

## WHAT IS THE ANGLICAN PATRIMONY?

By the Rev'd Samuel L. Edwards,  
with the Rev'd Dr David A. Ousley and Michael D. LaRue, K.M.

The recent meeting of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops featured an eagerly awaited report by the Cardinal Archbishop of Washington, Donald Wuerl, on the steps toward the creation of a Personal Ordinariate in the United States. If nothing more — and there was considerably more — this report had the salutary effect of putting to silence (assuming that is possible) those nay-sayers within the Anglican community who have been suggesting that such a structure would never be erected here. It is evident that it will be, and fairly soon, and that the Vatican means to issue the decree sooner rather than later.

In spite of all the good things about the report, during the subsequent question-and-answer session there was some evident uncertainty amongst the assembled bishops as to just what constitutes the Anglican patrimony (or heritage) for which the soon-to-be established Personal Ordinariate is to serve as the conduit for the further enrichment of the Catholic Church. The Archbishop of Chicago, Francis Cardinal George, articulated this when he said, referring to the ordinariates' mission to preserve elements of the Anglican tradition, "I'm not sure I've ever seen an explanation of what those elements might be."

The Bishops cannot be faulted for not having a clearer grasp of the particular elements of our patrimony, since many self-defined Anglicans do not really follow the classical Anglican way. Moreover, those of us who aspire to do so have not set forth the matter clearly and concisely.

To further complicate the matter, the fact that the majority of those clergy and congregations that so far have entered the first Ordinariate in England — the motherland of the Anglican Way — use the English translation of the Roman Missal instead of any version of *The Book of Common Prayer* tends for now to obscure the fact that outside England, the classical Prayer Book tradition is very much alive and well. (The reasons for this are complex and beyond the immediate scope of this paper.)

Another reason why there is uncertainty about the content of the Anglican heritage may well have to do with its very pervasiveness — it is a part of the general environment of anglophone European culture, especially its literary culture. The two most influential monuments of English literature are *The Book of Common Prayer* (1549ff.) and the Authorized Version of the Bible (1611), commonly known as the King James Version, which in very real ways have formed not just the cadence but the content of Western civilization in its Anglo-American form.

In the interests of removing the uncertainty about its nature and form, it is the purpose of this paper to set forth some of the key elements of the Anglican patrimony and in the process to foster a better understanding of it among the Latin Rite Catholics — particularly our Fathers in God — with whom we soon will be joined. These are things which we value and believe constitute the precious heritage of the Anglican way of being Christian, and which we hope to

offer for the enrichment of — and where necessary correction by — the Catholic Church.

### **The Anglican Mind**

Let us begin with a general description of the characteristics of the Anglican mind, which the particular elements of its patrimony (which will be discussed later) express.

The Anglican mind (also referred to as the Anglican Way or the Anglican ethos) was a variety within the species of the Christian mind. To be sure, there was a distinct flavour to its mixture of aesthetic, moral, and intellectual styles — a sort of golden moderation, reflecting a blend of the temperaments of the British, Celtic, and Norse cultures where were a part of the making of England, yet there was never any serious contention that such things as distinguished the Anglican mind from, say the Roman or Gallican or Iberian or Germanic or Slavic or Greek or Syrian or African or Oriental Christian mind were indicative of a difference in kind. All these were at least implicitly considered to be local or cultural streams flowing from the great well of Christian orthodoxy, and the Anglican mind habitually enriched and renewed itself by drinking liberally from all of them.

The Anglican mind, in its highest state of development, was supple without being flaccid, liberal yet disciplined, conservative yet open. It recognised that the opposite of protestant is not catholic, but corrupt, and that the opposite of catholic is not protestant, but sectarian. Even at its most polemical, it sought more reconciliation with its opponents than triumph over them. In every generation of its life — from Hooker and Field to Taylor and Cosin to Wesley and Wilberforce to Keble and Pusey to William Temple and Michael Ramsey — it has produced pastors and theologians who exemplify these characteristic. Its ethos informed an entire family of national Churches. Now, however, though the Anglican intellectual tradition remains alive in certain individuals and groups of Anglicans, it can no longer claim to have any substantial influence on what passes for life in the national and international institutions of the increasingly moribund Anglican Communion.

[Samuel L. Edwards, “Anglicanism and the death of the Anglican Mind,” in *Quo Vaditis: The State Churches of Northern Europe* (Leominster, Hertfordshire: Gracewing, 1996), pp. 10-11.]

In our present context it might well be added that, because of *Anglicanorum coetibus*, the treasury accumulated through the Anglican habit of drawing from the different *ethoi* which are comprehended under the roof of the great *oikos* of the People of God — together with those which shelter under its eaves or in its lee — now is made available as a resource for the whole of the Church in communion with the Successor of Peter. This conduit, which now can carry its contents in both directions, is available for mutual enrichment, recovery, and renewal.

## **The Content of the Anglican Heritage**

So what, particularly, are the contents of the Anglican patrimony that are consistent with the Catholic faith? Without any pretense at completeness, they would certainly include the following:

### ***A distinctly domestic approach to Christian corporate life.***

This finds expression in such diverse things as the Prayer Book tradition of worship and the re-founded Shrine of our Lady of Walsingham. The Prayer Book itself, at least in its central 1549 English — 1928 American (not to forget the 1962 Canadian) editions, is the linchpin of a parish-based ascetical system which, while it has the Eucharist at its center, augments and thereby buttresses the center with the Daily Office. The Office itself is, both in spirit and historically, more the descendant of the parochial and cathedral offices of the middle ages than of the monastic offices, more inherently suited to the participation of lay people than the more clerically-oriented offices of the Roman breviary. This greater accessibility — together with well-framed lectionaries — has been a major contributor to genuine biblical literacy amongst Anglicans. The Eucharistic lectionary, which is essentially the Medieval one, provides the depth of reading Scripture as a doctrinal instrument of salvation. The lessons become familiar through the Eucharistic preaching. The Daily Office lectionary provides the breadth by covering virtually the whole Bible every year.

### ***A distinctive tradition of pastoral care.***

This grows out of the previously mentioned domestic approach to parochial life and is, at least in part, a function of the typically small size of our parishes. Spiritual direction, counseling, and confession are approached in a way that emphasizes that which is pastoral, practical, and empirical rather than juridical.

*The Book of Common Prayer* provides the structures of the parochial system of pastoral care, providing in a distinctive way for initiation, catechesis, formation in morals and ascetics, nourishment in prayer and sacraments, clear teaching on the responsibilities of clergy and laity in the good order of the Church.

### ***An ascetical structure for a distinctive way of being Christian.***

*The Book of Common Prayer* defines the Anglican way of being Christian, with three essential elements: the Sunday (and Holy Day) Eucharist, the Daily Office, with its Psalter, Scripture and set prayers, and the “private” prayer of quiet and meditation.

### ***A characteristic theological method and temper which is, at its best, at once scriptural, traditional, and patristic.***

While (with recent exceptions) the Anglican Way has insisted on a well-educated clergy, theology has been done largely within a pastoral context. The greatest of Anglican theologians were pastors (Hooker, Keble, Newman, Ramsey).

The classical Anglican theological method might be characterized as more Benedictine than Jesuit. It is focused on Scriptural foundations, as Scripture is presented by the Fathers and the living tradition of the Church. We expect this method to find its perfection in the authority of the Magisterium: Indeed, those of us who are accepting the generous offer expressed in *Anglicanorum coetibus* are doing so because we have been brought to the conclusion that it is only in communion with the Magisterium that it can be perfected.

The aspiration of this method is best summarized by the formula of Saint Augustine of Hippo, “In essentials, unity; in doubtful things, liberty; in all things, charity.” Populated by believers chastened by the four and a half centuries of the “Anglican experiment,” the Ordinariates can serve as a vehicle whereby it may be demonstrated that unity in essentials cannot be maintained on a basis of theoretical consensus, but must have in this world a personal focus who can speak authoritatively in the Name of the Personal Savior of man.

***A tradition of reverence in the practice, and especially in the language, of public prayer.***

For nearly five centuries, Anglican worship has been characterized by the use of reverential language for liturgical prayer. In this, it follows a well-established pattern dating back at least to the patristic era and likely to the beginning of worship, which is the use of a more classical form of the vernacular, in contrast to the contemporary form. (Contrary to popular assumptions, the language of the Prayer Book and the King James Bible is not, nor ever was intended to be, the daily vernacular of the street and the marketplace. The composers and translators of these great monuments of the English tongue were very concerned with writing in a “language understood of the people,” but they never made the mistake of confusing that with the form of that language commonly spoken by the people. The gift in all this for Latin Rite Catholics is that it will help foster the practical re-integration of a fundamental principle of human spiritual development, which is that we are first taught reverence by being taught to act and speak reverently. (The new English translation of the Roman Missal represents another major and parallel step in this enterprise of recovery.)

There is in this aspect of the Anglican heritage a strikingly harmonious resonance with the longstanding concern of Benedict XVI with the re-sacralization of ecclesiastical life, in which the re-sacralization of worship has an instrumental role. (This concern seems to be very closely connected in principle with his and his predecessor’s urgent desire for the re-evangelization of Western society.)

***A musical tradition which is both broad-based and consistent with the ethos of the Anglican tradition of common worship, of which it is an integral component.***

The Anglican patrimony has as one of its notable elements a hymnody which, while spanning the ages from the late patristic to the contemporary, and styles from Gregorian monophony to modern polyphony, is directed toward the enhancement of worship and being the handmaid of the liturgy. Most Anglican congregations — including those in which a choir plays a major role in the offering of the liturgy — are notable for the quality and natural willingness of the concerted singing of the members.

Again, there is here a noteworthy resonance with the concerns of the Holy Father, which include the recovery of much of worth in the musical treasury of the Church that has been eclipsed in recent decades.

***A long experience with lay participation in church governance as regards temporalities.***

This is an element that is not unfamiliar to the other members of the Latin Rite after several decades of Parish Councils. However, because of its longer history among us, we may be able to assist our brethren in pointing out some of the pitfalls of the system as well as its positive potentialities. Its continuation in a form consistent with Canon Law is certainly anticipated, especially in Article X, §4 of *Anglicanorum coetibus*.

***Married Clergy.***

For the last 450 years Anglicans have had married as well as celibate clergy, as the Latin Rite does now, ordaining as a rule celibate men to the priesthood, but married men to the permanent Diaconate. *Anglicanorum coetibus* recognizes the fact, and provides for it, while also affirming the discipline of the Latin Rite of which the Ordinariate will be a part.

**Conclusion**

We wish to emphasize most clearly that we wish to offer the riches of the Anglican patrimony in a spirit of humility and gratitude both for the gift of the patrimony itself and for the gift of the means now made available by the Holy Father for the incorporation of this patrimony into the living treasury of Holy Church. We claim no inherent superiority for the Anglican Way, and are mindful that *Anglicanorum coetibus* provides not just a means of incorporation, but a means for correction, if necessary. We wish to retain only that which is consistent with the fullness of the Catholic Faith.

22 June 2011  
Eve of Corpus Christi  
Commemoration of Saint Alban,  
Protomartyr of England