

**REASONS FOR
ACKNOWLEDGING THE
AUTHORITY OF
THE HOLY ROMAN SEE**

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Reasons for acknowledging the authority of the Holy Roman see by Henry Major

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HENRY MAJOR

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LOAN STACK

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INSCRIBED,
MOST RESPECTFULLY,
TO THE
RIGHT REV. FRANCIS PATRICK KENRICK, D. D.,
BISHOP OF PHILADELPHIA,
IN WHOM THE AUTHOR HAD THE CONSOLATION TO FIND
MORE THAN A FATHER
IN THE MOST MOMENTOUS PERIOD
OF HIS LIFE.

PREFACE.

It is already known to most of those into whose hands this volume may fall, that the author has recently been received into the Catholic Church.

When one who has occupied the responsible and somewhat prominent position of a religious teacher, withdraws from the society with which he was so long connected, and joins a communion so entirely different, a proper respect for those whom he has left as well as for himself, seems to demand a public statement of the *reasons* by which he has been influenced. In accordance with this principle, the following work has been prepared.

The author was desirous to exhibit the proof by which, as he feels assured, each of the peculiar dogmas of the Catholic Church can be sustained. But finding that this could not be done within the compass of a volume of ordinary size, he determined to confine his remarks to one prominent point, which more or less involves all the rest, that is, *the authority of the Holy Roman See as the divinely ordained instrument of unity and government in the church militant.*

The point selected has been argued according to the acknowledged rule of Anglican divines, of appealing to the concurrent testimony of "Holy Scripture and Ancient Authors." It is true, that in the first part of the work an argument has been drawn from probability, necessity, and other grounds of a general nature, after the manner of those who undertake to prove that a Divine Revelation has been granted to mankind. But, nevertheless, it is upon the combined testimony of Scripture and the Fathers that he chiefly relies. The course of reasoning employed in the first Chapter is merely preparatory and subsidiary. And while it is believed that it alone would be sufficient, if the Scriptures and the Fathers were silent upon the point, yet, inasmuch as these have spoken in the affirmative in the clearest and most peremptory manner, of course the former must occupy an inferior and subordinate place.

Besides the classes of proofs just mentioned, which are resorted to in the following work, there are many presumptive evidences,

and various outward notes or signs, which plainly indicate that the body of Christians recognizing the universal authority of the Holy See is the Apostolical and Catholic Church. Upon these, however, the author has not dwelt; chiefly because he wished to preserve to the work as far as could be conveniently done, the character of unity.

It is the peculiar attribute of truth, in almost every department of knowledge, that it is corroborated by proof drawn from various sources. In this attribute the Catholic religion participates in an uncommon measure. The variety, number, and weight of the proofs which unite in its support, impart to the mind of him who duly considers them, a degree of conviction equal to that which mathematical demonstration affords.

It cannot detract from the force of the evidence that it has remained unknown in its practical influence for so many years. This can be easily made apparent; for, first, although the evidences in favor of the truth of Christianity are unquestionably most complete and overwhelming, yet very intelligent persons have, in some instances, failed to realize their force until the latter stage of a long life. And, secondly, while Protestant Churchmen will agree that the evidence in favor of Episcopacy is of the strongest nature, yet many intelligent persons, and persons versed in theology and ecclesiastical history, have lived and died without recognizing its truth. And lastly, although all will agree that either on the Protestant or Catholic side the evidence is most abundant, yet on both sides are found persons of education, wisdom, and age; and persons, too, whose lives have been spent in pursuits of an ecclesiastical nature.

That an individual, then, has not at an earlier period recognized the force of the evidence in favor of the Catholic Church, cannot be fairly urged as an objection, either against that evidence or against his change of religion grounded thereon. The apparent difficulty is easily explained by the prejudices of education, or by a want of thorough and impartial examination and inquiry.

It should be remembered, however, that the author in his transition to the Catholic Church has not renounced any article of faith which he formerly held. The Apostles' and Nicene creeds he of course still holds, and holds, he trusts, with a more scriptural, rational, and solid faith than before. And it is unnecessary to say that he likewise still holds those doctrines which separate Protestant Episcopalians from other Protestant Communions, viz: the doctrines of the divine institution of Episcopacy and of Apostolical Succession. He does indeed hold *more* than he held before; but he

has not discarded any *positive* doctrine to which he formerly assented. His change is one of progression and addition—not a change from one doctrine to its contrary. He formerly held a *part* of the “faith once delivered to the Saints”—he now holds the *whole*. The objection commonly urged by Protestant Churchmen against any addition to the *Credo*s as *professed among themselves*, will be examined in the course of the work.

It was, indeed, painful to sever himself from the fellowship of those whom, as individuals, he respected and loved, and among whom every earthly motive conspired to incline him to spend the remainder of his days. Their kind and respectful attentions to him, down to the moment of his secession, will always be held in grateful remembrance; and although he can no longer join with them in laboring to sustain and extend the communion with which they are identified, yet he is ready and desirous to labor in every proper way to promote their true happiness and ultimate salvation. He conceives that he cannot better exhibit his undiminished affection, than by placing before them those reasons which should induce them to seek the bosom of their true Mother—the Catholic Church. The following work is therefore respectfully commended to their serious and impartial perusal, with the fervent prayer that they may be enabled both to know and to do the “will of God.” Surely there are many urgent reasons which should induce Protestant Episcopalians to give the subject a thorough examination, whether they contemplate their own communion or the Catholic Church. More especially are they now called to do this, by the numerous secessions from their ranks to the Catholic Church, which have recently occurred in England and this country, including a large body of clergymen, all of good standing, and some distinguished for their piety, talent, learning, and position.* All these, after years of inquiry, prayer, and reflection, have been forced by their conscientious convictions, to forsake the homes and companions of their youth, and to throw themselves among strangers to begin their life anew. Of course, it is not here intimated that the mere fact that so many have thus acted, should induce others to do likewise. Far from it. Were the number a hundred-fold greater, no such argument would be val’d. It is only meant, that their transition to the Catholic Church should lead their former companions to institute a serious, candid, and searching examination of the points of difference. Surely no

* Bishop McIlvane states, that the number of these seceding clergymen in England alone is “nearly one hundred.” “Reasons for refusing to consecrate a church having an altar.” p. 6.

one who has a due regard for truth, and for the salvation of his soul, will deny this.

It is proper to remark, with regard to the authorities made use of in the following work, that in every instance they are such as Protestants acknowledge. Among the ancients, the testimonies of the Fathers are given, to whose writings Protestant Churchmen are accustomed to appeal, at least when advocating Episcopacy, Infant Baptism, &c. And among the moderns, Protestant authorities only have been used, and almost exclusively Episcopalians.

The utmost pains have been taken to have the citations from the fathers correct; for this purpose the original has been carefully examined and impartially translated. It is confidently believed that no error will be found among them, which can in the least degree affect the point at issue. Indeed, scarcely an author has been cited, whether ancient or modern, without an examination of the original work, unless otherwise specified.

The author has thought best, considering the character of the work, to make use of the *Protestant* version of the Holy Scriptures. This has been done the more readily, inasmuch as his reasoning has been based entirely upon the terms employed in the original.

With these remarks the work is submitted to the judgment of the candid reader. Should it prove instrumental in directing only one poor wanderer to the "one fold and one Shepherd," he will be abundantly compensated for the labor which it has cost him.

GETHSEMANI ABBEY,
GETHSEMANI, INDIA.

CHAPTER I.

Reasons in favor of a Supreme Officer in the Visible Church as its Head and Centre of Unity, drawn from the nature and design of the Church, and also from probability and necessity, with an examination of the theory of "independent branches."

BEFORE we proceed with the argument, it seems proper to make a few preliminary remarks respecting the real state of the great question involved. That question is, whether our Blessed Lord has not instituted a supreme officer to act as His Vicar in the government of His church? That the "*presumption*" is wholly in favor of the affirmative of this question will hardly be denied. It is neither a new theory nor an old one long since exploded. It is no more than has been held for at least twelve hundred years by a large majority of Christians; and, indeed, it was for many years the received doctrine of the *whole* of Christendom. And it is now held by a society of Christians diffused throughout the world, claiming to be the *church*, and having all the *marks* of the church, and embracing within its extensive fold two-thirds of those who profess the religion of Christ. And even within a comparatively recent period, it was held by the whole of western Christendom. And though it is now rejected by many whose ancestors formerly held it, yet the rejection has been brought about in such a manner as to deprive it of all weight in a consideration of this nature—brought about as to the Anglican church, and by consequence as to the P. E. church, and many other offshoots, by a despotic exercise of the *civil power* in the hands of Henry VIII. and others. It was not the result of a *careful examination of evidence* either on the part of the people or of the church, but the result of *brute force*. Henry quar-