

Foreword

“THE DEEPEST SIGNIFICANCE OF the past,” writes the former archbishop of Canterbury Michael Ramsey, “is that it contains reflections of what is eternal. Saintly men and women of any age belong to more than their own era: they transcend it.” In *Spiritual Counsel in the Anglican Tradition*, David Hein and Charles Henery not only present this insight of Archbishop Ramsey’s (in the chapter “A Pilgrim’s Journey”); they also demonstrate its truth through the whole scope of their anthology. Saints necessarily exemplify their own time and culture, yet somehow they also stretch beyond these limits, living as they do on the eschatological edge of the kingdom. When holy men and women leave us some tangible part of their thought and prayer through their writings, our sense of the communion of saints is immensely deepened. The living and the dead meet as contemporaries, addressing one another across centuries.

Sometimes we find that part of the benefit in reading earlier authors lies in their very distance from us. Samuel Johnson could be none other than an eighteenth-century thinker, while John Donne reflects the English Renaissance at its best. And so the various Anglican authors contained in this volume, spanning four centuries and two continents, will challenge our characteristic assumptions simply by being people of their own times and places—gifted people, to be sure, but still products of their distinct historical contexts. After reading them, we may find we want to consider cultivating virtues admired in a previous era, but now out of fashion; these virtues may still be needful for us. Our horizons can be enlarged by fellow pilgrims whose outlook on God, on life, or on the Church is not quite our own, pressing us to examine our own perspectives afresh.

Every generation seeks some embodiment of the “wonderful counselor” Isaiah extolled. And in every generation, the grace of holy Wisdom resides in faithful Christians of exceptional discernment. Here

“the reflections of what is eternal” may show up as counsel that is consistently apposite. While books cannot entirely substitute for personal guidance, they can help steer us through the sometimes rough and confusing terrain of the soul when access to face-to-face pastoral care may be limited by geography or other circumstances. Even when we enjoy sound mentoring, these authors continue to educate us in the ways of the Spirit. *Spiritual Counsel in the Anglican Tradition* draws upon sage representatives of the Anglican family, some of whom are well-known figures, while others are more obscure.

As we become more acquainted with them, we will probably wish to delve into the writings of those who address us most helpfully and pointedly; and if we are driven back to the sources, this collection of diverse writings will have been all the more successful in its pastoral goal. The topical—not chronological—grouping of these selections underscores our solidarity with every generation that aspires to maturity in Christ, and it assists the reader who wishes to pursue a particular avenue of thought. As in a good conversation, words need to be punctuated by thoughtful silence. I suggest using these texts as a form of *lectio divina*, reading no more than a selection or two a day, meditating on them, pondering their practical application, and finally allowing them to serve as a springboard for prayer.

The sections that deal with our corporate sacramental life, the mystery of Christ experienced through the round of the church year, and aspects of personal prayer all strengthen these essential foundations of Christian discipleship. Yet Anglican pastoral thinking has never focused exclusively on worship and prayer as the sole domain of the Spirit. On the contrary, Anglican spirituality characteristically seeks a robust sanctification of the ordinary, “so that God may be glorified in all things” (1 Pet 4:11). Hence we find the Anglican counselors in these pages concerned with such mundane matters as friendship, the care of children, marriage, money, work, art, aging, animals, and the created order. Nothing in our lives is to be untouched by grace. We need the integrative wisdom of these Anglican forebears to see how, even in the microcosm of our lives, in Christ “all things hold together” (Col 1:17).

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