

The Anglo-Catholic Vision

By John Orens¹

ANGLO-CATHOLICS ARE A PECULIAR LOT

Editor's Note: This article is book marked by numbers, which refer to Professor Oren's Sources at the bottom of the article. It also contains links to the historical figures he discusses within the article. Those links, also in blue underlined text, take you to websites where you can find more information on the individual. It should be noted that all of these people and subjects often have HUNDREDS OF WEBSITES devoted to them. The link we have provided may not fit your needs. To find a site that more suits your needs please go our suggested search engine All The Web.com and type in the name in the search box.

Not long ago, my wife and I were invited to a theological soiree: one of those events at which we Anglicans excel, the weighty questions of faith and morals being tempered by good food and fine wine. The setting could not have been better: the sheltered garden of a house in Georgetown. Our fellow guests were equally pleasant, but despite their conviviality we soon found ourselves embroiled in controversy. One of our dinner companions was a member of the vestry of a notoriously conservative Anglo-Catholic parish, and it took only a few minutes of conversation to set us arguing—decently and in good order, of course—about the ordination of women. Listening to our dispute with obvious bewilderment was a retired Orthodox bishop. "You are members of the same Church, are you not?" he asked. We assured him that we were. "You are both Anglo-Catholics?" Once again we answered yes. "How is it, then, that you disagree so strongly?" he continued. "I do not understand." "Neither do I," I was tempted to answer. But, in truth, I understood all too well.

Putting the best possible light on our dispute, I could have explained that we Anglicans are a peculiar lot, and that Anglo-Catholics are more peculiar than most. From the beginning we have been a movement divided, numbering among our company radicals and reactionaries, prophets and profiteers, liberals and literalists. I might have added that Anglo-Catholics are as flamboyant as they are disputatious, and that our arguments should be seen as the noisy but harmless recreation of a lovably daft family. This is why stories about ecclesiastical eccentrics are a sacred part of our folklore. Consider the oft-told tale of Father Wagner of Brighton, a worthy cleric who spent his entire fortune building odd churches. One he insisted be given the precise dimensions of Noah's ark. Another—the underground Chapel of the Resurrection—became so damp that it was transformed into a facility for storing meat. Driven to despair by his son's improvidence, his father, the Vicar of Brighton, poured out his grief in a sermon which took as its text: "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic."¹

We take comfort in stories like this, because for Anglicans—if not for Russian Orthodox prelates—quirkiness covers a multitude of sins. But, as we all know, the late twentieth century is too dark a time for a community to survive on genial lunacy alone. Despite its accomplishments, ours is a frightened generation haunted by the persistence of evil and paralyzed by the sense of its own moral impotence. Half in anger and half in desperation, the age demands that we give an accounting of ourselves. And from this insistent plea our colorful past offers no refuge. There was a time when we could answer this question with an air of triumphalist assurance. The Anglo-Catholic literature of earlier days is filled with pugnacious certitude. But today we are haunted by doubt. Overtaken by revolutionary changes in worship, Church order, and sexual morality—not all of them for the better—Anglo-Catholicism is a movement in disarray. The disagreements we once thought mere differences of temperament now appear to be differences of faith. Self-proclaimed traditionalists issue panic-stricken cries to flee from the present into an imaginary past of their own devising. Skeptics, who long ago dismissed us as relics of a bygone and credulous age, predict our imminent departure to what Karl Marx called "the dustbin of history." That we stubbornly refuse to disappear into the

past or into the trash is little less than miraculous. God, it would seem, is not done with Anglo-Catholics. There is something he still wants us to do. But what can it possibly be?

We have heard this question before; we have asked it of ourselves. But in our zeal to answer it we fall again and again into temptation. We form committees, hire consultants, develop parish profiles, and gaze intently into our navels: all in the hope of assembling enough bits of information so that we can issue what contemporary jargon calls a “goals statement.” But vocation is a mystery and, as Saint Ambrose once observed, “God does not save his people with arguments. To face the future we do not need facts about what we are, but the wisdom which comes from knowing who we are. Our destiny, and that of the whole Church, is already planted in our hearts, waiting only for the inner vision to bring it to light.” Words like these may seem to further compound our dilemma, wrapping mystery in the miasma of paradox. If the Catholic faith holds the future, why not simply define our beliefs, deduce their consequences, and proclaim our mission to the world?

The outward signs of Anglo-Catholicism are obvious enough: the creeds, the apostolic ministry, the Mass, eucharistic vestments, the whole panoply of smells and bells. But how do we explain their inward and spiritual grace? Not simply by expounding their doctrinal significance. Of course, we must speak of dogma, for underlying our Catholic religion are beliefs about God, the sacraments, the Church, and the world. But this not where grace begins nor where faith ends. Orthodox Christianity is a way of life and a vision of heaven on earth. As the divisions among Anglo-Catholics make painfully clear, doctrine by itself tells us very little. Only when it is placed in the soil of Christian living, nourished by the Church’s corporate experience, and illumined by prayer does it point to the unspeakable things of God. Before we rush to analyze dogma, we must first tell the story which gives it birth. To discern our future we must recall our journey from the past to the present. And ours is a saga with adventure enough to challenge even the resourceful Odysseus.

THE BEGINNING

The beginning, of course, is the Word. The opening of Saint John’s gospel is the heart of the Catholic faith. Recapitulating the epic of creation in a hymn to Christ made flesh, John reveals the mysterious nexus of spirit and matter, divinity and humanity, which under girds the Church, bears fruit in the sacraments, and gives substance to the world to come. It is no exaggeration to say that the long history of Catholic Christianity is the chronicle of men and women struggling to embody John’s vision in their own lives and that of the world. Being human, they often failed. What God had joined together, they preferred to rend asunder.

From the days of the Apostles, the Church was prey to all sorts of dualism: dogma was divided from experience, spirit was riven from flesh. For more than a thousand years the Church endured these wounds, sustained by the prayers of the saints, the promises of Scripture, and the fleshly spirituality of the Mass. But by the sixteenth century, the Catholic vision had been so obscured that the Church in western Europe was convulsed by religious revolution. The common root from which all Anglo-Catholics spring is the particular tangle of politics, passion, and faith we call the English Reformation. The continental reformers broke with Rome because they believed it had erred on matters of faith. But Henry VIII freed the Church of England from papal domination, not because he wanted new doctrines, but because he wanted a new wife. Thus, when it began, the English Reformation was a purely political affair. The Mass, the three-fold order of ministry, and the old ceremonial were carefully retained. What Henry had established, in fact, was a national Catholic Church. There were, of course, Protestants who wanted to go further, and when the King died it was they who gained control of the Church. Out went the Latin Mass, the altars, the statues, and a host of private devotions. But even then, Protestant reformers were not strong enough to extirpate the Church’s Catholic identity.

For one thing, there were too many Catholics—clergy and laity alike—who were attached to the old faith, and no one wanted to repeat in England the terrible religious wars dividing the continent. Moreover, a number of leading Protestants—among them Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury—were themselves attached to the traditions of Catholic Christianity: the discipline of the daily office, the sacred rhythm of praise and adoration, and the centrality of the Eucharist. This was more than mere sentiment or theological caution. The early English reformers were rooted in a way of life which took for granted the continuity of the Church, the sanctity of its order, and the authority of its patristic heritage. Thus, they kept the soil from which vision would spring, even as they laid the foundations of the fabled *via media* between Rome and Geneva.

THE PRAYER BOOK AND THE EUCHARIST

The path was not always synonymous with the high road of principle. But in the end Catholic truth was vindicated, as providence plucked faith from politics. The dispute over how to administer the Eucharist is a perfect example. The First Book of Common Prayer, issued in 1549 when the Henrician Catholics were still powerful, instructed the priest to address communicants as follows: “The body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life.” Three years later, determined to expunge both the Roman and Lutheran conceptions of the real presence, Cranmer removed the offending sentence, substituting: “Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving.”

When Elizabeth became Queen in 1558, (Reigned 1558-1605) she tried to reconcile her Catholic and Protestant subjects by commanding yet another revision of the Prayer Book. Unwilling to go back to 1549 as the Queen herself desired, yet unable to stand by the bare words of 1552, the bishops simply combined the two sentences, thereby taxing the tongues of the clergy and muddling the minds of the faithful. But in so doing these Elizabethan prelates unwittingly planted the seeds of Catholic devotion. Writing at the end of the Elizabethan age, Richard Hooker drew from our much maligned Anglican ambiguity the summons to turn from theological speculation to sacramental adoration.

“What these elements are in themselves,” he confessed, “it skilleth not. It is enough that to me which takes them they are the body and blood of Christ Why should any cogitation possess the mind of a faithful communicant than this, O my God thou art true. O my soul thou art happy?”²

Alas, where Richard Hooker saw the mystery of our participation in Christ while Puritans saw only popery. They demanded that the work of the Reformation be carried to its inevitable conclusion: the abolition of episcopacy and the elimination of the Prayer Book. Had Cranmer and his contemporaries been driven by the same anti-Catholic zeal, the Puritans would probably have had their way. But too much of our Catholic heritage had been saved for it to be suddenly tossed overboard. As Hooker put it: “In the Church we were and we are so still.”³ Indeed, by the beginning of the seventeenth century, it was High Churchmen who dominated the Anglican establishment: staunch Episcopalians who insisted on beautiful and reverent worship. To Puritan complaints about external piety, these “Caroline divines” replied that the outward beauty of eucharistic worship reflects and deepens our inward sanctification. Significantly, they also rejected the Puritan conception of charity as spiritual solace for the saints, emphasizing instead material provision for all who suffer.⁴

These differences are not accidental. They are rooted in the Caroline conviction, shared by Hooker and the mystical theologians of the Eastern Church, that in Christ’s deified humanity we are made partakers of the divine nature. Anyone seeking the visionary sweep and cosmic confidence of Caroline spirituality need look no further than the Private Prayers (*Preces Privatae*) of Lancelot Andrews, the Bishop of Winchester. Against the Puritan’s narrowing conception of the Church as an ark of believers set entirely apart from Papists, unbelieving humanity, and fallen nature, Andrews’ prayed for the unity of Roman Catholics, Orthodox, and Anglicans, for the welfare of the human race, and for the whole creation.⁵ To the Carolines, worship is delight. “Prayer,” wrote George Herbert,³⁷ is “the Churches banquet”

A kinde of tune, which all things heare and fear;
 Softnesse, and peace, and joy, and love, and blisse,
 Exalted Manna, gladnesse of the best,
 Heaven in ordinarie, and well drest,
 The milkie way, the bird of Paradise,
 Church-bels beyond the starres heard, the souls bloud,
 The land of spices; something understood.

“Prayer by Bishop Lancelot Andrews”

“Heaven in ordinarie,” the Word made flesh: this is the Catholic vision which could have sustained Anglicanism for centuries to come. But once again the demand for system and order shattered the symmetry of enchantment. The Puritans thought it too worldly, and when Archbishop Laud tied vision to monarchy and resorted to coercion to secure the faith, religious dissent and political unrest conspired to produce the tragedy of the English Civil War. When the clouds had cleared, the Church still stood. But although the forms of catholicity survived, their inner life had been exhausted. Having fought to restore bishops to their sees and Prayer Books to their pews, Anglicans were eager to put religious warfare behind them. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, Christian zeal was identified with fanaticism. The Church was revered, but only as a buttresses of civil propriety: a weapon in the struggle to keep the masses sober, quiet, and obedient. Besides, this was the age of reason. Religion was supposed to be ordered by common sense. The title of John Toland’s popular treatise on deism boldly proclaimed the conventional wisdom: “Christianity not Mysterious.”

18TH CENTURY CATHOLIC LITURGIES NEARLY VANISH

It would be easy to refute this simplistic theology; more than a few Anglicans did. But the spiritual desiccation from which it sprang was far more destructive. The catalogue of eighteenth-century ecclesiastical decay is long and harrowing. Baptismal fonts were used as umbrella stands; farm animals were housed in chancels. The Eucharist was rarely celebrated more than three or four times a year, and even then with a minimum of ceremony. Bishops did not visit parish churches and rarely entered their own cathedrals. This being the case, confirmation had to be administered every three to seven years to crowds so large that the bishop sometimes did not bother to lay hands upon his flock. Incumbents avoided their parishes whenever possible, farming out the work to underpaid, overworked, and often inept curates. This same indolence afflicted the Church in the American colonies, especially in places like Virginia where incompetent priests served at the pleasure of arrogant and indifferent vestries. Why enlightened men and women, however heretical, would tolerate such corruption is puzzling until we recall their spiritual blindness. Eighteenth-century rationalists decreed that there is no mystery in heaven or on earth. They thought this a blow for human dignity, but it eviscerated life of both vision and passion. Sanctity, whether human or divine, was a closed book to them.

Thus, the Church, God’s trysting place with his people, was abandoned to neglect. Not all was bleak, of course. In parishes all across England the gospel was preached, the sacraments were reverently administered, and countless acts of charity were performed. Some devout Anglicans, among them Thomas Ken, the author of our doxology, went into schism rather than compromise the Church’s apostolic authority. These zealous non-jurors were taunted as “high flyers,” a title they wore as a badge of honor.

“I do profess to be a high flyer,” wrote one, “whose endeavor is to fly upon the wings of angels to my Savior, to the General Assembly, to the Church, the High Church, of the first born who are enrolled in Heaven.”⁶ Most high churchmen remained loyal to the Establishment, but theirs was often a narrow ecclesiasticism devoid of religious fire.

One notable exception is John Wesley. Today Wesley is remembered as an evangelical preaching the gospel of repentance to multitudes untouched by the Church. But Wesley was no twentieth-century Methodist. So deeply rooted was he in the Catholic tradition, that he celebrated the Eucharist almost daily and regularly recited the rosary. Indeed, had Wesley called for the conversion of England to the whole faith first sung by St. John, he might have sparked an Anglo-Catholic renaissance of incalculable proportions.⁷ But impatient to redeem the lost, Wesley failed to communicate his churchmanship to his followers. Moreover, despite his sacramentalism, Wesley's theology was too other-worldly and individualistic to embody the Catholic vision of salvation. Like most of his contemporaries, evangelical and high church alike, Wesley had no hope of renewing the world. His great desire was to pluck sinners out of it one by one.

THE OXFORD MOVEMENT AND THE 19TH CENTURY

To break the hold of this fatalism would require an unlikely spiritual revival at once orthodox and passionate. But on 14 July 1833 John Keble preached a sermon against the sin of national apostasy which would change the Church forever. The specific issue which concerned Keble—an act of Parliament to consolidate the dioceses of the bloated Anglican establishment in Ireland—is not the stuff of prophecy. But the principles which he and his friends— John Henry Newman, Edward Bouverie Pusey, Hurrell Froude, Isaac Williams, and Robert Isaac Wilberforce—proclaimed were to become the charter of the Oxford Movement and of modern Anglo-Catholicism.

Editor's Note: At the site for Tractarians and John Henry Newman you can find more information on the other participants in the Oxford Movement.

The first of these principles is at the heart of Keble's sermon: the Church is neither an arm of the State nor its creature. It is a divine society, a sacred organism, the body of Christ. In saying this, Keble and the Tractarians rejected a notion common among those conservatives who pride themselves on their Catholic credentials: the belief that the Church is a guardian of national morality, civic virtue, and patriotic sentiment, as if sanctity were synonymous with respectability.

It was dismay over this subordination of Christ to Caesar that led the Tractarians to make so much of the apostolic succession. By joining Catholic bishops together in a chain of grace reaching back to Christ, they proclaimed the independence of the Church from worldly princes and worldly values. Unlike our nervous traditionalists, the Oxford fathers refused to deify the merely conventional. As for the idea that priests ought to be proper folk enforcing proper behavior, Hurrell Froude found it so detestable that he dubbed it "the gentleman heresy."

But the Oxford Movement also repudiated the Protestant understanding of the Church as a gathered society of believers. God does not save isolated individuals who then band together to create the Church. On the contrary, it is only by being grafted into the Church that we become Christians. Ours is a corporate life whose source and pattern is not a divine monad, but the community of love which is the holy Trinity. Thus, our purpose is not self-absorbed salvation, but the incorporation of the whole human family into the life of God. It is to this end, the sanctification of all things, that God has made the Church the teacher of sacred truths and the guardian of sacred mysteries.

Sacred truths are, of course, enshrined in Scripture and the creeds. All Anglicans profess loyalty to these, but the Tractarians brought to their interpretation a new emphasis. Scripture and the creeds, they argued, must be understood as part of the Church's living tradition. Indwelt by the Holy Spirit, the Church elucidates its faith with an authority no individual can claim, taking care to hold fast to the universal consensus of Christians summed up in the pithy Vincentian Canon, (St. Vincent of Lérins) which defines orthodoxy as whatever is believed at all times, in all places, by all the faithful (*quod semper quod ubique, quod ab omnibus creditum est*). And truth, the Tractarians understood, extends beyond the written word. Part and parcel of the Catholic faith is a right understanding of the sacred mysteries, especially the great sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist.

Editor: Icon Text “Hold Fast that which has been believed everywhere always by All.” Commonitorium (written about 434A.D). Icon From St. Hilarion Orthodox Monastery, Austin Texas. If you are interest in purchase of icons they provide an excellent source for listings.

The Tractarians insisted on the real presence of Christ in bread and wine, just as they defended the reality of baptismal regeneration. The two, in fact, are inseparable, for they embody a single vision: the vision of divinity and humanity intertwined in Christ. At the font God’s life encompasses our own without our deserving or even our desiring. At the altar God enfleshed touches our flesh. This recovery of Catholic truth baffled and enraged Evangelicals. One doughty Protestant, criticizing Dr. Pusey’s tract on baptism, complained that if baptism conveys new birth, why not administer communion to infants, the unconscious, or to idiots?⁸ But what he thought a clever *reductio ad absurdum* we know to be a *reductio ad gloriam*. We do not give communion to infants or the profoundly retarded because we feel sorry for them or because we are sacramental democrats. We do so because the life of God abounds in ways we cannot begin to understand, lifting up the helpless and ennobling the lowly and meek. The reality we divide with our truncated categories—deserving and undeserving, divine and human, spiritual and material—the Catholic faith holds in sacred union.

It is a reality whose glory transcends our liturgical universe. The sacred mysteries are signs of the sacred and mysterious order of all things. For more than two centuries, western civilization has been busy disenchanting the universe. The world, we pontificate, is a machine, the mind a computer, marriage a partnership, and morality a rationalization of our need for pleasure and our fear of pain.⁹ The goal of Anglo-Catholicism, on the other hand, is revolutionary re-enchantment. It restores sacred places and sacred things. The sacraments, the Church, the communion of saints: these are the bold banners of divine mystery and human destiny. We are sometimes suspicious of those drawn to the Church by its music, its architecture, its ceremony. So indeed were the Tractarians, for they were children of the evangelical revival and good Victorians to boot. But as good Catholics we can put these fears to rest, knowing that beautiful things are themselves sacraments of our beautiful God.

Catholic Christianity is a religion of transformation in which creation itself is made new through Christ in our own lives. The Tractarians, unlike some of our own champions of orthodoxy, realized the spiritual worthlessness of theological abstractions. Orthodoxy, they understood, is about holiness: the slow, sometimes painful, but ultimately joyful conformity to the image of Christ in which we are all created. Our faith does not depend upon speculation. It rests upon the simple fact with which our story began: the fact of God’s continuing incarnation. In John Betjman’s words:

No love that in a family dwells,
No caroling in frosty air,
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells
Can with this single Truth compare—
That God was Man in Palestine
And lives today in Bread and Wine.
“Christmas”

This mingling of spirit and flesh is both the root of our being and our destiny of delight. Without fully understanding the implications of their labors, the Tractarians had unleashed a theological and spiritual revolution. By reversing the Evangelical position which places the Fall and the Atonement at the center of the Christian faith, they redrew the map of our spiritual journey, replacing the path of convulsive rebirth and lugubrious duty with the highway of inward growth and grateful joy. The Church and the sacraments gained new reality, no longer merely respected as venerable, but adored as extensions of Christ’s body and blood. Human nature took on a dignity inconceivable to the eighteenth-century philosophers, and with it came the

possibility of envisioning a fuller life. It was as if the world were about to be born anew. Years later, Matthew Arnold, recalled the wonder he felt listening to Newman:

“Who could resist the charm of that spiritual apparition, gliding in the dim afternoon light through the aisles of St. Mary’s, rising into the pulpit, and then in the most entrancing of voices, breaking the silence with words and thoughts which were religious music, subtle, sweet and mournful? I seem to hear him saying: “After the fever of life, after weariness and sickness, fightings and despondings, languor and fretfulness, struggling and succeeding; after all the changes and chances of this troubled unhealthy state—at length comes death, at length white throne of God, at length the beatific vision...”¹⁰

But what Arnold fondly remembered, he could not himself believe. Stirred by Newman’s call to holiness, he heard, as we do today, the commanding noise of modern discord. Had he been able to, Arnold would have fled with his scholar gypsy into the medieval twilight, “Still nursing the unconquerable hope / Still clutching the inviolable shade . . .”¹¹ But honesty would not permit it. “The Sea of Faith,” he laments in “Dover Beach,”

“Was once, too, at the full, and round earth’s shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.”

The Tractarians were taken aback by such doubts and attributed them to the willful faithlessness of their age. Today many Anglo-Catholics do the same. But the problem lies as much in our flawed vision as it does in secular apostasy. Indeed, it is from the misdirection of our own hearts that the fissure now rending the Anglo-Catholic movement springs.

Consider Newman’s haunting words. They are filled with the power of enchantment, but they point to death not life. What hope could ardent souls find in such melancholy other-worldliness? “You promise heaven free from strife,” complained William Johnson Cory,

Pure truth, and perfect change of will;
But sweet, sweet is this human life,
So sweet, I fain would breathe it still;
Your chilly stars I can forgo,
This warm kind world is all I know.

“Mimnermus in Church”

The Oxford Apostolicals had recovered the centrality of the incarnation, but could not see the reach of God’s enfleshment. Despite their passionate and sometimes prophetic sacramentalism, they were dualists at heart: suspicious of the body, hostile to intellectual freedom, and skeptical of programs for social reform. Thus, like our own self-styled traditionalists, the Tractarians withdrew into a crotchety and un-Catholic exile from the age in which they lived, unable to fire its dreams or to heal its dread. Fortunately, there have always been men and women far-sighted enough to refuse this flight into the ethereal. They have understood that Anglo-Catholics must follow the example of Christ, embracing reality in all its wonder and

terror so that the Church may be transformed, society redeemed, and the mind spurred to explore the mysteries of heaven and earth. Their labors have sometimes been misguided and occasionally have encouraged the very parochialism they were meant to overcome. But it is these adventurers who have kept our faith whole, clothing the Catholic vision with flesh and blood.

ANGLO-CATHOLIC LITURGY

Their first undertaking was also their most controversial: the Victorian liturgical revolution. Today, it is easy to know when you have entered an Anglo-Catholic church. Vigil lights, statues, the gorgeously arrayed altar, the sweet smell of incense: all these set us apart from our low-church neighbors. Most Anglo-Catholics take these things for granted and, if they think about them at all, assume that they date back to antiquity and bear the imprimatur of apostolic authority. Pious antiquarians have developed an arcane rationale for everything from the placement of tabernacles to how many times the thurible should be swung at different stages of the liturgy, as if ceremonial could be spun out of theological axioms.¹² Indeed, some Anglo-Catholics defend their ecclesiastical bric-a-brac with as much ferocity as they defend the Nicene creed.

But furnishings are not the heart of Catholic worship, and logic has little to do with the ceremonial we cherish. Nor, despite their lovely patina, are the badges of Anglo-Catholic identity as ancient as we may imagine. The Oxford fathers adhered to the liturgical custom of their day, celebrating the Eucharist in simple cassock and surplice. To the end of his days as an Anglican, Newman continued to conduct the service in good Protestant fashion from the north side of the altar. What the Tractarians did insist upon was reverence and weekly celebrations of the Eucharist, usually early on Sunday. Ironically, those low-church parishes which cling to Morning Prayer as their principal service, offering communion to the pious at eight o'clock in the morning, are closer to the Tractarian pattern than are we.

But Anglo-Catholicism could not be forever confined to the liturgical norms of the eighteenth century. Convinced that Christ is truly present in the sacrament—that the faithful can behold and taste the sweetness of God—Victorian ritualists demanded that the Church bear witness to this fact in worship filled with awe and clouded in solemn beauty. Moreover, their Catholic vision extended beyond any individual celebration of the Mass to the whole Church of God throughout time and space. Having recovered their identity as citizens of the Church universal, Anglo-Catholics claimed as their own the richness of the Middle Ages, the splendor of Rome, and the mystery of the Orthodox East. Appropriating this legacy was less an exercise in doctrinal deduction or liturgical archaeology than it was a religious necessity. Passion, not logic, was in the driver's seat. And this was as it should be. One of the principal weaknesses of contemporary liturgies is that they exude so much thought and offer so little inspiration.

This is not to say that the worship our fiery forbears offered was always tasteful or even edifying. For good or for ill, Anglo-Catholicism was born in the age of Romanticism and came to maturity during the reign of Victoria. It thus developed an aesthetic sensitivity which was at once sensuous and sentimental, historical and histrionic. Not surprisingly, Anglo-Catholics concocted liturgies which were often sublime, sometimes grotesque, occasionally ridiculous, and nearly always theatrical. In the words of a clever wag:

One by one, Innovations came in due course
High Altars, bright brasses, great candles in force,
Uplifting of arms most decidedly high,
Turning backs on the people as if they were shy.
.....
There were chasubles white with the sign of the yoke,
Albs, copes, capes, birettas, and volumes of smoke.¹³

THE FIRST AMERICAN ANGLO-CATHOLIC

Yet confused though this ceremonial exuberance might be, it enkindled the devotion of multitudes and awakened the Church to God's sacramental presence in its midst. Even priests unpersuaded by Tractarian arguments embraced elements of the new worship. The first American ritualist, William Augustus Muhlenberg, (Feast Day April 8) shocked New York Episcopalians with the Catholic trappings he introduced at the Church of the Holy Communion, all the while denouncing Romanism, Puseyism, and "High Churchism."¹⁴ Editor: For more on William Augustus Muhlenberg visit this link also.

Indeed, so dramatic has the liturgical revolution been that we are apt to miss its true significance. Why is it "the Mass that matters"? The answer does not lie in Roman practice, medieval precedent, nor even in the teaching of the primitive Church. The Eucharist is the principal act of Christian worship because it embodies the central truth of the Christian faith: God has pitched his tent in our midst, in our own flesh, redeeming our nature, binding us one to another, and filling the whole creation with the effulgence of his glory. This is why the beauty the ritualists restored to Anglican worship is no luxury. Its sensual delights reveal Christ's presence in the matter from which we were made, sanctifying our passions and hallowing our bodies so that they may be temples of the Holy Spirit. We offer our art to the artist supreme, so that in God's loveliness we may perceive the loveliness of our common humanity.

Unfortunately, many of those who struggled to robe the Catholic vision in the beauty of holiness had never freed themselves from the dualism which had snared the Tractarians. For these ritualists the material ornaments of worship were a means of escaping, rather than embracing, the world of matter. Frederick W Faber, one of the clergy who followed Newman to Rome, gave poignant expression to this spiritual miasma when he described Jesus in the reserved sacrament as "the prisoner of the tabernacle." What we ought to venerate as the window through which we see God in all things, Faber and others transformed into a dark hole eviscerating the world of life and meaning.¹⁵ Given their distorted pietism, their fear of heresy, and the Protestant bigotry with which their labors were greeted, it was almost inevitable that such priests would turn to Rome for liturgical inspiration. And the baleful consequences are still apparent in conservative parishes across our communion.

Anglo-Catholicism rests on the conviction that the Anglican Church is Catholic, and that the Book of Common Prayer is an authentic expression of orthodox Christianity. To worship as if this were not true betrays both logic and history, and condemns the self-appointed guardians of Catholic orthodoxy to a life of sterile complaint, isolated from their fellow Anglicans and cut off from the Roman communion for which they yearn. Within such Anglo-Catholic parishes, the obsession with things Roman has encouraged a spirituality almost as dour as the puritanical Protestantism it was meant to combat. Until recently, vestments and furnishings of the most appalling ugliness were snapped up simply because they were customary in Rome. There were non-communicating Masses which unwittingly mocked the incarnation, and Latin Masses according to the Roman rite which openly mocked the Prayer Book. Some extremists silently excommunicated any priest who did not insist on fasting before Mass. When the ashes of the great liturgical reformer Percy Dearmer were interred in Westminster Abbey, one such rigorist rejoiced in his diary: "The accuser of our brethren is cast down. Apoc. xii.10."¹⁶ In their zeal to en flesh the Catholic vision, men of this sort had embalmed it.

But those not seduced by this easy otherworldliness held fast to the whole faith which the Tractarians had glimpsed. Already it had borne fruit in a myriad ways: the revival of the daily office, the founding of monastic communities, the provision of sacramental confession for the troubled heart, and above all the recovery of eucharistic worship. What is needed now, these incarnational Catholics insisted, is to carry our vision into the world so that the lost may be found and the captives set free. In language startlingly similar to that of the liberation theologians of our own time, Anglo-Catholic radicals went so far as to proclaim the Blessed Sacrament the Church's ensign of social revolution.

This boldness may seem startling at first; we are not used to joining the mystery of the Mass to the misery of the masses. Indeed, there are traditionalists for whom political engagement of any sort is yet another heresy, along with the ordination of women and the new Prayer Book. But the Anglo-Catholic passion for justice is as orthodox and as old as the Oxford Movement itself. Two principles lie intertwined at the foundation of Tractarians theology: the divine character of the Church and the sanctification of human nature in Christ. From these truths social and political consequences inevitably flow. Created in the image of God, the holy and undivided Trinity, human beings are meant for a communion of perfect equality with one another and with the loving Father who called them into being. Far from being an ark to bear the chosen few out of the world, as the Puritans imagined, the Church is the first fruit of the coming reign of God over all the earth. Thus, our redemption is indissolubly linked to the transformation of society and to redemption of those the world holds in low esteem.

ANGLO-CATHOLIC SOCIALISM

F. D. Maurice, the most consistent sacramental theologian of the Victorian era, drew from the incarnation hope for the poor and reproach for the proud. Christ, he wrote did not die “to give a few proud Philosophers or ascetical Pharisees some high notions about the powers of the soul and the meanness of the body.” No, Christ “entered into the state of the lowest beggar, of the poorest, stupidest, wickedest wretch whom that Philosopher or that Pharisee can trample upon,”¹⁷ in order that he might “redeem the humanity which Philosophers, Pharisees, beggars, and harlots share together.” Because the poor bear with us the divine image, they must be regarded with profound respect. But the Catholic faith reveals an even deeper mystery. The least of our brethren are bound to Christ in a manner so intimate that it commands our common repentance and amendment of life. In a remarkable sermon, Dr. Pusey reminded his congregation that God has made the poor “the visible representatives to the rich of his Only Begotten Son, who, being rich, for us men and our salvation, became poor, who, in their earthly lot, exalted our human nature to the union with his divine . . .” The hands of the poor are the hands of God. We dare not deck our walls with pictures, Pusey thundered, “while man, the image of God and representative of Christ, [we] clothe not . . .”¹⁸ Like his fellow Tractarians, Pusey often rent the bond between heaven and earth. But when it came to the poor his zeal was unrelenting. Our obligations cannot be restricted to spiritual solace, he insisted. To take the incarnation seriously means to serve Christ in the flesh of his children.

To take the incarnation seriously also means to relish the good earth. A friend of ours had a wonderful bumper sticker emblazoned with the words: “Anglo-Catholics have more fun!” And this is true, not simply because our worship is beautiful, our traditions rich, and our clergy eccentric. We rejoice because our faith gives us grateful hearts with which we can see God everywhere in this enchanted universe. But if the things of this world are precious, how much more is the human family to which they have been given as a common birthright. “Things matter more than money,” observes Eric Mascall. “You may say that it is not touching a very high spiritual level to tell people that potatoes are more important than money. But it is theology, it is good theology, it is good Catholic doctrine, Christian faith, to say that potatoes matter more than money.”¹⁹

This deceptively simple insight did not come easily to the Tractarians. They were privileged scholars more at home in the common rooms of Oxford than in the factories and slums of industrial cities. This is one reason they often saw heaven more clearly than they saw earth. But when the Catholic movement entered poverty-stricken urban parishes in Britain and America, priests and religious orders—including some with decidedly Roman sympathies—were quick to understand that they must defend their flock if they were to vindicate the Son of Man. Some embraced radical politics. Of these the most prophetic and the most exuberant was Stewart Headlam. Convinced that all of life was meant to be lived joyfully and sacramentally, Headlam championed the cause of all those denigrated by polite Victorian society, whether they be laborers, ballet dancers, or prostitutes. He even helped bail Oscar Wilde out of prison. And from his

labors the modern Christian Socialist movement was born.²⁰ Few Anglo-Catholics are aware of this tradition, yet in the work of Kenneth Leech and others in the British Jubilee Group it remains one of the most imaginative sources of theological reflection in the Anglican world.²¹

Of course, not every Catholic champion of the poor has embraced socialism. Most Victorian slum priests were resolutely non-political, and a few were downright reactionary. In recent years grave doubts have been cast on the ability of socialism to remedy our political and economic ills. Indeed, there is probably no perfect earthly solution to our woes. But what all Anglo-Catholics are bound to confess is that the suffering of the poor is the suffering of Christ. Without committing itself to an ideological nostrum, the Church must raise its voice in protest and its arm in protection, opening its bosom to comfort the afflicted. This will be the sacrament of our engagement with the world, just as surely as the Mass is the sacrament of our engagement with God and the Church. Indeed, the two point to the single reality of transfigured life.

Consider the story of how one radical priest joined together eucharistic adoration and social revolution. In 1919, Conrad Noel, the “Red Vicar” of the English village of Thaxted, announced that he was reviving a custom which had not been observed since the days of Mary Tudor: a Corpus Christi procession through the town followed by a service of benediction. Although there was no provision for these services in the Prayer Book, other Anglo-Catholics had long ago reintroduced them. But Noël’s intention was not the same as theirs. For the most part they were Romeward leaning pietists whose eucharistic devotions were both individualistic and sentimental. Noel, on the other hand, insisted that the Sacrament is a sign and a foretaste of the Kingdom of God. The consecrated host reveals to us our own deified humanity and nourishes us for the struggle to remake the world aright. To those who thought benediction a quaint ceremony Noël’s warning was severe. We welcome “all who wish to join in the Procession of the Divine Outlaw and to receive His blessing to encourage them in Battle,” he declared. “Mere onlookers are not welcomed.”²²

We need not embrace Noël’s revolutionary politics nor agree with his characterization of Christ as a divine outlaw to grasp the power of his argument. In the Mass, as in all the sacraments, God and his people are knit together. The inward spiritual grace we receive overflows our individual needs, empowering us to share in the divine adventure of social and even cosmic transformation. Like all God’s gifts, it will place upon us the burden of being misunderstood, mistreated, and even cast out by those with whom we would share it. This is how it has been from the beginning. The Tractarians were reviled, the ritualists were assaulted and imprisoned, and priests who championed the poor were denounced by the powerful and even rebuked by their bishops. But these difficulties need not dismay us, any more than they did our rebellious ancestors, if we hold fast to our vision.

By now it should be clear that Anglo-Catholicism is very different from what many of its more stolid adherents imagine. Were it a painting, we could admire its harmony of doctrines, the rich shading of its ritual, and the sheer drama which fills its canvas. But what would be most striking is how luminous it is, how much more it resembles Monet’s shimmering portraits (3, 1892,93,94) of Rouen cathedral than it does the solidly balanced theological murals of Raphael. All that we think of as the substance of Anglo-Catholicism is there—the dogmatic principles, the traditions, and the worship—but they are flecks of pigment, points of light which convey a vision rather than a system. Far from being an ecclesiastical juggernaut puffing out theological and liturgical excesses, it is a way of life which attempts, however feebly, to embody God’s loving embrace of our frail humanity. Enfleshing the God who takes on flesh, its central act of adoration and transformation is the Eucharist: food and drink compassing about the mystery of the universe.

Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all in my hand,
Little flower—but if I could understand

What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson
"Flower in the Crannied Wall"

But what if Tennyson's flower were to hold truths very different from those we gaze upon in the Sacrament? What if our vision were to prove to be a mirage? By the end of the nineteenth century Anglo-Catholics had arrayed their worship in glorious apparel. Some were boldly confronting the evils of industrial society. But the mournful sound of faith's solemn retreat which Matthew Arnold heard on Dover Beach could not be stilled by our liturgical and political Canutes, (Editor: (St.) King of England, Denmark and Norway 1016-1035 Feast Day January 19) however prophetic they might be. Intellectual doubt had seized the mind of the age as it has seized our own, and Anglo-Catholics were at a loss to answer it. The Tractarians, acutely aware of the growing power of unbelief and terrified of its consequences, took refuge behind the wall of Church authority. But the skeptics would not go away. Indeed, as the Victorian era drew to a close their questions were becoming increasingly insistent and alarming. Here, as when they wrestled with the incomprehension of the Church and the suffering of the world, Anglo-Catholics faced a simple choice: either they would retreat into ethereal irrelevance or yet again embark upon the risky adventure of embodiment. It is one of the hard truths of the incarnation that no vision, even the most luminous, can take root and grow unless it possesses the thought of its age.

ANGLO-CATHOLIC BATTLES OVER BIBLICAL INERRANCY

Grappling with the culture of modernity has certainly not been easy. From the nineteenth century on it has spoken through a veritable chorus of doubt in which we can discern at least three voices. The first is that of biblical criticism. Like nearly all the orthodox Christians of their day, Victorian Anglo-Catholics took the inerrancy of Scripture for granted. Because they fed on the rich store of patristic literature, and understood the power of symbol and metaphor, their interpretation of Scripture was more subtle than that of the Evangelicals. But they were just as ferocious when the veracity of a biblical text was questioned, and often joined hands with their Protestant persecutors to drive out of the ministry those who doubted even the smallest detail of the Old Testament narratives. Were this simply a theological dispute, the Tractarians and their unlikely allies might have swept the field. But history cannot be so easily disposed of. Scholars had uncovered a host of errors in the biblical story. More disturbing was the evidence that the Scriptures are the product of centuries of development and mythological elaboration. It now seemed that even Christ had been deceived on this point, for he had erroneously believed in the historicity of Jonah and in the Davidic authorship of Psalm 110. And if Jesus could err on these things, then his authority, as well as that of Scripture, is called into question.

Scripture is not the only intellectual battlefield to which Anglo-Catholics have been summoned. Since the early years of the nineteenth century, the whole of Christian history has become a spiritual minefield. Seeking the middle way between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, Anglo-Catholics had clung to the mainstay of traditional High-Church Anglicanism, the Vincentian Canon. But by the time John Keble; had flung down the accusation of national apostasy, it was becoming clear that no article of faith had ever been believed by everyone, everywhere, at every time. Doctrine, like Scripture, had developed. Broad Church liberals were delighted, for here was further confirmation of their humane skepticism. The Tractarians, on the other hand, were flabbergasted. Their defense of the Church of England rested on the assumption that Anglicanism has preserved the Catholic faith from both Protestant and Roman innovations. But if doctrine is always changing, to what criterion of truth can the Church appeal to save it from the perils of heresy and unbelief? Newman turned to the Roman magisterium.²³ Those Anglo-Catholics who rejected his drastic remedy were hard pressed to offer their own.

BIBLICAL FUNDAMENTALISM AND MODERN SCIENCE

Underlying these discordant voices is yet another: the deep protean tumult of evolution. That some Christians still cling to the opening chapters of Genesis as an accurate account of human origins strikes us as ludicrous. But in dismissing fundamentalism, we forget that more is at stake than biblical biology or even the economy of salvation.²⁴

If the entire cosmos is caught up in a Heraclitean torrent of change, there can be no privileged moment which bestows meaning on the rest. Already reeling from the assaults of biblical critics and historians, Anglo-Catholics faced with dread the prospect long since familiar to us that the Johannine vision is but one among many, all of them doomed to extinction in the blind flood of universal transmutation. No wonder the Tractarians and their conservative offspring shut their ears to the cacophony of modern thought, abandoning the world to its fate. But some Anglo-Catholics, more daring and more patient, heard emerging from this noisome change God's celestial lyre drawing together, as Saint Athanasius once wrote, "the things in the air with those on earth, and those in heaven with those in the air, . . . thus producing in beauty and harmony a single world and single order within it . . ." ²⁵ It is to these incarnationalists that the survival of a living Anglo-Catholic orthodoxy is largely due.

Among the most outspoken was Stewart Headlam. Catholic Christians, he argued, "need neither an infallible book nor an infallible Church. They stand on the Word made flesh through whom the world is continually made anew and by whose spirit humanity is guided to an ever deeper understanding of the truth." Darwin and other scientists deserve our thanks, for in breaking the fetters of mindless authority "they have helped to reveal to us Jesus Christ in His Majesty, drawing us with the cords of a Man, binding us with the bands of love."²⁶ What Headlam thundered from the pulpit, Charles Gore and other liberal Catholics transformed into a theological method. In 1889, Gore and a small group of friends published a collection of essays entitled *Lux Mundi*, a volume in some ways as important as the *Tracts for the Times*. Its contributors insisted that Christians need not choose between modern truth and ancient faith. Indeed change is one of the hallmarks of Catholic Christianity. "Standing firm in her old truths," wrote Gore, ". . . [the Church] is able to assimilate all new knowledge, to throw herself into the sanctification of each new social order, bringing forth out of her treasure things new and old, and showing again and again her power of witnessing under changed conditions to the catholic capacity of her faith and life."²⁷

This conviction enabled Gore to solve the vexing riddle of our Lord's seemingly naive views on biblical authorship. Gore called his theory "Kenotic Christology," from the Greek word *kenosis* which means emptying. In assuming our nature, he argued, Christ emptied himself of supernatural knowledge. To reveal his divinity he divested himself of all that separated him from our humanity. He became fully a man of his own age so that he could be a man for all ages.²⁸ Much as Richard Hooker had turned the liturgical ambiguity of the sixteenth century into an occasion for eucharistic devotion, Gore used the skepticism of the nineteenth century as a doorway into the mystery of the incarnation. To be sure, more than a hundred years separate us from Gore and his companions. Many of their opinions have become dated, and we must struggle anew to wed orthodox Christianity to the thought of the age.²⁹ But if *Lux Mundi* cannot serve as our theological textbook, its call to intellectual enfleshment remains as compelling as it ever was.

Summoned by the thousand doubts of which modernity is made—in neglected churches, in festering slums, in the troubled minds of honest scholars—Anglo-Catholics had made their pilgrimage to Dover Beach. With Matthew Arnold they had stood on that "darkling plain" where "ignorant armies clash by night." And out of their engagement with the world's travail they had discovered a living hope. Once again Catholics sang God's ancient love song to his people, beckoning them to his common feast of beauty, love, and truth. And the Anglican communion awoke from its slumbers. "By the end of the nineteenth century," observes one church historian, "the Anglo-Catholics had won. They had out-thought, out-lived, and out-suffered all their opponents."³⁰

ANGLO-CATHOLICS IN CRISIS?

When British Anglo-Catholics gathered in 1933 to celebrate the centenary of the Oxford Movement, 50,000 people crowded the great Mass of thanksgiving. And then, it seems, the spirit of the Lord departed from us. In the six decades which have passed since that anniversary, Anglo-Catholics have become an increasingly querulous and isolated minority, divided on matters of faith, defensive about their past, and fearful of the future. Despairing of the movement from which he springs, even as he holds fast to its faith, Kenneth Leech recently concluded that "Anglo-Catholicism is an exhausted religious tradition from which no further creative developments are likely."³¹ Something has gone terribly wrong; this much is clear. But the nature of the disease remains obscure and the quest for a remedy is strewn with danger. For years our would-be physicians have engaged in an orgy of finger-pointing and hand-wringing: activities which are wonderfully cathartic but which only deepen our malaise.

The hard truth is that the crisis which has befallen us cannot be blamed on ecclesiastical malfeasance, nor can it be fixed by adjusting a theological screw here and a liturgical screw there. Indeed, what is most mystifying about our situation is the fact that Anglo-Catholicism is dying at a time when the doctrines and worship it fought for are being adopted by Anglicans of all sorts and conditions. Weekly Eucharists are now the norm in all but the most backward parishes. Albs, chasubles, copes, even incense, have found their way into places which only a few decades ago would have cast them out as trinkets of popery. From one end of the ecclesiastical spectrum to the other there is only praise for religious orders once denounced as a Roman fifth column in our midst. And new Prayer Books from around the Anglican communion are more Catholic in spirit and doctrine than any of their predecessors.

Perhaps we are simply victims of our own success. If the Anglican communion has at last embraced its Catholic heritage, there may be no need further need for an Anglo-Catholic movement. Quite a few Catholic-minded Anglicans have taken this position and have blended into the countryside, leaving the remaining pockets of Tridentine Anglo-Catholicism like beached whales thrown up by the tide of liturgical reform. It is conceivable that the time has indeed come for us to sing *Te Deum*, pack up our bags, and go home. But before we convince ourselves that ours is merely a crisis of redundancy, we need to ponder anew the roots of Anglo-Catholicism. Since the days of Hooker and the Caroline divines, Anglo-Catholic doctrine and worship have sought to convey the vision of the Word made flesh. Incense, vestments, bells: all these were introduced to awaken us to God's presence in the sacraments, in the world, and in ourselves. The great wave of liturgical reform which has swept across the Anglican communion in recent years has brought the outward signs of catholicity in its wake. But where is the vision? This is not a question of taste, as some imagine; it is a question of faith. If we are in the presence of the divine mystery, ceremonial predilections are of no account. Our worship, be it simple or elaborate, will overflow with joy and adoration. Unfortunately, what seems at first to be Catholic worship is too often what used to be called "Protestantism in chasubles" a dry formulaic affair in which everything goes downhill after the sermon or, even worse, after the peace.

OUR FAULTS LIE WITHIN OURSELVES

But much of the fault lies with ourselves, and here we begin to grasp the nettle of our distress. If our fellow Anglicans do not enshrine the Catholic vision in their worship, it may be because they have not seen it manifested in our own. Part of the problem lies with the history of Anglo-Catholic ceremonial. Like a starving man let loose in a banquet hall, the ritualists and their successors devoured every liturgical practice they could unearth. Primitive, medieval, baroque, and Byzantine rituals were thrown together and crammed into the structure of the Prayer Book Mass. Rubrics multiplied and with them came the plague of liturgical Pharisaism from which we still have not freed ourselves. Thus, instead of mystery many Anglo-Catholic parishes continue to offer mystification.

This is more than liturgical excess; it is a symptom of doctrinal myopia. What grander ceremony could there be than the Mass celebrating the Oxford Movement's centennial? Yet of the 50,000 faithful who gathered that day, only five were invited to receive communion. And they were chosen only to insure that the Prayer Book rubrics would be fulfilled. It is as though, having led the Church into the holy of holies, the leaders of the Anglo-Catholic movement have taken fright at their own audacity and so once again have raised the curtain separating God from his people.

Sacramental visionaries gave us birth, but it is the dualists who rule in their place. They have shut the sacraments up in a narrow ecclesiastical universe, and now, after years of growing isolation from the rest of the Anglican world, they have imprisoned themselves in a bejeweled fortress. Consider the dilemma of the parishes which have joined the Episcopal Synod of America.³⁸ They have already excommunicated most of the Episcopal Church. Should they loose their ties to what remains, with whom will they be in communion? Not Canterbury, not Rome, not Constantinople, and certainly not the prostitutes and tax collectors who might dare darken their doors. It is a sorry end for men and women who call themselves Catholics, but sorrier still for the Church they are abandoning. As the Catholic witness decays, those hungry for God are forced to turn elsewhere. Some have embraced fundamentalism or the charismatic revival, movements whose otherworldliness is masked by their enthusiasm and the cult of communal good feeling. Others have left the Church altogether.

NOT ALL OUR FAULTS ARE SELF-INFLICTED

I do not mean to say that all the calamities from which Anglo-Catholics suffer are self-inflicted. Catholic Christianity is a religion of personal and corporate mystery, recounting a saga as old as creation and nursing the hope of the age to come. But ours is a century unwilling to remember and unable to hope. We are a frantically mobile people, forever fleeing our roots all the while indulging in sentimental nostalgia. What authentic memories our age does possess are often so chilling that we grieve for the past and despair of the future. We yearn for community but deny its possibility, hiding from its demands behind the wall of personal autonomy. Everywhere we go we are assaulted by the hucksters of instant gratification and effortless enlightenment. Credulous and cynical by turns, the one thing we secretly dread is true redemption's cost. New technologies and new moralities appear daily, promising delight only to increase our labor, further eroding our sense of personal identity and corporate solidarity. At times we seem to be living in a Bosnia of the spirit, torn by incoherent desires and imperious demands, unable to recover the narrative thread which holds our lives together. It is hardly surprising, then, that our neighbors can make no sense of the gospel story they hear on Easter and Christmas. For whatever comfort it is worth, the whole Church is floating rudderless on this sea of incomprehension and we Anglo-Catholics are suffering along with everybody else.

By now it should be clear that we cannot tinker our way out the crisis in which we find ourselves. Our problems are too deep to be remedied by revising the Prayer Book yet again or by refining our theology. Indeed, the more we busy ourselves with these parochial chores, the further removed we will find ourselves from the world we have been sent to redeem. To be sure, we will not ignore it. The world is ever on our minds, but we oscillate between two illusory extremes. Sometimes we believe that we have the ecclesiastical system for which the world is yearning. All we need do, therefore, is persuade people to come in and get it. This is what lies behind the persistent summons to bring a friend to church. Once we get our clutches on them, we think, they will never leave. At other times, we suspect that the world wants something we do not have, so we try to offer whatever that is: jollier hymns, shorter sermons, a better coffee hour. In the first case we try to be better salesmen, in the second case better panderers. Either way, the world is the passive recipient of our spiritual beneficence.

WHAT DOES THE WORLD NEED?

The question we ought to be asking is “What does the world need?” And the startling answer is that the world needs us in that commonness which bespeaks divinity. This is why God has preserved our little Anglo-Catholic family through tempest and storm. In the secret places of their hearts, modern men and women are seeking themselves. They sense, although they cannot believe it, that they have enduring value, that there is more to themselves than their employers, their accountants, their government, or even their families can possibly know. What the world craves is the assurance that there is “a splendor burning in the heart of things.”³² Naked dogma cannot supply this need, nor can empty ritual. Only the Catholic vision will suffice. But if the world is to find that vision it must be found in us, clothed in living thought and embodied in holy lives.

How then do we nurture this dream of flesh and spirit? How do we share it with the Church and with the world? Here I find myself almost at a loss for words. The answer to these questions can come only from profound meditation, common prayer, and from fearlessly and carefully listening to one another and to the world outside our doors. What I can offer are suggestions—signposts if you will—for our journey into the future. The first is that we must be willing to entertain troubling questions even about our most sacred beliefs. History, philosophy, psychology, above all the daily business of being human, call into doubt the goodness of God, the immortality of the soul, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. If, like some of our conservative brethren, we try to exorcise these doubts, we will exorcise every honest man and woman out of the Church. And, as we have already seen, if we do not win back the mind of the age, we will never gain its heart. We must make it clear that orthodox Christianity is not a closed system which must be swallowed whole or rejected altogether. Rather, it is a matrix within which doubt and uncertainty can be expressed and even sanctified. Indeed, to question God can be a holy vocation. It is sometimes frightening to confront the unbelief of others, if only because it forces us to face our own. But there is reassurance in the knowledge that there would be no orthodoxy, perhaps not even the Church, if the Christians of the patristic age had not wrestled with the doubts of pagans and heretics.³³

TRADITION IS THE LIVING VOICE OF THE LIVING CHURCH

Tradition, then, is not something finished once and for all in a distant and idyllic past. It is the living voice of a living Church guided by the Holy Spirit through darkness and conflict. Because something has never been done, it does not follow that it cannot be done now. God is forever doing a new thing, and as the people of God, we are the guardians and spokesmen of his living word. Much has been said of late about the ministry of the laity, most of it helpful and true. The Church of the future will be a people’s Church purged of the incubus of clericalism or it will not survive. But too often the advocates of lay authority, like the traditionalists who oppose them, confuse ministry with ecclesiastical busy work. What we Anglo-Catholics offer is the ultimate empowerment of the whole people of God, not as commission members or chalice bearers, but as tradition bearers, makers of Catholic truth, and icons of Christ.

It is a vocation that carries grave risks and demands ruthless honesty, especially about those aspects of our lives about which we are most embarrassed. This is not only because to do otherwise is to lose our credibility and to betray our God, but because the very things we hide in shame may reveal the truth. It is in this context that we must confront the thorny problem of homosexuality. It has long been common knowledge that the Anglo-Catholic movement, for a host of reasons, has been a refuge for gay clergy and lay people. As long as this fact was hidden or simply unacknowledged, the consequences were disastrous. Those outside the Anglo-Catholic world snickered, the prudish among us averted their eyes hypocritically, and among gay Anglo-Catholics there grew up an unhealthy and often misogynistic subculture: the world of gin and lace.³⁴

But today the whole Church is being forced to look at homosexuality anew. If we abandon our pretense, what a treasure of experience we can bring to this debate. For more than a century we have been graced

by the presence of gay men and women whose saintly lives have been sacraments of God's love. This does not mean that we can untangle this knotty issue ourselves. At stake are broad questions about the authority of Scripture, two thousand years of teaching and reflection, and the Church's unresolved ambivalence about sexuality itself.³⁵ But we can rejoice that what we once feared as a stigma may yet prove to be a sign of our common redemption and the sanctification of all human love.

Ours is the vocation of enchantment, restoring to humanity the divine image which sin has hidden but cannot destroy. It is a ministry of holy responsibility as well as delight. We must teach the truth to an age that does not believe in truth, preach hope to men and women bereft of confidence in the past or the future, and labor for justice in a time of ideological bankruptcy and political cynicism. But what will ultimately win souls—drawing human beings out of despondency to embrace their true selves, their brothers and sisters, and their God—is wonder: the spontaneous love and joy which lures us to Mass Sunday after Sunday. The future of Anglo-Catholicism and of the whole Church depends less on our work than on our ability to enflame our neighbor's hearts. This may seem an intimidating assignment, but it is breathtakingly simple. Every day we work our magic on those we love: our children, our friends, our spouses, and our lovers. And this is how we will lure the world. "Follow me," says Jesus, "and I will make you fishers of human beings" (Mark 1:17).

Not long ago, the sect known as the Children of God scandalized the Church by encouraging its female devotees to seduce potential converts. I do not advocate that kind of fishing myself. Sleeping with the world may be tempting, but it can hardly be called Catholic. Nevertheless, we should remember that heresy always contains a grain of truth. In this case, it is the joyful fact that conversion is the fruit of love. How else do we explain the impression Jesus made on those who knew him? There were other prophets and teachers, other miracle workers, other parable tellers. But no one could so enchant men and women with the vision of their own loveliness. And as we pattern ourselves after Christ, we too will become mirrors in which our brothers and sisters can glimpse their shared divinity. This is the vision for which the world longs and to which the beauty of Catholic worship is our public testimonial. Like the whole of our Christian life, therefore, liturgy should be an act of grace. Theological precision has its part, as do liturgical scholarship and the modern rediscovery of feminine metaphors for God. But the Mass is a sacred drama whose logic is the law of love and whose doctrine is the image of God. As our ritualist predecessors learned, we will not win the world by being pedantic or didactic, however sound our doctrine. All we need be is entrancing.

This does not mean that success will come easily. The turbulent history of Anglo-Catholicism demonstrates that engagement with reality is a risky business. But it is one we are bound to undertake. Ours is not a vision that can be hid under a bushel. It is the light of the world, summoning us and the whole human family to a destiny more glorious than we can imagine. Along the way we "will see rare beasts, and have unique adventures."³⁶

And in God's time altars around the world will be crowded with young and old, rich and poor. They "will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 8:11). What manner of feast will this be? It is prefigured at every Mass we attend. "What can you do with stars, or glory?" asks Robert Penn Warren.

I'll tell you, I'll tell you—thereof
Eat. Swallow. Absorb. Let bone
Be sustained thereof, let gristle
Toughen, flesh be more precious
Gratified, muscle yearn in
Its strength. Let brain glow
In its midnight of darkness,
Under its own inverted, bowl-shaped

Sky, skull-sky, let the heart Rejoice.

What other need now

Is possible to you but that

Of seeing life as glory?

“Have You Ever Eaten Stars”

Notes and Sources

Short Bio: John Orens is editor of Fellowship Papers, a long-time board member of the Catholic Fellowship, and a visiting professor of history at George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia.

1. Francis Penhale, *Catholics in Crisis* (London and Oxford: Mowbray, 1986), 74.
2. Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, bk. 5, chs. 8.2, 67.12.
3. J. R. H. Moorman, *A History of the Church in England*, 3d ed. (Wilton, CT: Morehouse-Barlow, 1980(?)), 216.
4. See J. Sears McGee, *The Godly Man in Stuart England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976), 208-234.
5. See Lancelot Andrewes, *Lancelot Andrewes and His Private Devotions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House), 74, 85, 118, 141.
6. George H. Tavard, *The Quest for Catholicity: A Study in Anglicanism* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1964), 102.
7. Wesley had a profound influence on Alexander Knox, one of the most important forerunners of the Oxford Movement. See Yngye Brillioth, *The Anglican Revival: Studies in the Oxford Movement* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1925), 46.
8. Letters to a Magazine on the Subject of Dr. Pusey's Tract on Baptism (n.p., [1836?]), iv.
9. This theme is developed by Penhale in *Catholics in Crisis*. Jacques Barzun discusses some of the ideological roots of this phenomenon in Darwin, Marx, Wagner, 3d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981). An important meditation on the politics of modern American disenchantment is Christopher Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics* (New York: Norton, 1991).
10. Marvin R. O'Connell, *The Oxford Conspirators: A History of the Oxford Movement 1833-1845* (New York: Macmillan, 1969), 214.
11. Matthew Arnold, "The Scholar Gypsy."
12. The most famous example is Charles Walker, *The Ritual Reason Why*, 2d ed. (Oxford and London: Mowbray & Co., 1868).
13. *The Unutterables or Pseudo-Martyrdom* (London: Platt and Burdett, 1883), p.3.
14. See E. Clowes Chorley, *Men and Movements in the American Episcopal Church* (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1950), 200-201.
15. See Judith Pinnington's thoughtful and sobering study, "Rubric and Spirit: A Diagnostic Reading of Tractarian Worship," in *Essays Catholic and Radical*, ed. Kenneth Leech and Rowan Williams (London: Bowerdean Press, 1983), 103-104
16. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
17. F. D. Maurice, *The Lords' Prayer, the Creed, and the Commandments* (London: Macmillan, 1870), 200.
18. Edward Bouverie Pusey, *University Sermons*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Joseph Parker, 1872-79), 2:28.
19. Eric Mascall. "The Social Implications of Worship," in *Worship: Its Social Significance* ed. P. T. R. Kirk (London: Centenary Press, 1939), 78.
20. On Headlam see my "Christ, Communism, and Chorus Girls: A Reassessment of Stewart Headlam," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, 49 (September 1980): 233-48. For other Anglo-Catholic socialists see my "Politics and the Kingdom: The Legacy of the Anglican Left," in *The Anglican Moral Choice*, ed. Paul Elmen (Wilton, CT: Morehouse-Barlow, 1983); and my "Priesthood and Prophecy: The Development of Anglo-Catholic Socialism," in *Essays Catholic and Radical*, 158-180.
21. The best introduction to Leech's thought is his *The Eye of the Storm: Living Spiritually in the Real World* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992).

22. Reg Groves, *Conrad Noel and the Thaxted Movement* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1968), 221. See also Kenneth Leech, ed., *Conrad Noel and the Catholic Crusade* (Croydon: The Jubilee Group, 1993)
23. See Owen Chadwick, *From Bossuet to Newman*, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
24. According to Pusey the "basis of our faith" is "that man was created in the perfection of our nature, endowed with supernatural grace, with a full freedom of choice such as man, until restored by Christ, has not had since." Alec R. Vidler, *The Church in an Age of Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1961), 119
25. Athanasius, *Contra Gentes*, 42.24-27.
26. Stewart D. Headlam, *The Service of Humanity* (London: John Hodges, 1882), 40.
27. Charles Gore, "Preface," in *Lux Mundi: A Series of Studies in the Religion of the Incarnation*, ed. Charles Gore, 15th ed., (London: John Murray, 1904), viii.
28. Idem, "The Holy Spirit and Inspiration," in *ibid.*, 263-265.
29. Among the volumes which stand in the tradition of *Lux Mundi* are Edward George Selwyn, ed., *Essays Catholic and Critical* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1926), and *Essays Catholic and Radical*.
30. Roger Lloyd, *The Church of England 1900-1965* (London: SCM, 1966), 121.
31. Kenneth Leech, *The Catholic Social Conscience: Twelve Theses* (London: Jubilee Group, 1988), 3. But see his essay in this issue of *Fellowship Papers*.
32. Evelyn Underhill, "Corpus Christi."
33. See Robert L. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984), especially pp. 197-205.
34. See David Hilliard, "UnEnglish and Unmanly: Anglo-Catholicism and Homosexuality," *Victorian Studies*, 25 (Winter 1982): 181-202; and Kenneth Leech, "Beyond Gin and Lace: Homosexuality and the Anglo-Catholic Subculture," in *Speaking Loves' Name: Homosexuality's Some Catholic and Socialist Reflections* (London: Jubilee Group, 1988), 16-27.
35. Bishop Richard Holloway addresses this ambivalence provocatively, if not always clearly, in his *Anger, Sex, Doubt, and Death* (London: SPCK, 1992), 27-61. See also Kenneth Leech, *Experiencing God: Theology as Spirituality* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 250-257; and idem, *The Eve of the Storm*, 58-69.
36. W H. Auden, "For the Time Being."
37. Writings of George Herbert
38. Episcopal Synod of America is Declining Article on Louie Crew's Alternative Anglican Website