

ERRORS OF THE LATINS

VOLUME II



# **ERRORS OF THE LATINS**

## **VOLUME II**

Notes on the Differences Between Traditional Roman  
Catholicism and the Eastern Orthodox Church, and an  
Analysis of Their Historical Controversies

George Pachymeres



Uncut Mountain Press

# ERRORS OF THE LATINS, VOLUME II

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*“The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”*

*2 Tim. 2:2.*



Icon of the Holy Royal Martyrs of Russia

To the Holy Royal Family (+1918),  
Everlasting remembrance.

### **Abbreviations**

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| <i>ANF</i>   | <i>The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers<br/>Down to A.D. 325</i> |
| <i>CE</i>    | <i>The Catholic Encyclopedia</i>   |
| <i>Mansi</i> | <i>G. D. Mansi, Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio</i>                            |
| <i>MGH</i>   | <i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i>   |
| <i>NPNF</i>  | <i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church</i>                                    |
| <i>PG</i>    | <i>J. P. Migne, Patrologia Graeca</i>  |
| <i>PL</i>    | <i>J. P. Migne, Patrologia Latina</i>  |



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## BOOK III



## FORGERIES



## Opening

*“To manipulate ancient writings, to edit history in one’s own favour, did not appear criminal if the end in view were otherwise just and good.”*

—William Francis Barry (1849–1930), an English Roman Catholic priest and professor, writing on the Latin Middle Ages<sup>1</sup>

*“The Bishops of Rome have ever been distinguished for scrupulous attention to the genuineness of their documents. From the earliest ages, the fact of a text proceeding ex scriniis Ecclesiam Romanum, was the best witness to its accuracy.”*

—James Francis Loughlin (1851–1911), an American Roman Catholic professor and priest (although this claim will be challenged here)<sup>2</sup>

*“History was always the weak point of the Jesuits, and consequently of the Papists. . . . History is the conscience of mankind, and Rome by falsifying it has sealed her own doom.”*

—Orthodox scholar Julian Joseph Overbeck (1820–1905)<sup>3</sup>

This book will review not only direct forgeries but a wide variety of misrepresentations of Church Fathers and ecclesiastical records and sources by Latins, including incorrect quotations, poor translations, misrepresentations, misattributions, corruptions, interpolations, possible inauthenticities, and similar related errors,

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1 Barry, *The Papal Monarchy*, 133. Barry elsewhere mentions the “manipulation of ancient deeds which the legal conscience of those times indulged in and thought no crime” (92–94). This work was censored by Barry’s superiors.

2 James F. Loughlin, “The Sixth Nicene Canon and the Papacy,” *American Catholic Quarterly Review* 5, no. 1 (1880): 235.

3 Overbeck, *A Plain View*, 64.

whether committed through fraud, negligence, or ignorance (with various degrees of culpability), as well as some issues with the integrity of several Latin ecclesiastics.

It is significant that the periods of the greatest controversies between the Latins and the Orthodox Church correlate to times when false documents entered the field or were used to support Roman Catholic claims. For example, shortly before the pontificate of Pope Nicholas I (858–867), who had a famous controversy with St. Photius, the Pseudo-Isidorian decretals were forged and entering wide circulation, although Nicholas’ reception and use of them, and their impact, is much debated. Pope Leo IX (1049–1054), whose controversy with the Blessed Michael Cerularius led to the 1054 excommunications, was the first pope to officially use the *Donation of Constantine*, and an Italian canonical collection made under Leo IX was mostly composed from the Pseudo-Isidorian decretals. The most important forgery in the Roman Catholic vs. Orthodox controversy is the Greek catena first extensively used by Thomas Aquinas (considered the greatest Roman Catholic theologian) in his *Contra Errores Graecorum* (*Against the Errors of the Greeks*, written in 1263/1264, only a few years after the Latin occupation of Constantinople ended in 1261), which became extremely widespread and the standard “quote mine” for very many Roman Catholic books against the Orthodox for about five hundred years. At the Latin Council of Florence (1431–1449) and afterwards, inauthentic texts were also used in support of the Roman Catholic side.

Although most of these false documents and errors had been exposed between the Renaissance and the eighteenth century, and no longer recognized as authentic by Roman Catholic scholars and officials, these forgeries had a significant impact on the growth of the papal power during the Middle Ages and were considered authentic for many hundreds of years. After they were formally rejected as inauthentic, the old forgeries have still been occasionally negligently used by Roman Catholic authors or carelessly copied from earlier books. Even in present times, forgeries, spurious works, interpolated documents, and writings of questionable authenticity have been cited in defense of the papacy and Roman Catholic doctrines, besides other misquotations and misrepresentations.

The most important forgeries bearing on the Roman Catholic vs. Orthodox controversy are the Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals, the *Donation of Constantine*, the forged Greek catena used in Aquinas’ *Against the Errors of the Greeks*, and the Symmachian Forgeries. There are other important corruptions and errors discussed in this work, and various other issues of minor and miscellaneous importance are also listed here. Many items do not bear on the controversy with the Orthodox, but still seem to show Roman Catholic historical misdealings or issues with the reliability of Latin records.

This book will be categorized into the following parts: Forgeries of Greatest Historic Consequence, Forgeries or Misquotations of Some Consequence, Corruptions Relating to the Immaculate Conception, and Miscellaneous Related Issues.



*Prince Roman of Halych-Volhynia receiving the ambassadors of Pope Innocent III*, by Nikolai Vasilievich Nevrev (1875). Context: “The Pope [Innocent III] sent his envoys to Roman in 1204, urging him to accept Roman Catholicism and promising to place him under the protection of St. Peter’s sword. Roman’s answer, as recorded in the chronicles, was characteristic enough: pointing to his own sword he asked the envoys, ‘Is the Pope’s sword similar to mine? So long as I carry mine, I need no other.’” (George Vernadsky, *Kievan Russia* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972], 230.)

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# CHAPTER I

## FORGERIES OF GREATEST HISTORIC CONSEQUENCE

### Section I

#### Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals

*“The ‘Decretum’ of Gratian quotes three hundred and twenty-four times the epistles of the popes of the first four centuries; and of these three hundred and twenty-four quotations, three hundred and thirteen are from the letters which are now universally known to be spurious.”*  
—George Salmon<sup>4</sup>

*“The Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals were the most extensive, most important, and most impudent fraud ever perpetrated in history.”*  
—Julian Joseph Overbeck<sup>5</sup>

The False Isidorian Decretals refers to a collection of forged papal letters and other apocryphal documents created around the year 850. Saint Isidore, who was the bishop of Seville in Spain from 600 to 636, was alleged to be the compiler of the collection. These forged documents claimed to be from the early ages of the Church but incorporated anachronistic ideas of papal power and other matters.

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4 Salmon, *The Infallibility of the Church*, 453–54.

5 Overbeck, *A Plain View*, 45.



This forgery greatly promoted the papacy and had nearly undisputed authority for about seven hundred years, from the ninth century to the sixteenth century.

The Episcopal bishop Arthur Cleveland Coxe (1818–1896) wrote:

These frauds, which, pretending to be a series of “papal edicts” from Clement and his successors during the ante-Nicene ages, are, in fact, the manufactured product of the ninth century,—the most stupendous imposture of the world’s history, the most successful and the most stubborn in its hold upon enlightened nations.<sup>6</sup>

The *Catholic Encyclopedia* has a learned article on this topic by the French Benedictine priest and professor Louis Saltet (1870–1952):

Nowadays every one agrees that these so-called papal letters are forgeries. . . . His [the forger’s] chief concern was to defend the bishops; and if the papacy profited by what he did, it can be shown that it was a necessary consequence of the pope’s being made the champion of the bishop. And even though **it must be admitted that the popes benefited by the forgeries**, their good faith is beyond question.<sup>7</sup>

However, the ready acceptance by the popes of these forgeries casts doubt upon the statement that their “good faith is beyond question,” and the Anglican priest and historian Henry Hart Milman (1791–1868), discussing the False Decretals in his magnum opus, *History of Latin Christianity*, has remarked:

This immediate, if somewhat cautious, adoption of the fiction, unquestionably not the forgery, by Pope Nicolas, appears to me less capable of charitable palliation than the original invention. It was, in truth, a strong temptation. But in Rome, where such documents had never been heard of, it is difficult to imagine by what arguments a man, not unlearned, could convince himself, or believe that he could convince himself, of their authenticity. Here was a long, continuous, unbroken series of letters, an accumulated mass of decrees of councils, of which the archives of Rome could show no vestige, of which the traditions of Rome were altogether silent: yet is there no holy indignation at fraud, no lofty reproof of those who dared to seat themselves in the pontifical chair and speak in the names of Pope after Pope. There is a deliberate, artful vindication of their authority. Reasons are alleged from which it is impossible to suppose that Nicolas himself believed their validity, on account of their acknowledged absence from the Roman archives. Nor did the successors of Nicolas betray any

6 *ANF* 8:601. See the whole of the introductory notice to the Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* series (*ANF* 8:601–07).

7 Louis Saltet, “False Decretals,” in *CE* 5:773 and 778.

greater scruple in strengthening themselves by this welcome, and therefore only, unsuspecting aid. It is impossible to deny that, at least by citing without reserve or hesitation, the Roman pontiffs gave their deliberate sanction to this great historic fraud.<sup>8</sup>

Saltet's article in the *Catholic Encyclopedia* states:

The Collection of Isidore falls under three headings: (1) A list of sixty apocryphal letters or decrees attributed to the popes from St. Clement (88–97) to Melchiades (311–314) inclusive. Of these sixty letters fifty-eight are forgeries; they begin with a letter from Aurelius of Carthage requesting Pope Damasus (366–384) to send him the letters of his predecessors in the chair of the Apostles; and this is followed by a reply in which Damasus assures Aurelius that the desired letters were being sent. This correspondence was meant to give an air of truth to the false decretals, and was the work of Isidore. (2) A treatise on the Primitive Church and on the Council of Nicæa, written by Isidore, and followed by the authentic canons of fifty-four councils. It should be remarked, however, that among the canons of the second Council of Seville (page 438) canon vii is an interpolation aimed against *chorepiscopi*. (3) The letters mainly of thirty-three popes, from Silvester (314–335) to Gregory II (715–731). Of these about thirty letters are forgeries, while all the others are authentic. . . .

The Isidorian collection was published between 847 and 852. On the one hand it must have been published before 852, because Hincmar quotes the false decretal of Stephen I (p. 183) among the statutes of a council (Migne, P.L., CXXV, 775), and on the other hand it cannot have been published before 847, because it makes use of the false capitularies of Benedict Levitas, which were not concluded until after 21 April, 847. As to the place where the Decretals were forged, critics are all agreed that it was somewhere in France. . . .

Isidore's forgeries were known among the Franks as early as 852. In Germany we hear of them a little later. We find traces of them in the Acts of the councils of Germany dating from that of Worms in 868, but in Spain we find no reference to them, and they seem to have been hardly known there. They found their way into England towards the close of the eleventh century, probably through Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury. Their reception in Italy is of greater importance. It occurred probably during the pontificate of Nicholas I (858–867). It seems certain that he

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8 Henry Hart Milman, *History of Latin Christianity*, 3rd ed., vol. 3 (London: John Murray, 1872), 198–99.

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**AMEN.**