

WHY I AM  
AND  
WHY I AM NOT  
A CATHOLIC

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a great deal of justification, more especially as I am quite sure the Master Himself would not. On the contrary, I could conceive him as the beloved disciple. Surely there must be something seriously wrong when persons Jesus would have welcomed to His heart are excluded from His Church—and that for external reasons He never used, and which would have made a very different division between His disciples and His enemies, if He had.

This may help to make plain what I am calling in question. I have seen priests faithfully discharging their duty among their people and I have seen people devoutly worshipping in Roman Catholic services in more countries than one; I have heard sermons in Roman Catholic Churches on the essentials of the Christian life to which I could most heartily say Amen, in more languages than one; and I have known Roman Catholics I highly esteemed, though some of them were regarded as not quite of the approved pattern. That all this belongs to the true Church, I rejoice to believe. Moreover, even the outward form of the Western Church had historical reasons, and, in some respect at least, historical justification. Even an infallible pope, who could alter things, though I am unable to believe in him, was better than the Eastern ossification in the past of the seven inspired synods. What I am dealing with exclusively is the claim of the sacerdotal hierarchy. What I do not believe is that the Church, founded on

## VII

## THE ROMAN SACERDOTAL HIERARCHY

PRINCIPAL J. W. OMAN, D.D.

ONE of my old professors, who, though he was specially learned in all that concerned the Roman controversy, had remained a convinced Protestant, said, after long and intimate conversation with an old French Catholic peasant woman, "I rejoiced to know that, in all essentials, our religion was the same." This is the communion of saints, which I take to be the Church that is the pillar and ground of the truth, being founded on the apostles and prophets, by the only adequate way which is, by having their spirit and their faith in the Father of all men, with Jesus Christ as the chief corner stone of this faith. To call in question, not only the essential faith, but the true saintliness of that old peasant woman, because she was a devoted Roman Catholic, would surely be a deplorable lack of charity. But, if I ever met a good man in this world, it was my old teacher. As, in all matters of charity, it is exclusion which needs to justify itself, because inclusion is itself of the nature of charity, a church which excluded him from the household of faith, would need

the Carpenter of Nazareth, can be rightly constituted by its clergy; that He ever contemplated its rule by a hierarchy; and that He handed on to its priesthood special sacerdotal powers.

For disbelieving anything there may be three good reasons. The first is that it is incredible; the second that it is not proved; and the third that it is inconsistent with beliefs conceived to be higher and more certain. On all three grounds I disbelieve in the Roman claims, but I will deal with the last first, because, though least often dwelt upon, it is what is most decisive and, what is more, it has a right to be. Nothing proves so much the reality of any faith as the making of contrary beliefs incredible. There is a kind of facile catholicity of accepting all sorts of views, which is due merely to no one of them being sufficiently in the light to show that the others are in darkness. Moreover, by their positive direction our lives should be determined. When we steadfastly pursue what we take to be the higher road, the others simply reject themselves. In this way I am not a Roman Catholic, primarily for the reason that all my conclusions regarding life and history are not only inconsistent with that belief, but seem to me higher, as well as more certain.

There are three essential points, to which attention may be confined. The first concerns authority; the second history; the third the idea of progress.

The question of authority is constantly confused by

the failure to distinguish between personal authority as a secondary ground of belief upon which a great many of everyone's ordinary working convictions rest, which has a right and important place, and authority as the ultimate ground on which anything should be believed, in respect of which, however exalted and however ancient, it has no place at all.

On one occasion, happening to be in Cologne Cathedral, I heard a monk preaching somewhat to this effect. "In spite of the evidence of your senses, which seems to show that the sun goes round the earth, you believe, on the authority of the astronomers, that the earth goes round the sun. Yet the astronomers are merely fallible men. How much more then should you receive the witness of the infallible Church, even though, as with transubstantiation, it may seem to have against it the witness of your own senses."

Did the question end with an acceptance which is merely not denying what we are told, the personal authority of the Pope might be as good as the personal authority of the astronomer; and, were not his infallibility simply another personal affirmation however many persons may be involved, a great deal better. The Church sounds more impersonal, but the authority of the Church is also merely the authority of a great number of persons, which type of authority has often been mistaken. But we do not believe the astronomer because of his authority. We believe because we know that he

has reasons, based on the study of the actual nature of things, which he is ready to produce, and by which we believe we ourselves would be convinced, were it for us a matter of life and death to know them. Moreover, when any point is called in question, the Astronomer Royal has an obligation to justify his belief by the evidence, even were the person who adduces good reasons against it a last year's graduate in the subject. The only primary authority is the authority of the witness of the reality, and the sole personal authority is the extent to which, in knowledge and discernment, it has been submitted to. Official position, in particular, is a wholly irrelevant consideration; and the universal acceptance of the re-prolemaic astronomy by the whole body of the learned did not make it right.

Judged in this way, the papacy has not usually been even a very good secondary authority. But the question at issue is its value as a primary authority, as something to be accepted, not because we know it rests on good grounds, ready to be produced, the sufficiency of which anyone prepared to take the necessary pains to test it both in thought and action can judge, but as itself the final ground for believing.

The usual argument is that the right of inquiry would make religion a matter for the learned, and that God must have provided something to be accepted humbly, for the ignorant man and the toiler. But, if there should be anyone who is equipped for the inquiry

and considers it a matter of life and death to know, his case should be met; and the unlearned and the toiler would also be in a better position if they knew that he had been satisfied as they are about the movements of the heavenly bodies. At all events, everyone has surely a right to ask whether the papacy is this kind of authority or not: and the difficulty about this question is just that it cannot be answered on religious grounds, where even the humblest might be at home, but depends on purely intellectual and historical grounds of the utmost dubiety even for the learned.

On the other hand, when we look at the teaching of the Prophets and Jesus, we find that it rests on grounds which are wholly religious, appealing to man as man, to be tested as it is found to be true for our daily secular life, wherein the learned and leisured have no advantage over the unlearned and toil-worn. Jesus spoke with authority but not as an authority. On the contrary, He is the supreme authority in religion, because He always spoke direct to the image of God in man's soul, saying, This you will see, unless you cloak it with hypocrisy. Moreover, His constant method was, not to announce truth for reception at all, but to draw it out of men's own thoughts, asking quite ordinary, and sometimes not even highly moral people, what they themselves thought on the matter. Newman's statement, that He uttered germs of ideas doctors and lawyers were meant to develop, no really objective study

of the Gospels could ever confirm. What Jesus uttered was for humble people to see for themselves, and was as far as possible from learned theology and codified law. Nothing, He thought, ever hindered His appeal, except hypocrisy, and even it, not because it was sinful, but because, calling good evil and evil good, it had no way of being convinced by the appeal of truth itself. And St. Paul says the same thing when he affirms that, if his gospel is hid, it is only to those whose eyes have been blinded by the god of this world.

Only the poor in spirit can see the truth, and the word is to be received in meekness. But this is wholly misrepresented when it is taken to mean that people are not to look at the truth and judge it for themselves, but are to receive it implicitly from the Church authorities. On the contrary, it means that, when we know that this is God's truth to our own soul, we are no more to listen to other voices without us than to the fears and worldly ambitions within. Like the prophet, we are not to say, I am but a child, but to say what God gives us to speak, even if it be against all human wisdom, and do what He calls us to do, even against all authorities, ecclesiastical as well as political. If the pure in heart sees God, it must be God alone and no delegated authority.

This is no more self-assertion in religion than in science. It is the true humility of a scientist to submit his mind utterly to the direct evidence of what he

studies, which, in its sphere, is God's witness, and to be so possessed by it that the opinion even of the greatest has no right to silence it. And, as religion is everyone's first duty, in it, above all else, his business is to seek to see truth for himself: and as our whole experience is the greatest experiment, the toiler is in as good a position as any other to do so. Nor is truth really believed except in so far as it is seen to be true; and the task of seeing the Father in Jesus Christ, who Himself was a hand-worker, no one may delegate to another. Doubtless a great many important matters are outside any one person's province. Yet, in so far as they come within his view, he can have a sound judgment upon them; and in so far as they are beyond him, they are outside of the essentials both of faith and practice. This, it is true, requires a religious mind, ready to accept the religious task: but a very marked feature of the Gospels is the way Jesus seeks to stir up such a mind, and His complete indifference to any merely traditional or formal or routine faith or anything less than seeing God and accepting His will.

The duty of deciding what is that will for ourselves, and as between God and our conscience, is an essential of all true goodness, as well as an essential element in the Gospels.

Nothing done because other people think it right is ever rightly done. And it is still less good, when enforced by gains and losses, rewards and penalties,

even if they be announced as from God Himself. To see for ourselves that it is right, and do it solely because we see it to be obligatory upon us is not something additional to morality, but the heart of it. If we are truly conscientious, we can hardly be wholly mistaken; and, in any case, God, who looks on the heart, sees what is better than correct action. The decision may be mistaken, but there is only one right way of seeing and doing better, which is to be more sensitively and sincerely conscientious.

With this the New Testament is entirely in accord. Jesus says that those whom He makes free are free indeed; and He came to fulfil the law, but it was by love, and not by precept. Nor could anything be farther from His method than casuistry. That was for Him the tradition which made void God's word to one's own soul. Casuistry can only deal with cases, which can be formulated and have degrees of guilt attached to them, as in the law courts; and its measure of heinous sins can hardly be other than their grossness, as in jurisprudence. What is at once unique and wholly convincing in the dealing of Jesus with sinful men is His reversal of the whole legal judgment and His power of going behind conscious intention and obvious motive. Intention and motive are taken into consideration, but so are they in the law courts. Hypocrisy is the one sin that has never forgiveness, not because God is not ready to pardon even the most heinous, but

because it shuts out God's appeal and cannot know itself so as to repent. The publicans and harlots go into His kingdom before the visibly well-doing and religious, just because they have responsive hearts and penitent minds, and even because the grossness of their sins cannot be ignored like pride and self-satisfaction. Religious and moral privilege, by which our own moral judgments, as well as most judgments of the confessional, are made, had no place in His estimate, which went behind them to the attitude of the heart, with which no casuistry can deal.

St. Paul shows in this, as in many other matters, how well he had learned of Christ. About few things is he so much concerned as the liberty of the children of God. We are to stand fast in the liberty with which Christ has set us free, and not to be entangled again in the yoke of bondage, by which he meant ecclesiastical injunction. Nor does he set any limit, for he says that he who is spiritual judges all things and he himself is judged of no man.

Against gross sins the confessional and hierarchical authority may be some security, though history does not make even this very certain. But in what are sins only to a sensitive conscience, it is very far from being helpful. In the most essential of all matters, which is truth, there is not a little evidence to show that it is the reverse. In any case, Christ came to bring grace and truth, and this meant the abolition of law in this

juridical sense; and all true moral theory and all higher moral insight approve.

Thus, in the end, my disbelief in the Roman claim to control faith and direct conscience arises from my faith in the direct witness of truth and goodness, and the conviction that what is held on any lower witness is not genuine truth or goodness, and that whatsoever is not of such faith comes short of them even if it be formally correct dogma and conduct.

That anyone who has ever seen this should afterwards be able to think that true faith is not what is seen by one's own insight, but what is implicitly accepted on the authority of the Church, and that true morality is not loyalty to the legislation of one's own conscience, but putting oneself in the hands of a director of souls, is difficult to conceive. That the High Anglican is not able to do so, but still thinks that, however much help and guidance is to be sought from the traditional creed, truth is still better held when seen to be true, and that however much guidance may be given by the confessional, forgiveness is a transaction between the soul and God, so that it does not suffice to say the Church pardons, remains a radical difference between his position and the Roman. The Roman position, for one who has never questioned it, has no doubt a very comfortable finality, but the kind of reasoning indulged in by so many converts to Romanism, which makes the same impression as Newman made on Lord Acton,

himself a Roman Catholic, that "he was never a servant, but always a manipulator of the truth," shows at least how closely the old garments cling to them. Nor do they ever seem to be quite satisfied with the idea that we are forgiven, if the Church forgives, if the necessity of peace between God and our own conscience has ever been seen. The character based upon the two ideas is different, and once having learned to value an independent morality, it is not easy to esteem a dependent. A lady, who had been a member of my own communion, but had been converted to Rome, said to me, "No doubt the faith is the great thing, but I have yet to meet the Roman Catholic of the same strong character as the best type of Protestant!" That may only have been because she was unable to rid herself of the Protestant standard, but once having seen that it is also the general ethical standard, to get rid of it cannot be easy.

The next question concerns history.

This is usually settled by an *a priori* argument from God's omniscience. If He gives a revelation of His mind and will, it must be infallible and absolute to be worthy of Him; and it would be vain to put this into the world without an infallible authority to secure that it is rightly preserved, interpreted and applied.

But, if it be incumbent upon God to speak only infallibly in one thing, it ought to be in all, and there should be no error. And equally He ought always to act upon His omnipotence, and there should be no short-

coming or sin. Surely it is not for us short-sighted mortals to say what God must do, but to try, as best we can, to learn by inquiry from what He does. When history is studied as God's dealing with man and man's with God, instead of any such infallibly imposed imperial writs, we merely find the fulfilment of the promise that man finds God, if he seeks him with all his heart. As it is a knowledge which is only truly of the heart, this is long and troubled and often blundering search; and history goes on its groping and erring way, just because this search is not ended, and because it needs the right attitude of the soul, and not merely correct information.

What is convincing about revelation is precisely that it never was directed by any external authority, never even became a formulated creed, yet always faces in one direction and sees ever more fully all the depth of faith and the claim upon the heart, as well as the action, of doing justly and loving mercy and walking humbly with our God. Each prophetic soul was guided only by his own experience: and that it was an experience of reality has its evidence precisely in the fact that the harmony of conviction was not imposed by any authority except the authority of direct dealing with God in face of man's sins and sorrows.

The incarnation was an incarnation of this attitude in perfection and of the fulness of love which is the complete fulfilling of the law. The essential revela-

tion is of the Father who is kind to the unthankful and evil, and who waits to overwhelm his erring son with every token of pardon and the restoration to his home, which should convince and convert the erring soul itself. Jesus is our true humanity, one like a son of man, and His symbol is a lamb slain, the symbol of victory by patience, sacrifice and service in contrast with the world power of subjection by might and dominion. This was changed to the imperial idea of the divinity of power, and became an incarnation of the very thing that had been set aside. Hence arose all the troubles about two omnipotences, and hence also the idea of an imperial vicar of Christ.

St. Paul is no doubt more of a theologian, yet what he says in essence is just the same. The word justification neither means being declared just nor being made just, but being put right with God: and what he says is that, if we have faith in God as He truly is, it works by His love, and we are right with Him, and then we can be right with our own souls and with all else, so that our whole world is a new creation. This is not merely expanded, but is transformed into a quite different transaction from a father's pardon, which, in spite of offences, restores to fellowship, when it is explained, as in the Tridentine Decrees, by five causes—final, efficient, meritorious, instrumental, formal. Protestant theology, it may be, has only imperfectly recovered the original simplicity, but at all events it



has room for those who have, as it does not enforce its views with anathemas, which is no more a Christian than it is a rational way of persuasion.

These anathemas rest on the doctrine of the Church. This, it has been said, is in the end the one doctrine of Trent: and at all events it is the most essential. But there is no other doctrine also which is so sharply in conflict with the Gospels, as we can only fail to see if we read them with the preconceptions of the Tridentine Decrees, which declare all to be anathema who deny that Jesus himself appointed the seven sacraments, and with them the hierarchical and sacerdotal church, as what Bellarmin calls a state, as much as the Republic of Venice or the Kingdom of France. What we actually find is a warning against any attempt to exercise such temporal power. Jesus taught His followers that they were not to exercise lordship like the Gentiles, but to make the last the first, and to look for no honour except to be the servant of all. Nor were they to call any master, for Jesus Himself was their Teacher, and, only as He taught them, was He their Lord.

Loisy acknowledges that this was the original form, but defends the departure from it on the ground that such a merely enthusiastic society would soon have disappeared; and a political order, with superiors, and inferiors and rules and regulations, was necessary for its continuance. Possibly, if there could have been such

a society, with faith enough to live in the order of Christ's Kingdom, there never was a time when it might not have been the most powerful of all influences on the earth. But, at all events, there was not found such a society: and nothing is so vital for understanding God's ways as to know that He always waits for the fulness of the times. The leaven was put, therefore, into the mixed society, which arose, as it would arise to-day in China were there only one generation of missionaries, a society mixed not only in character, but, in various degrees of Pagan and Christian ideas. Yet it is the leaven which has always constituted the true Church.

In respect of ourward form, so far as we can see, there seems to have been in the Church at the beginning nothing uniform. Yet in general the Church was the *ecclesia*, the gathering of the brethren, with leaders called because it was believed God had called them already by gifts and graces, who were named indifferently, after the usage of the synagogue, elders, and, after the usage of Greek gatherings, bishops or overseers. A century afterwards we find the bishop distinguished from the elder. Yet he was in no sense a metropolitan, but much more like the minister of a congregation. The headship of the pope and the whole metropolitan system grew out of the Roman secular administration and followed its divisions; and when the empire fell, the Church largely stepped into its place,

claiming its provincial tax as the tithe consecrated by Abraham, and exercising civil rule, largely, it is true, because there was no one else to do it, and very much to the benefit of law and order.

But what may thus have for a time historical necessity does not, for that reason, rest on eternal right. On the contrary, by entering into the political order, a church endangers its eternal principles, and is exposed to the vicissitudes of temporal change, so that some day the passing of its power may be a milestone on the road to progress. In spite of recent happiness, this temporal power has passed, and that to the spiritual gain of the Roman Church, as well as to the liberties of the European peoples. Yet its imperial spirit has not wholly been renounced, nor the way of subjecting to its dominion by the exercise of power wholly abandoned. At present its defenders are very busy giving the *tu quoque* to Protestantism. But, in the first place, the Protestant persecutions arose from political fears, not from the idea of this being a mode of religious persuasion; and, in the second, a bad heritage is not lived down in a day. Considering the violence and love of finality of human nature, it has been lived down very quickly, and so effectively that it is doubtful, whether, with any power, even Rome would now have courage to exercise the compulsion she has never in theory abandoned, though theory, like a snake, is never quite safe till it is quite dead.

That Jesus ever conceived of His Church as being one by political method or by any employment of physical force and visible authority is inconceivable, in view of His complete indifference to such unity and His complete renunciation of such means. He looked forward to His followers being perfected into one, but this looks like the goal, not the beginning, and to be of the spirit and not organisation. St. Paul acknowledges differences of mind, but urges that it should not create alienation of heart. Also, so far as we can learn, Jesus most carefully refrained from any laws or forms or instructions regarding outward order, and confined himself rigidly to the order of life and service which springs from being one with God, and so one with His children. Moreover, instead of appointing His apostles as superiors over His society, He warned them not to presume on their early call and longer labours, by the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, where those who come at the eleventh hour are paid the same as those who laboured from the first. The essential unity, therefore, is not by ecclesiastical supremacy, but by surmounting or even ignoring difference, and regarding all faithful followers of Christ as our brethren.

But if unity depends on this spirit, and not on outward forms, we must begin with it, and not wait till we have converted the pope or the pope converted us; and the Church Universal is not one organisation, but one fellowship. Hence, instead of supporting the

claim of one particular section to be the one true Church, the real lesson is that, as we have learned to have understanding and peace in spite of great difference of opinion, we must also learn to be one, in the sense that Christ and the Father are one, in spite of what is much more irrelevant to it, difference of organization.

Possibly the very reason of our divisions may be to prevent us from being content to rest in mere political unity. They may have the same purpose as the divided state of ancient Israel, which made men look beyond the visible nation to a more spiritual Israel, which was to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the true glory of God's own people.

As I look at history in this way, it is needless to explain farther that the claim even of the largest and most effectively organised church to be the only true church makes little appeal to me.

The third point concerns Progress.

People are spoken of as seeking the shelter of the Roman Church: and there is good reason in most cases for the description. But the question is whether mankind was ever meant to live in shelter, and whether our real safety is not upon the high seas, with no security but to carry on our course and have plenty of sea-room. On the view that God is primarily concerned with keeping us from unrest and error and with merely imposing on us correct belief and submission

to order, it is impossible to see any divine hand in man's chequered and troubled career. Unless experience has as its end to teach men by their own errors and failures the wisdom of His way and the folly of their own, God would surely have imposed His truth and His rule from the first; and, as He is omnipotent, by some more effective means than even the most inflexible hierarchy.

The purpose of God in a most distressing time was conceived by Jeremiah to be that man should so learn thereby that no one should need to say to his brother, Know the Lord, for all should, of their own insight, know him; nor anyone need to direct the conscience of another, for God would write his law himself on every heart. This Jeremiah thought so glorious a purpose that no possible material conflict or even distress of mind could be too high a price to pay for it. This was the Rule of God, which would bring true peace, by men seeing eye to eye in truth and standing shoulder to shoulder in righteousness. And this was also the Kingdom of which our Lord proclaimed Himself the Messiah; and He too taught that it alone could give a peace established in true righteousness. God's Kingdom comes when we hallow the name of God as our common Father, and seek to do His will on earth as in heaven, which surely must mean in freedom, as it is seen and accepted as our own.

If this be the goal, however distant, we can see why,

if man is good only as he himself chooses good, he may have to learn life's painful lesson by facing the consequences of his failure, as they work in the order of time. Nor, except it be advance on freedom, is there any standard of progress? Doubtless civilisation has meant a larger possibility of evil as well as good: but this is the case with all increase of power and opportunity. If God's end is merely to prevent error and evil, we cannot ascribe to Him any great success. No history can be interpreted by a power which wishes to keep man safely in the nursery. But if progress is to be judged positively by what is won, and not negatively by what is avoided, it is to be seen, first in the growth of knowledge, as the individual learned to stand on his own feet and judge for himself, and then in the growth of order, as compulsion became less and the freedom of the citizen became greater.

Freedom is a high and difficult task and men weary in it and put themselves again under what St. Paul calls the law; and, when they enjoy long material prosperity, they sometimes sacrifice political as well as spiritual freedom to the safeguarding of their ease. But no nation is ever long suffered to retain its peace with anything less than *girt loins*, both for independent thinking and for independent acting. This is the prophetic interpretation of calamity, and time has only added to the evidence that God will not suffer a nation

to be satisfied with less than seeing and doing his law in the love of it.

This Kingdom of the Father, which is the freedom of His children, may still be far away. But it is nearer, even in human order, than when the prophets preached it. And anything ahead, however distant, is nearer than anything behind, however slowly it is being left. If one can read the signs of the times at all, the Roman idea of submission is behind, and, as a general purpose of humanity, is never likely again to be the goal. Even its present attraction for many is merely because of weariness and discouragement, which never is of true faith in the Highest.

The other two reasons given for rejecting a belief, first that it is not proved and, second, that it is not credible, can be dealt with shortly, partly because what has been said already shows how they would be answered, and partly because one example of each will suffice.

As the example of what is not proved I take the assertion that Jesus founded the Church, as a hierarchical, sacerdotal state, with the apostles as rulers in His stead, and Peter as the chief, who became bishop of Rome, and handed down his supremacy to all future bishops of that see.

With our present knowledge, this might be confidently said to be disproved. We have seen how our

Lord's last injunctions to His disciples were in the quite opposite direction. The apostles claimed no lordship over men's faith, but wrote, with warning and instruction, as themselves disciples of Jesus to His disciples, and as themselves members of His fellowship to their fellow-members. Among the many fine qualities of St. Peter, infallibility never seems to have been one: and he was most deplorably wrong at Antioch. Further, it is not difficult to trace, at a later date, the rise of the political idea, and its effect in changing the early Christian fundamental conception of the family to the Greek and Roman conception of the state, and of pardon, as the Restoration of His children by the Father, to state condonation of offence. In the New Testament, the very idea of a saint is one open to the leading of the Spirit, with its effect to be judged by the spirit of love. Moreover, holiness is entirely ethical, and there is not a single ritual precept, while the vital change to the Catholic Church is in the reintroduction of the idea of the holy from Paganism as a sort of awesome potency, of the same type as obtained in the early Jewish ritual, and which the Prophets spent their energy in combating. Nor is it by any teaching of the Apostles that the claim of the Roman priesthood to be their sacerdotal successors is justified, for they never claimed any sacerdotal potency.

But it suffices here to say that the Roman claim is entirely unproved. History is not what may have hap-

pened, but what can be proved, by known evidence, to have happened. Moreover, assertion in which Rome has an easy supremacy is rather the opposite of evidence. If her claim is so essential, we can only say that there has been a most regrettable neglect on the part of Providence to provide the evidence for it. In particular, this is the case with the primacy of Peter at Rome. There is not even an account of it like Livy's story of Romulus and Remus, though even it no serious historian regards as evidence. The Roman argument is little more than the possibility that it may have happened, which is no historical foundation at all. A tradition, known to be late and a reason for the rise of which can be given, adds nothing as evidence.

As an example of what is incredible, I take transubstantiation.

Even as late as Tertullian it was assumed that Jesus was speaking figuratively when he said, "This is my body." No one ever spoke more frequently in this way; and the observances, as recorded in the Gospels, are in the usual double form of his parables, the second member saying the same thing as the first, with deepened meaning. The natural explanation of the rite is that it was the sign and seal of his disciples' fellowship with Him in His suffering, their participation in the benefits of His sacrifice, and their consecration with Him to the Kingdom of God, in the renunciation of fear of them that kill the body. The idea that the

bread was actually changed into the body depended not on the New Testament, but on the Platonic idea of substance and accidents; and the possibility of conceiving it vanishes with the theory.

That the power of working this miracle depends on an act of ordination is still less Christian. Originally laying on of hands was only a specially solemn invocation of the help of the Spirit for any specially difficult undertaking, as with Barnabas and Paul, when they went on their first mission, though they had long been leaders in the Church, and had doubtless exercised all its ministries. Nor is there the slightest probability that any apostle took part in the ceremony. The belief that ordination creates a special priesthood has nothing to do with the prophetic and Christian conception of the holy, but this holy priesthood of descent by ordination is of the type of Paganism, and early ritual Judaism. Nay it is just primitive *mana*. Moreover, if we can judge by the disorder in St. Paul's time, there could have been no special administrator at all: and, in any case, he puts all the stress on the right spirit, and none at all on the right method of administration, and still less on the right person to do it.

All this may be summed up by saying that the Roman claim to inherit promises which were first attached to the ideal Kingdom of God, as the rule of God in the freedom of His children, in their own vision of truth and their own consecration of love, makes the

Visible Church an end, whereas it is to be judged merely as a means for fulfilling the final end. Size, under the myriad stars, is in God's universe less than nothing and vanity. Only what is wholly different from visible greatness, by possessing absolute quality, has in it the promise of infinity and eternity. As far as history shows, this has usually been highest in one inspired soul, and has wrought most effectively and even widely through the truly consecrated gathering of the two or three. Most of our Protestant divisions are distressing, and many of them seem to be useless: and the true spirit of God's Kingdom would heal most of them. But they are not profitably to be suppressed, even by ecclesiastical authority, because, as the deepest changes in our material world may be preparing their beginning in some development of an atom, some higher realisation of the Kingdom of God may be preparing itself in the spirit and vision of the smallest society. Naturally, the task of freedom is much more difficult, and even more divisive than the way of submission. But, if it is God's end, we must, like Him, not faint or grow weary. In view of its magnitude, we have only been occupied in it seriously for a very few hundred years: and we must remember that with God, a thousand years are but as one day. Nor has it ever been with the faith and courage and devotion which it, of all tasks, most requires. But, if God's final order is not one imposed on His subjects, but one the essence

of which is the freedom of His children, we also may not be content with less than this victory on the earth of truth seen and right chosen, and our call is not to seek shelter in anything less, but to hazard all in the assurance that was the end of God's working, and should be of ours, that, in spite of all that seems to be against it, it alone is sure to triumph. The trouble is that we seldom wish to trust God, unless we have failed to find some more visible substitute: and so are far more apt to be impressed by an external authority which claims to be Divine than to be ready to commit our hope to the direct authority of God which works only by His love, both in its endless claim and its infinite succour.

## VIII

## WHY I AM NOT A ROMAN CATHOLIC

PROFESSOR A. E. TAYLOR, D.LITT.

WHEN I am asked, "Why are you not a Roman Catholic," my first impulse is to meet the questioner with a counter-question, "Why should I be a Roman Catholic?" I happen, in fact, to be something else, namely, an Anglican; it is natural I should be that, for that is what I have been made by all those influences of education, tradition, and personal history which, in the main, settle what a man's intellectual and moral allegiance shall be, and nothing has ever happened to me to make me at all uneasy about my allegiance. I am Anglican, that is, for much the same reasons that a Roman Catholic, born into a Roman Catholic community and educated in its traditions, is a Roman Catholic, or, for the matter of that a Jew, born and reared in the traditions of the Synagogue, a Jew. It is generally the case, I suppose, with all of us that what our birth and education predisposes us to be, that we are, unless some critical experience of the failure of our traditions forces the necessity of a change upon us.