



From
F A I T H
To
F A I T H

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF
RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT

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PUTNAM

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INTRODUCTORY

THE story of conversion, that profound change which takes place in the human soul as it awakens to its deepest needs, and, in order to satisfy them, turns Godward, evidently has an interest hardly less appealing than that aroused by a tale of perilous travel or a life of dramatic adventure. For, after all, the things of the spirit are the most real for us, because they are the most intimate; and they can be the most exciting, since the issues demand that the soul shall venture everything, the perils are numerous, and the prize beyond compare. For, to take a false step may lead to an injurious fall, to miss the purpose of life is an irretrievable loss, to turn away from the pursuit of truth is to put out the only light by which we see, while to be faithless disintegrates the soul, on whose integrity interior peace depends, and destroys the very faculty that makes possible the happiness which we all crave here or in eternity.

There must always remain, however, an element of mystery about conversion; partly because it involves movements of the mind which remain obscure even to the acutest introspection, but still more because the workings of divine grace are secret; so that the most exhaustive controversy and the most penetrating analysis have left theology baffled in its attempt to determine how grace influences the mind or co-operates with the will.

Modern psychology has both brought a new interest, and yet added a further complexity to this subject; for, while seizing upon any first-hand testimony of religious awakening or change in theological conviction, it dogmatically maintains that the causes which the subject may trace at work within himself, or the reasons which he may put forward for holding the opinions he professes, never reveal more than occasions or mere excuses; indeed, some schools go further, and insinuate that egoistic motives and even physical

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马术

神学思想
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深及

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passions, however unrecognized they may be, are the primary causes and the real forces that account for religious conversion, whether it be gradual or sudden.

The violent disruption of our once common Christianity, which remains the most indisputable effect of the Reformation, has added this still further complication: that the term "conversion" has now come to be employed to indicate not only a movement from unbelief to faith, or from indifference to religious concern, but also to denote a change of conviction from Evangelical to Catholic faith, and a transfer of personal allegiance from some Protestant denomination to an acceptance of the claims which the Roman Catholic Church makes to be the one and only Church founded by Christ. Controversy has consequently come to centre around the declaration, on the one side, that a sound evangelical conversion is all that is necessary to salvation, and should, therefore, be a sufficient and permanent protection against a conversion to Catholicism; for, from the same point of view, this is not only regarded as due to a mistaken concern over a merely ecclesiastical and, therefore, comparatively unimportant question, but is often depreciated by being contemptuously denominated as a perversion rather than a conversion. On the other side, many Catholic writers and teachers as determinedly restrict the description of conversion to that change of mind which assents to the whole of the Catholic faith, and does so on the ground that this is what the Catholic Church teaches and requires to be believed if salvation is to be secure. This complication is confusing, and the retention of a single term for what may be, at least, two widely separated and vastly different events may create painful perplexity and makes for a further embitterment of controversy; nevertheless, it must be admitted by both sides that the ecclesiastical conversion is often accomplished with more difficulty, and may be accompanied by a more serious mental change than that which characterized previous evangelical conversion, and it is, therefore, at least of some psychological importance.

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In addition, therefore, to a serious doubt whether he will be able to tell his own story simply, fully and sincerely, and, still more, whether even then it will prove worth the telling, one who starts out nowadays to tell of a conversion which embraces two movements of widely different character, separated by nearly forty years, is bound to be sensitive to the suspicion, or even the contempt, with which the dominance of the new psychology will sharpen criticism; moreover, he is painfully apprehensive lest he may only stir up that ecclesiastical bitterness which he would fain do something to allay. But with regard to the crude motives to which much modern psychology is at present inclined to refer all religious conviction, it may perhaps be pointed out that, by the same principles, it would be equally possible to suspect conversions from faith to unbelief, of which, alas! there must be almost as many stories, if only it were felt worth while to tell them. Similarly, hostility to religion, especially when it takes violent forms, could with even more evidence than religious concern really provides, be regarded, at least in many cases, as undoubtedly due to a psychological complex.

It may be admitted, however, that any realistic view of the Christian religion, or any deep analysis of faith, would reveal that the longing for God has something in it similar to sexual desire, if by that is meant the passion for personal completion through union with another. Moreover, that fear does enter largely into all religion is more frankly admitted in Catholicism than in Protestantism. It is surely obvious, however, that no human being, seriously contemplating what his position in this universe would be if it had no divine mind for its Designer and Director, could be expected to do other than shake with terror; for he would then not only be left without any foothold on existence, but he could not even have any assurance that the highest aspirations the mind can formulate were anything more than indications of insanity, or that the conclusions to which reason compelled him, anything other than a kind of nightmare from which there is no awakening save to nescience and eternal nothingness.

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Indeed, if the new psychology must reduce everything to its grossest elements, why does it not seize on the fact, to which so much devotional language bears witness, that the craving for God partakes of the nature of physical hunger, since from ancient times it has cried out: "My soul thirsteth for God"; "My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God"? And what confirmation it could find for the speculation that religion is only the sublimation of a nutrition complex, in the suspicious fact that Catholicism holds, as the very centre of its religion, the belief that man must eat the flesh and drink the blood of its God in order that He may dwell within him! All this, for the sake of argument, can be granted to the psycho-analytical critics; for such facts, rightly interpreted, need not be apologized for or shrunk from, indeed, they can be gloried in as proving how necessary religion is to the very constitution of human nature, and as showing, not so much what unseemly roots faith has, but rather how even the grossest elements of our nature demand ultimately the most spiritual reality for their final satisfaction.

Further, the story of the passing from some form of Protestant belief to full Catholic faith has been so often told of late, that it is surely becoming a somewhat monotonous recital. Indeed, there are those who have prayed the author that they should be spared the task of wading through yet another "Apologia." Despite the damaging comparison that the mention of such a word invites, since it brings to mind Newman's masterly defence of his soul's sincerity in that work which will always remain a monument of our English tongue, the present writer is compelled to bear witness to his also having passed through a stage of conversion in early youth, the reality of which he has seen no reason to doubt, and less now than ever, and yet has come to be equally convinced that his Evangelical conversion involved and necessitated a further, and a Catholic conversion. He is acutely aware that to many this further conversion will seem to demand the denial of all previous religious experiences, and will be

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regarded by some as only another deplorable apostasy from the all-sufficient Evangelical faith. It is recorded that a well-known Presbyterian theologian, when lecturing to his students, was accustomed to say, that the man who testified, as Newman had done, to an early conversion, which left him luminously certain of God and his own soul, and who yet, after that, accepted the claims of the Roman Church, could only be designated a traitor. And a prominent Congregational official is recently reported to have exclaimed that, for one like the writer, who had been widely acclaimed and accepted by Nonconformists as a welcome evangelical preacher, and had, moreover, openly proclaimed his desire for a comprehensive Church, to have changed to one of the most exclusive Churches in the world, and to have consented to abjure his past, was "dreadful! dreadful!! dreadful!!!"

If the writer cannot forget such judgments as are here quoted, but is only the more determined to meet them, it is evident that his change of conviction and transference of allegiance will need considerable explanation, if these opinions are to be countered and all grounds for condemnation removed. And yet, it is precisely the conviction that an evangelical conversion needs for its explanation, as well as for its perfecting, an acceptance of the claims of the Catholic Church, that has encouraged him to undertake the present task. Moreover, to risk once more the effect of comparison with so great a mind and lofty a soul as that of Newman's, which newspaper writers, surely in ignorance of what manner of man he was, or in careless exaggeration of what I know myself to be, have recently drawn, nevertheless enables attention to be directed to one important difference, amongst others more obvious. Newman's confession of being certain of two, and only two realities, God and his own soul, has often been criticized as betraying a certain narrowness of concern, which was perhaps characteristic of the older evangelical outlook, namely, of being insufficiently alive to the social obligations of religion. If the considerable number of penetrating references to social principles that could be

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collected from his writings are taken into account, it is doubtful whether Newman can rightly be accused of lacking the social sense, to whose awakening, indeed, as to so many other modern ideas, he may have indirectly contributed. In the case of the present writer, however, the type of Evangelicalism which influenced him, belonging as it did to a much later time, was already tinged with an awakening social interest; while, from the very beginning, his particular religious experience seemed to involve concern for the lives other men were compelled to live, as well as for the beliefs that they could not help holding. For that experience not only carried with it a spontaneous urgency to pass it on, so far as was possible, to everyone with whom he came into contact, as one is in duty bound to pass on any good news, but the experience itself was of such a nature that it has always seemed to him to provide the only basis, as well as the inspiration necessary for a regeneration of the social order.

Nevertheless, with some who are primarily zealous for the reformation of society, the abolition of poverty or the prevention of war, to accept the claims of the Catholic Church is taken to involve that one must give up faith in socialism, which so many Papal Encyclicals have condemned, and, therefore, presumably, care no more for the cry of the oppressed and destitute, but rather countenance the injustices of the present social order, and preach charity to the rich and contentment to the poor; while the accepted Catholic teaching, which prohibits the absolute condemnation of all war, is taken to entail that the only real moral safeguard against war is implicitly surrendered beforehand; and so, as some have at this time bitterly declared, one more leader is lost to the cause of social emancipation and humanitarian progress, tempted by the specious promise of finding rest in an institution which is constitutionally opposed to human freedom and conservatively resists all social reform. These charges will also be faced, and any fears that ideals, long held and proclaimed, must be abandoned when Catholicism

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is accepted, shall be shown to be due to a neglect to make the necessary distinction between false applications of principles, in themselves, perhaps, sound, though superficially understood, and their more adequate formulation in Catholic teaching, as well as to the failure to recognize that the first necessity for social justice or human freedom is that they must be based upon divine revelation and can only be carried out by supernatural faith.

Fortunately, however, the writer need not labour to convince many of his former Evangelical associates that he has been entirely sincere in the step that he has taken, and, by adopting his present allegiance, is only endeavouring to be faithful to the light as he sees it. For such numerous and generous testimonies have been received, especially from Nonconformists, that it would be a pleasure to publish them, if that were a proper thing to do ; and that, not so much in justification of his own sincerity (for of that no one can himself be sure, nor anyone else, save God, know how far any soul is sincere), but rather in order to show what a much more charitable attitude towards the Catholic Church prevails, even in unexpected quarters, and how many can understand the spiritual necessity of such a step being taken, without imagining that it involves judging others who do not see the light in the same way, or condemning those who remain outside what they cannot at present admit to be the one true fold.

In response to such welcome witness the writer had better, however, openly proclaim that this book has been written with the open purpose of persuading all Evangelicals that the Catholic issue must be faced if Evangelicalism is to endure, and that those who have had an evangelical experience are bound to face this issue for themselves, with all its consequences, if they are to be fully faithful to the experience they have been already granted. For, in what follows, there will be an endeavour to show that any genuine evangelical experience is ultimately derived from the Catholic Church, and is rationally explicable only on the basis of the doctrines that

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it so jealously guards and rigidly demands as necessary to be believed if full salvation is to be attained; while it will be argued that the acceptance of the claim that the Roman Church represents the one historically continuous Church founded by Christ, is the only sure means of guaranteeing that the evangelical experience will continue to be made accessible to all mankind. If this purpose is confessed at the outset, it may prevent some reading any further, but it will anyhow prevent any charge of having taken an unfair advantage, or any suspicion of employing a concealed influence; while it boldly flings down at the opening the challenge which is to be maintained, so that the reader can judge for himself whether the position has been sustained, and will be able to register within himself how far its confessed purpose has succeeded. The following pages will therefore attempt to substantiate the assertion that the Catholic Church is the home of faith and the bulwark of freedom. When this has been maintained previously, it has been dismissed as nothing more than an attempt to be paradoxical; it is, however, in the writer's view, nothing of the kind, but simply the inescapable truth.

That I have taken so long to reach this decision may seem to some of my new Catholic associates a sign of an extraordinary density of mind or slowness of soul, if of nothing worse. That also I shall endeavour to explain; but this very fact may at least serve to convince some of my old Evangelical associates that it is a proof of having thought the whole matter out with the greatest thoroughness, and, I need not assure them, with constant prayer for guidance. Indeed, some, with less understanding of the situation, have frequently expressed surprise that I did not take the step long ago; for they strongly disapproved of my having introduced Catholic practices into Free Church worship, and preached Catholic doctrine from a pulpit endowed by Protestant Dissenters; some having gone so far as to stigmatize such action as a base betrayal of trust; while the attempt to reconcile Catholicism and Protestantism has been traced

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to a hopelessly muddled mind, if not taken to indicate an unconcern for the ordinary standards of public honesty. That charge also shall receive the fullest recognition, and what I have attempted to do shall, as far as possible, be set in the light of an, at least, clearly conceived and honestly open purpose; while, on the other hand, the full reasons shall be given which led to the abandonment of what others welcomed as a true ideal, or regarded as a valuable contribution towards the wiping out of our unhappy divisions.

And yet, it is not merely to justify myself, or to convince others, that I have ventured upon the perilous task of explaining my actions, though it could be maintained that this is a duty one owes both to oneself and to others, as well as to truth and sincerity. Still less, of course, am I anxious to provide material for the psycho-analysts, little as I fear the worst they may say. For against those who have asked to be saved any further explanations of why one has become a Roman Catholic, there must be set the quite frequent and opposite request of some who have followed my leadership, until they have been brought up sharply by the step I have now taken, which, strangely enough, they never conceived that I was moving towards, or thought I could ever take. For many have asked that I should at least do them the justice of explaining, as far and as fully as I can, the reasons that have led to my action, especially in view of opinions, some of which I may have previously expressed, and which they still hold, that the Roman Catholic Church, if not hopelessly corrupt and obviously effete, has at least departed from the simplicity that is in Christ, has become the enemy to pure spiritual religion, in insisting so much upon externals and depending so much upon regulations; is so unpardonably uncharitable in its exclusion of others from religious fellowship; and is fundamentally opposed to "the freedom wherewith Christ hath made us free."

Such charges are here enumerated, and thus repeated, precisely because it is proposed to take all possible objections into consideration, and yet to plead that not one of them

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provides a valid reason for remaining outside the historically continuous Church. But, beyond all these purposes, I hope to be of some service in promoting a better understanding of what the issue between Catholicism and Protestantism actually is, for I believe it is constantly confused; and thus of securing a further consideration of the concerns which developing history show to be at stake, and, therefore, of the action which all faithful and enlightened Christians ought to take. Most of all, and far beyond any of these aims or reasons, I rejoice to have the opportunity of placing on record how graciously God has dealt with me through all my life, so much so, that any sacrifice I may have made of human respect or friendship, of security or position, and may yet have to make, must be counted as nothing beside the desire I have to do the will of God, so far as I can discern it, and to yield to Christ the life which He can rightly claim, and thus show the loyalty which His great sacrifice for me and all men so richly deserves. For, as I look back once more upon the path by which I have been led, it seems to me to have been one on which the light of certainty has shone ever more clearly, every step taken has been on to firmer ground, and every change that has been made characterized not by loss but by further gain. While mourning much that I can now discern to have been due to obtuseness of mind or obstinacy of spirit, which accounts for my progress having been so slow, and my response to grace so imperfect, I cannot but humbly rejoice in the unfailing mercy that has been shown to me, and the goodness of God that has been showered upon me all my days; for He has so blessed me, that, despite many sorrows and much interior suffering, "the lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places;" and although I must often have been dense to His gentle guidance, yet I must praise the protection which has piloted me through many storms and the patience that has brought me at length into a large place. Why I have been thus called and chosen, and why singled out for such blessing, when I have known so many who seem to have struggled in vain, so often have

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stumbled, or, more sadly, have fallen away, has been one of the greatest mysteries of my life. I have, however, sought only the more earnestly to make the truth I see clear to others, and have striven with all the devotion I could summon to convey something to others of the peace and joy which I am convinced are, through faith and obedience, available to everyone. And what I am trying to do now is nothing else than persuade everyone I can to return to the Catholic faith, because I am convinced that full personal satisfaction and world-wide redemption are to be found in that rich pasturage and safe anchorage which only the one, visible, historically continuous, and firmly united Church can provide.

It is not, however, to be expected that I shall convince all who do me the honour and have the patience to read to the end of this book that the path I have taken is one that everyone should take, or that the arguments by which I seek to justify the position at which I have arrived are valid and cogent. But I can at least hope to show that I have not only fairly considered the objections that are usually urged against accepting the claims of the Roman Church, but that I can feel their force perhaps just as much as those who urge them as sufficient to justify their rejection of those claims, and in remaining where they are, whereas I feel that wider considerations outbalance them. Meantime, I frankly and freely recognize that no one can do other than follow the light he sees, and that by this alone we all shall be judged alike; so that those who feel they possess more light are not thereby entitled to condemn others, but rather to be the more concerned that they themselves faithfully follow it.

I hope, also, that I have the fairness and good sense to recognize that not all who see the light can always see how to follow it; while sometimes to do so would seem to demand an impossible sacrifice. No one can command others to sacrifices which, in many instances, I can imagine would be far beyond anything I have ever made, and such as I hope I shall never have to make; especially where it would most

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certainly impose suffering on others who do not share their convictions. God asks of no one the impossible; but a consecrated willingness to advance where the light is clear, and, when the way is made open, will be rightly appraised by God. However, I believe that complete consecration beforehand, and a constant surrender to the will of God, as it is made known, will eventually clear away all darkness and make a way through all difficulties; while, as far as the objections that rest rather upon intellectual conviction or intelligible fears are concerned, I believe that most of them would vanish on further inquiry. For some criticisms of the Catholic Church fail to take account of conditions inevitable to human frailty, which were all, nevertheless, foreseen, and arise from the fact that offences must needs come. Much hesitation about the Catholic faith is, no doubt, also due to presentations of divine truth which are not truly derivable from essential Catholic doctrine, but are rather the distortions of narrow and ungenerous minds. But all these things, I am convinced, are outweighed by elements in the claim of the Roman Church alone adequately to represent original and full Christianity, which are historically and pragmatically indisputable; and are more than balanced by the intellectual greatness, the magnanimity of soul and saintly achievement which can be found in the Catholic Church, and are directly traceable to acceptance of her doctrines and faithful adherence to her regulations.

There should, therefore, be no permanent hindrance to the acceptance of the Roman claims with those who recognize that Christ founded a Church which He meant to be as visible as a city set on a hill, and to remain as solid and as united as a house built on a rock; with those who are also alive to the personal, social and humanitarian urgency of being perfectly united to Christ as members of His body; but particularly with those who seek nothing else but to obey His call to the uttermost, and who desire to do all they can to further His sacrificial purposes of redeeming the world and uniting all mankind into one, so that mankind

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may be enabled to become partakers of the Divine nature and our enslaved humanity brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

NOTE

THE practice has been followed in this book of not mentioning by name any persons still living; not that they cannot be easily identified, but I did not wish any of them to be startled or annoyed by finding their names appearing in a work of this kind. While this book is written in the conviction that the Roman Church is the one visible Church of Christ, such titles as Roman Catholicism, the Roman Church, or, for short, just Rome, have been used so as not to appear to beg the question beforehand. The few Biblical references are, for similar reasons, taken indiscriminately from the Authorised or Revised versions; but they are generally employed as literary allusions rather than as proof texts, and in no case does anything important depend upon any difference between the Protestant and Catholic versions.