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# THE PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

## AN HISTORICAL RETROSPECT.

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IN a letter to *The Times*, published on December 30 last, Canon Goudge, Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Oxford, sought to show that the rejection of the Deposited Book of Common Prayer by the House of Commons was due to a fundamental misunderstanding of the word "Protestant" as applied to the Church of England. The original meaning of the word, he said truly enough, had become obscured by the transference of the accent from the second to the first syllable, and he argued that it is only in its original sense of "protestant" that it can properly be applied to the Church of England. To Protestantism in the now commonly accepted sense of the word, i.e., as applied to religious communities differing from the Catholic Church in such matters as the Church, the ministry and the sacraments, the Church of England, he said, "has never committed itself in any way." In the sixteenth century it "took a line of its own, a line which enabled it to include those who accepted Protestantism, in the better sense of the word, and those who did not." "It is, as they say on the Continent," he concludes, "a Bridge-Church, and to reject Protestantism is perfectly consistent with loyalty to the Church of England."

The validity of this view, of course, depends on what is meant by "Catholic" and "Protestant" respectively. Certainly the Church of England has always claimed to be part of the Catholic Church; equally certainly it from the first refused to include those who clung to the outward observance of the "old religion" (the Sacrifice of the Mass, etc.) and those who objected to its own "popish" Church order and ritual. As for the first of these exclusions, it is so germane to the subject of the present discussions that a little historical light on it may be serviceable.

I have already, in this Review, pointed out the stages by which, during the Reformation in England, the Mass was converted into the Communion. Here it must suffice to emphasise the fact that what drove the "papists" into persecuted secession was not the abolition by Elizabeth of the papal jurisdiction in England, but the fundamental breach with what they regarded the central Catholic doctrine by the abolition of the Mass.<sup>1</sup> Bishops Bonner and Gardiner, for

<sup>1</sup> The "Catholic Committee," formed in the eighties of the eighteenth century to negotiate with the Government with a view to Catholic Relief, represented views which would now be considered moderately "Anglo-Catholic." It aimed at the establishment of a national hierarchy in only nominal dependence on the Pope, and advocated the substitution of English for Latin in the ser-

instance, had both been active in forwarding the divorce of Henry VIII ; both had accepted without protest his proclamation of the royal supremacy ; it was not till Elizabeth and her advisers proceeded to abolish the Mass that they proved recalcitrant and were deprived. Doubtless, Queen Elizabeth would have liked to build a Bridge-Church between the " old religion " and the " new," but the conflicting theological currents were too strong for any such enterprise to succeed. The most that can be said is that, for three centuries, the Church of England acted as some sort of bridge between the divergent schools within what was to be called Protestantism. Apart from the feeble and transient efforts made in the seventeenth century, there was, until the rise of the Tractarian movement a hundred years ago, no attempt made to bridge the gap between Canterbury and Rome. The Church of England remained consciously and contentedly Protestant.

To understand exactly what is, and what is not, implied by this fact we must know what is meant by Protestantism. Now it is perfectly true that nowhere in its formularies does the Church of England style itself Protestant, though its daughter Church in America is so styled ; but the same is true of other Protestant Churches. The truth is that, at the outset, none of the Reformers, whatever school they belonged to, regarded themselves as the founders of separate Churches. For them the Church was *one*—that founded by Christ, and their aim was simply to reform it by appealing from " the traditions of men " to the supreme authority of the Gospel itself. Therefore they called themselves *Evangelici*, Evangelicals, as opposed to the *Pontificii*, Papists, who upheld the Pope as the fountain of authority. When they spoke of *nostra ecclesia*, or, later, of *nostra ecclesia reformata*, the reference was not to a separate Church, as we should conceive it, but to the local Church which had accepted the evangelical doctrine and so proved itself a member of the " true Church." It is notable, for instance, that in the Confession of Augsburg, which was a distinct effort to find some avenue to an accommodation with the Romanists, there is no naming of a separate reformed organisation ; the articles are introduced by the formula " we teach " ; it is the manifesto, not of a separate Church, but of a school of thought within the Church universal.

The same is true of the Church of England. It never occurred to the English Reformers, even the most extreme of them, that they were founding a new Church. No new name was necessary ; for that of *ecclesia anglicana* had long been in use ; nor in the creeds and prayers was the word Catholic shunned, since the Reformers believed

vices of the Church. In the " Protest," signed by 1,500 bishops, priests and laymen, which did much to influence the passing of the Relief Act of 1791, occurs the phrase " we acknowledge no infallibility in the Pope." Up to Cardinal Wiseman's time English Roman Catholics retained the traditional English vestments and rites, and knew nothing of some of the modern Roman cults and " devotions " which certain Anglo-Catholics have introduced into their churches. See generally Monsignor Bernard Ward's *Dawn of the Catholic Revival in England* and *The Eve of Catholic Emancipation*.

in the Catholic Church and held firmly that their doctrine was rooted not only in Holy Scripture but in the teaching of the Catholic Fathers. Not they, but the Papists, were the "heretics." How could it be otherwise, since the sole appeal was to Scripture, and by the plain words of Scripture "the errors of Rome" stood condemned?

How, then, did the name Protestant come to be applied as a generic term covering all the various groups and schools of Reformers? The origin of the name is clear enough. It is derived from the *Protestatio*, handed in at the second Diet of Spire (April 19/25, 1529) by the greater number of the evangelical Estates of the Empire, against the decisions of the Romanist majority, according to which the dissemination of the reformed doctrines was to be suspended, toleration was to be denied to "sectaries" (i.e., Baptists and the like), and the Mass was everywhere to be freely celebrated.

Now the idea that underlay this protest was political rather than religious, and it was in this sense that the *protestantes* were first spoken of, not by themselves but by their opponents. The word, however, soon came into more general use; for it was in itself confessionally colourless and therefore convenient as a general term covering all the various schools of those who appealed to Scripture as the rule of faith, in opposition to the claims and teaching of Rome. But the term Protestant, though of German origin, was less commonly used in Germany than abroad. As the logic of events increased the cleavage between the reformed Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, and also the division among themselves, new names came into use to designate them. It was only during the Thirty Years' War, however, that the Calvinists began to arrogate to themselves alone the title of "the Reformed Church," while those who adhered to the Augsburg Confession began to be known as "Lutherans." The distinction was formally embodied in the Treaty of Westphalia, in 1648. In Article VI, § 1, the *Evangelici* are divided into those who are described as *Augustanæ Confessionis addicti* and those *qui inter illos Reformati vocantur*.

Protestantism was thus divided into two groups, clearly defined by differences in sacramental doctrine and Church order. In what relation did, and does, the Church of England stand to these groups?

Canon Goudge holds that it belongs to neither, but is a group apart, standing as a sort of *puissance médiatrice* between Protestantism and Romanism, and having stronger affinities with the latter than with the former. This view, which is that of the Tractarians, has but slight historical foundation, and it is not held by Continental scholars—or at least some of them—who have made a special study of Anglican history. The author of the article on the Anglican Church in Herzog-Hauck's great *Realencyklopädie*, for instance, places the Church of England among the "Reformed" Churches. It differs from them, he says, in its episcopal constitution and in its acceptance of the royal supremacy; but in doctrine, owing to the influence of Bucer, it became closely related to Calvinism, closer than to Lutheranism which, of all the evangelical

Churches, most nearly approximated to Roman Catholicism in its sacramental teachings, though not in Church order. Anglo-Catholics will be surprised to hear that in the article "Protestantismus" the same authority, Dr. F. Kattenbusch, includes them, with Presbyterians, Wesleyans and Baptists, among the 120 million or so of Christians who make up the Reformed Church.

However absurd this classification may now appear, it can be justified both by the formularies of the Church of England and its history. It is a commonplace to speak of the XXXIX Articles as Calvinistic. The Elizabethan Church, which drew them up in their definite form, was consciously Calvinistic, even when—in characteristic English fashion—it sought to veil the change of doctrine under some of the old forms. That the majority of the bishops were Calvinists, till Arminianism made entry in the seventeenth century, is matter of history. That Queen Elizabeth herself held the Anglican Church to belong to the Reformed group is shown by an interesting letter preserved in the public Records and published in 1869 in a volume of Appendices to Rymer's *Foedera*. The letter, which is in Latin, is dated August 21, and is addressed by the Queen to Ludwig, Duke of Würtemberg and Teck. She had heard, she writes, that in October a congress of Electors and other princes was to be held at Magdeburg, for the purpose of passing certain decrees against those who seem to differ from the Augsburg Confession (*qui ab Augustana Confessione videntur alieni*). In view of the afflictions of Christians in the Netherlands and France, such a conflict was fraught with peril "to those who profess the Gospel." "We princes who profess the truth of the Gospel against the errors and heresies of the papists may in a moment inflict a wound both on ourselves and on Christ." She urges that now is not the time for these princes to quarrel among themselves, that they should defer the matters in dispute and unite in a holy alliance against the papists (*pontificios*), "whose power grows and madness rages to excess." Finally, she begs that, if and when the congress should meet, she may not be excluded, since "we are also a member of the Church of God."

This letter is conclusive proof, if any were needed, that Queen Elizabeth—in spite of her taste for copes and altar-candles—thought of herself as belonging to that "true Church" which was coming to be collectively known as Protestant. It is also proof that she was regarded by the "Lutherans" as a Calvinist. Finally, it is conclusive proof that, if she regarded the Church of England as a Bridge-Church, it was certainly not as a bridge between Protestantism and Rome, but as one between the two great groups of those who "professed the Gospel."

The term "Protestant" began to come into fairly common use in England after the middle of the sixteenth century, at first as a term of contempt applied by papists to the reformers, but later adopted by the latter as an honourable indication—as Archbishop Laud was to put it—that they did but "protest the sincerity of their faith against the doctrinal corruption which hath invaded the great

sacrament of the Eucharist, and other parts of real religion." By the opening of the seventeenth century all England, with the exception of the small remnant of Roman Catholics, was fiercely Protestant, how fiercely the attitude of the people, and of their representatives in Parliament, towards the "Romanizers" in the Church of England was presently to show.

Yet Archbishop Laud, the chief victim of the popular wrath, was no Romanizer in the sense of which this term can be used of the extremer "Anglo-Catholics" of to-day. For all his excusable or inexcusable ritualism, he did not anticipate the Tractarians in the attempt to minimise the fundamental differences between Anglican and Roman doctrine. He represented, it is true, a reaction from the uncompromising Calvinism of the Elizabethan Church, but this reaction had its origin in Protestant Holland, and he himself remained Protestant to the last.

This is proved, above all, by his attitude towards the distinctively Roman doctrines which were the chief rocks of offence to the Reformers—Transubstantiation and the Sacrifice of the Mass. He repudiated utterly the Tridentine conception of the Eucharist as a propitiatory sacrifice, conferring grace *ex opere operato*; for him it was the memorial of the Sacrifice offered once for all. "'Tis one thing," he said, "to offer up his body, and another to offer up the memorial of his body, with our praise and thanksgiving for that infinite blessing" (Works, iii. 345). Accused at his trial of having introduced into the Scottish office from the Roman missal the words "that they may become to us the Body and Blood," he replied in words which have a peculiar interest at the present moment:—

"Now, for the good of Christendom, I would with all my heart that these words, *ut fiant nobis*—that these elements might be 'to us' worthy receivers, the blessed Body and Blood of our Saviour,—were the worst error of the Mass. For then I could hope that the great controversy, which to all men that are out of the Church is the shame, and among all that are within the Church is the division of Christendom, might have some good accommodation. For if it be only *ut fiant nobis*, 'that they may be to us' the Body and Blood of Christ; it implies clearly that they 'are to us,' but are not transubstantiated in themselves into the Body and Blood of Christ, nor that there is any corporal presence in or under the elements. And then nothing can more cross the doctrine of the present Church of Rome than their own service . . . the words cannot well be understood otherwise, than to imply, not the corporal substance, but the real, and yet the spiritual use of them" (Works, iii. 353–355).<sup>1</sup>

Laud's essentially Protestant attitude towards the central

<sup>1</sup> The words "may be unto us" were included in the first Prayer Book of Edward VI, but were excluded from the second Prayer Book and that of Elizabeth. The reason for the exclusion was given by Bishop Guest in a letter to Cecil (1559). They made, he said, for "a doctrine that hath caused much idolatrie." See J. H. Round, "The Sacrifice of the Mass" in *The Nineteenth Century* for May, 1897 (No. 243, p. 849, note).

doctrine of the Mass is further evidenced by the introduction into the Scottish office of the exceedingly strong denunciation of non-communicating attendance, which was contained in Elizabeth's Prayer Book, but omitted from that of 1662, presumably because the practice had ceased. Indeed, there is no need to labour the proof of Laud's Protestantism. "I desire it may be remembered," he said on the scaffold, "I have always lived in the Protestant religion established in England, and in that I come now to die."

But though Laud was a Protestant, his Protestantism was mild compared with that of the Church and people he had attempted to rule. For them, in spite of his disclaimers, he was a Romanizer, and they passionately objected to being romanized. The objection took form in the Protestation made, in May, 1641, by all the members present in the House of Commons, and all the peers—including seventeen bishops—present in the House of Lords, in the following form :

"I, A.B., do in the presence of God promise, vow, and protest, to maintain and defend, as far as I lawfully may, with my life, power, and estate, the true reformed Protestant religion expressed in the doctrine of the Church of England, against all popery and popish innovations."

If this expressed the mind of churchmen before the Great Rebellion, it equally expressed it after the Restoration. The alterations made in the revised Prayer Book of 1662 represented, it is true, a mildly "Catholic" tendency, and so led to the great non-conformist secession. But the tendency was not Romeward, and the "high churchmen" did not, any more than the "low churchmen," think of themselves as separated from the Protestant Churches abroad. This is made perfectly clear by the Last Will of Bishop Cosin—a beautiful expression of a tolerant spirit far in advance of his times:—

"In what part of the world soever any Churches are extant bearing the name of Christ and professing the true Catholic faith and religion, . . . if I be now hindered actually to join with them, either by distance of countries, or variance amongst men, or by any hindrance whatsoever ; yet always in my mind and affection I join and unite with them ; which I desire to be chiefly understood of Protestants and the best reformed Churches."

That should be conclusive evidence that the Restoration Church, like the Elizabethan Church, was Protestant, even though its Protestantism has taken a somewhat different colour. But there is stronger evidence yet. The fact that the heir to the throne was a Romanist excited misgivings both in Church and Parliament, misgivings fully justified by James II's activities as King. In 1678, accordingly, an Act of Parliament imposed on all bishops, when taking their seats in the House of Lords, the obligation of making the following declaration:—

"I, A.B., doe solemnly and sincerely in the presence of God professe, testifie, and declare that I doe believe that in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper there is not any Transubstantiation of the

Elements of Bread and Wine into the Body and Blood of Christ at or after the Consecration thereof by any person whatsoever. And that the Invocation or Adoration of the Virgin Mary or any other saint and the Sacrifice of the Masse, as they are now used in the Church of Rome, are superstitious and idolatrous. And I doe solemnly in the presence of God professe, testifie, and declare that I doe make this Declaration and every part thereof in the plaine and ordinary sence of the Words read unto me as they are commonly understood by English Protestants, without any Evasion, Equivocation, or Mentall Reservation whatever.”<sup>1</sup>

This is a declaration the plain meaning it would have been difficult even for the casuistry of the author of Tract XC to misinterpret! And for a century and a half, i.e., until the Relief Act of 1829, it was made by every Anglican Bishop on taking his seat in the House of Lords. It can scarcely be said to strengthen the contention that the English Church is a bridge between the “professors of the Gospel” and Rome!

The Revolution of 1688 made still more evident the Protestant character of the English Church. In the service at the coronation of William and Mary (April 9, 1689) the following question and answer were introduced:—

*The Archbishop or Bishop*: Will you, to the utmost of your power, maintain the law of God, the true profession of the Gospel, and the Protestant Reformed religion established by law?

*King and Queen*: All this I promise to do.

As for the view generally held of the relation of the Anglican Church to the Protestant communions on the Continent, that is made clear by the Speech from the Throne at the opening of Parliament on October 19, 1689, in which reference was made to “the Protestant religion in general, of which the Church of England is one of the greatest supporters,” and yet more clear by the reply of Convocation to the royal address summoning it (December 12), in which the clergy return their humble acknowledgments “for the pious zeal and care your Majesty is pleased to express for the honour, peace, advantage and establishment of the Church of England, whereby we doubt not the interest of the Protestant religion in all other Protestant churches, which is dear to us, will be the better secured under the influence of your Majesty’s government and protection.”<sup>2</sup> Thus not only Parliament, but the clergy through their representative body, asserted the Church of England’s position as the sister and ally of the great Protestant Churches abroad.

Finally, if any further proof be needed, we have the Act of Settlement of 1701, which established the Protestant succession to the throne. In framing this Act Parliament took care that there should be no misunderstanding as to its meaning. From this time onward every sovereign of England, until the accession of his present Majesty, had at his or her coronation to make the same declaration as that imposed upon the bishops in 1678. Even now, though

<sup>1</sup> 30 Car. II. (1678), cap. 1 (*Statutes of the Realm*, vol. v, p. 894).

<sup>2</sup> Cardwell, *Synodalia*, ii, 698.

the denunciation of the Mass as "superstitious and idolatrous" has been excised, as needlessly offensive to the King's loyal Roman Catholic subjects, the new sovereign has still to declare his adhesion to the Protestant Reformed religion as by law established.

The Church of England, then, so far as the decisions of both ecclesiastical and secular authority can make it so, is Protestant and Reformed. The question next arises of what is meant by these terms. Of the general meaning of Protestant I have said enough : in its application to the Anglican Church it implies, in my opinion, no more than the alignment of this Church with the other Churches, whether "Lutheran" or "Calvinist," which reject the claims and certain distinctive doctrines of the Papacy as unscriptural. The name Protestant in itself may, as we have seen, cover a considerable variety of faith and practice.

The epithet "Reformed" presents rather more difficulty. In view of the classification of the Anglican Church as belonging to the group of the Reformed (Calvinistic) Churches, it might be argued that it was originally consciously applied in this narrower sense. But, as we have seen, it was only during the Thirty Years' War that the word began to be used in this sense, and it was not till 1648 that this use received, as it were, official sanction under the Treaty of Westphalia. When, therefore, the Protestation of 1641 speaks of the "true reformed Protestant religion," the word "reformed" may or may not have been used in this special sense. It is, however, I think, very improbable that any such meaning was attached to it in the later formulæ devised by Parliament for the safeguarding of the Protestant character of the Church. It is true that William III was a Calvinist ; but in the search for an heir who should satisfy the provisions of the Act of Settlement the question of the shade of Protestantism did not arise, and the succession fell to a Lutheran prince. My own view is—and I think it is borne out by history—that the Church of England was styled "reformed" in the sense of the original *ecclesia reformata*, a name which implied no exclusive claims and embraced all those who "professed the Gospel."

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ABDUL RAHIM. London : *Zenana Missionary Society*. 9d. net.

This charming booklet is in reality the story of two lives. First the consecrated life of an Indian Officer whose genuine piety made an indelible impression on his native servant,—indeed to such an extent that he became a Christian. The other life, then, is his,—he was a Christian in more than name. At length he found his way into the ministry of our Church and served with such devotion that in the end his self-forgetfulness cost him his life. We see the tremendous power of example illustrated in these pages, and those who imagine that all native converts and servants are miserable humbugs will observe that this is a wild and unjustifiable exaggeration.

S. R. C.