

Justifying Her Religious Conviction

Emilie Loyson-Meriman's Use of Historical Reasoning

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“We had no difficulty in perceiving, from the first, that our presence was remarked. Of all the clergy in the long procession that passed, not one failed to give us a look, and a long and a strong one, but not one of hostility”,¹ wrote Emilie Jane Loyson-Meriman (1833–1909) about her and her husband Père Hyacinthe Loyson’s (1827–1912) visit to a Sunday morning service in a Roman Catholic cathedral in Malta in December 1895. She gives this account of her stay on the island in her published travelogue, *To Jerusalem Through The Lands of Islam*.² Notably, she stressed the fact that the clergy did not look at them with hostility as they passed by. This leads to the question of why their stay was noticed by the clergy in the first place and what reason the clergy would have had to meet their arrival on the island with hostility. She offers the answer herself: “[i]t seems that the presence of the married monk and his wife had been noised about [...]”.³ By this statement, however, she is trying to convince the reader that she and her husband – this unusual couple of a married monk and his wife – were not perceived negatively by the clergy in Malta. She continues the description of her stay in Malta by mentioning how she and her husband were greeted by a friend: “Catholic Reform, which not only walks openly in the streets of the most Roman city of the seas, but is received with sympathy in its church!”⁴ Loyson-Meriman shares with the reader that she and her husband, the married monk, have

1 Madame Hyacinthe Loyson: *To Jerusalem Through The Lands of Islam*, The Open Court Publishing Company, Chicago 1905, 122.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., 122.

4 Ibid., 124.

been called a living “Catholic Reform”.⁵ This epithet is in many ways appropriate and the following article will focus on her ideas of reform. Loyson-Meriman used history to strengthen her ideas of reform and, as such, her decisions, for example, to marry a priest and former monk, seem to require justification. Therefore, this article will address the issue of the significance that historical reasoning had to her life and work. It is primarily based on Loyson-Meriman’s unpublished autobiography, in which her use of historical reasoning to debate issues in theological fields and to justify her religious convictions is revealed.⁶ Autobiographies are self-testimonies, which are about the author’s (self-)perception and where information about them and their life is recorded. They are also texts of remembrance in which the events are usually written down with a considerable time-lag. Thus, autobiographies represent a retrospective view of the author’s own history. Some events, however, are forgotten or omitted, reflected upon afterwards and reinterpreted. In addition, narrative tradition, and stylistic devices flow into the text.⁷ These aspects must be considered when interpreting this type of source material. The source value of autobiographies, however, consists not only in the insights they provide into people’s subjective perceptions, but also in the fact that autobiographies provide information on living conditions and (family) culture, as well as on processes of gender construction and identity formation. The autobiography as a representation of life history is a “draft of one’s own self”⁸ and serves “to establish a stable identity”.⁹ In Loyson-Meriman’s case, her autobiography reveals her religious identity, how she perceived it and presented it to the reader. “Claiming History” to establish

5 For the sake of consistency and economy, and for the reader, I will refer to Emilie Jane Loyson-Meriman, née Butterfield, as Loyson-Meriman for the rest of this article as I am convinced that this is the most meaningful and representative name to attach to her life and career.

6 Madame Hyacinthe Loyson: The Evolution of a Soul. From the Great American Forest to the Vatican Council, 1909, unpublished Autobiography, in: Bibliothèque de Genève, Loyson Papers, MS fr. 3906, Autobiographie de Mme Hyacinthe Loyson, Geneva. An annotated edition of this autobiography is currently planned by Prof. Dr. Angela Berlis for publication.

7 Stephan 2004, 2–3.

8 Schmid 2003, 9–17.

9 Stephan 2004, 12.

own's religious identity is a concept that she did not only apply in retrospect. Rather, she already acted this way in the time she is narrating and the concept has influenced certain decisions in her life. Loyson-Meriman's autobiography deals mainly with her religious development and religious commitment, as well as her reflections on faith and religion, especially Christianity. She refers to political events and religious affairs, especially those concerning the Catholic Church, which took place during her lifetime. In the 19th century, ultramontanism increased (from the Latin *ultra montanes*, meaning "beyond the mountains" and referring to the Italian side of the Alps), and the ultramontanes supported strong papal authority. Pope Pius IX (1846–1878) fought with them against modernity and its ideals, which he saw in liberalism, Darwinism, Marxism, socialism and democracy. The Catholic Church came into a defensive position, which strengthened its focus on the pope as a symbol of Catholic identity and stability.¹⁰ Along with this development, however, internal debate within the Catholic Church also increased, such as the question of the pope's position, particularly his infallibility (which not at all found approval by all the clergy), and the Church's attitude towards the modern freedoms demanded by the Enlightenment.¹¹ In 1864, Pope Pius IX condemned these modern ideals and values (such as freedom of religion, freedom of the press, civil marriage, etc.) in a list of eighty errors of the modern world, entitled the *Syllabus of Errors*, which was highly influential; and in 1869, he called for an ecumenical council to resolve the question of ultimate authority, thereby bringing certainty and security to the Catholic world at a time when traditional values were being overthrown.¹²

10 Schatz 1992, 18 f.

11 Ibid. 34.

12 Kelly 2009, 159–162.

1 From Protestantism to Catholicism – Emilie Loyson-Meriman’s View of the Catholic Church

“I loved Rome from the first, with tenderness, and certainly nothing [...] can ever equal my emotions in those days of my first visit there. [...] And I loved the Romans. But neither then nor afterwards did I love the Roman Institution – misnamed a Church; – but I had and ever have an immense pity for all its members, for they are deceived, misled and often blind and sick and imprisoned!”¹³

This statement, coming from a woman who herself had converted to Catholicism, requires further inquiry. What were Emilie Loyson-Meriman’s (1833–1909) intentions in converting to Catholicism when, at the end of her life, she expressed that she never loved the Roman Catholic Church and criticised its members as being deceived and misled? Loyson-Meriman, who was born in the United States with the maiden name Emily Jane Butterfield, grew up a Puritan.¹⁴ From a young age, she had already become a more liberal Protestant, as evidenced by the fact that she liked to attend services in a variety of different Protestant churches. Later, in the 1860s, she travelled around Europe, where she met many Catholics and had positive as well as negative experiences of them. Among these Catholics, she met the famous French preacher and monk, Père Hyacinthe Loyson (1827–1912), who became a trusted friend of hers and with whom she shared her inner spiritual search and religious unrest. He would also become her future husband.¹⁵ In 1868, she converted to Catholicism. In her autobiography, she describes how she took this step into the Catholic Church as a Protestant: she writes that she had not given up her old faith,¹⁶ nor had she changed her religion.¹⁷ For her, this was a conversion to the “Church of the Fathers” and to the one,

13 Autobiography, chapter XXIII.

14 She preferred the French writing version of her name, Emilie, see: Autobiography, chapter IV.

15 Her first husband, Edwin Ruthven Meriman, has passed away in 1867, see: Autobiography, chapter XXXIII.

16 Autobiography, chapter XXXVII.

17 Autobiography, chapter L.

universal and “True Catholic Church of Christ”¹⁸ – by which she did not mean the Roman form – by overcoming denomination. Through her conversion, Loyson-Meriman expressed her understanding of the one church of Christ, a universal church, regardless of denominational direction. It was precisely in this overcoming of confessionism, for her, that the key to Christian unity lay.¹⁹ Her faith in the one true, universal and all-embracing church, in which every believer, as a child of God, was a member, characterised her religious attitude. Thereby, she expressed an ecumenical view. But how did she come to hold this view?

An important factor in her conversion, alongside her conversations with the French priest and monk, Père Hyacinthe, was her engagement with church history. In her autobiography, she explains that through church-historical literature she “got into dogmatic polemics” and the more she advanced in her studies, “spiritual doubts were awakened” as she began to “discover Scriptural and historical truths” which she had “entirely ignored.”²⁰ She has arrived at a point in her life where history became important to her and where historical events started to shape her religious conviction. One thing of special significance, which became clear to her, concerned the history of the early Church:

“I had begun to distinguish between the time-honored Church of the Fathers, as maintained by the Latin Church of the early centuries, before her schism with the Orient and before the corrupt government of its Pontiffs.”²¹

Loyson-Meriman started to make a distinction between the Church before and after the schism between the Eastern and the Western churches in 1054 CE, that is, between the Orthodox churches and the Latin church. And for her, the Church before this schism was “time-honored” – an ancient and venerable Church. She has praised the early Church for “the unity of faith as well as that of the church.”²² However, her adoration of the early Church went beyond the time of an established and organised church to the

18 Autobiography, chapter XXIII.

19 Ibid.

20 Autobiography, chapter XVIII.

21 Autobiography, chapter XXIII.

22 Autobiography, chapter XLII.

beginnings of Christianity. For her, “the apostles and early disciples [which] were bound together by the love of God thro’ the example of Christ into a sacred brotherhood”, represented the ideal Christian society.²³ This is the image of the Church she applies when referring to religious affairs of her time. Yet, she saw both the necessity and difficulty of organising and institutionalising Christian society given that “troubles augmented” and “defection and heresies were rife throughout the young church”.²⁴ Therefore, she concludes, councils were convoked “to remedy the evils and stimulate the good”.²⁵ She highlights the Council of Nicaea, in 325 CE, which she calls “the greatest the world has ever seen”, because it established “Universal Hierarchy and Ecclesiastical Power and Order”.²⁶ She also stresses its ecumenical character. This view of the early Church, and her orientation towards this image, would later be decisive for her future decisions.

Her view of the early Church, however, contradicts with her view of the contemporary Roman Catholic Church and its history since the great schism. The “historical truths”, which she claims to have discovered through her studies of ecclesiastical history, did not only concern the early Church.²⁷ She claims to have also discovered “all the horrid ecclesiastical history” for which she blames “the errors and despotism of the Roman Pontiffs”.²⁸ Thus, she was convinced that the Roman Catholic church must be reformed. Crucially, she notes that “to reform is not to forsake – to cure, not to cut off”.²⁹ This thought, which was her primary critique of the Protestant Reformation, also proves to be the product of her ecumenical position. Even though Loyson-Meriman believed the Protestant Reformation did “glorious work for Christianity”,³⁰ she was convinced that leaving “the one, great and true Church” was not the right way to do so.³¹ In her opinion, the Church needs to

23 Autobiography, chapter XLII.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 Autobiography, chapter XVIII.

28 Autobiography, chapter XXII.

29 Autobiography, chapter XXXVI.

30 Autobiography, chapter XXXIX.

31 Autobiography, chapter XXXVI.

confront and acknowledge its history and its erroneous ways.³² Through her studies of church history, Loyson-Meriman became eager for a radical reform of the Roman Catholic Church. She believed she had found the right time for reform in 1869, with the Vatican Council convened by Pope Pius IX.

2 The Vatican Council (1869–1870)

“The announcement of an Oecumenical Council to be held at the Vatican was the breaking of a dawn announcing a glorious day”.³³ This appraisal, made by Loyson-Meriman, expresses the hope she poured into this council for reforming the Roman Catholic Church, which for her meant liberating it from its “deplorable state”³⁴ and bringing all of the churches into “brotherly relations and finally into Catholic Unity”.³⁵ This ideal of an “apostolic brotherhood” encouraged her to keep her expectations high for the council convoked by Pope Pius IX, which is known today as the First Vatican Council. However, her expectations were not met. The dogma of papal infallibility and supremacy, which was declared by the Vatican Council, in 1870, was the main reason for the next schism within the Roman Catholic Church.³⁶ Many liberal Catholics did not agree with the proclaimed dogma and they protested vehemently. Already during the council itself, the formal definition of the pope’s infallibility had been fought, albeit unsuccessfully, by a minority of bishops.³⁷ Not least, they saw it as problematic from a church-

32 This point of view was shared by other Roman Catholics, such as, for example, Lord Acton, a student of the church historian, theologian and Catholic priest, Ignaz von Döllinger, both of whom opposed the doctrine of the pope’s infallibility, see further: Schatz 1993, 33.

33 *Autobiography*, chapter XLIV.

34 *Ibid.*

35 *Autobiography*, chapter XLIV.

36 See Schatz 1992–1994; see also Kelly 2009, 149–173 and Conzemius 1969.

37 Most minority bishops had factual-theological reservations about the doctrine of infallibility. The attitude toward the question of infallibility ran right across national groups, but the German-speaking and francophone groups, primarily, were in the minority. The opponents of infallibility, Maret, Gratry, Darboy and Dupanloup from the francophone side, as well as Rauscher, Hefele, Ketteler, Schwarzenberg, Strossmayer (from Hungary) for the German-speaking side: for more information on this, see Schatz 1993, 36–44.

historical perspective since it would also have to be applied retroactively to the past.³⁸ Catholics who did not accept the Council's decisions were excommunicated. This led to the formation of protest movements in Germany and other German-speaking countries, out of which the church of "Old Catholics" came into existence. Loyson-Meriman and the French priest Père Hyacinthe were both part of this protest movement and the thereafter-formed Old Catholic Church. Loyson-Meriman informs the reader of her autobiography that she had heard that Père Hyacinthe "has given to the world the central idea of Reform – which will be the nucleus of the new church".³⁹ Père Hyacinthe was, indeed, among others, a leading figure of the protest movement.⁴⁰ The self-perception of the protest movement he and Loyson-Meriman joined was that it should be a Catholic reform movement and its guiding principles lay in the first thousand years of the Church's history.⁴¹ This orientation is reflected in the movement's name, "Old Catholic".

3 The Vatican Council's Disputed Ecumenicity

One of the protest movement's most common and widespread arguments was that the Vatican Council was not ecumenical, and therefore, its dogmas were not legitimate or binding. The German canon lawyer, Johann Friedrich von Schulte, who was one of the leading figures of the protest movement, in his 1887 work, *Der Altkatholizismus*, rejected the Council's ecumenicity based primarily on its formal character.⁴² Under this point, he summarised various arguments, particularly the lack of transparency and missing information regarding the true reasons for calling the council beforehand, the modification of procedural rules (*Geschäftsordnung*) during the Council, and his doubts about the legitimacy of the voting procedure itself. For Loyson-

38 Above all, this concerned the case of Pope Honorius I (625–638 CE), who was condemned as a heretic at the Sixth Ecumenical Council in Constantinople (681 CE). On the Honorius question, see the article by Prof. Dr. Angela Berlis in this volume.

39 Autobiography, chapter XXXII.

40 Berlis 2013, 188–206.

41 Berlis 2012, 57–71.

42 Schulte 1887, 273–296.

Meriman, who was aware of these arguments, there was another more prominent reason to doubt the Council's ecumenicity.⁴³ According to Loyson-Meriman – as passages from her autobiography about the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea make clear – a council can only be ecumenical and valid when the whole church is represented. Therefore, she argues that “the absence of the Oriental Mother Churches from the Convocation of Pius IX rendered the Vatican Council non-ecumenical, invalid and in no way binding upon Christians”.⁴⁴ There is, however, another important fact she refers to in her autobiography when she clarifies her idea of what constitutes an ecumenical council. She writes that the First Council of Nicaea was intended “to call a reunion of all Christians from all lands and of all races, for open and free discussion of all things concerning Christianity”.⁴⁵ She concludes that the reason for convoking a council should be the unity of Christians. She questions why convening the whole of Christianity, rather than just the Roman Catholic Church had not been a priority – first and foremost, the Anglican Church, as well as the other Protestant churches, as she believed they represented a major part of the body of believers. Since this idea of including Anglicans or Protestants was not a feature of the First Vatican Council, she argues that the Council's intention was not to seek the reunion of Christians.

Loyson-Meriman looked to the First Council of Nicaea as the ideal model for an ecumenical council and thus, by taking this historical event as precedent, she argues against the ecumenicity of the Vatican Council. This, in turn, served as an argument for rejecting the dogma of papal infallibility. The question of who should be invited to take part in ecumenical councils and whether a council should include Anglicans and other Protestants preoccupied her a great deal. She had never entirely relinquished certain

43 During the First Vatican Council, Loyson-Meriman resided in Rome and bishops of the minority, mentioned in footnote n. 37 above, met in her home, see: *Autobiography*, chapter XLIX.

44 *Autobiography*, chapter XLIV.

45 *Autobiography*, chapter XLII. However, it is important to note here that the historical fact is that the Nicean Council was mainly Greek-speaking, since the Western bishops, in particular, could not attend it (the Roman bishop, Sylvester I (314–335 CE), sent two priests to represent him). Yet, two bishops had even come from beyond the imperial borders, see Kelly 2009, 21.

beliefs from her early life when she entered the Roman Church as a Protestant. Her ideal of an ecumenical council in which she wished to have a unified church of all Christians represented was strongly intertwined with her religious identity. Identities are not only the manifestation of connections to communities, families and groups with which one shares commonalities, but also, significantly, of a connection to history.⁴⁶ The memory of the early, undivided church exemplified by the First Council of Nicaea not only justified her rejection of the ecumenicity of the Vatican Council, but also legitimised her religious conviction to unify Protestantism and Catholicism in her life.

4 Unrighteous Power Structures?

The Roman Church as an institution has a strong hierarchy with the pope at its head. Through the dogmas of the pope's infallibility and juridical supremacy, his position got even stronger.⁴⁷ Loyson-Meriman acknowledged this and describes the power structures in her autobiography:

“the Bishop of Rome who hitherto had only spiritual charge of his Diocese, began to take on temporal authority, which in time became Supremacy, [...] claiming power over all Christian citizens and Sovereigns throughout all nations. [...] this assumption of supreme power by the Bishop of Rome, with his pretension of unique authority in doctrine, deprived him ipso facto, of canonic authority and legitimate position as decreed by the Oecumenical Council of Nicae [sic] [...] and ever since, the See of Rome has been occupied by an illegal, heretic, schismatic and usurping Bishop”.⁴⁸

According to Loyson-Meriman, the position of power the pope had acquired throughout the centuries, culminating in infallibility, was not legitimate. On the contrary, in her eyes, the binding ecclesiastical order should be the one

⁴⁶ Alcott forthcoming, 11.

⁴⁷ Schatz 1993, 178–184.

⁴⁸ Autobiography, chapter XLII.

established at the First Council of Nicaea, where the Christian church was organised and structured under five bishops.⁴⁹

In her autobiography, she further describes the inner structure of the Roman Church. For her, its ecclesiastical hierarchy was defined by the priests' dependence upon the Holy See. One reason for this dependence she saw in the "forced celibacy" of the clergy.⁵⁰ In her view, celibacy represented "unrighteous chains",⁵¹ which were used to bind priests to the "unrighteous, unnatural and demoralizing Papal system".⁵² She argues against it as follows:

"Those who know the history of the Church, know that from its beginning not only priests, but Bishops were married and took active and intelligent part in all deliberations [...] up to 1086, when the Pope Gregory VII formally prohibited the marriage of the clergy. [...] the argument [of Rome] was that 'marriage would detach the priests from their dependence upon the Holy See, in proportion as they became attached to their wives, their children and their country. To permit them to marry would be to destroy the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, and to reduce the Pope to being nothing more than Bishop of Rome.' That argument was the destruction of a Holy Clergy and the premise of Papal Infallibility, which is destroying the Latin Church".⁵³

In this example, we see how Loyson-Meriman used historical developments to justify her opinion to abolish celibacy. Firstly, it should be noted here that she is referring to the habits of the early Church to strengthen her position against papal infallibility. Just as the dogma of the pope's infallibility and juridical supremacy strengthened the papal claim to power, it reduced the bishops' ordinary authority, and therefore, only expanded the disparity of power between them. In Loyson-Meriman's eyes, this dogma was a result of the papal system and its power structure, which was supported by the vows of celibate priests who were solely dependent upon ecclesiastical hierarchy.

However, this was not a neutral historical example for Loyson-Meriman. Rather, it is closely linked to her religious conviction. In 1872, Emilie

⁴⁹ Here, Loyson-Meriman is referring to the so-called "pentarchy" of the five patriarchates of Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople and Jerusalem.

⁵⁰ Autobiography, chapter XLVII.

⁵¹ Autobiography, chapter XLII.

⁵² Autobiography, chapter XLVII.

⁵³ Autobiography, chapter L.

Meriman married the priest and former monk, Père Hyacinthe Loyson. Once more, the situation of the early Church, in which the clergy was still allowed to marry, served Loyson-Meriman as a point of orientation. Marrying a Roman Catholic priest meant she had first-hand experience of the idea of reforming the Roman Church through abolishing celibacy. Indeed, the couple saw their marriage as a reform of the Church.⁵⁴ Hence, arguing for the legitimate marriage of priests represented part of their shared religious conviction and identities.

5 A Parting of the Ways: A New Church Coming into Existence

A characteristic of conflict situations is the incompatibility of the objectives (which are sometimes mutually exclusive) of the actors involved in such situations.⁵⁵ In her autobiography, Loyson-Meriman describes her leaving the Roman Church as the only way out of what had become, for her, an unbearable situation:

“We asked, is not this the moment to put forth every effort in our power to maintain Christian faith, which can only be done for the Roman Institution by sane and radical Ecclesiastical Reform. [...] when reform is impossible, the best way to escape political and religious oppression, as well as corruption and error, is migration, as all history [...] prove[s]”.⁵⁶

She underlines her argument with the biblical immigration of Abraham to the promised land, the exodus of the Israelites out of Egypt and the immigration to and founding of the United States of America. These historic

⁵⁴ Berlis 2015, 285–300, 288; Before their marriage, Hyacinthe Loyson wrote in his diary on 16 June 1869, that Emilie Meriman had told him that she felt “that she, I and GOD together are one, and that we are working towards the birth of a new church”, in: Houtin A. et Couchoud P.-L., *Du Sacerdoce au mariage I*, Paris 1927, 141; see also *ibid.*, 85, 141, 169; see also “Concerning my Marriage”, in: *Father Hyacinthe, Catholic Reform: Letters, Fragments, Discourses*, transl. Madame Hyacinthe-Loyson, London 1874, 114–126.

⁵⁵ Stobbe 1980, 190–237, 199.

⁵⁶ *Autobiography*, chapter XLVII.

examples served her as an orientation for leaving things behind – in this case, the Roman Catholic Church – and starting afresh.⁵⁷

From 1873, united in protest against papal infallibility and primacy of jurisdiction, Catholics organised themselves into communities in Germany, Switzerland and Austria. These communities thus began to form independent “Old Catholic” dioceses and with the consecration of bishops in apostolic succession in Germany (1873) and Switzerland (1876) a path towards a connection with the church in Utrecht was set in motion. Furthermore, the church was legitimated by the state. The Old Catholic churches became the bearer of reforms. During the 1870s, obligatory celibacy was abolished, the position of laypersons was strengthened by giving them co-responsibility, which was legally anchored in the Church’s constitution, and once again, as in the ancient Church, the bishops were considered the ordinary heads of their dioceses and elected by vote.⁵⁸ This reflects an attitude that was diametrically opposed to that of ultramontane Catholics – the latter supported supreme papal authority, and therefore, also the dogmas of the First Vatican Council. Thus, the power structures that gave Loyson-Meriman cause for concern, namely the factors of authority and hierarchy in the Roman Catholic Church, were reformed. From the beginning of their formation, the Old Catholics looked for close relations with the Orthodox and Anglican churches, who both orientated themselves on the traditions of the ancient Church. At the second Old Catholic Congress, in 1872 in Cologne, a commission was established with the aim of bringing about the reunion of the churches. This reflects the ecumenical view held by Loyson-Meriman, who herself had led her prayers and actions towards the “lost Unity of faith by the Re-union of the Churches”.⁵⁹ Ignaz von Döllinger, considered an important contributor to the development of the Old Catholic

57 It is important to note here that the self-image of the Old Catholic Church is not that of a *new* church, on the contrary, they held on to the *old*, i.e. the previous church; in their view, it was the Roman Catholic Church, with the proclaimed dogmas of the pope’s infallibility and juridical supremacy, which had taken a new path. However, from a general church-historical and sociological point of view, it is, in my opinion, a reform movement that first started within the Roman Catholic Church, and then, however, came to represent the formation of an independent and *new* church.

58 Küppers 1978, 337–344.

59 Autobiography, chapter XXXIV.

Church, met with approval, not least from Loyson-Meriman, for his work on the reunion of the churches.⁶⁰

This connection between the proponents of the protest movement and the later established Church is not surprising given that objectives are usually closely linked to the self-image and programmatic approach of the actors involved in conflict situations.⁶¹ In order to show one's new religious affiliation and membership to a new church, it is necessary to differentiate between the newly-formed religious group and the traditional religious group. In this way, the new image of oneself and of one's religious affiliation can be constructed and expressed. One step in this process of creating and legitimating one's new religious affiliation is the use of historical reasoning.⁶² The connection between historical reasoning and religious conviction is clearly demonstrated by the case of Emilie Loyson-Meriman's idea of reform.

6 Conclusion

What did it mean for Emilie Loyson-Meriman to be an Old Catholic? This cannot be reconstructed in its entirety here. However, in one of her articles, in which she points out that she was an Old Catholic, she aligns herself with ancient Israel. To her, this meant obeying God's Word, which she was sure encouraged people to protest against everything that is wrong:

“I am an ‘Old Catholic’ – as old as the hills of Judea, when among them there went up and down those whom the Master taught, [...] in whose teachings was certainly the sentiment of *protest* against all that was false, as well as the principle of *order* for all that was good; God's works and laws bearing witness”.⁶³

⁶⁰ J.J. Ignaz von Döllinger, *Lectures on the Reunion of the Churches*, London 1872; The German version was published much later: Von Döllinger Ignaz, *Ueber die Wiedervereinigung der christlichen Kirchen: sieben Vorträge gehalten zu München im Jahr 1872, Nördlingen 1888*. In 1880, Loyson-Meriman enjoyed translating Döllinger's lectures on the reunion of the Churches into French, see: *Autobiography*, chapter XXXIV.

⁶¹ Stobbe 1980, 199.

⁶² Benz 1961, 49.

⁶³ Emilie Hyacinthe Loyson, *Old Catholics and Old Presbyterians, The Independent ... Devoted to the Consideration of Politics, Social and Economic Tendencies, History, Literature and the Arts*, July 3 1890; 42, 2170; *American Periodicals*, 13.

She uses history to claim at least two things with this statement: first, that being an Old Catholic, for her, means taking her place in a lineage that can be traced back to the beginning of God's history with His people; second, that her protest against the dogma of papal infallibility and juridical supremacy is justified by God's teaching of protesting against all things false.

Church history is full of examples of theological disputes, internal conflicts, and ruptures in the Church. However, the voices of women in these conflicts are rare because women "have been written out of history".⁶⁴ Whether women's voices were taken into account depends not only on whether their written sources were considered (ir)relevant for transmission, but also on whether historians analysed this material in the first place, because historiography is always a perspective account of history. Not only does this make Loyson-Meriman's thoughts precious, but her testimony also sheds further light on gender issues. Loyson-Meriman speaks of historical people who have influenced her spiritually.⁶⁵ It is characteristic of her that she chose Catherine of Siena (ca. 1347–1380) as her patron saint and made references comparing herself to the saint. Catherine of Siena, canonised by Pius II in 1461, was engaged with the historical questions of her time, and thus, at least two parallels to Loyson-Meriman stand out.⁶⁶ Both of these women wanted peace among Christians and wanted a reform of the Church. Loyson-Meriman particularly admired the courage that Catherine of Siena mustered to persuade Pope Gregory XI (1370–1378) to leave Avignon. In fact, Catherine of Siena acted as an admonisher and advisor to Gregory XI, putting him under pressure to return to Rome. Loyson-Meriman wrote, impressed by her patroness, that Saint Catherine had taken "the Pope by the beard" and told him with all openness and with the "divine power and eloquence"⁶⁷ what "his duty"⁶⁸ was. The importance of acting in untenable situations was a concern for others, as well as for Catherine of Siena.

⁶⁴ Berlis/Methuen 2000, 5–7; see also Gause 2006.

⁶⁵ Autobiography, chapter XXVIII.

⁶⁶ Alberigo 1989, 30–34.

⁶⁷ Autobiography, chapter XXVIII.

⁶⁸ Emilie Hyacinthe Loyson, *Old Catholics and Old Presbyterians*, 13.

Protesting became a leading principle in Loyson-Meriman's religious life and historical facts became the tools she wielded to do so.⁶⁹ In history, she found an "inexorable teacher"⁷⁰ who taught her "signal object-lessons for all time".⁷¹ This was the reason why she has wished for more careful teaching and study of ecclesiastical history in schools and universities. She hoped that this increased access to education would result in religious development in the form of reform.⁷² She wanted to implement in her own life the guiding principles she had discovered in the historical examples. She had entered the Roman Catholic Church as a Protestant and later married a former Roman Catholic monk and priest; she was against positions of power that contradicted her image of the early Church and she ended up being part of the protest movement that brought the Old Catholic Church into being. She based her decisions on theological arguments, drawing on biblical, secular and church-historical sources to underline her theological opinions. By using historical reasoning, she justified and strengthened her theological opinions and religious convictions.

Loyson-Meriman described her religious life as a religious development and said that, in the end, her doctrinal doubts had disappeared.⁷³ Her autobiography concludes with the dogma of the pope's infallibility adopted at the First Vatican Council. This circumstance led her to say that her enemies could not call her a heretic; but that she was a schismatic towards Rome.⁷⁴ In this and myriad other ways, Loyson-Meriman truly embodied, in her daily life, her ideas of reform.

69 Autobiography, chapter XVI.

70 Autobiography, chapter XLVIII.

71 Autobiography, chapter XLII.

72 Ibid.

73 Autobiography, chapter V.

74 Autobiography, chapter LI.

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