunning tactics and notorious temper influenced the bishops.²⁰⁵ He treated the council as a papal advisory body rather than an independent assembly, and for this reason many have called Vatican I “the council that ended the councils.”²⁰⁶ Pius IX censored mail, restricted meetings, and refused to allow opponents to speak at a council where the majority was already in favor of the definition he wanted.²⁰⁷

The bishops from more liberal countries, most notably France, Germany, Austria, Hungary and Portugal, were predominantly opposed to infallibility. However, the bishops of Italy, Spain, South America, and all missionaries, who were in favor, vastly outnumbered them.²⁰⁸ A petition for the definition was proposed on January 22, but a petition against it on January 26 was not accepted by the papal officials controlling the agenda.²⁰⁹ The dogma was presented on March 6, and on March 12 a motion passed to discuss it immediately, or *extra ordinem*. The shock of the minority when the first definition was circulated necessitated a long discussion.²¹⁰ By April the minority was losing ground and the pope was losing patience, refusing to grant any more audiences to the opposition.²¹¹ Discussion began on May 13 and was closed on June 3, denying 49 bishops of the minority the right to speak.²¹² On July 13, 1870, the

²⁰³ Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, 118.

²⁰⁴ Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, 124.

²⁰⁵ Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, 123.

²⁰⁶ O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 31.

²⁰⁷ Bury, *History of the Papacy in the 19th Century*, 79.

²⁰⁸ Wallace, *The Papacy and European Diplomacy*, 69.

²⁰⁹ Wallace, *The Papacy and European Diplomacy*, 77.

²¹⁰ Bury, *History of the Papacy in the 19th Century*, 109.

²¹¹ Wallace, *The Papacy and European Diplomacy*, 100.

²¹² Wallace, *The Papacy and European Diplomacy*, 102.

bishops voted on a preliminary draft of the decree. Eighty-eight voted against, sixty-two assented with reservations, and 451 voted in approval. By this time papal supporters had convinced nearly two thirds of the originally undecided bishops. Many who opposed were simply not willing to lose their livelihood or risk excommunication to oppose the pope, who refrained from outright threats but had made his contempt for the minority painfully clear during his tantrums.²¹³

The council revised the definition of papal infallibility several times between the beginning of discussion in May and the final vote in July. A total of 117 amendments were presented and discussed. Pius IX and his supporters considered all these changes improvements, the definition never changed in its essence, and none of the changes represented concessions to the minority. Even supporters of the doctrine agreed that infallibility should be limited to *ex cathedra* definitions of faith and morals.²¹⁴ Fifty-five bishops of the minority left Rome before the last session of the Council, creating a deceptively unanimous final vote. In the final vote on July 18, 1870, 535 voted yes, two voted no, and twenty percent of the original council boycotted.²¹⁵ The last vote was public and was merely a formality. The dogma had already passed in reality, but the act of voting in public was a gesture of submission to the pope for those who had originally opposed infallibility.²¹⁶ After the vote, the two bishops who had opposed fell at Pius' feet, begging his forgiveness and consenting to the definition.²¹⁷ Besides the definition of infallibility, the council only published one other decree, *Dei Filius*, on April 24, which confirmed the Catholic faith and God's existence, responding to modern criticisms of religion.²¹⁸

The doctrine of papal infallibility was first advanced by left-wing Franciscans in the

²¹³ Bury, *History of the Papacy in the 19th Century*, 126.

²¹⁴ De Mattei, *Blessed Pius IX*, 144.

²¹⁵ Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, 189.

²¹⁶ Bury, *History of the Papacy in the 19th Century*, 126.

²¹⁷ Hales, *Pio Nono*, 324.

²¹⁸ De Mattei, *Blessed Pius IX*, 137.

thirteenth century seeking to limit papal authority. Though Saint Francis of Assisi had forbidden his followers to seek papal privileges, they had been doing so since Pope Gregory IX allowed them to ignore Francis' last testament in the bull *Quo Elongati*.²¹⁹ Franciscans sought to establish infallibility to prevent popes from making arbitrary decisions, particularly with respect to their holy order, or contradicting their predecessors. Saint Bonaventure taught that the universal church was unerring in faith, but he did not assert that all jurisdiction on faith was concentrated in the pope. His assertion of papal sovereignty and jurisdiction over the universal church does not go so far as to indicate that the pope's decisions were infallible or irreformable.²²⁰ Pietro Olivi, a prominent Franciscan leader after Bonaventure's death, first promoted a theory of papal infallibility independent from Scripture or canon law in his *Quaestio*. The idea that the pope was the infallible master and magisterium of the Church was both new and controversial.²²¹ Olivi took the arguments of canonists claiming that the Church as a whole was "indefectible" out of context and used them to argue that it was impossible to have an infallible Church without an infallible leader. Olivi acknowledged the problems of the doctrine he proposed and differentiated between private life and public pronouncements of a pope and between true popes and heretical pseudo-popes.²²² Though he promoted the absolute power of faith of the pope, Olivi believed that infallibility set strict limits on the sovereign power of the pope, even in the realm of internal Church government.²²³

Both Olivi and his contemporaries realized that to ascribe infallibility to the papacy was to severely limit the sovereignty of any individual pope.²²⁴ Pius IX was almost certainly

²¹⁹ Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility*, 64.

²²⁰ Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility*, 88.

²²¹ Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility*, 115.

²²² Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility*, 121.

²²³ Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility*, 104.

²²⁴ Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility*, 130.

mistaken in his belief that papal infallibility had been widely believed in the Middle Ages. Though Olivi's writings prove that some radicals promoted infallibility, they did not advance the sort of infallibility that Pius IX did, and medieval popes gave little notice to the theory. In his promotion of infallibility at Vatican I, Pius IX reveals his misunderstanding of the papacy during the peak of its power in the twelfth century. The papacy at the peak of its power was a sovereign civil, judicial, legal, and political authority. No medieval pope accepted the idea that either the Church or the pope was infallible. Though the papacy was based in ecclesiastical legitimacy, the height of papal power that Pius IX revered between 1180 and 1250 was a period of extreme papal sovereignty, not infallibility. Pius IX takes these two very different entities to be the same thing, both promoting a more powerful pontiff. The dogma that Pius IX promoted at Vatican I, which he claimed was in keeping with Church tradition, was radically different from the unpopular medieval notions of infallibility, and Pius IX almost certainly failed to grasp this.

The debate over papal infallibility at Vatican I revolved around the intent of medieval canonists and theologians. Each side sought to establish that infallibility either had or had not been widely accepted in the Middle Ages. There is an undeniable gap in the beliefs of medieval theologians concerning papal infallibility and the definition promoted at Vatican I. Medieval canonists that promoted infallibility believed in a fundamentally different concept than that which Pius IX promoted at Vatican I.²²⁵ Infallibility was not supported by any significant number of theologians or supported by any bishops or popes during the period Pius IX revered as the height of papal authority, between 1180 and 1250. The canonists gave no attention to theories of infallibility, instead devoting their efforts to supporting papal sovereignty.²²⁶ The early proponents of infallibility differentiated between the written tradition of Scripture and "living

²²⁵ Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility*, 57.

²²⁶ Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility*, 274.

tradition,” which was the oral custom that had been passed down through the centuries.²²⁷ No ancient council or Church father made any statement on papal infallibility, and though many at Vatican I took this silence to mean that it was universally held, the thirteenth century inventors of papal infallibility could not have based their theory on canon because the canonists had written nothing about it.²²⁸ The most common Bible passage used to support papal infallibility is Luke 22:32, “But I have prayed for you, Peter, that your faith may not fail.” Though Pius IX took this to mean that the successors of Saint Peter were infallible in any declarations of faith, many take it to mean that the Church as a whole is indefectible and “may not fail,” meaning that it will always survive.²²⁹ Though canonists between 1150 and 1250 often ascribed to the pope vast authority and sovereignty, none attempted to make him a source of doctrine or faith separate from Scripture. The pope was the supreme ruler of the temporal Church within the framework set down in Scripture, not an absolute monarch above it.²³⁰ In many ways, the doctrine of infallibility that emerged in the fourteenth century was incompatible with the idea of papal sovereignty as promoted by the canonists. The essence of a sovereign pope is that a supreme ruler is not bound by the policies of his predecessors. The definition of an infallible pope binds him to every policy of all of his predecessors.²³¹ The idea of papal infallibility that emerged around 1300 was intertwined with ideas of papal sovereignty and tradition, but it was not rooted in long-standing Church teachings as many theologians at Vatican I claimed.²³²

The definition of papal infallibility that resulted from Vatican I was promulgated as *Pastor Aeternus*. In its essence, the decree stated that when the pope speaks *ex cathedra* on *fides*

²²⁷ Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility*, 7.

²²⁸ Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility*, 8, 13.

²²⁹ Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility*, 35.

²³⁰ Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility*, 25, 31.

²³¹ Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility*, 2.

²³² Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility*, 6.

and *mores*, or faith and morals, he cannot be wrong.²³³ *Ex cathedra* is defined as when the pope is speaking through his role as *omnium christianorum pastor et doctor*, or as the universal teacher of revealed faith. Decrees made in the pope's other three roles, as supreme priest, legislator or ecclesiastical judge, cannot be infallible. Of the pope's four duties, faith, morals, discipline and ecclesiastical administration, only the first two are eligible for infallible decrees.²³⁴ The *Syllabus Errorum*, for instance, does not qualify as *ex cathedra* because it did not speak on faith or morals, and therefore it cannot be considered an infallible statement.²³⁵ Only the pope can decide when his own decrees are *ex cathedra*, giving future popes some flexibility in their declarations – as long as they did not state that they were speaking *ex cathedra*, they were not bound to the decisions of their predecessors.²³⁶ However, the limitation imposed by *ex cathedra* makes infallibility less personal and relegates it to the papal office as an authority on faith rather than to each individual pope.²³⁷ The decree states,

Since the gates of hell trying, if they can, to overthrow the church, make their assault with a hatred that increases day by day against its divinely laid foundation, we judge it necessary, with the approbation of the sacred council, and for the protection, defense and growth of the catholic flock, to propound the doctrine concerning the institution, permanence and nature of the sacred and apostolic primacy, upon which the strength and coherence of the whole church depends.²³⁸

It further stated, “This doctrine is to be believed and held by all the faithful in accordance with the ancient and unchanging faith of the whole church,” which, of course, it was not.²³⁹

The first chapter of the decree, “On the institution of the apostolic primacy in blessed Peter,” reinforced the institution of the papacy and the right of the popes as the successors of

²³³ Hans Küng, *Infallible? An Enquiry* (London: William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., 1971), 80.

²³⁴ Bury, *History of the Papacy in the 19th Century*, 136.

²³⁵ Hales, *Pio Nono*, 289.

²³⁶ Bury, *History of the Papacy in the 19th Century*, 137.

²³⁷ De Mattei, *Blessed Pius IX*, 149.

²³⁸ Tanner, *The Decrees of the Ecumenical Council* vol. 2, 812.

²³⁹ Tanner, *The Decrees of the Ecumenical Council* vol. 2, 812.

Saint Peter. The primacy of Rome and the Petrine succession were never contested in the medieval Church, but were also never considered the foundation for the theories of infallibility that emerged in the thirteenth century. Chapter two, “The permanence of the primacy of blessed Peter in the Roman pontiffs,” traces the right of the Roman pontiffs to sovereign power over all other churches. It states, “It has always been necessary for every church – that is to say the faithful throughout the world – to be in agreement with the Roman church because of its more effective leadership.”²⁴⁰ The third chapter, “On the power and character of the primacy of the Roman Pontiff,” cites evidence from the general councils in support of the claim that the pope is the supreme leader of the Church, conveniently ignoring the conciliar period. The decree says,

The Roman Church possesses a pre-eminence of ordinary power over every other Church, and that this jurisdictional power of the Roman Pontiff is both episcopal and immediate. Both clergy and faithful, of whatever rite and dignity, both singly and collectively, are bound to submit to this power by the duty of hierarchical subordination and true obedience, and this not only in matters concerning faith and morals, but also in those which regard the discipline and government of the Church throughout the world.²⁴¹

This passage asserts papal sovereignty, especially in its statement of papal authority in discipline and government, but does not provide a base for infallibility.

The actual statement of papal infallibility comes in the decree’s fourth and final chapter, “On the infallible teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff.” It cites the decrees of the Fourth Council of Constantinople, the Second Council of Lyons, and the Council of Florence, which affirmed the pope’s teaching authority. The decree states that for the sake of Church unity, “the long established custom of the Churches and the pattern of ancient usage” gave authority to the pontiff in “matters concerning the faith” so that “any damage suffered by the faith should be

²⁴⁰ Tanner, *The Decrees of the Ecumenical Council* vol. 2, 813.

²⁴¹ Tanner, *The Decrees of the Ecumenical Council* vol. 2, 813-14.

repaired in that place above all where the faith can know no failing.”²⁴² The decree speaks of popes and councils working together to establish dogma. Again, Pius IX demonstrates his misunderstanding of Church history and lack of theological training by ignoring the conciliar period. The decree continues, “For the Holy Spirit was promised to the successors of Peter not so that they might, by his revelation, make known some new doctrine, but that, by his assistance, they might religiously guard and faithfully expound the revelation or deposit of faith transmitted by the apostles.”²⁴³ Here, the council admits that the papacy had not received Peter’s mandate to act as an independent source of faith separate from Scripture, but to “guard” the teachings of Scripture and the apostles. However, infallibility by definition indicates that the pope could act as an independent source of faith and define new dogmas without explicit Scriptural support. Infallibility gave each pope the right to interpret Scripture and tradition and infallibly define articles of faith. Pius IX’s earlier encyclicals prove that he often misread Scripture, most obviously in the case of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. This assertion with regards to infallibility takes it one step further, giving the pope the ability to define dogma regardless of scriptural support. This was certainly not in keeping with Church tradition, and even the proponents of papal infallibility in the fourteenth century did not believe that the papacy was a separate source of faith. The decree declares that infallibility was inherent in Peter’s role:

This gift of truth and never-failing faith was therefore divinely conferred on Peter and his successors in this See so that they might discharge their exalted office for the salvation of all, and so that the whole flock of Christ might be kept away by them from the poisonous food of error and be nourished with the sustenance of heavenly doctrine. Thus the tendency to schism is removed and the whole Church is preserved in unity, and, resting on its foundation, can stand firm against the gates of hell.²⁴⁴

The council stated that infallible authority residing with the pope will inherently strengthen the

²⁴² Tanner, *The Decrees of the Ecumenical Council* vol. 2, 815.

²⁴³ Tanner, *The Decrees of the Ecumenical Council* vol. 2, 816.

²⁴⁴ Tanner, *The Decrees of the Ecumenical Council* vol. 2, 816.

Church: “Since in this very age when the salutary effectiveness of the apostolic office is most especially needed ... we judge it absolutely necessary to affirm solemnly the prerogative which the only-begotten Son of God was pleased to attach to the supreme pastoral office,” namely, infallibility.²⁴⁵ This supports the claim that proponents of infallibility at Vatican I incorrectly believed that it would strengthen the Church. This misconception was clearly widespread at Vatican I. The final chapter states that it acts, “Faithfully adhering to the tradition received from the beginning of the Christian faith” and “with the approval of the Sacred Council.” Pius IX is literally speaking through the council. It defines,

As a divinely revealed dogma that when the Roman Pontiff speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when, in the exercise of his office as shepherd and teacher of all Christians, in virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the whole Church, he possesses, by the divine assistance promised to him in blessed Peter, that infallibility which the divine Redeemer willed his Church to enjoy in defining doctrine concerning faith or morals. Therefore, such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are of themselves, and not by the consent of the Church, irreformable.²⁴⁶

This final declaration of infallibility represents, not continuity with the apostolic age or medieval theology as Pius IX believed, but a radically new conception of the pope.

Despite the claims of the definition of papal infallibility that “this the holy see has always held” and “this the perpetual usage of the Church confirms,” infallibility was by no means a universally accepted dogma that Pius IX formally defined. The passages in Matthew and Luke had never been interpreted conclusively as supporting infallibility and could be interpreted many ways.²⁴⁷ As opponents pointed out at Vatican I, Scripture could not prove the reality or possibility of infallibility.²⁴⁸ In the medieval tradition, the pope, though the most important

²⁴⁵ Tanner, *The Decrees of the Ecumenical Council* vol. 2, 816.

²⁴⁶ Tanner, *The Decrees of the Ecumenical Council* vol. 2, 816.

²⁴⁷ Küng, *Infallible? An Enquiry*, 91.

²⁴⁸ Küng, *Infallible? An Enquiry*, 124.

prelate, was a man, and man was always susceptible to error.²⁴⁹ No council or theologian could provide conclusive evidence that proved that the Church or the pope was free from error.²⁵⁰ The medieval understanding that the Church as a whole could not err even if its parts could did not support the infallibility of a single member of the Church.²⁵¹ In declaring infallibility, many theologians believed that there would never be another council. There was no need for a council once the pope could settle any disputed matter of faith with an infallible decree.²⁵² Though this belief ignores the difficulty of actually making an infallible declaration, in a sense they were right. The Second Vatican Council created no new dogma, and the definition of papal infallibility actually kept Vatican II from limiting papal authority as it wanted to.²⁵³ Infallibility itself has only been used only once since its proclamation as dogma in 1870. The Immaculate Conception of Mary in 1854 was an infallible *ex cathedra* declaration, as was the dogma of her Assumption in 1950.²⁵⁴ The dogma is significant, not for its uses, but for the fact that it represents a tragic misunderstanding of the medieval roots of infallibility and a radical innovation in dogma.

Papal infallibility as it was defined in 1870 is flawed in that it treats the primacy of Rome, papal sovereignty, and papal infallibility as three interrelated aspects of the same principle.²⁵⁵ The format of the decree, first discussing the primacy of Peter's successors, then the permanence of this primacy, then the supreme authority, or sovereignty, of the pope, followed by the actual definition of infallibility, confuses these three very different issues. The Church as a whole can and has erred in the past. However, it never stopped teaching the Gospel. Therefore, it

²⁴⁹ Küng, *Infallible? An Enquiry*, 139.

²⁵⁰ Küng, *Infallible? An Enquiry*, 141.

²⁵¹ Küng, *Infallible? An Enquiry*, 151.

²⁵² O'Malley, *What Happened At Vatican II*, 15.

²⁵³ Küng, *Infallible? An Enquiry*, 85.

²⁵⁴ Küng, *Infallible? An Enquiry*, 112.

²⁵⁵ Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility*, 2.

is indefectible, not infallible.²⁵⁶ *Pastor Aeternus* confuses this distinction and applies infallibility to a single person. It is the essence of papal sovereignty that the pope should not be bound by any decisions of his predecessors. Infallibility binds each pope to the decisions of his predecessors, making each decree on faith and morals irreformable. If infallibility, as the decree states, has always been true, then Pius IX, though he never admitted it, was similarly bound by the decisions of all of his predecessors.²⁵⁷ To attribute infallibility to an entire line of rulers is to curtail radically the sovereign power of each, but Pius IX and the Ultramontanes saw the definition of infallibility as an increase in papal power.²⁵⁸ In day-to-day practice, infallibility had the opposite effect that its proponents at Vatican I thought it would.²⁵⁹ In making past proclamations infallible the council strengthened rocks of certainty in faith, but at the same time it became impossible for theologians to find continuity or reconcile the past and the present.²⁶⁰ Infallibility as defined at Vatican I can be qualified nearly out of existence. Every *ex cathedra* declaration is infallible, but popes can claim that nothing is actually *ex cathedra*.²⁶¹ Vatican I did not confirm an eternal truth about a transcendent godhead, the infallible pope, but rather it ascribed a particularly problematic characteristic to a succession of temporal rulers.²⁶² Infallibility served nobody in the Church, least of all the popes.

Pius IX and the supporters of infallibility believed that the definition would strengthen papal power, compensate for the loss of temporal sovereignty, and check the spread of liberalism. Though the minority believed that the declaration of infallibility would cause the Church to lose its few remaining political allies, most Italians believed that the timing was

²⁵⁶ Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility*, 277.

²⁵⁷ Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility*, 2.

²⁵⁸ Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility*, 6.

²⁵⁹ Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility*, 275.

²⁶⁰ Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility*, 280.

²⁶¹ Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility*, 280.

²⁶² Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility*, 281.

perfect because the Church was threatened and anything that bolstered the papacy was good.²⁶³ The notion of papal infallibility as a weapon that would strengthen the Church in its battle against the modern world totally ignores the intentions of the medieval inventors of papal infallibility, who believed that it limited papal power.²⁶⁴ To Pius IX, papal infallibility was not a matter of theology but a declaration of faith and loyalty to the Church.²⁶⁵ The definition of infallibility worsened relations with many nations, most notably Austria, France and Germany. Politically, the timing could not have been worse.²⁶⁶ The day after the final vote on the definition, Pius IX suspended the council, French troops pulled out of Rome, and the Franco-Prussian War, which had been building for years, broke out. When Rome fell to Italian forces on September 20, 1870, Pius IX withdrew into the Vatican, declared himself the “Prisoner of the Vatican,” and refused to negotiate, eliminating any possibility that the council could be reconvened. The pope dismissed or denied privileges or authorizations to any who had opposed the dogma or left Rome. By 1871 Pius IX had letters of submission from all of the dissenting bishops.²⁶⁷ Many bishops later claimed that they had only supported infallibility for the sake of Church unity or for fear of what the pope would do to those who opposed him.²⁶⁸ American bishops, who had always resisted the Protestant accusation that Catholics treated the pope as a deity, were especially offended by the definition.²⁶⁹ Odo Russell claimed in a letter to the pope that the enlightened political elite of Europe commonly called the definition a “monstrous assault on the reason of mankind.”²⁷⁰

²⁶³ Kertzer, *Prisoner of the Vatican*, 27.

²⁶⁴ Wallace, *The Papacy and European Diplomacy*, 53.

²⁶⁵ Kertzer, *Prisoner of the Vatican*, 30.

²⁶⁶ Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, 240.

²⁶⁷ Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, 199.

²⁶⁸ Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, 14.

²⁶⁹ Kertzer, *Prisoner of the Vatican*, 26.

²⁷⁰ Kertzer, *Prisoner of the Vatican*, 29.

Conclusion:

Pio Nono and *Tradizione*

In the aftermath of the First Vatican Council, Pius IX blundered into conflicts with all the major European powers and proved his political ineptitude. The fall of Rome in 1870 represented the final act of the Italian Risorgimento, but Pius IX maintained his position against the new Italian state. Pius claimed, “The battle which is being waged against the Roman Pontiff is not intended only to deprive the Holy See and the Roman Pontiff of all civil power. It also seeks to weaken and, if possible, to destroy completely all the beneficial effects of the Catholic religion.”²⁷¹ In this instance, he received the support of the Catholic episcopate. Pius IX’s devout faith in the face of Italian opposition made him a martyr and a hero to the Catholic masses. In his relations with other European nations, however, this pope was not so lucky.²⁷² Pius IX confronted Otto von Bismarck, his last great enemy, whose *Kulturkampf* attempted to tear the German Catholics away from Rome. The German government had refused to accept papal infallibility in 1871 because Bismarck believed it put German bishops outside the control of the state, and the “May Laws” of 1873-1875 subjected German bishops and the whole Church in Germany to state control.²⁷³ In the encyclical *Etsi Multa Luctuosa* of November 1873 Pius IX denounced attacks on the Church in Prussia, and in a letter to all the German bishops he declared the May Laws null and void. Pius also resisted the spread of Freemasonry in Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Holland, and Portugal.²⁷⁴ Pius IX’s actions in Germany worsened the strife that had ensnared the Church since Vatican I. He ended his life in solitude, trapped inside the Vatican, resisted in Rome and abroad, equally as loved as he was hated.

²⁷¹ De Mattei, *Blessed Pius IX*, 64.

²⁷² De Mattei, *Blessed Pius IX*, 63.

²⁷³ De Mattei, *Blessed Pius IX*, 84.

²⁷⁴ De Mattei, *Blessed Pius IX*, 86.

The definition of papal infallibility created an extremely mixed reaction abroad and adversely affected the way Pius IX and the First Vatican Council are remembered. Though many see Pius IX as one of the most authoritarian, dictatorial, reactionary popes in history for his promotion of papal infallibility, he is also remembered as one of the most pious and beloved. He reigned for thirty-two years until his death in 1878 at age 85, concluding the longest pontificate in the history of the Church. On July 13, 1881 his body was moved from Saint Peter's grotto to the Basilica of Saint Lawrence outside the Walls. An impressive train of local dignitaries and crowds of the faithful followed his body across Rome, but met with a mob of liberals threatening to throw his corpse in the Tiber, screaming, "*Viva l'Italia! Morte al Papa! Morte ai Preti! Al fiume il Porco! Al Tevere la carogna!*" meaning, "long live Italy, death to the pope, death to the priests, throw the pig in the river, throw the beast in the Tiber."²⁷⁵ This episode reveals the inherent conflict embodied by Pius IX. The controversy surrounding infallibility could not destroy his reputation as a gregarious, friendly, loving, and highly devout pope. Cardinal Henry Edward Manning, one of Pius IX's most constant supporters during Vatican I, wrote after his death, "when the history of the Pontificate of Pius IX shall be written, it will be found to have been one of the most resplendent, majestic, and powerful – one that has reached over the whole Church with greater power than that of any other Pope in the whole succession."²⁷⁶ He is supposed to have said on his deathbed, "I hope my successor will be as much attached to the Church as I have been and will have as keen a desire to do good: beyond that, I can see that everything has changed, my system and my policies have had their day, but I am too old to change my course; that will be the task of my successor."²⁷⁷ He admits the shortcomings of his political stance, but the struggles with liberalism made him a martyr and added to the mystique

²⁷⁵ Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, 242.

²⁷⁶ Vidler, *The Church in an Age of Revolution*, 146.

²⁷⁷ Vidler, *The Church in an Age of Revolution*, 153.

and personal cult he created.²⁷⁸ Infallibility, which Pius IX considered his crowning achievement, was supposed to be a cure for the ills of the Church, but it instead fostered secularism and anticlericalism.²⁷⁹

Pius IX has been lauded as the first modern pope, who expanded the Church and the role of the pope as a universal pastor and teacher, despite losing the Papal States and effectively ending the pope's authority as a sovereign prince.²⁸⁰ Though it was not his intention in defining infallibility in 1870, which he believed would increase the pope's authority in all realms, infallibility has made the modern papacy a more spiritual and less temporal office. In the longest pontificate since Saint Peter himself, Pius IX published a record 38 encyclicals. However, he left many important questions to plague his successors. He ended his life in a virtual war with the modern world, and nobody could say in 1878 how infallibility would affect the papacy or the Church as a whole.²⁸¹ His successor, Leo XIII, was not a liberal but was diplomatic enough to see that compromise with liberal ideas and governments was the only way to restore the prestige and worldwide influence of the Church.²⁸² After Leo XIII's rational policies, it became clear that Pius IX and infallibility had set a precedent for reactionary papal policies. Pius X's intense antimodernist campaign and Pius XII's *humanigenis* purge continued this trend, which ended only with John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council.²⁸³ The process for Pius IX's beatification as a saint began in 1907, he was declared venerable in 1985, and beatified in 2000. His beatification has been long and controversial because of the struggle to reconcile his antimodernist, often harsh and irrational decisions with his legacy as the beloved Pio Nono.

²⁷⁸ Vidler, *The Church in an Age of Revolution*, 153.

²⁷⁹ Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, 243.

²⁸⁰ Corkery, *The Papacy Since 1500*, 142.

²⁸¹ Wallace, *The Papacy and European Diplomacy*, 325.

²⁸² Vidler, *The Church in an Age of Revolution*, 181.

²⁸³ Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible*, 6.

Pius IX was undoubtedly one of the most remarkable men ever to occupy the chair of Saint Peter. He was one of the most devout, beloved popes in history, but also one of the most controversial and detested. He promoted hyper-conservative measures and blanket condemnations of all things liberal. He fundamentally misunderstood the medieval roots of the papacy. In his promotion of the Immaculate Conception of Mary and of papal infallibility, Pius attempted to define formally dogmas that he believed had been widespread in the Middle Ages. In both cases, though the beliefs had existed, they were never as widespread or officially supported as he claimed. He attempted to stretch his authority, confusing the essential differences between papal sovereignty and papal infallibility. Pius revered the height of papal power between 1180 and 1250, but failed to realize that the papacy of that age was a powerful judicial authority, not an infallible creator of faith and dogma. Rather than strengthening the Church, which Pius IX and his supporters believed they were doing, the definition of papal infallibility radically limited the sovereign power of succeeding popes. Pius IX was neither saint nor devil, neither savior nor destroyer of the Church. He was a pope who was undoubtedly unequipped to deal with the issues facing the Church during his pontificate, fundamentally misunderstood the medieval papal power he claimed to embrace and defend, and challenged Scriptural and doctrinal limitations in defining papal infallibility.

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