

# The Bishop of Rome

by J.H. Newman

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*The Anglican Church maintains its independence from the Roman Catholic Church, rejecting the supremacy of the Pope as not being directly from revelation but an event in Providence.*

**Scripture:** Romans 13:1, 1 Corinthians 1:10, Ephesians 4:3, Colossians 2:8, 1 Peter 2:13

**Topics:** "Church Authority", "Ecclesiastical Governance"

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## Description

J.H. Newman preaches about the Anglican view on the Bishop of Rome's jurisdiction in England, emphasizing the independence of each diocese and the unity of the Church through common possession of the Succession, Episcopal form, Apostolical faith, and Sacraments. The Anglican Church sees the Roman supremacy as an ecclesiastical arrangement, not a matter of faith, and asserts that the English Church was essentially complete without Rome. The Oath of Supremacy declares that no foreign prelate should have authority within England, highlighting that the Pope's authority is not a divine right but a matter of specific engagement.

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## Transcript

Article xxxviii. "The Bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in this realm of England."

By "hath" is meant "ought to have," as the Articl in the 36th Canon and the Oath of Supremacy show, in which the same doctrine is drawn out more at length. "No foreign prince, person, prelate, state, or potentate, hath, or ought to have, any jurisdiction, power, superiority, pre-eminence, or authority, ecclesiastical or spiritual, within this realm."

This is the profession which every one must in consistency make, who does not join the Roman Church. If the Bishop of Rome has jurisdiction and authority here, why do we not acknowledge it, and submit to him? To say then the above words, is nothing more or less than to say "I am not a Roman Catholic;" and whatever reasons there are against saying them, are so far reasons against remaining in the English Church. They are a mere enunciation of the principle of Anglicanism.

Anglicans maintain that the supremacy of the Pope is not directly from revelation, but an event in Providence. All things may be undone by the agents and causes by which they are done. What revelation gives, revelation takes away; what Providence gives, Providence takes away. GOD ordained by miracle, He reversed by miracle, the Jewish election; He promoted in the way of Providence, and He cast down by the same way, the Roman empire. "The powers that be, are ordained of GOD," while they be, and have a

claim on our obedience. When they cease to be, they cease to have a claim. They cease to be when GOD removes them. He may be considered to remove them when He undoes what He had done. The Jewish election did not cease to be, when the Jews went into captivity: this was an event in Providence; and what miracle had ordained, it was miracle that annulled. But the Roman power ceased to be when the barbarians overthrew it; for it rose by the sword, and it therefore perished by the sword. The Gospel Ministry began in CHRIST and His Apostles; and what they began, they only can end. The Papacy began in the exertions and passions of man; and what man can make, man can destroy. Its jurisdiction, while it lasted, was "ordained of GOD;" when it ceased to be, it ceased to claim our obedience; and it ceased to be at the Reformation. The Reformers, who could not destroy a Ministry, which the Apostles began, could destroy a Dominion which the Popes founded.

Perhaps the following passage will throw additional light upon this point:Â--

"The Anglican view of the Church has ever been this: that its portions need not otherwise have been united together for their essential completeness, than as being descended from one original. They are like a number of colonies sent out from a mother-country. . . . Each Church is independent of all the rest, and is to act on the principle of what may be called Episcopal independence, except, indeed, so far as the civil power unites any of them together. . . . Each diocese is a perfect independent Church, sufficient for itself; and the communion of Christians one with another, and the unity of them altogether, lie, not in a mutual understanding, intercourse, and combination, not in what they do in common, but in what they are and have in common, in their possession of the Succession, their Episcopal form, their Apostolical faith, and the use of the Sacraments. . . . Mutual intercourse is but an accident of the Church, not of its essence. . . . Intercommunion is a duty, as other duties, but is not the tenure or instrument of the communion between the unseen world and this; and much more the confederacy of sees and churches, the metropolitan, patriarchal, and papal systems, are matters of expedience or of natural duty from long custom, or of propriety from gratitude and reverence, or of necessity from voluntary oaths and engagements, or of ecclesiastical force from the canons of Councils, but not necessary in order to the conveyance of grace, or for fulfilment of the ceremonial law, as it may be called, or unity. Bishop is superior to bishop only in rank, not in real power; and the Bishop of Rome, the head of the Catholic world, is not the centre of unity, except as having a primacy of order. Accordingly, even grating for argument's sake, that the English Church violated a duty in the 16th century, in releasing itself from the Roman supremacy, still it did not thereby commit that special sin, which cuts off from it the fountains of grace, and is called schism. It was essentially complete without Rome, and naturally independent of it; it had, in the course of years, whether by usurpation or not, come under the supremacy of Rome; and now, whether by rebellion or not, it is free from it: and as it did not enter into the Church invisible by joining Rome, so it was not cast out of it by breaking from Rome. These were accidents in its history, involving, indeed, sin in individuals, but not affecting the Church as a Church.

"Accordingly, the Oath of Supremacy declares 'that no foreign prelate hath or ought to have any jurisdiction, power, pre-eminence, or authority within this realm.' In other words, there is nothing in the Apostolic system which gives an authority to the Pope over the Church, such as it does not give to a Bishop. It is altogether an ecclesiastical arrangement; not a point de fide, but of expedience, custom, or piety, which cannot be claimed as if the Pope ought to have it, any more than, on the other hand, the King could of Divine right claim the supremacy; the claim of both one and the other resting, not on duty or revelation, but on specific engagement. We find ourselves, as a Church, under the King now, and we obey him; we were under the Pope formerly, and we obeyed him. 'Ought' does not, in any degree, come into the

question."

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