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In the previous chapter we discussed the Anglican tradition, and how this tradition, which was delivered to the world by God through Christ, is passed on through the Anglican Church in its teaching, its life, and its theology. We also saw that after the Elizabethan Settlement, certain characteristics of Anglican theology began to emerge. I would now like to pursue that theme by examining the Anglican appeal to Scripture, antiquity, and reason.

First, then, the appeal to Holy Scripture. The Anglican Church has always regarded and still regards Holy Scripture as the supreme authority for the doctrine of the Christian church. Article Six of the Thirty-Nine Articles is called “Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation,” and has this to say: “Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation, so that whatsoever is not read therein nor may be proved thereby is not required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith or thought to be necessary for salvation.” Article Seven con-

tinues, "The Old Testament is not contrary to the New, for both in the Old and in the New everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only mediator between God and Man, being both God and man."

The supremacy of Holy Scripture, therefore, is related to the salvation of the human race. This emphasis on the sufficiency of Scripture is itself a "hit" at the Roman Catholic Council of Trent, which used language suggesting that a body of truth existed in antiquity outside of Holy Scripture, and that this body of truth has been handed down to the church. In other words, the Council claimed that there was a source of authority directly from Christ and the apostles in addition to the authority of Holy Scripture, and it was against that idea that the Thirty-Nine Articles protested.

But we must notice most of all their emphasis upon the need for salvation. Holy Scripture contains truth necessary for *salvation*. The Articles do not say that Holy Scripture contains truth on innumerable subjects not related to salvation, and here we have the difference between the treatment of Scripture by the Anglicans, as represented by Hooker, and by the Puritans. The Anglicans claimed that whatever is needed for our salvation we find in Scripture, but we do not necessarily have to follow Scripture for rules concerning the details of the life of the church. The Puritans, *per contra*, insisted that Holy Scripture does provide necessary rules and details for the life of the church.

Two examples, one actual and the other hypothetical. The Anglicans used a ring in the sacrament of Holy Marriage because there is nothing that forbids it and it seems a devout and good custom. The Puritans said no, a ring in marriage is not ordered by Holy Scripture and therefore it is wrong to use it. To cite another, more hypothetical instance: when Anglicans use incense in public worship, they do so because it appears to be a holy and edifying custom with evident symbolism attached to it. But

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Anglicans would not say that the use of incense in public worship is biblically ordered simply because its use is described in the book of Revelation. Scripture tells us what is necessary for salvation, but it is not a source of authority for countless other things as well. Hooker has a striking passage about this. In his *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, he notes that Holy Scripture must not be used for the kinds of information and knowledge of information that it is not concerned about, because that knowledge and information does not bear upon salvation.¹

In the second of the Articles quoted above, it stated that the Old Testament is not contrary to the New because in both salvation is offered to humanity through Jesus Christ. How is salvation offered through the Old Testament as well as through the New Testament? Again, Hooker has something to say about this. In a passage that comes a little later than the one I quoted above, he speaks of how the Old Testament reveals Christ by pointing the way to him as the fulfiller, while the New Testament reveals Christ as the one who fulfills what is shadowed in the Old.

How do we understand that doctrine today? There are in the Old Testament a number of passages that may seem strange to us or even cause considerable mirth. For example, portions of Leviticus, or stories in the Elijah and Elisha cycles found in 1 and 2 Kings may strike many of us as odd. How can passages of such mirth and apparent irrelevance bear upon the salvation of humankind through Jesus Christ?

I believe that the concept is both intelligible and true. How does God save the world? God saves the world by manifesting himself through the divine *Logos*, through seers and thinkers and the consciences of men and women far and wide. More specifically, God saves the world by manifesting himself to Israel. And the life of Israel and the revelation to Israel is a great divine work preparing the way for Christ. In that work of God revealing himself to

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Israel, the whole life of the people is involved—the follies and backslidings and absurdities as well as the virtues and great deeds of righteousness. In the whole drama of the Bible, with all its ups and downs, God is manifesting himself as the righteous savior God in a way that points to Christ, and is incomplete without Christ. Thus everything that lies within both the Old and New Testaments is a part of that drama of salvation of which Christ is the head and the climax. In that sense it is true indeed that the Scriptures are a unity to which Christ is the key.

But how is Scripture to be interpreted? Who will be the guide to our understanding? For is it likely that Holy Scripture will be rightly understood in a kind of vacuum? This leads us to the second part of the Anglican appeal, the Anglican appeal to antiquity, the appeal to ancient tradition.

Article Twenty of the Articles of Religion describes the church as the witness to and keeper of Holy Writ. In that belief, the Anglican divines looked increasingly to the fathers of the ancient church as guides to the understanding of Scripture. Here is a classic passage about how the appeal to Scripture and the appeal to ancient tradition go together in Anglican thinking. The writer is one Francis White and the work is called *A Treatise of the Sabbath Day*, written in 1635.

The Church of England in her public and authorized Doctrine and Religion proceedeth in manner following. It buildeth her faith and religion upon the Sacred Canonical Scriptures....[But] next to the Holy Scripture, it relieth upon the consentient testimony and authority of the bishops and pastors of the true and ancient Catholic Church; and it preferreth the sentence thereof before all other curious and profane novelties. [Thus] the Holy Scripture is the fountain and lively spring, containing in all sufficiency the pure water of life.... The consentient and unanimous testimony of the

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... true church of Christ in the primitive ages... is *canalis*, a conduit pipe, to derive and convey to succeeding generations the celestial water contained in Holy Scripture. The first of these, namely Scripture, is the sovereign authority... The latter is a ministerial and subordinant rule and guide to preserve and direct us to the right understanding of the Scriptures.²

A similar appeal to the tradition of antiquity was made forcibly in the "Canon on Preaching," a canon issued in 1571 at the same time as the Thirty-Nine Articles. And this "Canon on Preaching" states that the preachers in the churches should preach nothing but what is found in Holy Scripture and what the ancient fathers and catholic doctors have collected from the same. That is to say, antiquity is regarded as a guide to the understanding of Scripture. The classic ancient definition of this authority of the church of antiquity is found in St. Vincent, who said that the church's understanding be directed by "what has been believed everywhere, always, by all—*quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est.*" Therefore the interpretation of Holy Scripture is to be found in what Christians, the members of the church, believe always, everywhere, and by all.

Now, this appeal to the ancient fathers became increasingly characteristic of Anglican thought. It became as well the point of divergence between characteristic Anglican theology and the theology of the Lutheran and Calvinistic churches on the Continent. This trend, which was of immense interest in the teaching of the fathers, came to be called by the broad umbrella word of "Arminian." Jacobus Arminius was a Dutch Protestant who quarreled with the official Calvinist teaching on a number of points, such as the predestination of some to damnation, and the irresistible character of God's grace. In quarreling with the official Calvinist line, he came to be regarded by the Calvinists as a heretic. But his teaching, a greatly modified

Calvinism, spread widely, and spread considerably into the Anglican Church. It remained very powerful in the Anglican Church for some time, as we can see from a rather whimsical conversation reported to have taken place in the seventeenth century. Question: "Can you tell me what the Arminians hold?" Answer: "I am sorry to say that they hold half the deaneries in England!"

Thus the word "Arminian" came to be a rather vague description of the Anglican divines who were not Calvinist, but High Church, sacramental, devoted to antiquity, and perhaps Pelagian. It is also a word that has stuck in Anglican history for a very long time, lasting right down to the Methodist movement, when it was aptly noted that of the two great leaders of the Methodist revival, one of them, George Whitefield, was Calvinist and the other, John Wesley, was an Arminian. Wesley would not have rejected the description because it broadly represented his position.

What, then, was the effect upon Anglican theology of this increasing devotion to antiquity, to the church fathers, and to the authority of antiquity as a guide to the right interpretation of Holy Scripture? The effect certainly was, and perhaps still is, to give a certain archaic flavor to Anglican theology. Besides that, there were effects of a very creative kind. Christian antiquity is both Latin and Greek, both western and eastern, and the Anglican appeal to antiquity meant that Greek as well as Latin theology came to figure largely in the Anglican consciousness and in the work of Anglican divines. I remind you of the prayer included in Lancelot Andrewes's book of prayers: "Let us pray for the whole church; eastern, western, our own. . . ."³ To live with that point of view—the church is eastern, western, and our own—had, of course, a broadening as well as archaizing effect upon the ethos of Anglican divinity. Furthermore, the Anglican devotion to antiquity helped it get right away from medieval and post-medieval

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controversies and see some of those controverted questions in a larger perspective.

Let me give two examples, the first being the doctrine of the Eucharist. In the sixteenth century, understandings of the Eucharist came to be terribly bogged down between a very lopsided medieval conception of the meaning of sacrifice in the Mass, over against a tendency to reject the concept of sacrifice in the Mass totally in reaction to the corrupt medieval idea. Of course it was possible for both sides to quote Scripture, although merely quoting Scripture did not provide the answer. Yet Anglican divinity, because of its devotion to the ancient fathers, found it possible to see this controversy in a larger perspective and explore a concept of sacrifice that neither fully embraced it nor rejected it, as many of the reformers did. That is an instance of how the Anglican appeal to antiquity could be a creative source of synthesis, a new valuation and progress.

Another illustration comes from the doctrine of the communion of saints, which holds that the souls in paradise and the saints in heaven are one family of prayer and worship with the church here on earth. They are one family reflecting the unique glory of Jesus. Now at the time of the Reformation controversies, there was on the one hand a medieval doctrine of purgatory of a very corrupt kind, and on the other a doctrine of devotion to the saints that made the saints, as it were, individual mediators who supplemented the mediatorship of Jesus. In reaction, people began to insist that all prayers for the departed must be wrong, while all sense of praying and worshipping with the saints in heaven was wrong as well, because it interfered with the unique prerogative of Jesus.

Because of its devotion to antiquity, Anglican divinity has been able to get away from that false antithesis and recover thought and teaching about the communion of saints. It has been able to recover the kind of teaching that is found, for instance, in St. John Chrysostom, where

you have the church on earth, the souls in paradise, the saints in heaven, and the Blessed Virgin Mary as a family unity of mutual prayer and thanksgiving. The communion of saints is the reflection of the unique glory of Jesus in those who belong to him on earth, or in paradise, or in heaven.

These are two instances in which the Anglican appeal to antiquity, for all its archaisms and frequent pedantry and apparent retrogression, has been something that makes for peace and synthesis and creativity. It was the glory of the Anglican appeal to antiquity that it included the ancient East as well as the ancient West, and that continues today.

Now, alongside its appeal to Scripture and antiquity, Anglicanism also makes an appeal to reason. This third kind of appeal is a little difficult to define, and its manifestations have been buried in different phases of Anglican history. God created the human race, not in a vacuum, but as part of a created order in which he manifests himself. And in the created order, the divine Logos is a principle of unity and purpose and rationality. Through the indwelling of the divine Logos in the world, it informs the conscience and the reason of men and women. Quite outside the biblical covenants, therefore, we have the rudiments of a knowledge of God through that conscience and reason that are bestowed by him.

This principle of the indwelling Logos includes our perception of right and wrong. By virtue of that perception we are able to know shape and purpose, as well as model order, in the universe. That knowledge is hazardous and incomplete until revelation comes to crown it, indeed, until redemption comes to cleanse us, so that our conscience and reason may be freed from those things that thwart and corrupt them.

Now this appeal to reason, which takes place in the context of the biblical revelation and the appeal to antiquity, has appeared in Anglican history in a number of

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forms. Let me mention two or three instances of the powerful Anglican appeal to reason that you may care to follow up on your own.

One example comes from those divines in the seventeenth century called the Cambridge Platonists,⁴ a group that flourished roughly between 1630 and 1690. The Cambridge Platonists were very aware of the role of reason in religion, and of the presence of the divine Spirit in nature and in human beings. A single, much-quoted sentence of one of their number, Benjamin Whichcote, really expresses and defines the character of their work. He wrote, "The spirit in man is the candle of the Lord."⁵ That sentence draws together both the quest for the divine through the use of human reason studying the world, and the quest for the divine through a mystical experience of God in the indwelling Spirit. Among them, the study of Plato's writings to supplement Holy Scripture was typical of the way these scholars worked.

In the eighteenth century, a good instance of the Anglican appeal to reason is found in the work of Joseph Butler replying to the Deists of his time. I strongly recommend the study not only of Butler's sermons, but also of his great work, *The Analogy of Religion*.⁶ Butler applied the concept of reason to human worship, in contrast with the more rationalistic view of his time that ignored the presence of the Spirit of God in human reason.

For us today, however, perhaps the most significant aspect of the Anglican appeal to reason is found in the nineteenth-century crisis of faith, a crisis both for Anglicans and for all Christians. At that time, the development of the scientific revolution appeared to be challenging the authority of Holy Scripture. In reaction to this challenge, church people began to treat Holy Scripture in ways that the Anglican formularies did not require and that Richard Hooker certainly would have repudiated. The Bible was used not merely to declare the things necessary to salvation, but also as a source of information on

every conceivable subject: geology, botany, astronomy, biology, the rotation of the world, and the details of human history through the centuries.

A literalist view of the Bible, which was common to Anglicans and to Christians of almost every sort, came to be challenged by the growth of sciences, geology, and biology. Literal-minded churchmen claimed that the world had been created in exactly six days, with the creation of the two first parents as its climax. The discoveries of biology, geology, and other sciences, however, held that the human race was the result of a long evolutionary process. Hence a clash between a literalistic view of the Bible and a developing science.

Another clash occurred between what was held to be the historical character of all the biblical records, and the application of historical criticism to ancient documents. So it became very hard to believe that everything described in the Pentateuch, for instance, is literal history, and for many this brought about a crisis of faith. Yet the appeal to reason as a God-given attribute made it possible for believers to realize that the divine Logos is at work in the sciences themselves—in the new understanding of nature that produced the evolutionary theories, in the new historical study that challenged the literal character of every biblical narrative.

That being so, Christian theology can continue its belief in divine creation and in biblical revelation—not in diminished, but in wonderfully enhanced ways. Thus the work of the divine creator is no less glorious if God in fact created the world through a slow evolving process with human beings as the climax. Equally, the Bible is not diminished but enhanced if God's revelation is not limited to prosaic literal statements, but able to use poetry, drama, symbol, imagery, and a whole wealth of literary forms of speech and thought in showing his existence, his graciousness, and his purposes to humanity. The drama of the book of Job, and perhaps the poetry of the book of

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Jonah, can be no less revealing of God's glory and beauty than are literal statements.

Now those are some significant instances of how the Anglican tradition appealed to Scripture as containing all things necessary to salvation, to antiquity as a guide to the understanding of Scripture, and to reason as a God-given faculty for receiving divine revelation. Reason increases and enlarges human understanding of divine revelation through its own workings, so long as reason is used in humble dependence upon the God who gave it.

The Anglican tradition has continued to be a kind of triangle, a kind of balance between the appeals to Scripture, tradition, reason. And it is possible for the three sides of that triangle to pull apart. Inevitably there have been within the Anglican churches those who have specially emphasized the appeal to Scripture, and have not bothered very much about the ancient fathers. There have been those who have appealed strongly to ancient tradition, but might have paid a little more attention to Holy Scripture, and perhaps a little more attention to reason as well. There have also been those who, concentrating upon the activity of God in reason, have not been quite as sensitive as they might be to what is revealed in Holy Scripture and contemptuous of traditions as something that old men used to think many, many centuries ago.

This division of emphasis is entirely healthy if kept a matter merely of emphasis, but it can become partisan and divisive if pursued recklessly. So we occasionally witness not just the appeal to Scripture, but a kind of scripturalism, and any "ism" can be dangerous. Scripturalism is not the same thing as the appeal to Holy Scripture. Traditionalism is not the same thing as the intelligent appeal to tradition. And rationalism can be a very evil thing when it involves a worship of reason, and forgets that reason is concerned with great mysteries requiring awe, wonder, and even cleverness. Reason itself is a gift of God; its use can be corrupted if our dependence upon God

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is forgotten. So we in our study of the Anglican tradition must pursue the ways that the appeal to Scripture, tradition, and reason can still mutually enrich one another.



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