

ANGLICAN THEORIES OF INFALLIBILITY

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JOHN J. GALVIN, S.S., S.T.L. *The Infallibility of the Church in Anglo-Catholic Theology*. University of Louvain, 1940. xxii, 153. \$2.00.

For the past fifty years certain ecclesiastics in Belgium and adjacent France have displayed more interest in the *soi-disant* Catholic minority of Anglicanism than acquaintance with the facts of its origin and nature. Since 1934 this *penchant* has evoked an exchange of courtesies in the Anglican quarterly *Oecuménica: Revue de l'Anglicanisme et des Questions Oecuméniques*, an organ of impressive half-truths edited in French, and originally sponsored by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, later by private enterprise, and now suspended by the misfortunes of the war. Under the local circumstances, a theological dissertation bearing the above title would seem to come naturally from the University of Louvain. At any rate, it is a contribution to impartial study, playing neither advocate nor censor. Whatever intrinsic interest the author finds in his subject, he gives it serious and adequate consideration. His reading has been thorough and well chosen, and he handles a bewildering mass of speculation with becoming gravity and poise. While acknowledging obscurities in the path of research, he arranges his material well, and sums its data with discrimination and clarity. Avowed sources of religious authority are duly distinguished in advance, both from one another and from the degree of certitude ascribed to any such authority, which is the precise object of inquiry. General conclusions are fairly presented without encumbrance by details. Methodical analysis and good typography assist the reader, as do abundant notes and good indices. Scarcely a dozen errors of print occur, though such a slip as "Lambert Conferences," occurring twice on one page, suggests a reading acquaintance rather academic than general.

Part I reviews certain general characteristics of Anglican theology since the establishment of 1559. Part II treats more thoroughly the sources of doctrine, Scripture, the Church and reason, as viewed by Anglican writers, beginning with the Articles and Hooker. While the second source may be arranged analytically, the first and third call for some historical distinction of attitude, but especially the function of reason, since "the modern period," beginning with the appearance of *Lux Mundi* in 1889, has introduced significant emphasis on the appeal to reason as compared with the weight allowed to Scripture and the Church. Part III finally discusses with great thoroughness the infallibility of the Church in the theology of the Caroline writers, both conservative and latitudinarian; in the teaching of the Oxford Movement and that of its opponents; and

finally, in the recent period of "Liberal Catholicism." Under each of these three periods express attention is given to positive objections against infallibility, to whatever particular source of authority it may be ascribed. Eight pages are devoted to general conclusions.

The whole study is enlightening and useful within its scope; but readers unfamiliar with the vagaries of Anglican theology would be ill advised in assuming this example to present a typical cross-section of the whole. Just as Cranmer's Articles on the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Resurrection and a few other doctrines are unexceptionable, while other of the Articles are manifestly heretical, so the topic of infallibility, though none too reverently treated in the body of Anglican theology, has fared better there than many another doctrine.

Another imperfect induction might result from the extent given to the term "Anglo-Catholic" in these pages. For the sake of background, the subject of infallible authority, or of any objective authority in religious teaching, may fitly be traced backward from the real Anglo-Catholicism of the Oxford Movement into the doctrines of the Caroline divines, since the same subject occupies the conscious attention of both periods. But the Tractarians' own contention, that they were only reviving a normal Anglicanism in the position of the High Churchmen, would be difficult to verify for their entire program. Their induction of a host of earlier writers into a "Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology" does not seem to have impressed their own age; not only the *mobile vulgus*, but the Bishops in their formal charges, accused the Movement of radical innovations in Anglican tradition. The justice of this challenge appears in the matter, among others, of the character and function of the Church's ministry. On this vital subject Anglo-Catholicism in Tractarian hands was something else than that of the High Churchmen either before or after the Stuart Restoration. One need but read Laud's annotations to Bellarmine on the Eucharist, to see how far was the greatest of High Church apologists from having envisioned a sacrificial priesthood, or even conceded it a place in the witness of the Fathers. The term "Anglo-Catholic" in its strict and proper value must date its career from 1833. Even under the more common topic of infallibility, the author of this thesis concedes to the Tractarians a new emphasis on ecclesiastical tradition as compared with Holy Scripture. One may grant his right to trace back the particular subject of infallibility to its treatment in Caroline times, provided those times be not credited with the seeds of Anglo-Catholicism as a complete system; but such a proviso should accompany the commendation of his work to Catholic students not otherwise acquainted with Anglicanism, or even with this minority among its ranks.

Dr. Galvin's subject is an ample one, and his avoidance of digression is

as commendable as the scientific character of his whole method. Yet a broader perspective might have improved some of his interpretations. The scope of his reading was a task of itself, and perhaps its methodical treatment was all that could be strictly demanded. However, the attentive reader occasionally feels that some of what lay within the limits of the author's scope might have been more pertinently handled in the light of its background or affinities.

There was, for example, from the beginning of the English Reformation, a negative tendency, or inhibition, which might have been included among general characteristics, especially in view of its bearing on what the author terms "oracular infallibility." Whatever Anglican theology has deduced, its official sources—the Articles, the Prayer Book, the Ordinal, the Homilies—are perceptibly wary of *gratia gratis data*. They seem to know nothing of grace imparted to one subject primarily for the sanctification of others. No real instance to the contrary is furnished by Article XXVI, which develops the theme that "the unworthiness of the ministers hinders not the grace of the sacraments" very much as one might argue that a magistrate's personal misdemeanors do not automatically invalidate his commission. Doubtless the Tractarians did regard the apostolic commission as implemented in its exercise by an appropriate grace or supernatural character; but this was of a piece with their Catholic ideal of the ministry. We have not given to this present observation the degree of study which warrants full assurance. But the tone of Elizabethan doctrine creates an impression that in imagining (let us say) a council of prelates acting with authority upon the orthodoxy of some opinion, it has no place for the assistance of the Holy Spirit through the medium of a grace of state attending the Church's authentic guides in this most vital of her functions. It seems to think of infallible judgment in such a case as demanding miracle and nothing less. Thus, too, a leader of the present "Liberal Catholics," Dr. Goudge, as quoted from *The Church Times* by Dr. S. Herbert Scott (*Modernism in Anglo-Catholicism*, p. 20), considers it self-evident that "to say that the Holy Spirit guarantees the truth of the Church's teaching, whatever the Church's moral condition may be, is simply to say that His action is magical." That a non-miraculous though supernatural alternative does not commend itself to the Anglican mind is a fact which animates and explains other expressions of opinion less gross than this one.

The profound change in Anglo-Catholic theology effected by the appearance of *Lux Mundi* under the editorship of a Librarian of the Pusey House, and the inauguration thereby of a distinct "modern period," are in no respect exaggerated, as Anglicans of all schools would commonly acknowledge now. But Dr. Galvin seems to say that the new position captured the Anglo-Catholic party instantly. He writes (p. 40): "For

two decades *Lux Mundi* remained the classical exposition of Anglo-Catholic orthodoxy." He might have found reason to modify this statement from a very little reading beyond his immediate subject. The determined opposition which the book at first encountered is keen in the memory of this reviewer; and just at hand is its fourth edition, with a page containing two very significant corrections occasioned by public criticism. At the disposal of all are Liddon's sermon on *The Worth of the Old Testament*, Bishop Ellicott's *Christus Comprobator*, and several searching criticisms in *The Church Quarterly Review* between 1889 and 1895. It is quite true that today the semi-rationalist withdrawal from the position of Pusey and Liddon, begun by *Lux Mundi* and evolved by *Foundations, Essays Catholic and Critical* and the *New Commentary on Holy Scripture*, has enlisted in the "Liberal Catholic" or "Northern Catholic" group nearly every writer of repute who still professes to reverence the Oxford Movement, as well as many periodicals. But no such general acceptance of *Lux Mundi* itself as "the classical exposition of Anglo-Catholic orthodoxy" greeted that work as soon as it appeared. To say no more, the influence of Liddon's *Divinity of our Lord*—even in the themes of its Eighth Lecture—was not so quickly eclipsed from Anglo-Catholic vision.

For it was precisely the infallibility of Christ Himself that came on trial in Gore's fateful essay *The Holy Spirit and Inspiration*; and Dr. Galvin writes as if theoretically aware of this. Protestant theology has always been essentially biblical. The Tübingen estimate of the Old Testament, especially as interpreted to England by Driver, appeared to Gore to be established and incontestable truth. But Christ had regarded that very literature as the Word of His Father, and appealed to it as such. To Gore, therefore, one conclusion appeared inevitable: the Eternal Word had willed to assume a state of human ignorance from which patient investigation has emancipated ourselves. The implications of this are obvious: when revelation and reason appear to conflict, the latter must prevail; belief consists in the acceptance of intrinsic evidence of the thing believed; the intellectual destiny of a Christian is to be ever searching for Christianity. This doctrine of Christ's alleged *kenosis* was only founded by the essay in *Lux Mundi*, its fuller evolution appearing in the author's subsequent works *The Incarnation of the Son of God* (1891) and *Dissertations on Subjects connected with the Incarnation* (1895). By this time the Anglo-Catholic school had produced a Christian who could criticize Christ as a teacher of religious truth. The dominance of Gore's teaching has been almost unparalleled in modern Anglicanism, and the fact puts the latter in its true and proper place in Christian history.

Dr. Galvin, however, in the course of his general conclusion (p. 142), generously observes: "It does not seem correct to think that Anglo-

Catholics would jettison any of the fundamental beliefs of Christianity when restating or reinterpreting them in the light of the fuller knowledge of current methods."

This presupposition is more edifying in its spirit than evident in its foundation. Perhaps here again the author was too self-restricting in his sources of information. We suggest a brief perusal of Dr. Gore's initial excursus, *The Bible in the Church*, introducing the *New Commentary on Holy Scripture* (London: S. P. C. K., 1928). Some of the restatements and reinterpretations there displayed assure the public that Christ never intended to establish through His Apostles a medium, permanent or transient, for the inerrant transmission of His own instructions to them; that, whatever biblical inspiration may be, it is not a divine charism; that biblical inerrancy is a figment of rabbinic extravagance blindly received by the first Christians; and that, once a written New Testament was in general circulation, it superseded all appeal to apostolic tradition. At the appropriate places within the same volume one further learns that there never was a fall from grace in Adam, nor any grace from which to fall, man having always been just as he now is; and reference to the Protestant Episcopal "Book of Common Prayer" current since the autumn of 1929 will show that all of the former allusions to the fall and to original sin have been deleted from the office of Baptism. As to reinterpretation of the Human Nature of the Christ, Dr. Galvin's very sources might have introduced him to that. Whether any fundamental beliefs are involved in all this, we refrain from presuming to decide. But its authors are self-declared Anglo-Catholics; and one of their own number informs us in a review (*Oecuménica*, I, 1, p. 96) that "*Nous affirmons que les auteurs des Essays Catholic and Critical ou de Northern Catholicism sont les vrais héritiers de Froude, de Keble et de Pusey.*"