

Preface to the 1989 Edition

For some people writing a book is the source of much pleasure. They are enthusiastic to proclaim a message, reveal a discovery, create profound characters, unearth an exciting plot. The finished work gives satisfaction in having created something worth while which can be made widely known. For me this book has not had that effect. Before undertaking the task I felt an initial enthusiasm roused by trying to write an objective assessment of Anglo-Catholicism. I thought there would be satisfaction in expounding the achievements of the movement and in seeing the interrelation of its ideas. As I began to undertake the research, to recall old times, and to evolve a theoretical framework, potential gladness began to fall away and turned into heaviness. I had to accept the facts, see what they added up to, and seek an explanation. But why should the task have turned out to be so displeasing when other books I have written have given me gratification?

The short answer is that when I was a young boy I was in part religiously nurtured in Anglo-Catholicism and visited many of the churches influenced by the movement in and around London. My religious convictions were unquestionably strengthened, as, through friends and reading books, I became more and more attracted to ritualistic services which were so much more exciting and absorbing than those of the parish church which I attended from time to time with my parents. I was proud to be a server, to talk to Anglo-Catholic priests, and to boast of my knowledge of the peculiar niceties of ritual. This early affectionate attitude towards Anglo-Catholicism has never left me, but, during the Second World War and subsequently at a theological college, I found myself distanced from my early love. And so after over forty years of absence I was back in it once more. But with a difference. The

emotional piety was replaced by the sharp tools of sociology. It is this which has proved to be so painful. As is so often the case, however, with pain there is purification. The writing of this book may have been one such occasion. Critical analysis inevitably leads to a search for basic positions and the raising of fundamental issues. These are evident in the introduction and the concluding chapters and I trust that in them my own position with regard to Anglo-Catholicism is plain for all to see.

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Preface to the 2008 Edition

This book saw the light of day in May, 1989. It was reprinted in 1991 and now it is to be printed again, this time by the James Clarke. There were two things I hoped for as I began the study of Anglo-Catholicism. The first was that the book, which would appear to be the only one of its ilk, would give rise to other books on Anglo-Catholicism. They would, I hoped, cover further historical and sociological research into this remarkable phenomenon existing at the heart of the Church of England and within the Anglican Communion. By no means had it been my intention to write a book that in any sense could be called definitive. What I produced related to only one aspect of Anglo-Catholicism – Anglo-Catholicism at the parish level and within well marked boundaries of time. The project left plenty of room for others to expound different aspects of Anglo-Catholicism, for example, the theological writings of Anglo-Catholics, the place of Anglo-Catholicism in the British Commonwealth and the USA, Anglo-Catholicism as it would develop with the impending ordination of women to the priesthood, and so on.

The second hope was for a response, perhaps theological, to the more theoretical theme of the book, namely, the ambiguity of Anglo-Catholicism – the existence of a Catholic movement within a church commonly held to be Protestant. It is a church whose origins were anti-Roman and which embraced, some principles of the Reformation. One may well ask: how, in fact, do devotees of Anglo-Catholicism acknowledge the dilemma? How do they live with such an ambiguity? What of the attempts to resolve it? Focussing on the ambiguity should force Anglo-Catholics, I had hoped, especially theologians associated with the movement, to expound the meaning of the word Catholic within their particular context. The word Catholic is much used but has a multiplicity of meanings. The most searching problem is to know in what sense the word can be used within the Church of England. To call oneself an Anglo-Catholic implies a recognition of the theological nature of the Church of England, but how is that reconciled with an

ideal that is Catholic? To explore the meaning of the word Catholic is not only an historical pursuit but one of present-day necessity that would benefit Anglo-Catholics as well as the Anglican Communion at large. It might, also, help to resolve the issue of ambiguity. There is, however, a further, more sociological question: what keeps priests and laity of strong Catholic inclinations loyal to Anglicanism?

Some reviewers of the first edition of the book agreed with the hope of the author that further books would follow – one that would open up more extensively the history of Anglo-Catholicism and might take up the more abstract themes of the book. Were this book to have been published in the hey-day of Anglo-Catholicism from say, 1900 to the 1930s, there might have been a firm response to it. No doubt the response would have been of a critical kind, from theologians of academic repute, people of the stature of Charles Gore, Lionel Thornton, or Eric Mascall. That there has been none reflects, not least, the contemporary intellectual weakness of Anglo-Catholicism.

However, a few books have appeared since the 1980s on the subject of Anglo-Catholicism. Whether they have arisen as a direct response to this book is open to serious question. May be they have not, but the author is, nevertheless, pleased to see their publication.

The three books that have in some way dealt with various aspects of Anglo-Catholicism are as follows. One, written by Michael Yelton, concentrates on the history of Anglo-Papalism (he calls it Anglican Papalism) from 1900 to 1960.¹ It emphasizes the thought, movements and actions of priests, some rather remote, whose use of ritual and furnishing of parish churches imitated those of the Roman Catholic Church at the time. This was usually of a Baroque nature. Yelton's is a useful and detailed study of this extreme form of Anglo-Catholicism, where followers, while remaining in the Church of England, yearned to be incorporated in some way into the Church of Rome. They thought that imitation was the best communal means of being accepted. Their hopes have been dashed and when official talks were organised between Roman Catholics and Anglicans, their members were completely disregarded. This kind of Anglo-Catholicism is an important element in understanding the wider movement and is central to the thesis of the book that now confronts the reader.

The second book is provocative and journalistic in tone. It is by a Roman Catholic convert, William Oddie. His *Roman Option*,² criticizes Anglo-Papalism with which he once aligned himself. The book concentrates on modern times, starting roughly from when the Church of England in Synod decided to ordain women to the priesthood.

The third, an academic, historical study, is that by Nigel Yates, who has focussed on ritualism in the nineteenth century.³ He offers a thoroughly researched, detailed account of the movement up until 1910. But he goes beyond this, despite the title, and devotes about 40 pages to the later fortunes of Anglo-Catholicism, until 1980.

While it does not deal specifically with Anglo-Catholicism as a movement in Anglicanism, Alan Wilkinson's study of the Community of the Resurrection, a famous religious order based in Mirfield near Leeds, contains many insights into the movement. It was published in 1992 and showed the great influence of the Mirfield Fathers, not only in England in the 1930s, but also in South Africa.⁴

As just stated, the book reprinted here never set out to be a comprehensive, historical account tout court of Anglo-Catholicism. Yates has now filled a gap that the author hoped would be filled. Because none of these books has dealt with Anglo-Catholicism in the way the present book has, and because no comparable text exists, the publishers see virtue in reproducing it as an analytical examination of what is essentially a British religious phenomenon, begun in the Established Church in the nineteenth century.

The author sees no reason to change anything that he wrote in the late 1980s, apart from one or two minor details, corrected in the errata. More details and examples could be added, but that was practically possible. Thus, the book continues to stand as a statement of the nature of Anglo-Catholicism viewed rationally and sociologically at the parish level.

Recently several people have approached the author to suggest he might write a further book on the fortunes of Anglo-Catholicism after the ordination of women to the priesthood, for the book stops just before it occurred. For various reasons, this has proved impossible. In reproducing the present book, however, some kind of postscript was thought necessary. All the author has been able to do is to write in broad terms and fairly briefly, at the end of this edition, what he sees to be the way Anglo-Catholicism has evolved since the 1980s.

1. M. Yelton, *Anglican Papalism. A history: 1900-1960*, Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2005.

2. W. Oddie, *The Roman Option. Crisis and the Realignment of English-speaking Christianity*, London: Harper Collins, 1997.

3. N. Yates, *Anglican Ritualism in Victorian Britain, 1830-1910*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

4. A. Wilkinson, *The Community of the Resurrection: A Centenary History*, London: SCM Press, 1992.