

Aspects of Anglicanism

Today's Church & Today's World

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Section VI

After the wide-ranging symposium of the articles in the previous five sections, the final three essays of Section VI face a question both elusive and challenging. What is *Anglicanism*, that we have been surveying in all its breadth and length? The question might be regarded as exhibiting those anxiety traits that have caused almost all institutions, assumptions and principles—social, moral or religious—to be re-examined rigorously during the post-war decades. Anyone actually flying in a plane, while perhaps wondering whether the wings will stay on, is hardly likely to ask whether it is working correctly to aerodynamic principles. The nagging introspective enquiry that keeps surfacing in these three last articles is, however, of this order: not whether Anglicanism is wise or right in this or that; nor what might be new approaches, formulations, realignments, growth points or other developmental themes. These of course are there. But the real matter that underlies the three is: What is peculiar, native, identifying, about Anglican churchmanship, now that it has spread beyond the Anglo-Saxon, British racial origins to embrace great provinces of Asian, African and South American peoples? It is more explicit in the first of the three articles, 'On Being Anglican', by Bishop Stephen Neill; and it is obviously haunting the third by Bishop John Howe, the Secretary-General of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) in his 'Anglican Patterns'; but it is also implicit in the discussion by Bishop Oliver Tomkins in the second, 'Anglican Christianity and Ecumenism'.

Historic Anglicanism

Bishop Neill frankly poses the question right at the outset of his contribution: 'Is there anything to be said for being Anglican in the year 1977?' Some etymological investigation of the very term 'Anglican Communion' produces a predictable conclusion that it results from the 18th-19th-century missionary work overseas by Church of England missionary societies and by the parallel expansion of the British Empire; so the enquiry delves further back into history to identify the peculiarities of the Reformation experience of the Church of England, and its long-term effects. This attempt at distinguishing is made on the basis of propounding six types of Reform in Europe: Lutheran, Calvinist, Socinian, Anabaptist, Tridentine, and English. Bishop Neill attributes a summary description to each of these respectively as biblical, doctrinal, intellectual, radical, conservative and

liturgical. Such identifying terms may appear a little strange to many: thus the Calvinist reform was at least as biblical as the Lutheran, and the Lutheran provided doctrinal confessions as much as the Calvinist. The Socinian might better be described as 'rationalist' rather than 'intellectual', while the Tridentine was so different in principle from the others—maintaining the Roman traditional system so completely—that if it is called 'reform' in the same breath as the rest it must surely be in terms of simply disciplinary. The difference between the Lutheran and Calvinist Reformations might surely be seen not in biblical and theological terms as such, but in the conservatism of the Lutherans, sacramentally and ecclesologically, and in the correspondingly different thoroughgoing Calvinist positions; and in their consistently different view of church-state relations, which (as Richard Niebuhr showed in his *Christ and Culture*) embody on the one hand a demarcation agreement of two separate spheres, and on the other an equally thoroughgoing unification of all life in terms of transformation of society by the gospel. It is clear from this that simplifications in terms of one-word summaries are less illuminating than is intended.

By the same token, it is doubtful whether the description of the English Reformation under the summary term 'liturgical' really gets to the heart of it, and again it is doubtful whether one word will suffice. Bishop Neill sees it was more than this; but while he is right in stressing the outstanding genius of Cranmer—which stamped the Reformed Church of England with the permanent liturgical devotion and order of the Prayer Book—it was surely the *approach* to liturgical reform which reflected a cast of mind that affected a much wider range of characteristics of the English Reformation than just the liturgical, even if the liturgical aspect vividly manifested their operation. The liturgical principle enunciated in Sander-son's 'preface' to the BCP of 1662, of 'the mean between the two extremes of too much stiffness in refusing and of too much easiness in admitting any variation', echoes the similar theme in the 1552 preface ('Of Ceremonies . . .') that reckons to pilot a path between those 'addicted to their old customs' and those 'so new-fangled that they would innovate all things'; and in claiming the values of reformed antiquity, also urges the merits of a godly devotion and discipline that is appropriate to a particular people — in this case, of course, the English. The Englishness of the Reformation in this country has frequently been pointed out: not only did it not, as in the Continental Reformations, focus upon the great name of a leader, but it was from the first rooted in popular movements like the Lollards and the 'Christian Brethren'. Furthermore, it was led by leaders of the Church of England, the Henrician, Edwardian and Elizabethan bishops. It was a much more protracted affair, at least to the latter part of Elizabeth's reign, though an argument could well be mounted that the nature of the Reformed Church of England was not completed until 1662. And because of all this, it was a much more historic process: that is to say, it looked back to its own uninterrupted origins in the earliest days of Christianity in these islands, during which the papal hegemony was first accepted and then, in

the Reformation, repudiated. And further, it saw reformation not just as a religious affair, but as something that affected the whole realm.

Bishop Neill leads on to this theme when he spells out the continuing basic difference in conceiving of the church as that of the whole people, or that of the gathered professors of the faith. As he rightly says, it was the experience of the seventeenth century, culminating in the civil war and the Restoration, that clinched the decision to express England's Christianity through—not 'the state church'—but, the church of the Elizabethan Settlement that saw itself rightly as the continuing Church of England which had in the early days nursed the Anglo-Saxon-Danish heptarchy into one realm by its own anterior unified diocesan and parochial structure. In this sense it is probably unprofitable to continue the nineteenth-century debate about what kind of *via media* the Church of England follows: whether, as with Bishop Neill, between Rome and the Anabaptist sectaries (not, as the misprint, secretaries!); or, as is popularly but erroneously held, between Rome and Geneva; or even, with greater accuracy and with the late Dr C. S. Carter, between Lutheran and Calvinist. The midpoint motif may well be wrongly conceived, as a borrowing of the liturgical principle already referred to, and applying it illegitimately. Lutheranism may occupy a position between Rome and Geneva, even if not midway; but the Anabaptist sects and the English Reformation go off this line at other tangents. The whole variety of the European Reformation is too complex, too varied in its different theatres of action, to be well illustrated by plotting the relations of the different types like beads on one thread.

The historic form of the Reformation in England set forward a particular church polity that contained the major characteristics of a close fidelity to the actual teaching of Holy Scripture for all questions of faith, with no special preference for any leading theologian, although the ancient fathers were given special honour; and the belief and policy that a national church can order its government, discipline and worship according to its best wisdom, provided nothing so ordered is contrary to Holy Scripture (a critical issue with the Presbyterians, Independents and others). In this it accepted some things from the past and refused others, but submitted all to a re-use in terms of scriptural godliness and edification. It retained the threefold ministry in a pattern of diocesan and parochial pastoral oversight. Its liturgical ordering covered the constant round of life, daily from the cradle to the grave, and fostered special seasons of feast and fast that formed a deeply devotional and teaching medium and at the same time established strong links with general community life. It was Richard Hooker, of course, who wrote up all this and much more into a philosophy on the principle of 'one people, one ruler, one faith, one church'. Bishop Neill makes reference to this as 'not an ignoble ideal' but also quite rightly says that the toleration that came about at the end of the seventeenth century meant its final abandonment. But it opened up the thinking in both church and state towards a toleration of variations in practice, and to some extent

in faith, that was already being seen within the bounds of the Church of England.

Bishop Neill does not pursue the historical question any further at this point, although it could well be remarked that when one attempts to find some bearings upon what is distinctive about Anglicanism from a look at the English Reformation, it might soon be seen that the seventeenth century itself began to provide important qualifications and developments about that very ethos—which means that a look at the Reformation is not enough. Later political events, like the succession of William of Orange, produced the pocket of self-conscious High church non-jurors (themselves heirs of a continuing body of devotees of the Henrician reform), while the evangelical revival in the eighteenth century strengthened and gave a pietist slant to the continuing Edwardian form of the Reformation tradition. A continuing philosophical stream, carrying on from the Cambridge Platonists, has provided a third element in emerging Anglicanism into more recent times. In the growing empire and the parallel overseas outreach of Church of England missionaries, areas of Africa, India, Australasia, Canada, the West Indies and South America, as well as other parts of the world, found themselves led into a Christianity of a particular kind of Anglicanism. Bishop Neill points out that Scotland and the United States of America showed them the way in which Anglicanism could be fully expressed without the English set-up: the Scots as a minority church; the Americans in a country which after the War of Independence owed no allegiance to the British crown. Yet without the link with the crown, or indeed with any state establishment, the episcopal order of Anglicanism, in communion with Canterbury, was maintained despite the shocks sustained by the inflexibly establishment-minded in England.

New times and a changing status

Three great movements in the nineteenth century have had a profound effect upon Anglican self-understanding the world over, up till today. The first, which none of the three writers refers to, is the growing alienation between all forms of Christianity—the Church of England and Anglican provinces overseas included—and the socio-political communities that have been developing within the terms of first, the industrial revolution, and then the more recent technological revolution—with all the wide-ranging intellectual, moral, social and political changes, affecting entire social outlooks and assumptions in their train. Professor Owen Chadwick has analysed some of this in *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge 1975) and there is much more beside. As far as the Church of England is concerned, all this has greatly weakened its own older confidence in its role as an established church and its historical character. Its own self-understanding in these changing terms has been accentuated by the obvious detachment of state institutions, or many of their members. Some point was given to all this in the parliamentary

handling of the Deposited Prayer Book (1927); the attitudes of many MPs and the reactions of many church leaders after its refusal; and the subsequent permissions under episcopal exercise of authority. Over a hundred years now, the Church of England has been coming to accept a denominational standing, indeed even showing from time to time a sectarian outlook. No doubt the growing strengths of the Free Churches on the one hand, and the Roman Catholic Church in Britain on the other, have contributed much to this; but not apart from the deepening sense of being more and more a missionary church, with a growing understanding of the conditions of the 'home' front that undermines the old assumptions that mission only goes on overseas. Issues over baptismal discipline, regulations as to remarriage of divorcees, and the liturgical emphasis upon the Parish Eucharist instead of Matins and 8.0 am Holy Communion, have served to isolate the Church of England *congregation* in increasing distinction from the community. A 'gathered church' outlook has imperceptibly gained a hold, and in more recent times is becoming explicit and argued for.

To a great extent, the other two great movements have intertwined with this first, and they are both dealt with in these three articles. One is the growth and diversification of Anglicanism in the world-wide communion; the other is the ecumenical movement. Bishop Neill points out the variety of liturgical use and practice throughout the Anglican Communion so that an Anglican who moves about is never sure what rite he will find; and behind the variety is no evident 'unity of theological understanding or of liturgical principle'. This is hardly surprising: not only is the BCP left behind but 'The Thirty-nine Articles have been generally abandoned' (p 280), so that Anglicanism at large is left without any distinctive theological or liturgical criterion. And on the horizon Bishop Neill describes the threat of a lessening of scriptural authority and with it a loss of unity on matters of ethical principle. All this, we may comment, tends to make the Church of England—so far from being a test of what is best in Anglicanism—something of an old-fashioned fuddy-duddy in the eyes of some from overseas. Its characteristic as the church of the nation is undermined not only by social alienation and the resurgence of alternative types of Christianity, but even by its overseas members of the family seeing their own 'free' standing as being in no way a second best to England. In the light of all this Bishop Howe sees the need for much more consultation, not less. As the Anglican Communion continues to be ordered in twenty-five autonomous Provinces (or Provincial Churches, some with internal archiepiscopal provinces) all forming a family of equals, there is increasing need to consult, share, discuss and forge relationships, since there is no overarching canonical authority. Some of these Provincial Churches span more than one country and involve different and unlike languages. Beside these problems of organization, there are signs that 'All is less well than it seems. To opt for the gospel and the apostolic tradition has become a matter of challenging the national tradition.' (p 292) Bishop Howe sees a need to consolidate: in different parts of his article he urges, in not very

clear terms, that monochrome dioceses, of one kind of churchmanship alone, should become more open to others; and he wants more thought-through terms for understanding the Bible, for he sees what may be broadly termed 'conservative' and 'critical' kinds of biblical approach as divisive forces in ecumenical and evangelistic activity and as having their own ecclesiological drawbacks. But there is yet room for encouragement; there is a greater growing together by different types of churchmanship and a greater constructiveness in seeing what the gospel is about and what the church is for.

Then what of the third great movement: the ecumenical? Itself an outcome of overseas missionary work, of the evangelistic missions of D. L. Moody and their subsequent results in world-wide student organizations, and therefore not just the attempts of denominations to preserve their vitality in the face of growing secularization (as the sociologist Bryan Wilson has propounded) there has come about since the middle or latter part of the last century a great surge of international, inter-church activity which Bishop Tomkins briefly surveys in his article—culminating with the WCC and the problems of the Anglican Communion in relation to 'World Confessional Families'. These, as Bishop Neill also shows, are described by a term that does not easily fit twenty-five autonomous Anglican bodies each individually represented on the WCC. Here again, the identity of the Anglican Communion as distinct from the Lutheran World Federation, for example, is hard for anyone not an Anglican to see. Yet Anglicanism has been very much to the fore in ecumenical endeavour, and in the Churches of North India and South India has agreed to some dioceses joining to form churches that are non-Anglican but members of that wider episcopal fellowship which Anglican resources have assisted over recent decades. But in the general ecumenical field, Bishop Tomkins reviews the new 'ongoing process' towards 'visible unity' involving (as it has) no less than eight schemes of union in which Anglicans participated and which have collapsed—thus supporting his quotation from an American Congregationalist: 'The Anglican Communion prays more for unity and does more to prevent it than any other body in Christendom.' (p 283) The reaction against schemes of union—which became stronger after the failure of the Anglican-Methodist scheme and was built into the outlook of the Ten Propositions—no doubt enshrines growing attitudes that have emerged more in the '70s, as Bishop Tomkins points out, against forms, 'system' and structures; and, above all, reflects a concern for participation in decision-making. New complementarities—'tensions' Bishop Tomkins calls them—have arisen in ecumenical activity: between local (national) and world terms, especially in the reconciliation of the spirituality and theology of the various global confessions; and between local areas of ecumenical experiment and the denominational background in which anomalies are deliberately accepted because of the accepted process, involving the participants, towards the goal of visible unity. The terms of visible unity have been first set out in the ACC Trinidad 1976 Report

(p 16), and adopted by the General Synod Board for Mission & Unity's Second Report on 'Visible Unity in Life and Mission' (GS 300A, para 25) as the object of the Ten Propositions as the Board understands them: a confession of a common faith, complete eucharistic fellowship, mutual recognition of membership, the inter-changeability of ministries, acceptance of an enriching diversity, and common counsel and action leading to the sharing of resources. They omit from the ACC list only the item 'streamlining of structures.'

The further goal? If one follows Bishop Howe, it is essential to 'be deeply committed and believing in the Anglican Communion', yet to 'regret its need to exist', because it 'exists in its present form because of division.' (p 291) But is that divisiveness about to be enhanced by Anglicans going their own way over the issue of the ordination of women? The book has an earlier article by Margaret Dewey of USPG which, among other widely-ranging comments on contemporary influences in church and society, lays down a paragraph of *pronunciamentos* on the subject as if they were self-evident axioms and concludes with the lapidary sentence that 'Priestesses are pagan; "women priests" a semantic impossibility.' (p 53) While not even the Pope has said that, Bishop Neill more cautiously remarks: 'It is not the business of an individual writer to pass judgement on these proceedings; it is important that we should recognize the consequences of what we do.' (p 281) With a schism in ECUSA, problems at Manchester and Newcastle upon Tyne, clear warnings to the General Synod by Cardinal Hume, difficulties already with the Anglican-Orthodox conversations, it would argue an invincible and culpable ignorance if this Lambeth Conference this year were to recommend any positive action here that did not show any recognition of what the consequences might be.

Enduring values in Anglicanism

Is there then 'anything to be said for being an Anglican' (p 272) today? In the long term both Bishop Neill, openly, and Bishop Howe, by implication, pose the question whether the Anglican Communion 'is to be regarded as a permanent part of the world Christian scene, or only as a provisional entity'. The 1948 Lambeth Conference, says Bishop Neil, returned the answer that 'we must face the possibility of our own demise', if it be the will of God 'that what is at present Anglican should find itself absorbed into a more fully catholic union, in which everything that has been valued as Anglican in separation should find its appropriate home.' (p 278-9) But it naturally added a warning about being too premature in implementing this possibility. Accepting all this, what are to be discerned as the particular values ('treasures') of Anglicanism? We no longer talk about the 'threefold cord' of Scripture, tradition and reason—possibly because many would dispute an Anglican monopoly of them. Bishop Neill identifies 'a unique combination of order and freedom, of independence and mutual loyalty.

... a stream of tolerance [patchy, unequal and unstable, one might comment], of willingness to listen' [again, recent, uneven and undependable, it could be said]. (p 281) We 'are still called to be watchdogs'—but apparently not against heretics; rather to let the truth appear by its own light in due course. One presumes that the human contribution of contending for it comes in somewhere. We have built up a world-wide fellowship in which Christians of many races feel at home 'within the limits of a not too stringent definition of the Christian faith and its demands', (p 282) and there is yet more to be done in this field. Bishop Neill concludes that there is an 'Anglican ethos', which if lost would render the world church the poorer, and he believes that it lies in the principle with which Bishop Sanderson begins his preface to the 1662 BCP.

Can one say more? One might at least elaborate a little. The historic involvement of the Church of England in the ding-dong struggle for liberty in its various aspects, sometimes finding to its cost that it has misjudged the situation and been on the wrong side, means that it has emerged from a tangled and troubled past with a deep sense that, as a church, it will not and cannot do with highly centralized government. Neither the Roman Curia, nor the Methodist Conference, nor the various kinds of European state churches, hold any kind of appeal to Anglicans; they could not share in any structural union that involved anything like them. The long-winded procedures of synodical government spell out this caution, and close criticism needs to be made on proposals to 'speed it up' by increasing the cutting of corners. Similarly, the autonomy of the major Provinces of the Anglican Communion, together with the close consultation to thrash out issues as equal participants—seeking a consensus that is not imposed by any other sanction than that of a conviction of finding the Spirit's guidance in an openness to truth, and, where more than one possible view has finally to be accepted—embodies a view of what a world-wide Christian church should be like as it seeks humbly and honestly to know what the will of the Lord is. In seeking truth, Anglicanism holds on to a profound honour for the general Christian tradition, but not uncritically nor unhistorically. Its experience allows no infallibility to the tradition, nor to any current exponent of it, however august. It could never muster a body of highly skilled experts to advise, and then go contrary to their guidance, as papal action has done over contraception and the doctrine of the Assumption, to speak of no more. It is for this reason that the ordination of women is a peculiarly Anglican problem. But there is still a task before it to enable its members to read and use Holy Scripture in such a way as to find a common hermeneutic principle: a way that does not on the one hand ask the wrong questions ('we don't find the parish system in the NT'), or seek for an equally important significance in every text, or indulge in double-think that forgets about St Paul's words on the covered heads of women at worship but is bothered about his words on their speaking in the congregation; or, on the other, indulges in critical high-handedness that dismisses whole sections of text, or demands a following of idiosyncratic

theories, or turns the NT writings into labyrinths of juxtaposed texts and interpretations that lose everyone in their maze. The gospel demands that no believer should be delivered up to the scribe or the authoritarian academic, even though the fellowship of the church finds edification from ripe scholarship in order that everyone should be able to read Scripture with understanding, share intelligently in its liturgical and homiletic use, and find it a means of grace that ministers to one's own spiritual needs. This has been an Anglican concern since the Reformation and, as Archbishop McAdoo has shown, was an important pastoral principle of the seventeenth century divines (cf. *The Structure of Caroline Moral Theology*, 1949) and it is no small testimony to the particular Anglican provision in this area that Free Churchmen have come to share appreciatively in the liturgical observance of the Christian year and lectionary, and Roman Catholics have found in Matins and Evensong a daily devotional use of great value.

Finally, a proper evaluation has to be made of the Church of England's historic pattern of pastoral care by means of diocesan and parochial structures. European Christendom has had a number of patterns in its pastoral administration: city bishoprics, the Roman civil administration, the Teutonic and Celtic tribal pagan religion and the monastic mission centre for an area; and there has been adaptation that has used elements from one or another at different times, as social and church developments arose and other forms were copied or imposed. It is therefore a naive piece of simplification to allege that the parish system arose out of an agricultural era, and is therefore out of date, unserviceable, irrelevant, and so on. Basically, the principle is that of the Christian gospel being affirmed and presented in terms of teaching and care for the whole of life, and for all (cf. St Paul's aim Col. 1:28, 29). We have to ask ourselves whether our modern society fundamentally calls that into question, or if some entirely different pattern of approach is called for; and also whether what has been a European pattern has itself to be superseded, and neither held up to Anglican Provinces elsewhere in the world as a valuable example nor even commended in its basic principle. The sociological problems (not least in social psychology) of sprawling conurbations and vast industrial complexes, first thoroughly examined by the work of Canon Boulard in France in 1960, with their implications for church life of any kind at all; the wave of intense debate over Bonhoeffer's 'Religionless Christianity', and Harvey Cox's *The Secular City*, in the emerging western social and religious situation; the raw view of the future offered by Charles Davis in his *The Temptations of Religion* (1973) that the church will have to choose between the ghetto or the desert (into which as a 'presence' it would be absorbed); the multiplication of various kinds of para-church Christian-type group life, together with charismatic development; the intense ecumenical interest culminating in the abortive Anglican-Methodist schemes—all have provided an intense force of cross-currents to an internal process of reform begun in the Church of England before 1939, which culminated in

the *Paul Report* (1964). From this a number of further analyses and recommendations have followed in books by other authors—including Leslie Paul himself—and reports like *Partners in Ministry* (ed. Fenton Morley). All were accepting, and indeed seeking to further, the parochial principle of the ministry of the Church of England (though usually, in hope, in ever-closer relation with other churches) to the whole community. The Urban Church Project gives the data for making the parochial structure correspond more properly to the social limits of genuine community; only the Sheffield Urban Theology Unit sees loosely-structured small groups as the appropriate pastoral model for the inner city and conurbation, and indeed would want to extend it to suburbia. Beside these more general approaches to the task of pastoral care, the special forms of sector ministry—in education, hospitals and industry—have adapted the parochial structure to enable a service of a particular kind to be exercised in such areas with their own peculiar needs and problems. In this one recognizes fresh ways of articulating the pastoral principle of church to the community, and calls for no anxiety-prompted reactions to assert the relative merits of different kinds of ministry over against one another. In a time, however, when ordained ministry is undermanned, it opens up the question of what is appropriate for ordained men: whether ‘every-member ministry’ offers fresh possibilities for lay leaders to exercise a special ministry in sector areas of some kinds; or what part non-stipendiary ordained ministry has to play.

All these developments in England have their counterparts elsewhere in the Anglican Communion, even if the basic parochial structure cannot be applied very easily to the geographical area. But in fact, in practice, and still more in principle, the church’s task in a ministry to the whole community is our continuing aim and ideal. The ideal of the gathered community is not a live one for Anglicans; at most it can only be something accepted as an imposed limitation by circumstances of one sort or another. And this has to be maintained even in the midst of a plural society and indeed one involving mixed races and religions. The Church of England knows now a little of what its Anglican partners have known for a long time and in much more significant proportions in settled non-Christian countries overseas. But when Bishop Tomkins rightly raises this as a fresh (though hardly new) aspect of the mission of the church in Britain (and neither fresh nor new for Anglicans elsewhere), it may very well require a clearer understanding as to the form of ministry to those of other races and cultures within our midst. It may call for a tactful dialogue, but hardly for the unresolved question he passes on from Professor John Hick as to whether it is ‘possible for Christians to affirm with the former certainty that in Christ alone is the Way, the Truth and the Life?’ (p 286) Hick’s attempt to use the Copernican astronomical revolution as an analogy to bolster up an otherwise unsupported assertion as to the displacement of the centrality of Christ, unfortunately quoted without criticism by Bishop Tomkins, has been properly subjected to logical devastation by Bishop

Lesslie Newbigin in his booklet *Christian Witness in a Plural Society* (British Council of Churches 1977), together with much other wisdom. It is to be hoped that the Lambeth fathers will be better advised by Bishop Newbigin than by Bishop Tomkins on this matter. Truly there is need for listening, for love and respect that will go deeper than mere humanism as they reflect the love of God in Jesus Christ; true, it may be that listening may lead to putting things differently. Bishop Tomkins is right here to warn that putting something differently *may* in fact be saying something different altogether. Much will depend on whether there is a capitulation to Hick's view of the situation, or whether Anglicans keep to that faith which is not simply Anglican but Christian; on this they have not been helped very much by recent theological writings from some of their highly-placed teachers. Whatever may be said, however, for the eventual absorption of Anglican Provinces into a wider Christendom, the 'being swallowed up into a world religion' is not only not on the agenda now or ever from Christian presuppositions; it is also not on *anyone's* agenda—particularly, as Bishop Newbigin also shows, the agenda of the non-Christian religions. The theosophic notion of syncretism of essential truths to provide a 'world religion' is the illusion of detached western intellectuals.

Perhaps then, an answer can be envisaged to the question 'Is there anything to be said for being an Anglican' in 1978 or beyond? The answer may not be given in neat and tidy theses, or clear-cut differentiae; but if this had been possible, the question would never have arisen. Yet there is that within Anglicanism which will involve, without any shadow of doubt, in any future form of a wider Christendom, structurally united, what has been discerned as part of the ongoing Anglican heritage; it will not only be taken into it, but will require that, in order to be included, other aspects of other areas of Christendom (RC, Orthodox or Protestant) will have to be adjusted or reformed to make it possible. It is important to recognize this. Many such issues were 'swept under the carpet' in the Stage II part of the abortive Anglican-Methodist scheme; happily, the procedure of the Ten Propositions for this country enables an ongoing assessment of all such issues in the continuing approaches to one another. This is not at all to ignore the call for reform to ourselves. But in recent years the Church of England, no doubt for very good reasons, has been well belaboured with many and varied requirements along this line by a number of revived sixteenth-century Brownists calling for sweeping 'reformation without taryng for anie', and therefore is not without a reforming shopping list. Bearing all this in mind, assessing what ought to be required of us in the Church of England, yet also treasuring our essential identity as something that God has taught us and given us through the circumstances of our history, perhaps we ought to give more careful consideration as to what is this treasure held within the earthen vessel of Anglicanism and to make sure that in any larger, future earthen vessel (and, make no bones about it, it *will* be earthen!) this treasure will be conserved and not allowed for

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any reason to be lost. In an ordered liberty, it is concerned for a structure of government that is open both to the guidance and the freedom of the Spirit: structure that provides for, stimulates and responds to, a consensus —using gifted leadership, but with common discussion using scriptural teaching, historical perspective and well-founded information and knowledge. As a church living fully in community, it is concerned to nourish a strong self-ministering spirituality: with a special ministry of Word, Sacrament and godly fellowship, yet open to and sharing with the tasks, problems and ordinary life situations of society of which it is part; and to do it as humbly but firmly ministering the truth and grace of Christ, the Servant, the Saviour, and the Lord.

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