

**THE EXERCISE OF  
FAITH. A BOOK  
FOR DOUBTERS**

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The Exercise of Faith. A Book for Doubters by Miles Mahan

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**MILES MAHAN**

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THE  
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BY THE LATE  
REV. MILES MAHAN, D.D.

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## PREFACE

BY THE

EDITOR IN ENGLAND.

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IN introducing this little treatise to English Churchmen, I need say very little. I have not published it simply as an antidote to temptations to secede to Rome, but as a help to those who, from any cause, seem to be impatient of any trials of faith. Every one is in a hurry now-a-days, and in matters concerning the deepest interests of the soul many act too quickly, too rashly, as though they had no time "to wait upon the Lord," and so gradually to be led by Him into the "paths of peace." To walk by faith amid the temptations of the world and the troubles in the Church, seems too much of a strain to many who forget that we are to "walk by faith, and not by sight" in this life. Some are not only too impatient under difficulties which try their faith, but even assert that there ought to be no difficulties at all! I have in my possession a letter, written from a well-known quarter, assuring a person that if they forsook the Anglican for the Roman Communion they "would never know any trial of faith again, to have ever a doubt of any kind would be an impossibility, and that if such a thing could be, the person would have ceased to be a Catholic." In fact the letter made out that no spiritual trouble of any kind could even be momentarily felt, either as regards

"points of doctrine" or "growth in holiness." The spiritual combat was simply ignored in the eagerness of controversy by the writer.

No one of any learning or weight in theology or Church history secedes to Rome now; and if any do go over and publish their reasons for the step, it is always the case that there is some flaw in their logic, some mistake as to their facts, or more likely still, the craving for such absolute certainty and peace in the Church Militant here on earth, which has tempted the soul weary of the exercise of faith, to listen to promises which, if true, might deceive the very elect! In spite of all her enemies, the ignorance of friends, and the sneers of the infidel, the Church of England, by GOD'S blessing, is winning souls by hundreds and hundreds, compared to the few Rome manages to entice away. Still these cases, though scarce, often cause much sadness and separation in families and between friends, and if this treatise helps to reduce the little number who secede, I shall rejoice. But there are many who wish to believe, who are puzzled by the divisions of Christendom, they cannot believe that Ultramontanism is true, they are dismayed by the contradictory teaching in Anglican pulpits, they cannot rest in mere "Protestantism," and yet they yearn to find and hold the true faith, and to live up to it. I venture to think Dr. Mahan in this treatise gives a helping hand to those who are in earnest, but who feel thus entangled in a maze. At all events "The Exercise of Faith" has helped many such souls in America, may it be blessed to do the same good work in England.

ARTHUR BRINCKMAN,

*Assistant Curate, All Saints', Margaret Street.*

## TO THE READER.

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THE following short treatise, written with a view to one important point of the present controversy with Rome, can pretend to nothing which has not been said a hundred times before with much more wit, and with vastly more learning, on the same or similar questions. The only claim it possesses is, that it is designed to meet difficulties which actually exist in many minds, and which the assertion of *Church Authority* on one hand, and of the *Sufficiency of Holy Scripture* on the other (Arts. vi. and xx.), seems in some sort to warrant, especially when this assertion is brought into comparison, with the simpler and more absolute rule of papal infallibility, or of unlimited private judgment. The essay is an attempt to show that *absolutism* in either form is not warranted by reason, by Scripture, or by the early Church. If, in view of the many able works which have been written on kindred subjects, this little essay should be considered needless, the author can only excuse himself on the plea, that religious controversy is a battle which requires many strokes to decide it; and as the Roman Church is now undoubtedly acting on this principle, it behoves those also who are on our side to be stirring, lest, trusting too much in the good blows dealt by former generations, we find ourselves in the position of that king who lost a victory because, when he should have struck several times, "he struck thrice and



stayed." It may be proper to add, that this tract does not pretend to define the limits either of Church authority or of private judgment with theological accuracy. It takes for granted, that both have their place in Christianity. Its end will be gained, if it shows, that practically one need not interfere with the right use of the other, and that a person may exercise a *true faith in GOD*, without throwing himself absolutely and unreservedly upon either.

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