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The Anglican Tradition in Liturgy and Devotion.

BY THE RT. REV. STEPHEN NEILL, M.A.

THE Anglican Communion occupies a unique place in Christendom. This is a platitude. All the same it is worth repeating. The Anglican *via media* seems to the ardent something very different from the golden mean. Yet, though that *via media* has, from time to time, been synonymous with unadventurousness in theology, lukewarmness in devotion, and sloth in the carrying out of good works, abuse should not be allowed to obscure the excellences of use; that the *via media* represents a point of precarious balance does not make it any less admirable as an ideal of Churchmanship. In liturgy, as elsewhere, the Anglican tradition is a gallant attempt to reconcile law and liberty, to hold fast to the wealth of past experience, without denying whatever the Spirit may have to say to the Churches in the present.

For our liturgical tradition as we have it today, we are indebted almost entirely to one man, Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury. Without doubt, Cranmer had collaborators and advisers; but when we compare the services of the 1st and 2nd Prayer Books either with the prolix and tasteless compositions to be found in the books of Elizabethan special services, or with the 17th Century parts of the Prayer Book, admirable but so curiously different in style and feeling, I think the impression is deepened that the original liturgical work of our Reformation all bears the mark of one master-hand, and that can be none other than the hand of Cranmer. Luther laid upon the German Reformation the trademark of his ebullience and gusto, his deep feeling and his inspired gift of hymnody. It would be difficult to find a man more completely different from Luther than Cranmer. Cautious almost to a fault, patient, sensitive, he advanced only with great hesitation along the path of reform. When he wrote of his efforts at verse composition "Mine English verses lack the grace and facility I would wish they had", he was expressing himself with moderation. But he has left the world permanently his debtor by a unique precision in the use of English words, and an unequalled ear for English prose rhythms. He has made a greater contribution to the development of Christian worship than any other one man of whom we have knowledge in the history of the Christian Church.

Cranmer's intention was not to innovate but to restore. He was actuated by a genuine desire to get behind the complexities of the mediaeval tradition to what he rightly discerned as the simplicities and glories of a better stage of Catholic worship. Diligent and scrupulous as he was in the use of all the materials then available to him, he was hindered by the very imperfect state of liturgical scholarship in his age. In fact, in the latest appraisal of his work, he is blamed, not for having made too many innovations, but for having retained

too much of the mediaeval superstructure, and not having shown sufficient boldness in carrying through his own sounder principles of Catholic worship.

We will here leave out of account the minor acts of worship of the Christian Church, and concentrate on the two great traditions of the Eucharist and the Divine Office. Both of these, Cranmer found grievously depraved from their former high estate. In the Eucharist, the Communion of the people had almost ceased to exist, except on rare festival occasions; worse than this, even the genuinely worshipping minority of the congregations made no attempt to base their worship on the liturgy, but contented themselves with small individual manuals of devotion. The Mass, therefore, had ceased to be the corporate action of the whole Church, and had become a rite carried out by the priest on behalf of the congregation, in which the individual worshipper took a greater or less part, according to his personal inclination. The Divine Office had become in the strict sense of the word a "Choir Office". It was no longer regarded as being in any way the concern of the layman; it had become so complicated and lengthy as to be beyond the capacity of even the secular clerk to understand and to carry out; and in the ever increasing complication of the rules, the original purpose of psalmody and the plain and uninterrupted reading of the Scriptures had entirely been forgotten.

Faced with this jungle, Cranmer hacked out for himself a straight path by steady adherence to two great principles—every act of worship in the Church must be the act of the whole worshipping congregation; and every worshipper must realise himself in every act as a member of the whole redeemed and worshipping Body of Christ in heaven and on earth.

The first deduction from these principles made, be it noted, only in the eleventh year of Cranmer's Archbishopric, was that all worship must be in a language understood of the people. With this decision, the Church of England takes its stand uncompromisingly with the Reformed and against the Unreformed Churches of Christendom. It must not be supposed that by this decision everything is made simple for the ordinary Christian; in fact, a liturgical service in the vernacular makes heavier demands on the worshipper than any other type of service. If we worship in an unknown tongue, the ordinary man is exempt from the effort to follow the actual liturgy, and is free to compose his own acts of worship according to his capacity, within the general framework of what the Church is doing. If the service is unliturgical, the minister can make infinitely varied adaptations of the order to what he knows of the capacity of his flock to receive the Word, and worship can be brought within the grasp even of the simple and unlearned. But a fixed liturgy, from its very nature, should be the expression of a wide range of not very simple theological ideas; and it will always tend to be exalted, noble, and therefore unusual in expression. Liturgical language may be understood of the people, it is very unlikely that it will be itself the common people's speech; but when the Liturgy is in the vernacular, the common man cannot be set free from the effort to understand it, and to pray according to it. This makes upon him very heavy demands; and, when we remember

what the level of education and intelligence is likely to have been in the 16th Century England, we cannot but be astonished by what Cranmer believed to be within the capacity of simple people, illumined by the Word and the Spirit of God. It is clear that he never imagined himself to be creating a book of worship for the élite ; his ideal was that of Erasmus, that the ploughman and the weaver at their work should sing the songs of Zion, and the traveller beguile with them the tedium of his journey ; he did not hesitate to take the ideal as being also the possible.

In the Eucharist, Cranmer's primary aim was to restore regular and general Communion. The moment the people come forward to receive the Sacrament, the priest is drawn out of his isolation at the altar ; the Eucharist is no longer something done by the priest on behalf of a passive congregation, it becomes the act of the priestly body, the Church, and the ordained priest becomes the representative of the body as being the one through whom all perform their action, not as the one whose action makes impossible or unnecessary all activity on the part of the rest of the Church. This serious concern of Cranmer is expressed most forcibly in a passage not often noted except by experts in liturgiology, in the "exhortation at certain times when the Curate shall see the people negligent to come to the Holy Communion" in the Prayer Book of 1552 : "Truly it is a great unthankfulness to say nay when ye be called : but the fault is much greater when men stande by, and yet will neither eate nor drink this holy Communion with other. I pray you what can this be els, but even to have the misteries of Christ in derision ? It is said unto all : Take ye and eate ; Take and drink ye all of this ; do this in remembrance of me. With what face then, or with what countenance shall ye heare these wordes ? What will this be else but a neglecting, a despising and mocking of the Testament of Christ. Wherefore, rather than you should do so, depart you hence, and give place to them that be godly disposed "

But, even if the devout communicant comes forward to approach the table of the Lord, it is possible that he may do so in the inviolate shroud of his own individuality. We have heard too often of "making my Communion", a phrase which would have filled Cranmer with amazement, and I hope is now consigned to the limbo of mediaeval horrors. The communicant must be reminded as forcibly as possible of his status in the Body of Christ, the one loaf, the one Body, the mystery of which, in Augustinian phrase, is set forth on the altar. There is interesting evidence of this concern in Cranmer's mind in the 1549 Rubric about the bread to be used at the Communion ; the bread is to be "something more larger and thicker than it was, so that it may be aptly divided in divers pieces : and everyone shall be divided, in two pieces, at the leaste, or more by the discrecion of the minister, and so distributed". Each communicant is to be given only a divided part, in order that he may be emphatically reminded of the whole.

But still more significant is the arrangement of the service of Holy Communion in 1552, in which the communion of the people is brought nearer to the centre of the rite than in any other liturgy in Christendom. The communicant, after Communion, is not left alone absorbed in his

own individual devotion ; he is drawn out of it to take part in a corporate act of thanksgiving, oblation and adoration. I suppose there are times when we all resent this intrusion of the fellowship upon the self—when, after Communion we would prefer to be left, as we might put it, alone in the presence of the Lord. But it does not take very deep theological thought to see that this, so far from being evidence of a higher spirituality, is really a relic of that individualism, which is in us all the legacy of original sin and from which Christ came to deliver us, and that the Eucharistic rite of our Prayer Book, with its culmination in the adoration of the whole body of the faithful now made one in Christ, is far truer to the Biblical and classical conception of the Eucharist as the expression of the common life in the Body of Christ.

In setting forth Mattins and Evensong, Cranmer was actuated by two purposes—first to provide the ordinary working clergy with a daily office, which really could be said daily as a matter of obligation, without undue interference with the routine of other spiritual work ; second, to supply daily services in Church which ordinary Christians could be expected to attend with profit. It is only by detailed comparison with what went before that the magnificent simplicity of these two services stands out boldly. The substitution of the monthly for the weekly reading of the Psalter solved at a stroke a problem which has continued to vex the Roman hierarchy to the present day. Once it has been done, it is so simple and obvious, that we tend to underestimate the genius of the man who broke with the tradition of a thousand years, and said *it shall be so*. The services are a subtle blending of the needs of the day and the month and the year. The principle that all the more important parts of the Bible are to be read through in a year is strictly adhered to ; very few special lessons are allowed, the remembrance of saints being provided for chiefly by Collect, Epistle and Gospel. The worshipper is to feel himself part of a nation-wide community ; in every Church in the land, fellow-Christians will be singing just those Psalms and hearing just those lessons ; wherever within the land the Christian may wander, he will know just what to expect, and will be able to take up the cycle of devotion just where he had broken off.

Cranmer's arrangement of the services is open to obvious criticisms ; first, that excessive rigidity tends to monotony ; second, that it is impossible to guarantee that the variable parts of the service will be appropriate or edifying to any particular congregation on the day on which they are used. To these I think Cranmer's answer would have been as follows : the idea of a single book of devotion, which is in the hands of the worshippers and contains everything needed for intelligent participation in the services, is a new one ; the gains made possible by it are so great that nothing must be allowed to jeopardize them ; much variety in the daily services—antiphones, responses, invitatories and so on—will soon make the book both complicated and unwieldy ; if we must pay the price of monotony for simplicity, it is a price well worth paying. The second criticism is based on the fundamental Protestant conception of worship. This is that the unit in space is the single congregation, not the whole Church, and that the unit in time is the single service, and not the liturgical year. The aim of the

Protestant, as opposed to the Catholic tradition, is that every service should be immediately and plainly edifying to the congregation attending it. This they do much better in Geneva; we in England do not aim at small profits and quick returns. If a man coming out of Church says to us "I have gained nothing today", we shall reply "My friend, you are seeking the wrong thing. Do not hope to pluck an oak-tree from an acorn in a day. Let the discipline of Christ's worship grow with you from year to year, and you will find in the end that you have as many rings about you as has an oak-tree, and have gained in sixty years as much strength in the spiritual world as it has in the material". In the whole Anglican rationale of worship there is no point more fundamental than this, and nothing in which its adherence to the essential Catholic tradition is more clear.

By 1552, the main lines of the Anglican liturgical tradition have become plainly apparent. It is *Biblical*. For steady and systematic Bible-reading on the large scale, no other Church in the world can compare with the Anglican. It is *intellectual*; the Anglican Prayer Book is not intended for the intellectually idle; it demands that those who use it should exercise themselves to understand, and it will give little of its riches to those who merely acquiesce. It is *sober*; it never aims at awaking immediate and facile emotion; it relies on the development of deep currents of feeling through the patient contemplation of the mysteries of the Gospel. It is *ethical*. Perhaps the profound sense of sin reawakened in Reformation times by the renewed study of the Scriptures weighs a little too heavy on it. It is characteristic of the whole book that the Exhortation of Morning and Evening Prayer bids us approach God *with an humble, penitent, lowly and obedient heart*. But it is part of the strength of the Anglican tradition that it has never allowed it to be supposed that worship can exist in separation from conduct, or that emotion can usurp the function of conscience. It is again characteristic that Cranmer himself added to the Litany the petition, not found in any of his earlier models, for the grace of the Holy Spirit *to amend our lives according to thy holy Word*.

I imagine that there have never been more than a few who found in the Prayer Book the fulfilment of all their devotional needs. Most people have sought additional outlets, usually in one of three directions. Some have developed the individual approach to God, in silent meditation and prayer. Some have desired the emotional stimulus of the extempore prayer meeting, and other more Corybantic manifestations of Christianity, with their immediate relevance to daily needs, and their immediate satisfaction of an emotional craving. Others have welcomed the soothing balm of, it must be admitted, often rather sentimental hymns; and the need to soften the rather austere outlines of our services has become so generally recognised that the insertion of hymns has become an almost universal practice. I do not suppose that Cranmer would have objected to any of this, provided that the decorations did not obscure the structure. The common prayer of the Church should deal with universals; and its appeal should be to deep and permanent instincts of the human heart. If this is safeguarded, there is no reason why more transient emotions should not find their satisfaction in other ways.

The gravest defect of our liturgical tradition has been its rigidity and

the impossibility of spontaneous growth. For this the accident of the establishment is largely responsible. A healthy liturgical development depends upon the combination of intense loyalty to the central liturgical tradition with considerable freedom and flexibility in detail. It is just this flexibility which makes the study of ancient liturgies so extremely perplexing. Modifications always begin by way of individual experiment. An experiment which is successful in one place will quickly spread to another, and can do so without hindrance under the eye of a patient and tolerant authority, not concerned to maintain a rigid uniformity in non-essentials. Liturgical experiments can prove their value only by actual use, use in an ordinary congregation over a considerable period of time. Only then does the work of authority begin. When an experiment has justified itself in use, and has been widely adopted, it is time that it should be, as it were, officially registered, adopted into service books, and accepted as a permanent part of the rite. It was in this way, for example, that the recitation of the Nicene Creed in the liturgy very gradually established itself as part of the regular practice of the Church in both East and West. Such liturgical experiment has never ceased in England in minor matters, even under the rigid control of the Act of Uniformity. I have already alluded to the universal adoption of the singing of hymns, not frowned on, though never formally approved, by authority. I may mention here two other, not strictly liturgical, examples of the rapidity with which custom spreads, so that before long most people have forgotten that there ever was a time when the custom was not observed. One is the 19th century practice of holding a Harvest Festival, now in many places more observed than either Christmas or Easter. The other is the custom of taking a money collection at Mattins and Evensong, first introduced, I believe, by Hawker of Morwenstow, the minor poet, about the middle of the last century, but now so rigidly followed that its omission produces a slight shock. But in strictly liturgical matters the Anglican parson in England and his flock have no liberty of experiment, and are open to the charge of disobedience and disloyalty if they depart from the letter of the statutory requirements.

In consequence, such liturgical revision as has taken place within the Anglican Communion has mostly been put through in the self-governing churches and provinces. It is very desirable that the ignorance prevailing in the provinces of Canterbury and York about these various revisions should at least in a measure be dispelled.

It is a common experience of the theological teacher to find that his students have never heard of the very intelligent though conservative revision of the Prayer Book undertaken by the Church of Ireland. Very few even among well educated Anglicans know the extent of variation now sanctioned in different parts of the world. In addition to the several rehandlings of the Anglican liturgy, two rites based on the Eastern tradition have been sanctioned for limited use, and permission has been given for the use in two theological colleges of the use of the Reformed Syrian Church of Malabar. But all these many experiments, with their various merits and defects, labour under two great difficulties. In the first place, these revisions are not the result of a genuine movement of freedom in worship upwards from below. They have

all been, at least in a measure, academic revisions carried out by committees or interested individuals at the study table. Thus, for example, the Ceylon liturgy, meritorious as it is in conception, is much too much a scissors and paste affair, patching together fragments from East and West, to stand successfully under the test of regular and repeated use. Secondly, all these revisions have suffered under the hand of the liturgiologist. The critic of poetry is not infrequently the worst of poets. It seems that the expert liturgiologist is the worst maker of liturgies in the world. The scholarly and archaeological interests seem to conflict irremediably with the creative, and pedantry, the worst foe of worship, creeps into the construction upon which the expert has laid his hand. Both these troubles hindered the already vexed course of the abortive English revision which culminated in the fiasco of 1927-8. But, as has been correctly pointed out in the biography of Archbishop Randall Davidson, that revision was weighed down by a further heavy burden of trouble. It was not put in hand with a single-minded interest to discover and set forth that rite by which the eucharistic devotion of the Church of England in the 20th century could best be expressed. It was part of a long drawn plan to coerce a recalcitrant minority and to restore at least a measure of order in an anarchic situation, surely the very worst basis on which liturgical redrafting could possibly be taken in hand.

The storm centre in the English liturgical anarchy has been the Eucharist. It has not therefore been sufficiently observed that elsewhere also over-rigidity has had its natural effects, and that the war of 1914-18 brought not reform but revolution on the Church of England. It came, not with the flourish of trumpets, but without observation, and therefore it is only with an effort that even those of us who are over forty and were in the habit of going to church before the last war, can cast our minds back and remember what the state of things was in 1914. In that year, in the vast majority of churches in England, no prayer was ever read that was not in the statutory Prayer Book. There was only one lectionary, universally and faithfully observed, with no alternative lessons at Mattins. Thus Jezebel always came in the middle of the summer holidays; we always heard her story read by a stranger, and not in the familiar voice of Col. F. the Vicar's warden. The State prayers were read every Sunday, unless their place was taken by the Litany, which was read so regularly that by the age of twelve we all knew it by heart. On the first Sunday in the month at midday was the parish Eucharist, at which, even at that date, it was no uncommon thing to see a family of parents and three or four children filling an entire pew.

In 1914 the flood of "Protestantism" burst upon the Church of England, as it never had burst since the days of the Protector, and threatened to engulf it. The old order has been completely, and apparently irrevocably, swept away. It is to be noted that all the changes have been in the "Protestant" direction, and away from the Catholic ideal, that is, away from the conception of a universal worshipping church progressing soberly through the liturgical year, and towards the conception of each congregation as a collection of hungry units, crying out for immediate edification. The first step in the direction of making the services adaptable to the needs of the day was

to authorise special war prayers, and not very good ones, for use after the Third Collect. That introduced the now well-known principle that what comes after the Third Collect is a gamble, and that you never know what you are likely to get. Then followed a new and eclectic lectionary. Experience had falsified Cranmer's hope that everybody would come regularly to church on Sundays, and a good proportion of the laity on week-days also. So the 1922 lectionary frankly abandoned the idea of regular Bible-reading covering Sundays and weekdays alike, and chose special lessons for Sunday services, on the general principle that each lesson should be, as far as possible complete in itself, and intelligible to the irregular worshipper with a slender knowledge of Scripture. But this lectionary provided so many alternatives, sometimes several for a single lesson, that the preservation of continuity in reading became almost impossible; it depended on the caprice or judgment of the incumbent whether any part of the historical books of the Old Testament or any of the Epistles were read; and the worshipper never knew beforehand what he might expect to hear. The mischief was increased by the growing demand for the observance of all kinds of special Sundays, for which the bishops were expected to provide or sanction special lections. To this must be added the practice, now very general, of inserting after the Third Collect any kind of intercessions from any kind of source authorised or unauthorised at the discretion or indiscretion of the parson! It is clear that we have come very near to the "Protestant" ideal, where the parson is his own Pope, and his only concern is with the immediate needs and interests of his own flock.

With these radical changes in the character of the divine office was going hand in hand a similar "Protestantisation" of the Eucharist. We have seen that legitimate development in worship follows from careful and humble loyalty to a central tradition, combined with great flexibility in detail. But the developments in Eucharistic worship, which began in the third quarter of the 19th Century, and reached their climax perhaps about the end of the last war, cannot be said to have fallen within the limits of the Catholic framework. Development must proceed from within, from a profound understanding of the genius of the English rite and the liturgical ideas for which it stands, and an enrichment of the liturgy by extension along its own natural lines. The various official revisions shew something of what can be done in this way: though many of those who know them best and use them most frequently, may feel that not one is equal in dignity and force to the austere majesty of the Rite of 1662. But unfortunately many of those who were pressing for liturgical enrichment were doing so on indefensible lines. Having fallen in love with the Latin rite in its late mediaeval form, and being for the most part ignorant of the Eastern rites with their treasures of devotion, they took that one rather jejune rite as the norm of Eucharistic worship, criticised the Anglican rite for not being what it never set out to be, the lineal inheritor in English of the Latin mediaeval service, and tried to bring the English service up to their ideal of what Eucharistic worship should be by the singularly inartistic method of patching, fastening here and there a bit of the Roman on to the English to the mutual destruction of both. Those who solved the problem by simply

abandoning the English rite altogether and saying the whole Roman service in English or in Latin were few but logical. Those who reduced the Mass to a thing of shreds and patches were more numerous. But their position was liturgically precarious and inevitably Protestant. No rational authority could sanction such a proceeding, or authorise the more or less skilful conflation of two not altogether harmonious rites. The individual priest was therefore left to the dictates of his own conscience, or his own liturgical fancies. The appeal could not be to anything but the purely Protestant principle of private judgment—either to what the individual priest felt to be necessary for the celebration of what he judged a fully Catholic Mass, or what he found to be personally edifying; or in certain cases, even to what his congregation had come to like, or would be sorry to be deprived of. Now one of the great weaknesses of Protestantism is the multiplicity of its rites, as will be well-known to any who have waded through any of the shapeless liturgies produced in the days when each small German city and principality thought it incumbent on it to have its own independent and hastily produced form of service. This was the situation reproduced in the English provinces in the early years of this Century, when it was computed that in one diocese alone there were twenty-seven distinct uses in the celebration of the Eucharist, twenty-five of them having no proper ecclesiastical authority at all.

We must recognise that to-day we are facing the dissolution of the Anglican liturgical tradition in a very much exaggerated form. For five years the great majority of the younger men and women of the country have been in uniform, and, in so far as they have attended Church at all, have become accustomed either to parade services, in which a truncated and fragmentary, though not wholly unliturgical, form of Mattins with sermon, is got through in thirty-five minutes; or to the free-and-easy type of service conducted by the individual padre according to his lights. This new generation, even the Christianly inclined part of it, has become unaccustomed to the use of the Prayer Book, does not know how to find its way about in it, and is unfamiliar with the real structure of the regular services. What is to be our plan for the worship of the Church after the war, when we return to more or less normal conditions?

It has to be recognised that at present the vast majority of our people are not communicants, and cannot be made communicants in any near future. Therefore, though the Eucharist will always be in dignity the principal service of the day, we cannot hope that it will be the principal service in frequency of attendance. We have also to recognize that for a whole generation at least, the greater part of our work must be evangelistic; that is, that for the present, services have to be planned largely for those who stand outside the Christian tradition of worship, and have gradually and affectionately to be won back into it. This is a situation unparalleled in England for more than a thousand years. This means that we must be prepared for a great deal of experiment in the way of shorter and less liturgical services, much easier to understand than the Book of Common Prayer, and yet all planned with an educational purpose, not to bring religion down to the level of lowest common understanding, but to meet the not unfriendly seeker where he is, and to bring him slowly to appreciate

the meaning of worship and the significance of liturgy ; and all this must be done without weakening the hold of the Church as a whole on the richness of its liturgical tradition. Clearly a problem great in size and difficult in complexity. In a paper of this length it is not possible to do more than to indicate certain lines of practical action :

1. It should be the aim of us all to bring the Eucharist back to its right place in worship, not by the endless multiplication of Celebrations, but by the development of the parish Eucharist, if possible followed by a communal meal, and probably at the start once a month rather than once a week.

2. There should be great boldness in experiment, outside the liturgical framework, but not out of relation to it, and not as a series of stunts, but as a steady educational programme, designed to familiarise the worshippers with the concepts and the classical forms of Christian worship.

3. We should aim at the printing of the standard prayer book in a form in which it is reasonably possible for the not very expert worshipper to find his way about. The prayer book put out by the Church in Wales is not a bad model from which to start.

4. Even though the daily offices should become for a time, as they were in the Middle Ages, a choir office, that is, the close preserve of a leisured and expert class, traditional Mattins and Evensong should not be abandoned, but should be retained as the form and standard by which other more vernacular types of worship are to be judged, and to which they should gradually be approximated. It is important that all priests should take seriously the duty of saying the Daily Offices, even when they cannot be said in Church, and should so discipline themselves in the inner life, that their own spiritual experiences and aspirations can find their expression in the wider context of the Church's historic worship.

5. We need to give time and attention to the study of liturgical principles, as well as to the solution of practical problems of worship. As I have said before, most of the work of liturgical revision in our Communion has gone forward on a basis of imperfect knowledge or sectarian bias, and has not therefore been very successful. It is the merit of Dom Gregory Dix's recent work *The Shape of the Liturgy* that he does ask the right kind of questions—What is the Church trying to do? How has it set about doing it? What are the permanently necessary parts of the liturgy and which are the accessories which may be changed or abandoned? How far his answers to these questions are satisfactory I have not the expert knowledge to be able to judge, and it will take time before his book has found its level in the liturgical world. In any case it deals only with the Eucharist, not with the daily offices, still less with the occasional offices of the Church. But the hopeful feature of the book is that it does go back behind the controversies of the mediaeval and Reformation periods, which have made liturgiology such a barren and exacerbating subject, and has helped us to study worship as a function of the living and breathing organism.

When we turn from the worship of the Church to the individual practice of devotion, a comparison of our tradition with that of the

Roman Catholic Church is likely to leave us distressed by the poverty of our inheritance. We have nothing to correspond with the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, or with the counsels of St. François de Sales. We have developed nothing like the elaborate systems of prayer and meditation so carefully listed and analysed in Dom Bede Frost's book on *The Art of Mental Prayer*. Not only so, but I suspect that, among Anglicans, those who can use such methods with pleasure and profit are very few indeed, and that the genius of our tradition revolts against such rigid classification and regimentation. There is a right individualism in the approach of man to God; if we accept as necessary the subordination of the individual in the liturgical approach, we feel that this must be compensated for by great freedom in the personal approach of private prayer and meditation.

In all Anglican history I can find only three books of devotion which can be called Classical or universal in their significance, one for each of the three Centuries since the Reformation—Lancelot Andrewes' *Preces Privatae*, the hymns of Charles Wesley and the *Christian Year* by John Keble. Andrewes' Manual of Prayer has proved its catholic character by the acceptance it has found with Anglicans and Free Churchmen of every conceivable variety of school and practice. It has many of the characteristics of Anglicanism at its best. It springs direct from the Biblical tradition; even where it is not directly using Biblical words it manifestly has the same gift as Cranmer's prayers of expressing Biblical thought in kindred and apt but original language. It is full of fervour, but of fervour under restraint; in the range and particularity of its intercessions it reveals a religion which is in no way cloistral, but takes into itself the concerns of the court and the camp, and of all sorts and conditions of men at their ordinary avocations. Wesley's Hymns, again, stand in the Biblical tradition; the emotional tension is higher, but the emotion is that which arises from deep and genuine religious experience, and is almost entirely free from sentimentality or mawkishness. The essential quality of the Hymns is unction, in the true, and not the modern, significance of that much misused word. It is a matter for regret that the Anglican Church has almost forgotten this rich heritage, which belongs specially to it, since Charles Wesley never departed from the Communion of the Church, of which to the end of his life he was a minister, and the whole body of his hymns was written for use by faithful members of that Church. At some points the 18th Century phraseology may be a hindrance to the modern reader; but for the greater part, the hymns are in plain straightforward English, and the experiences with which they deal are those which are common to all sincere Christians earnestly seeking fellowship with Christ. The *English Hymnal* contains only twenty of Wesley's hymns and not all of these have been left in the form in which Wesley wrote them. Bernard Manning the Congregationalist had some hard things to say of the feeble way in which Anglicans use hymns in their services. To the Free Churchman, with no fixed forms, hymns in a real sense are the liturgy, and the right choice of them seems a most essential part of worship. We tend to use them as mere ornamental accretions, without serious liturgical significance, and to spatter them about our services as vocal pauses in the exacting business of worship. Certainly

there is a warning here that we do well to heed ; and perhaps we are ourselves to blame for bringing on ourselves these strictures by neglect of our own devotional heritage. The *Christian Year* is on a much slighter scale than either of the other classics that I have mentioned ; but this too is almost wholly free from sectarian bias or influence. For two generations it was almost as popular in Evangelical as in Tractarian circles, and was the kind of present which Evangelical godparents invariably gave to their godchildren at Confirmation. The poetry is never of a very high order, but it bears the mark of a cultured, scholarly mind, and of that refined, sober piety which was lost when the Tractarian movement diffused itself in the marshes of ritualistic excess. John Keble in many ways belonged to the 18th rather than to the 19th Century. The revival of the Church interest is shewn in the direct connection of the poems with the liturgical sequence of the Church's year, but there is little in either doctrine or expression which would not have met with the approval of Dr. Johnson.

I can find no other book of devotion which can be regarded as of universal significance even within the Anglican Communion. I believe that this is largely to be accounted for by the ascendancy of the Prayer Book. When people are really praying the liturgy their need for additional sources of devotion is much less than when the liturgy is an unintelligible performance in an unknown tongue, or is the extemporaneous composition of a possibly not very gifted minister. The Primers flourished and multiplied until the Prayer Book was put into English and then they wilted and died. As we have said, the Prayer Book does not by itself satisfy the devotional needs of the majority of worshippers ; but the characteristically Anglican supplements to it seem to me to have taken two directions.

The first is the devotional study of Scripture. This practice has so much died out that it is hard for us to realise how widespread at one time it was. The study was not always very intelligent, but it was painstaking and earnest. It was taken for granted that the devout Christian would spend some time every day, and a considerable time every Sunday, in Bible-reading ; it was further taken for granted that the subject of study was the whole Bible, and that the ordinary Christian would wrestle even with the more difficult parts until some kind of meaning had been elucidated. Whilst the learned would use commentaries, the unlearned might expect with the help of the Holy Spirit and of the Sunday sermon, to become in time acquainted with the whole range of the plan of salvation. There were of course eccentricities of interpretation ; but generally, the standard of doctrine being set by the Prayer Book and the Catechism, aberrations from the broad highway of Christian conviction were not so serious as to be dangerous. The high watermark of Bible-reading was probably about 1860 ; but the ebb of the tide did not begin to be very rapid until after the war of 1914-1918.

The other devotional outlet was the use of extempore prayer. It is often supposed that this is a special preserve of the Free Churchman. But this is by no means the case. Throughout the 19th Century, many parishes had a regular Saturday night meeting for extempore prayer. Perhaps the thing which most markedly distinguishes us from the

godly of two generations ago is that, whereas they felt it perfectly natural to kneel down and pray together on any and every occasion, we are self-conscious even with our closest friends. Perhaps we have gained in restraint; it can scarcely be denied that we have lost in spontaneity. Perhaps there is something here which we should seek to recover. It is noticeable that where Anglicans are familiar with the use of extempore prayer, they generally make a much better use of it than Free Churchmen; the constant use of the Collects has taught them definiteness in object and precision in expression, and saves them from the meandering and repetition which can make extempore prayer so tedious and meaningless. We have the testimony of many that opening their lips in prayer was for them a decisive turning-point in spiritual experience, and that the simple approach to the heavenly Father in company with a friend, or in the little group of two or three, was for them the surest and most effective means of experiencing the reality of Christian fellowship.

In writing this paper, I have been compelled to realise at every point that a great deal of what I have written is remote from our present practice and experience, that the Anglican tradition in liturgy and devotion is not what we do now, but something that we have to discover in theory and to recover in practice. The scantiness of our congregations, serious as it is, is much less serious than the dying out of religion in the home and in daily life. Anglicanism sets its mark on the faithful not in crises of emotion nor in extremes of self-denying service (though these have never been lacking among the faithful of our Church), but in the sober discipline of innumerable acts of turning to God, in the inner chamber and in the house of God. The real meaning and value of the Anglican tradition will not become apparent until the congregations in our Churches become once again conscious and worshipping manifestations of the *koinonia* of the Body of Christ, until the service of the Church has become, as it ought to be, the focussing of uncounted rays of personal fellowship with God.