

# THE SPIRIT OF ANGLICANISM

BY  
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THE documents from which this compilation is drawn fall within the period from 1594 to 1691, for which the “seventeenth century” will pass as a convenient and sufficiently accurate term. On the earlier of these dates Hooker published the first four books of his *Ecclesiastical Polity*, which in the quiet living of Boscombe he had written out in memory of his controversy with Travers in the Temple. They were intended primarily to be a defence against the servile submission to Geneva that threatened to reduce the English reformation to a mere echo of the radical Protestantism of the Continent. In effect the finished product went far beyond any such defensive intention. Here first the Anglican Communion was made aware of itself as an independent branch of the Church Universal, neither Roman nor Calvinist, but at once Catholic and Protestant, with a positive doctrine and discipline of its own and a definite mission in the wide economy of Grace. As it has been well said, “Hooker was the father of Anglo-Catholic theology”;<sup>1</sup> for it was he who laid the foundation upon which the majestic edifice of Caroline divinity was built. The publication of the *Ecclesiastical Polity* is thus the given *terminus a quo* for any compilation designed to illustrate the specific genius of Anglicanism.

For the *terminus ad quem* the year 1691 has been chosen as dating the schismatic activity of the Non-Jurors, and as marking a notable break in English ecclesiastical history. As a result of that schism we see on the one side a succession of writers who in the main, though with some lack of balance, follow the true line of development from Hooker and Laud, but whose place in an exposition of Anglicanism might be challenged on the ground that they can hardly be called members of the National Church. On the other side the theology of those who continued within the Establishment becomes irrelevant to our purpose for another reason. The extrusion of so large a body of the more Catholic elements left the rest of the Church for several decades a prey to the rising tide of rationalism and deism, so that the apologetic literature of the orthodox took, perforce, a new turn. The aim, for instance, of such a work as Bishop Butler’s *Analogy* is not so much to define the peculiar position of the Church of England as to defend Christianity against the open or disguised attacks of infidelity. Thus the special task of the seventeenth century may be said to have been accomplished by the date 1691.

## I

Within this period of nearly a hundred years a considerable diversity of opinion may be discovered among admittedly Anglican writers on points of doctrine and discipline, and something of that uncertainty may be felt in the selections here brought together. England, it is important to remember, did not produce at that time, and indeed has never produced, a single theologian to whom appeal can be made for a final sentence in disputed questions, as the Germans could appeal to Luther and the Presbyterians to Calvin, nor had she any such ultimate court of authority as the Counter-Reformation possessed in the Council of Trent. Possibly Hooker, had he written at the conclusion of our century, might have summed up the scattered thought of his predecessors in quasi-definitive form; but that is conjecture, and as a

1. L. S. Thornton, *Richard Hooker*, p. 101. Cf. H. M. Gwatkin, “If Jewel is the apologist of the Reformation, Hooker is the apologist of the Church of England” (*Church and State in England to the Death of Queen Anne*, pp. 263 f.).

matter of fact no such legislator did appear. Of this condition the apologists of the age were well aware; they could even turn it into a boast, as when Chillingworth declared proudly that we “call no man master on the earth.”

Diversity of opinion and diffusion of authority are patent on the surface of the Caroline literature. But withal an attentive student of the whole movement will be more impressed by the unity within the variety and by the steady flow of the current beneath all surface eddies towards a definite goal. What we have to look for in the ecclesiastical literature of England is not so much finality as direction; and if this implies a degree of inconsistency among those groping for the way, such pliancy of mind in approaching the mysteries of revelation may prove safer than premature fixation. The finished system of Calvin fell into ruins as soon as a single flaw was detected in its chain of logic, and a single discrepancy between fact and theory may bring the “fundamentalism”<sup>1</sup> of Rome to the same doom. In Aubrey de Vere’s account of his conversion to Rome there is a passage that bears on this point. “Carlyle,” he says, “was one of those who gave me the most curious form of warning: ‘I have ridden over here to tell you not to do that thing. You were born free. Do not go into that hole.’ I answered: ‘But you used always to tell me that the Roman Catholic Church was the only Christian body that was consistent, and could defend her position.’ He replied: ‘And so I say still. But the Church of England is much better notwithstanding, because her face *is turned in the right direction.*’ ”<sup>2</sup> The word “right” may be a begging of the question, but it was in establishing a certain “direction” and in avoiding a premature fixation that Anglican theology in its formative period showed at once its character and wisdom and its underlying consistency.

## II

If challenged to state the motive that started the Church of England on her peculiar course, the historian is likely to reply that it was political rather than religious. The first impulse towards independence was given by the Papal refusal to admit the annulment of Henry the Eighth’s marriage to Catherine of Aragon, and this conflict, however much it may have concerned that monarch’s taste in wives, was presented to the people as though the monarchy and national autonomy were at stake. Henry was a Catholic still. He applied the “Whip with the Six Strings” (the Six Articles) with an inquisitorial zest that must have been infinitely distressing to the cautious Cranmer. And then no sooner was the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome discredited than there arose a new party, influenced from Geneva, which denied the authority of all bishops whatsoever. And again the issue, as presented to the people, became confused with politics. It was henceforth the cry of the Court and the Church that episcopacy and monarchy were indissolubly bound together: No Bishop, no King! Between these opposite intrusions from the Continent the Church of England was thus directed, primarily by reasons of State, to the *via media* which has been her watchword from that day to this. And the secular aspect of the cause persisted, in somewhat changed form, until the Revolution. We see it in Sanderson’s theory of ecclesiastical laws: “In this, as in many other debates, the *mean* between the two *extremes* seems to be the truer opinion, and safer to follow,”—that is the middle way between “Romanists who would exempt the clergy from all jurisdiction of the civil magistrates”

1. I use this term in its modern connotation to describe those who cling to a belief in the complete inerrancy of the Bible. It signifies a position the very opposite of the Anglican instance on the “fundamentals” of faith, of which later.

2. *Recollections*, p. 321. (The Italics are in the original.)

and “the Puritanical Reformers, . . . who . . . take away all power, authority, and ecclesiastical jurisdiction from the Crown and confine it wholly to their own classes and conventions.”

It is in the light of this thrust of civil influences from abroad that we should interpret the special form which the Erastianism of the age took in England, and should consider the disabilities imposed upon Romanist and Nonconformist alike which were not removed until well into the nineteenth century. How far Erastianism is right or wrong in principle, what should be the exact relation between Church and State, is a question still *sub judice*. It flared up after the Vatican Council between Gladstone and Newman; it flared up again recently in a presidential election in the United States, and is ablaze now on the Continent of Europe. The issue is not dead. Manifestly it is not the business of the present writer to express an opinion on the peculiar form of the problem as it confronts Great Britain to-day; but those who may care to know the natural bent of the English mind will find matter for reflection in the arguments and distinctions of the older controversialists arranged under Section XVII.

That, however, is by the way. For our purpose the point of interest is the manner in which the Church gradually disentangled her theology from these secular disputes as she became more aware of her separate mission and function. And it is characteristic of this evolution that at the beginning so much heat was expended upon what might be called the furniture of religion. To turn from the contemporary debates on the Continent over the metaphysics of faith to the bickerings in England over the adjuncts of worship is to enter a different world—to the uninstructed reader a world wherein the more spiritual aspects of the conflict are lost in matters at once petty and materialistic. But that is the Englishman’s way, to talk about what lies on the surface and to avoid as long as possible the deeper concerns of the heart. At any rate, not only were the vexed problems of faith involved in the wrangling over surplices and posture, communion table and altar, but we can see them in the literature from Hooker onwards slowly coming out into the open.<sup>1</sup>

### III

Such quite clearly is the external origin of the *via media* which was to become the very charter of the Church. It may have begun as a protest against the political claims of Rome on the one side and the Genevan theories of State on the other. It may have looked at the outset like a shift to avoid difficulties, a *modus vivendi*, at the best a “middle way” as commended by Donne because “more convenient and advantageous than that of any other Kingdom.” But behind it all the while lay a profounder impulse, pointing in a positive direction, and aiming to introduce into religion, and to base upon the “light of reason,” that love of balance, restraint, moderation, measure, which from sources beyond our reckoning appears to be innate in the English temper. Thus Hooker, at the inception of the great work which opened our era, carried this principle up to that first eternal law which is no less than the nature of God Himself, and then showed how from it depends as a golden chain the second eternal law, stretching down, link by link, to the humanly devised polity of Church and State:

If therefore it be demanded why, God having power and ability infinite, the effects notwithstanding of that power are all so limited as we see they are, the reason hereof is the end which He hath proposed, and the law whereby His

1. This subject has been treated amply and acutely by Principal Tulloch in the Introduction to his *English Puritanism and Its Leaders*.

wisdom hath stinted the effects of His power, in such sort that it doth not work infinitely, but correspondently unto that end for which it worketh, even, all things χρηστῶς, in most decent and comely sort,' all things in Measure, Number, and Weight.

That is the note struck by the master musician, and it gives the key to all that follows. We shall find Joseph Hall exalting measure as that which guides the celestial bodies in their harmonious courses, and as “the centre wherein all, both divine and moral philosophy meet, the rule of life, the governess of manners, the silken string that runs through the pearl-chain of all virtues, the very ecliptic-line under which reason and religion move without any deviation.” And Fuller, who employs the same metaphor of the silken chord through the pearl-chain of the virtues, is careful to explain that “moderation is not an halting betwixt two opinions, when the thorough-believing of one of them is necessary to salvation,” nor is it mere “luke-warmness” in matters divine, but a law and an ideal whereupon all a man’s soul may be set, even to martyrdom.

So understood, the principle of measure is at once English and Greek. One is reminded of Aristotle’s definition of the ethical mean as both a limit and unlimited. Courage, for instance, in relation to the vices of rashness and cowardice is a measured avoidance of excess in either direction; but in itself, as a motive of conduct, it has its own direction to which there is no limit. A man cannot be too courageous; there is no such thing as excess of virtue. Quite consciously, as could be shown by specific passages, the Anglican divines were expanding this Greek precept of ethics into a spiritual law of Christianity.

The point is, that though in matters of human expediency measure and restraint may seem to result in compromise, in the sphere of religion, where ultimate principles are involved, they depend upon a positive choice of direction which is intrinsically different from compromise. And this difference can be illustrated by the heretical and the orthodox attitude towards the primary doctrine of Christianity. Here the Fathers were confronted by the plain fact that the Founder of their faith was presented to them by a tradition going back to those who had lived with Him, as at once, in some unique manner, both divine and human, both God and man. Reason was thunderstruck by such a paradox; the wisdom of the schools could make nothing of it. Logic could deal with Him as God only or as man only, and indeed as one or the other. He did so appear to the docetic or humanitarian philosophy of Gnostics and Adoptionists. But theology was bound to discover a path between these two exclusions; and the great heresy, the first to threaten the very existence of Christianity as a religion, was an attempt to explain the *via media* as a compromise. To the Arians Christ was neither quite God nor quite man, but a something intermediary which resembled the natures of both without being purely either. Against this plausible and seemingly reasonable escape between the horns of faith’s dilemma (which in fact possessed the virtues neither of reason nor of paradox), the Church, by the Definition of Chalcedon, simply thrust its way through the middle by making the personality of the Incarnate so large as to carry with it *both* natures.<sup>1</sup> Evidently in this case at least the principle of measure does not produce a diminished or half truth, but acts as a law of restraint

1. The reader who wishes further to consider the character of the path thus cleft may be referred to Dr. Quick’s works—notably his *Liberalism, Modernism and Tradition* and his *Gospel of Divine Action*. It is fashionable to-day to pour scorn on the Christology of Chalcedon. But Dr. Quick in the books referred to (particularly in the latter, where he interprets the purpose of the Incarnation in terms of the twin concepts of Symbol and Instrument) seems completely to vindicate the conclusions of the Fathers.

preventing either one of two aspects of a paradoxical truth from excluding the other. Nor is the middle way here a mean of compromise, but a mean of comprehension.

Now the dogma of the Incarnation, so conceived, is not specially Anglican, since it is held by Roman and Reformed and Anglican alike so far as they adhere to the Catholic faith—indeed, so far as they remain Christian. The Abbé Bardy, for instance, in a work published with the full *imprimatur* of Rome, concludes his account of the early Christological controversies with just such an exposition of the *voie moyenne*, which he declares to be the criterion of Catholic orthodoxy not only for the mystery of the Incarnation, but for the Trinity and other dogmas *de fide*.<sup>1</sup> The course of the Anglicans was peculiar in this, that deliberately and courageously they clung to the principle of mediation in regions of doctrine and discipline, where, as they contended, the Romanist and the radical Protestant did in fact stray aside into vicious extremes of exclusion.

If we follow this contention through its ramifications we shall find that it revolves about the nature of authority in Tradition and Scripture as bearing upon two main points: (1) the practical distinction between fundamentals and accessories of religion, and (2) the axiomatic rejection of infallibility.

## IV

The distinction between fundamentals and accessories, or, in the more usual language of the day, between things necessary for salvation and things convenient in practice, was clearly drawn by Hooker and recurs constantly through the ensuing literature. The fundamentals are few and revealed, the accessories are indeterminate and more or less dependent on human invention. So Jeremy Taylor declares that the “intendment” of his discourse on *The Liberty of Prophesying* is that men should “not make more necessities than God made, which indeed are not many.” For the Anglicans of the seventeenth century those few things necessary for salvation were summed up conveniently in the Creeds, particularly in the so-called Apostles’ Creed. And for the truth of this Creed they appealed, as did other Christians, to the double authority of Tradition and Scripture. They held the common belief that the twelve articles of the Creed went back to the actual Apostles, each one of whom made his individual contribution to the formula, and so handed on the deposit of the faith to the keeping of successive generations. But behind the Creed, guaranteeing its truth and in general confirming the authority of tradition where right and correcting it when astray, was the sacred canon of written books. For this reason Chillingworth, while allowing due weight to tradition in its place, could speak of the Bible as the religion, and, in case of dispute, the sole religion, of Protestants. “I am fully assured,” he wrote, “that God does not and therefore that men ought not to require any more of any man than this, to believe Scripture to be God’s Word, to endeavour to find the true sense of it, and to live according to it.” And he who looks for the plain indisputable sense of the Bible will discover that it consists, not in a complicated web of theological propositions nor in subtleties of definition, but simply in the presentation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God who was born and lived and died for the salvation of the world.

Certainly no Anglican divine of the seventeenth century, if questioned, would have admitted that faith in the Incarnation as the one thing necessary could be divested of such accessories as the Virgin Birth and the literal Ascension into heaven which are included in the Creed and based on the record of Scripture; but three quotations, from the beginning, the middle, and

1. *En lisant les Pères*, 2nd ed., pp. 35 and 43.

the end of our period, will show how the continued emphasis on what is fundamental was leading the Church in the direction of an utter simplicity. Hooker, commenting on the text, *These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God*, declares that the drift of Holy Scripture is to make men wise for salvation, the Old Testament by teaching of Him Who should come, the New by teaching that the Saviour is actually come. In the same vein, and more emphatically, Cudworth asserts that "the Gospel is nothing else but God descending into the world in our form and conversing with us in our likeness," in order "that He might deify us, that is (as St. Peter expresseth it), make us *partakers of the divine Nature*." And South, carrying on and, so to speak, closing the process of simplification, affirms that the fundamentals are embraced in a single article of faith: "Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

Just how literally such statements should be taken may be a matter of debate, but the direction in which the leading divines of England were moving cannot be missed by any unprejudiced reader of the literature. And it is certain that in thus isolating the few things, or the one thing, in the Bible necessary for salvation they saw themselves placed between the two fires of Romanist and Puritan. In their controversy with the former it was a question of tradition. To the Anglicans the value of tradition was measured by its tenacity of the original *depositum fidei*. It was not that they rejected the principle of development utterly, but that in matters fundamental they limited its competence to an interpretation of dogma held strictly at every step to the test of Scripture. Ussher, for instance, is definite on this point, when he denies that "any traditions should be accepted for parcels of God's word [that is as demanding implicit belief] beside the Holy Scriptures and such doctrines as are either expressly therein contained or by sound inference may be deduced from thence." Now the admission of "sound inference" as a canon of truth may seem to transfer the weight of authority from the book itself to the interpreter of the book, but practically the issue was clear and sharp. The quarrel with Rome was because of her practice of extending the fundamentals of faith by increments on the warrant of her own inspired authority, and so of creating, as it were, instead of obeying tradition. South was voicing the common view of all Protestants when he made the specific charge: "The Church of Rome has (in this respect) sufficiently declared the little value she has for the old Christian Truth, by the *new, upstart* articles she has added to it." And Newman was merely repeating what he had learned from the Caroline divines when he criticized the Council of Trent and the Creed of Pope Pius IV, because, "after adding to it [*i.e.* to the Apostles' Creed] the recognition of the seven Sacraments, Transubstantiation, Purgatory, the Invocation of Saints, Image-worship, and Indulgences, the Romanist declares, 'This true Catholic Faith, *out of which no one can be saved*, . . . do I promise, vow, and swear . . . most constantly to retain and confess, whole and inviolate, to the last breath of life.'"<sup>1</sup>

We have seen how a modern Roman Catholic apologist applies the law of the *voie moyenne* to the Christological formula drawn up at Chalcedon. There is in the same author an eloquent passage<sup>2</sup> in which he shows how the Catholic of to-day is united by the long continuity of tradition with the ancient Fathers, holding the same articles of faith, worshipping in essentially the same forms, employing many of the same words to express the deeper emotions of his heart before the majesty of God. It is a stirring appeal to the imagination intended to enforce the attraction of Rome as against the aridity of the merely Protestant service. But reading it, one asks what, if these pages had fallen under his eyes, would have been the response of an

1. *Prophetical Office of the Church*, 1st ed., p. 268. The words in italics contain the real sting of the charge.

2. Bardy, *op. cit.*, pp. 50 ff.



Anglican Protestant of the seventeenth century, who claimed also to be genuinely Catholic, to whom the unsundered memories of the past were as the very breath of life, and who was passionately devoted to the liturgy and forms of adoration so marvellously transferred to his own native tongue in the Prayer Book. Certainly he would have been moved by the nobility of the French Abbé's sentiment; certainly he would have accepted the perpetuity of tradition as a power that confirms the truth, while it enhances the grace and poetry, of worship; but with equal certainty he would have contended that the obstinate retention by Rome of discordant elements added in the darker ages enveloped the core of truth to such an extent as to obscure what had been handed down from the beginning. To the Roman apologist for continuity he might have uttered the Virgilian retort: *Sic vos non vobis!*

In their repudiation of the Roman efforts to cover her dogmatic innovations under the authority of tradition, and in their insistence on the Bible as the sole final criterion of orthodoxy, the Anglicans stood with the Protestants; but on the other side they departed from the Reformers of the Continent and from the Puritans at home in their rejection of what they regarded as an illegitimate extension of Scriptural authority. Again it was a question of fundamentals and accessories. Certain inferences from the central dogma of the Incarnation they allowed as self-evident, even in a way as essential to the faith that saves; but they hesitated over, and with the passing of time drew back more resolutely from, the doctrines of absolute predestination, effectual calling, justification by faith alone, imputed righteousness, and the whole scaffolding of rationalized theology which Luther and Calvin had constructed about the central truth out of an unbalanced exposition of isolated texts. Not that way lay the simplicity of the faith.

Also, and even more unhesitatingly, they followed Hooker in his protest against the Puritan denunciation of all the accessories of ritual and discipline for which specific warrant could not be found in Scripture. Here they stood with Rome in so far as they would admit the immense value of tradition in much that was vital to religious observance, though it might not be necessary to salvation.

The true thread of continuity, the Anglicans held, was broken either by superimposing new and disputable dogmas upon the divine revelation after the manner of Rome, or by disallowing due weight in the practical sphere of religion to the wisdom of accumulated human experience after the manner of Geneva.

## V

Closely connected with the distinction between fundamentals and accessories was the axiomatic denial of infallibility. One of the surprises awaiting a student of the ecclesiastical literature of the seventeenth century is the frequency with which this word "infallibility" occurs in unexpected places. It was the veritable bugbear of the English mind of that age as it has become again since the Vatican Council, and upon the attitude to all that is conveyed by those fatal syllables hangs the ultimate philosophic difference, or let us say incompatibility of temper, between Roman and Anglican Catholicism and, in a fashion less sharply defined, between radical and Anglican Protestantism. "Two things there are," says Hooker, "which trouble greatly these later times: one that the Church of Rome cannot, another that Geneva will not, err." And in a sweeping assertion Hales sums up the Anglican position thus: "Infallibility either in judgement, or interpretation, or whatsoever, is annex neither to the See of any Bishop, nor to the Councils, nor to the Church, nor to any created power whatsoever." Now such a

statement, which might be supplemented by quotations from other and more authoritative, at least more Catholic writers, if taken superficially would seem to leave religion a prey to the universal flux of uncertainty; but not if full weight be given to the phrase “created power.” Evidently this does not exclude from infallibility those necessary truths which proceed directly from a divine and uncreated source. What Hales had in mind is exactly the addition to these fundamentals by tradition or their expansion by reason. So Laud, replying to the Romanists’ usurpation of the text, *I will send you the Spirit of Truth, which will lead you into all truth*, is quite explicit: “‘All’ is not always universally taken in Scripture. Nor is it here simply for ‘all truth’; for then a General Council could no more err in matter of fact than in matter of faith, in which yet yourselves grant it may err. But ‘into all truth’ is a limited ‘all’: ‘into all truth absolutely necessary to salvation.’ . . . A Church may err, and dangerously too, and yet not fall from the foundation.” On the same ground Chillingworth drew his distinction between “being *infallible in fundamentals* and being an *infallible guide in fundamentals*,” and adds, “that there shall be always a Church infallible in fundamentals, we easily grant; for it comes to no more but this, *that there shall be always a Church*.”

Taking together then the two axioms in regard to fundamentals and infallibility, we can see that the Anglicanism of the seventeenth century comes to something like this: The means divinely ordained for the salvation of mankind is plainly set forth in the Bible in the story of the birth and life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This truth, as Chillingworth maintained, is of such “admirable simplicity”—though its simplicity and plainness rather enhance than diminish its significance—as to need no inspired interpreter. But there are recorded in the same book other facts and doctrines, a vast body enveloping, so to speak, the central truth, which, however great their importance, are not necessary to salvation, and do not open their meaning so immediately. For the interpreting of these secondary truths, and for the drawing of inferences therefrom, upon which rests the whole structure of disputable theology, there is no oracular organ of infallibility appointed among men or in any human institution. This distinction is made clearly by Chillingworth in words that might be taken as the charter of Anglican liberalism: “Though we pretend not to certain means of not erring in interpreting all Scripture, particularly such places as are obscure and ambiguous, yet this, methinks, should be no impediment but that we may have certain means of not erring in and about the sense of those places which are so plain and clear that they need no interpreters; and in such we say our Faith is contained.” The Anglicans believed and declared that, however the human mind might go astray in its efforts to interpret and unfold the whole mystery of God’s economy of salvation, yet by the office of the Holy Ghost the truth in its simplicity should not be lost or ever utterly obscured, and the Church as the instrument of Grace should not fail from the earth.

## VI

At this point the Anglican attitude towards infallibility raises a question to which only a tentative answer can be given, in accordance with one’s notion of what was implicit in the direction of Caroline theology. All branches of the Church in the seventeenth century held the Bible to be infallibly inspired by God; if, then, the more liberal of the Anglicans at that time had been faced by the results of modern Biblical scholarship, how would they have reacted? Popes, they knew, were against Popes, Councils against Councils, some Fathers against others, age against age; what then if they had been compelled to extend this *sic et non* to the ultimate



source of all authority, and to admit that the Bible also was a “created power” and therefore to the same degree and in the same manner subject to error? Practically, indeed, they had come very close to such an admission,—how close we can see from Chillingworth’s admission that the Bible, though *infallible in fundamentals* is not an *infallible guide in fundamentals*. The distinction was directed against the claim of Rome that she was the inspired guardian and unerring interpreter of Scripture. But its implications go beyond any such purpose of apology; for quite manifestly in practice an oracle that offers no infallible guide to its meaning is itself for any who consult it fallible. So far Chillingworth, and those for whom he spoke, would have been driven by the force of logic to go. But would they have yielded the next step? Would they, in submission to the evidence of critical examination, have been ready to acknowledge inconsistencies and contradictions in the Bible itself as a “created power,” while yet holding fast to the belief that it contains the record of a fundamental truth upon which the assurances of faith may be built? This is not an idle question. Upon an affirmative answer to it depends the identity of the Anglican spirit as manifested in that day and in ours. Thus much is at stake, namely whether the Church can be said to have moved in a straight direction, whether, in a word, it is proper to speak of any such thing as Anglicanism.

Now no one is likely to dispute the statement that the eighteenth century failed in the main to carry on the line of development indicated by Hooker and Laud and Beveridge and Ken, and historians have pretty well agreed in holding the significance of the Oxford Movement to be exactly this, that it brought theology back to the path from which it had deviated in the arid intervening years. The renewed emphasis on the Church as a divine institution, on the continuity of the Catholic tradition as overleaping the more radical and destructive elements of the Reformation, the enrichment of public worship, and the deepening of individual religious experience,—these were common to the leaders of the Movement, and they were a deliberate regression to the seventeenth century. All this abides, and Newman’s part in the great *instauratio ecclesiae* will not be forgotten. But it may still be asked whether in the thought of him who is by common consent the greatest of the Tractarians there were not also certain traits which would have diverted the Church from its true course, had they completely dominated the Movement as they finally did prevail in his own life.

The question first arises as to whether Newman’s *Prophetical Office of the Church*, avowedly a defence of the Anglican *via media*, was conceived in loyalty to the spirit of the Caroline divines. So the author thought it to be, and on the face of it the animus of the book would appear to support his view. The attack on Romanism is powerful, indeed in places unmeasured if not virulent. In no modern work will one find a more eloquent exposition of the Anglican attitude towards fundamentals and infallibility. In the chapters dealing directly with these subjects he speaks with a philosophical consistency and clarity to which the older theologians seldom attained. Under the influence of Butler he even went beyond what the seventeenth century would have granted in its revolt from the pretensions of infallibility. “We, for our part,” he declares categorically, “have been taught to consider that faith in its degree as well as conduct, must be guided by probabilities, and that doubt is ever our portion in this life.” Nevertheless there are passages in the book which awaken a suspicion that his apology for Anglicanism was dictated more by affection (a perfectly sincere sentiment) for the Communion of his birth than by the native propension of his mind, and that his hostility to Rome was caused in part by misunderstanding and in part by an unconscious impulse of self-defence. And this apprehension is confirmed by his attitude towards the higher criticism of the Bible which was before very many years to trouble the sleepy conscience of the Church.

Now historically considered Newman's conservatism may not be of much importance, since it was shared by most of his countrymen. But one gets the impression that his "fundamentalism" (in the modern, not the Caroline, sense of the word) was not due to ignorance of German, and would have been as strong were he living to-day as it was in the mid-nineteenth century; that it was in fact symptomatic of a deep-seated craving for the support of an absolute external authority which, from the beginning and despite all his protests, he was dimly conscious of needing for his faith. It is significant that in the *Prophetic Office*, after his large, if not too large, concessions to probability, after his dismissal of "the claim of infallibility" as "an expedient [*i.e.* a cunning device of Rome] for impressing strongly upon the mind the necessity of hearing and of obeying the Church," he proceeds to plead for an infallible organ of authority, compounded of "Scripture, Antiquity, and Catholicity," of which the Church of England is the sacred custodian. It is a disputable thesis, but one for which a good case might be made, that Newman, deep down in his heart, was never in full sympathy with the liberal spirit of the seventeenth century, and that the Oxford Movement, so far as it was swayed by his genius, has not been without danger of leading the Church away from the line of its normal development.

Certainly at least anyone who comes fresh from reading the Caroline divines to Gore and the other essayists of *Lux Mundi* will feel that here, rather than in Newman, he has picked up again the straight continuity of direction. That book of essays is not final, it is rather a new beginning; but in its determination to face the results of increased knowledge (particularly as shown by the editor in his Preface to the tenth edition), and in its frank extension of fallibility to the Bible, while insisting on the Personality of Christ and on the Incarnation as the fundamental dogma on which the whole fabric of Christianity rests, one breathes again that air of larger freedom which frightened Newman into the prison-house of absolutism. It would be interesting, if space permitted, to show in detail how exultantly the leaders of Anglican thought since the appearance of *Lux Mundi* have responded to this reacquired note of intellectual liberty. We know what has happened in the other great branches of the Church. The Roman Curia has condemned both the good and the bad of "modernism" unflinchingly and, it would seem, irredeemably. For their part the radical Protestants have either clung to an impossible theory of Scriptural inerrancy, and so have put themselves hopelessly out of court, or else, bowing to the results of the higher criticism, have seen their faith in the fundamentals of religion go down in ruins along with their anti-catholic bibliolatry. With the recent literature of "fundamentalism" on the one side and of the *liberalische Theologie* (I use the phrases technically) on the other side one need only compare such works, to name a few out of many, as *Essays Catholic and Critical*, Canon Quick's *Christian Sacraments*, Sir Edwyn Hoskyns' and Mr. Noel Davey's *Riddle of the New Testament*, Dr. K. E. Kirk's *Vision of God*, Prof. A. E. Taylor's *Faith of a Moralist*, and the more recent essays on *Northern Catholicism*, to see the advantage of this line of the *via media* upon which the Church of England started out more than three centuries ago.

## VII

Looking backwards, then, upon the theology of the Caroline divines, we can see that their manifest intention was to steer a middle course between the excesses of Romanist and Radical Protestant. Clearly also such a middle course was not in the nature of compromise or of hesitation to commit themselves to conviction, but was governed by a positive determination to preserve the just balance between fundamentals and accessories which was threatened by

an authority vested in the infallibility whether of Tradition or of Scripture. So far there can be no doubt in regard to the guiding principle of the Anglican *via media*. And at this point, if our sense of direction be right, we may venture upon a further step in definition, in the light of the continuity of the two movements instituted by Hooker and Gore. Here indeed we must proceed warily. But if we are looking for a single term to denote the ultimate law of Anglicanism, I do not see that we can do better than adopt a title which offers itself as peculiarly descriptive, despite the unsavoury repute it may have acquired from its usurpation by certain modern sects of philosophy; I refer to the title "pragmatism." The self-styled "pragmatist" of to-day is commonly one who, pretending to eschew what he regards as unverifiable theory, limits his assent to "facts," and whose criterion of fact is "that which works"—works, that is, by the test of *physical* experience. But etymologically there is no reason why the word "pragmatism" should be so narrowed in its meaning as to include only one half of human experience. Rightly understood it may be said that among philosophers Plato was the supreme pragmatist, in so far as he sought to defend his belief in "Ideas" as facts more real than the objects of nature by showing that there is a spiritual intuition larger, deeper, more positive and trustworthy, more truly scientific, than the clamorous rout of physical sensations. And by the same token there is no reason why we should shrink from describing the genius of Anglicanism as supremely pragmatic.

Such a pragmatism, then, if the word be allowed and if the more recent theology since the publication of *Lux Mundi* be the true heir and interpreter of the Caroline age, would come to this. Let us consider some questions. In the first place did the person Jesus ever live, was He born as our records assert and did He suffer death on the Cross? Secondly, did He, again as the records assert, think and speak of Himself as the Messiah, the Son of God? Now these, plainly, are questions of simple history the answer to which depends on the weighing of documentary evidence, exactly as in the case of any other recorded event of the past. So far the truth of the narrative may be granted without committing one's self to any supernatural creed. The real problem of Christianity begins with a question of a different order: When Jesus thought and spoke of Himself as the Messiah, the Son of God, was He what He proclaimed Himself to be or was He suffering a delusion? This also comes down to a simple question of fact, *pragma*, as do finally all questions of truth; but quite obviously the answer is to be sought otherwise than in the mere weighing of documentary evidence. We have passed from the province of history to that of philosophy and religion. All Christians of course believe in the actuality of this fact. If the Anglican differs from the Romanist or the radical Protestant, it is because more definitely and consciously than either he justifies his belief by the pragmatic test of experience, namely: "Does it work?" It is not that he rejects authority for an unchecked individualism; he sees that his personal experience is no more than a fragment of the larger experience of mankind, and must be controlled at every step by that accumulation of wisdom which is the voice of the Church. What he rejects is the Absolute of authority based on *a priori* theories of infallibility. Rather, looking within and without, he asks the consequences of believing or not believing. How does acceptance of the dogma of the Incarnation work out in practice? Does faith bring with it any proof of its objective validity?

Now pragmatism of this sort may seem to leave religion exposed to the shifting winds of human opinion, and, not to mention the charges brought against the Church of England by infallibilists of both branches, we have seen how Newman in his Anglican days confessed that faith must be guided by probabilities and that doubt is always our portion in this life. But Newman, it may be maintained, was here under a mistaken notion of the function and

scope of probability, a mistake which helps to explain his later defection from the body he was defending. Historic evidence can never rise above the probable, though unprejudiced scholarship can and does say that the external evidence for Jesus' own avowed pretensions to the Messianic role is so convincing as to leave no sound warrant for doubt. But it does not follow that the pragmatic test of our faith in Jesus as in very truth the Incarnate Word is subject to the same conditions. Except in those cases of miraculously sudden conversion, of which the Anglican is temperamentally suspicious, though he would not deny their occasional happening, it may be that the Christian convert must begin with the probabilities with which history ends. It may be that he will never attain to that ecstasy of immediate knowledge claimed by the mystics, of which again the Anglican is inclined by nature to be sceptical. But, quickly or slowly, the experiment of believing may pass into experience, and the result of experience may be of such a kind as to bring the believer, however incapable he may be of convincing others, to a sure conviction that he has chosen the right way. He may come to know by effects which leave for him no doubt of their cause that the Christ in whom he trusts is not dead but living, and that faith has brought him into touch with fact. Nor is it arrogant to suggest that the Anglican insistence on distinguishing the fundamentals, or the one fundamental, of Christian theology may help to clarify this fundamental of Christian experience. At any rate the pragmatist may be aware of the working of divine Grace and certified of revelation, and this without leaning for support on the theory of an oracular infallibility committed to any visible organ of speech. Such, very nearly, would appear to be the meaning of Chillingworth in his retort upon the Romanists:

You content not yourselves with a moral certainty of the things you believe, nor with such a degree of assurance of them as is sufficient to produce obedience to the condition of the new Covenant, which is all that we require. God's spirit, if He please, may work more, a certainty of adherence beyond a certainty of evidence; but neither God doth, nor man may, require of us as our duty to give a greater assent to the conclusion than the premises deserve.<sup>1</sup>

## VIII

But perhaps the full force of the word pragmatic as applied to the Church of England can be seen even better in her attitude towards the priesthood and its sacramental function. We may concede that the Anglicans, particularly at the early stage of the controversy over the eucharistic sacrifice, rather shunned the term "priest" and even went so far as to deny that a "minister" should in any true sense be so called. This Hooker declares explicitly; and the "pious and profoundly learned Joseph Mede" defines "priest" as the English for *presbyter*, not *sacerdos*, as being a "minister" rather than a "sacrificer." It is fair, however, to add that the direction of Anglican theology was towards a more Catholic, even a more Roman view; and Hickes, in his monumental treatise on *The Christian Priesthood Asserted* (which as the work of a Non-Juror falls out of our period), was in the true line of development from Laud and Cosin and Thorndike.

1. Compare the statement of Professor Williams in *Northern Catholicism*, p. 233: "The final and clinching proof of Christian truth, which raises 'probability' to certainty, for intellectual and simple alike, lies in its verification through first-hand experience of God in Christ, and of Christ in the Church and the Sacraments." That, I take it, is in the line, the direction, from Hooker through Gore.

But the acuteness of the debate centred not so much on the priesthood itself as on the various orders of ministry, more especially on the episcopate. Here, as we have seen, the Anglicans held primarily to a view that might be regarded as a sort of compromise. With Rome they adhered to the historic authority of bishops against the immoderate hostility of the Protestants to any distinction of orders; while at the same time they stood with the Reformation in disavowing the equally immoderate pretensions of the Bishop of Rome. The pragmatic note is felt in the kind of arguments by which they defended their medial position. Here indeed we encounter some differences in method. Certain controversialists contend that the distinct order of the episcopate can be justified by statements in the Bible; others, including notably Hooker, prefer to base their defence on the usage of sub-apostolic antiquity and on the continuous tradition of the Church since then. But in either case their ultimate appeal is to expedience and thus “pragmatic,” though pragmatic in the sense that the values discovered by practice are spiritual as well as physical. It is in harmony with such arguments that the most convinced Episcopalians hesitated to rank the Divine origin of episcopacy among the *credenda*; and thus it was a common opinion among them that the Protestant communions on the Continent, which possessed no bishops at all, or at best no unbroken succession of bishops, should not for that reason be denied their place as a true, though errant, branch of the Church Universal. But they were insistent on the demonstrably historic fact that the integrity of the Church has been sustained chiefly by the recognition of episcopal authority, and their vast scholarship was nowhere better displayed than in their fierce rebuttal of the Roman efforts to deprive the English Church of its catholicity by discovering flaws in the consecration of the Elizabethan bishops. Very definitely they held that the spiritual function of the priesthood was proved by experience to depend for its higher and purer efficacy on the Apostolic Succession of the bishops. And from this pragmatic argument they could go on to infer that episcopacy, even though devised by man rather than commanded by revelation, was sanctioned by Providence to be the means of preserving the Church as the channel of Grace.

Whatever uncertainty may hover about the earlier conception of the priesthood there was practical unanimity in regard to the importance of the Eucharist administered by sacerdotal hands. Here, plainly, was a fundamental of religion which, standing parallel with the Incarnation, is the prime factor in the sacramental function of the Church as that is of its dogmatic theology; or, rather, it might be said that the two are not so much parallel factors as twin aspects of the one divine economy of salvation. The Anglicans widely admitted the “real presence,” not corporal but spiritual, of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist. In so far, they tended away from Reformation Eucharistic theology towards the Objectivism of Rome. But in a different respect, namely in their emphasis on the need for the cooperation of faith in the communicant, they leaned towards the Protestant position. In regard to the spiritual fact behind the Eucharistic rite they were thus in the line of the *via media* between the extremes, to speak locally, of Rome and Zurich, and their departure from the one might be measured by their comprehension of the other. The radical difference from both appears when we touch the question of theory.

In so far as the Anglicans theorized at all about the *how* of the Sacrament, the prevalent view would seem to have followed Calvin and one side of St. Augustine in using the language of dynamic or instrumental symbolism. The physical participation, as Hooker expresses it, is “instrumentally a cause of that mystical participation”; and a favourite metaphor for the symbolic power of the consecration was to liken the elements to a legal document before and after the attachment of the royal seal. But they were not entirely coherent or, one gathers,

very deeply concerned in such explanations. Hooker avowedly adopts his instrumentalism as a kind of common denominator upon which Lutheran and Roman and Anglican might agree in peace, since it "hath in it nothing but what the rest do all approve." And in general such theories, when they occur, have the air of half-hearted attempts to find a substitute for the Tridentine dogma of transubstantiation, which is denounced quite whole-heartedly as bad theology and bad philosophy and as a legacy of error under which the Roman Church, owing to its presumption of infallibility, must stagger on for ever. Oftener and more characteristically the Anglican theologians refused *on principle* to theorize at all on the how of sacramental efficacy. So Andrewes: "Christ said, *This is My body*; He did not say, *This is My body in this way*." So Ussher, scorning the untenable metaphysics of Trent, declares that the real presence must be left an inexplicable mystery. And Bramhall sums up the whole contention with the theorists of either party, Roman or Protestant, finally and definitely. We know not, he insists, whether the real presence is by transubstantiation or consubstantiation, by production or conservation or adduction or assumption; and he quotes the great dictum attributed to Durandus of Troarn: *Motum sentimus, modum nescimus, praesentiam credimus*.

Why God should choose this special channel of sacramental grace we know not, any more than we know why His eternal purpose for the redemption of mankind should have necessitated the awful fact of the Incarnation; how the sacrament works we know not any more than we know how the death of His Son is made the instrument of eternal life. In such matters we are brought face to face with the causes and operation of Providence which reach up into the vast, transcendental, all-surrounding circle of the supernatural. But we do know by experience (*motum sentimus*) what faith and practice effect in our own souls. Here is not a reckoning of probabilities, but an immediate impress of reality growing ever from less to more distinctness; and, perceiving that the eucharistic elements do so operate, we believe in a supernatural power imparted to them (*praesentiam credimus*).

This is the pragmatic argument from effect to cause which permeates the theology of Anglicanism. Not only in the seventeenth century but from the time of Henry VIII to the present day, if there is any outstanding note of the English temper it is a humility of awe before the divine mysteries of faith and a recognition of the incompetence of language to define the ultimate paradox of experience. It is a pragmatism not of the lips only, as with the scholastics of the past or the present, but from a deep conviction that the rationalization of the supernatural is always in danger of pushing on to a formula which magnifies one half of the truth to an Absolute by excluding the other half. As Cudworth, one of the most metaphysical of the Caroline theologians, expressed it, "neither are we able to inclose in words and letters the life, soul, and essence of any spiritual truth, and as it were to incorporate it in them."

It is not fanciful to say that in the Anglican writers of the seventeenth century we find the Chalcedon of eucharistic theology. The perils alike of transubstantiation and receptionism are avoided: the one because it implies a docetic view of the divine operation in the Eucharist utterly inconsistent with that operation in the sacramental process considered as a whole; the other because it points to what in the language of the present day might be called sacramental epiphenomenalism. And here again, as in the Christology of Chalcedon, the middle way is not compromise; it is direction.<sup>1</sup>

1. To see how this direction has been carried on in Anglican Eucharistic theology compare the contribution of Will Spens to *Essays Catholic and Critical*; O. C. Quick, *The Christian Sacraments; the Report of the Anglo-Catholic Congress*, 1927; the Report of the Farnham Conference on *Reservation*, 1925; and F. C. N. Hicks, *The Fullness of Sacrifice*.



## IX

It may appear to some who have followed this essay in its endeavour, admittedly tentative, to get at the principles directing the course of the Anglican Church that the outcome is a “diminished” Christianity. Such was not the intention of the essayist. Nor is it the belief of the joint editors of this volume. Rather, as they have collected these documents from the stalwart divinity of a past age, they have been impressed by the richness and depth and beauty of the religious life to which that literature as a whole bears witness. In particular they have discovered no trace of “diminution” in a theology which aimed at separating the accretions to the faith from the dogmas necessary for salvation. It might seem that in so insisting on the kernel of truth as distinguished from its accessories, the Church was playing into the hands of a Lord Herbert of Cherbury and the others who were laying the foundation of deism upon an elemental set of beliefs which, as they supposed, were common to all the religions of the world; and it cannot be denied that after the schism of the Non-Jurors a portion of the established Church fell for a time under the chilling sway of that movement. But in reality the refrigeration of the eighteenth-century theologians was owing to their loss of grip on the very dogma which their predecessors had singled out. The fact of the Incarnation, with its corollary in the Sacramental life, was the one thing that could find no place in the five points of Lord Herbert’s universal religion and that was inimical to the whole trend of deism,—as it is to the kindred “religiosity” of the present day. As for the caviller who would admit this distinction yet would criticize the Anglican position as tending to narrow the scope of Christianity, it may be proper to ask whether he has ever really considered the infinite riches of the Incarnation and the Eucharist, their inexhaustible meaning, the depth and breadth of their transforming power upon conduct and character, the glory of their promise. The Anglicans were here in the great tradition of antiquity; they, as Cudworth and others knew, were but taking up the doctrine of Irenaeus and Athanasius: ὁ Θεὸς γέγονεν ἄνθρωπος, ἵνα ἡμᾶς ἐν ἑαυτῷ θεοποιήσῃ. Concentration may bring gain rather than loss; to intensify may be to move towards more of strength and certainty. We can remember the words of Christ Himself, His last perhaps upon the Cross: *It is finished*. It was the utter simplicity of the Christian faith concentrated upon an act of God’s merciful condescension that inspired one of the most modern and most Caroline of George Herbert’s poems:

Could not that wisdom which first broach’d the wine  
 Have thicken’d it with definitions?  
 And jagg’d His seamless coat, had that been fine,  
 With curious questions and divisions?  
 But all the doctrine which He taught and gave,  
 Was clear as heav’n from whence it came,  
 At least those beams of truth which only save,  
 Surpass in brightness any flame.

It was a favourite thesis of Baron von Hugel that the English Church, with all its excellencies, has failed in producing the variety and depth of the saintly life to be found within the Roman Communion. And this in a manner may be conceded. Naturally, in the matter of variety, it could not be expected that Christianity manifested through the temperament of a single people at a given time should produce as many different types of holiness as a Communion embracing a number of divergent nationalities. But if one will compare the lives in Walton with, let us say, the biographies of contemporary saints and mystics of a neighbouring

country collected by Abbé Bremond, it is not at all clear that the advantage lies with Roman Catholicism. And if to the little group commemorated in Walton's inimitable pages one adds Andrewes and Barrow and Taylor and Traherne and Henry More and Sir Thomas Browne and Ken, one will have a striking variety ranging through the man of prayer, the great scholar, the goldenmouthed orator, the romantic dreamer, the Platonic idealist, the devout physician, and the irreproachable prelate.

We may grant that among them all there is no one who stirs the poetic imagination quite as does St. Francis of Assisi. But, in the first place, such a character as St. Francis, coming before the Reformation, does in a sense belong to England of the seventeenth century almost as much as to France or Catholic Germany of the same age; for the Anglicans, though in the heat of controversy they may have spoken uncharitably of Romanism, did not forget that, as Hooker reminded the Puritans, their fathers had served God and found salvation in communion with the Pope. And secondly they might say, or we may say for them, that, though a St. Francis could scarcely be expected in England at any time, neither could a Hooker or a Ken be imagined in Italy. One star differs from another in glory, and the galaxy of English saints sheds a light very precious for the world.

It might even be argued with plausibility that the saintly type of the future, as the mediatorial work of Christ is better understood, will conform rather to the Anglican than to the medieval model. Anglicanism will never become formally the religion of the world, nor has Canterbury any ambition to usurp the place claimed by Rome; but there is reason to believe that a liberal *ethos* of Christianity, resembling that developed by Englishmen in their clear-eyed opposition to the pseudo-antiquity of the Reformation and to the tenacious medievalism of the Counter-Reformation, will more and more prevail in the Holy Catholic Church. The image of the Anglican branch of that brotherhood, rising before a mind imbued in the literature from which the following documents are compiled, is of one that *rejoiceth as a giant to run his course*.