

# **ROMAN CATHOLIC CLAIMS**

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CLAIMS

BY

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## PREFACE

IT is always important to explain what exactly is assumed at starting in every book, or in other words, for what class of readers it is written. This book then is written for persons who accept, or are disposed to accept, the Catholic position ; that is, who believe that Christ instituted a visible Church, and intended the apostolic succession of the Ministry to form at least one necessary link of connection in it : who accept the Catholic Creeds and the declared mind of the Church as governing their belief : and who believe in the Sacraments, as celebrated by a ministry of apostolic authority in its different grades, as the covenanted channels or instruments of grace. Further, this book is addressed to catholic-minded persons who are members of the Church of England, or Churches in communion with her. Such persons find themselves attacked from the side of Rome, and hear it denied that it is possible to be Catholics without being Roman Catholics. It is against such claims made upon us from the side of the Roman Church that the following pages are intended to

be a defence, mostly in the way of explaining positively the Anglican position, and showing it to be both catholic and rational. Thus Chapter I. is a general explanation of the Anglican position as the '*via media*,' and a general statement of our attitude towards the Roman Church. After that follows an answer in detail to each article of the Roman assault. Thus Chapter II. vindicates the Anglican or Catholic conception of Church unity as against the Roman modification of it. Chapter III. endeavours to explain the true or primitive conception of Church authority, and Chapter IV. the true relation of the Church to the Bible. Chapter V. examines the Roman interpretation of our Lord's promise to St. Peter. Chapters VI. and VII. bring to the test of history the modern claims of the Roman see. Chapter VIII. expounds the meaning of schism, and clears the English Church from the charge of it. Chapter IX. is occupied in vindicating the validity and jurisdiction of the Anglican episcopate; and Chapter X. in defending the Anglican Church on the charge of heresy.

This book is largely a reproduction of some papers on the same subjects originally published in the *Indian Churchman* in the early part of 1884, and afterwards reprinted in India. From time to time I have had occasion to notice as I went along the recently published letter of Mr.

Luke Rivington on *Authority: A plain reason for joining the Church of Rome*. This letter professes to be 'a reply' to my reprinted articles (see p. 1), and I felt therefore that it gave me some cause for complaint, because in fact, even on the point with which alone it deals—the claims of the Roman see—it made no allusion to the main contention of my argument, but directed its criticism mostly to its minor or insignificant issues. . . . Whatever value the book may have had, it was not a reply to mine. I have endeavoured in the course of the following pages to give a more full-facced reply to the Roman arguments than Mr. Rivington has given to mine. There are three other remarks that I wish to make on Mr. Rivington's book.

1. Mr. Rivington betrays an almost incredible forgetfulness of the conditions of the controversy. He says that since Sir Thomas More and St. Francis de Sales spoke or wrote about the authority of the Roman see there has been "no new literary discoveries, of any importance, about the early centuries of the Christian life." This is a sentence to make a man rub his eyes! It is not true in the positive sense that St. Francis 'shows an intimate acquaintance with all the Fathers whom' I quote. At least he did not know the *Refutatio* of St. Hippolytus. But this is not what is most important. The fact is that St. Francis and Sir Thomas More knew a great deal too



much. Sir Thomas More had before him the whole almost unassailed fabric of the Isidorian Decretals—an immense body of documents supposed to emanate from the Roman bishops, beginning with St. Clement and reaching down to Melchiades (A.D. 90-314), and all assuming a developed form of the Papal power existing and recognized from the earliest times. Their authority had been much shaken before St. Francis de Sales' death, but it was six years after that event (*i.e.* in A.D. 1625) that the whole of this immense fabric was finally demolished by David Blondel in St. Francis's own see of Geneva. The spuriousness of these decretals was indeed shown so demonstratively that the Roman writers themselves have had unanimously to abandon them, with the result that the fabric of the Papal authority has been almost totally deprived of its historical and literary basis in the early centuries.<sup>1</sup> And as if this were not enough, it must be remembered that the interpolations in St. Cyprian, tending to the authority of the see of Peter, had been inserted in the edition of Manuzio in 1563, and would no doubt have been read by St. Francis as the genuine words of St. Cyprian. Further, it was not till the eighteenth century that the Benedictine editors of the *Fathers* purged the Patristic

<sup>1</sup> See some excellent pages in Mr. E. G. Wood's *Regal Power of the Church*, pp. 25-29.

writings from a vast deal of spurious matter, all more or less in the interests of mediævalism. After pointing this out—and I am not the first to do it—I think I am justified in asking whether an assertion like this at the very outset of an argument, does not go far to discredit it?

2. A great many of Mr. Rivington's arguments and quotations might have been in place if any one had denied for instance that St. Peter was the leader of the apostolic band: or that the Roman Church was commonly regarded, at least from the third century in the West, and the fourth century in the East, as having the prestige of the 'see of St. Peter': or that there was after the fifth century a 'papal' tone about the Roman claims, however much it fell short of the clear note of the mediæval Papacy. But nobody questions these historical facts. Only we protest that the last-mentioned fact, the papal claim, was not of catholic acceptance, that is, was unheard for several centuries, was never accepted in the East, and was a very gradual growth in the West. Very little of Mr. Rivington's book is even directed to showing that it was of catholic acceptance.

3. Mr. Rivington has found "a plain reason" for joining the Church of Rome. I should have thought his title a rather suggestive one. Great questions are not decided on single issues. There

is 'a plain reason' for most courses of action—for instance, it is 'a plain reason' for suicide that it rids us of "the ills we have": but it came into Hamlet's mind that there was another reason, if not so plain, at any rate more weighty, against such a course of action, viz., that "we fly to others that we know not of." I do not at all believe that Mr. Rivington has made good even his one plain reason, but I am sure that he has not even considered a great number of weightier reasons against the course he suggests.

My thanks are due to the Rev. F. E. Brightman and Mr. R. B. Rackham for help in preparing this book for the press.

C. G.

PUSKY HOUSE, ST. DENYS, 1888.

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*Addendum* to p. 18. n.<sup>2</sup> My attention has been called to a passage in Newman's *Discourses to Mixed Congregations*, p. 251, where he enumerates as the parts of what would constitute a 'mortal operation' upon the Anglican Church and destroy its essence or definition, the following: "Take its bishops out of the legislature, tear its formularies from the Statute Book, open its universities to Dissenters, allow its clergy to become laymen again, legalize its private prayer-meetings." This was uttered in 1849. Since then three of the contingencies contemplated have actually occurred. Would any one now imagine that the occurrence of the first two would make the operation mortal?