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OUR ATTITUDE TO THE REFORMATION SETTLEMENT (DOCTRINAL).

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If any one wishes to see Mount Snowdon, he must decide whether he will look at it from Carnarvon or Llanberis or the top of Gwynant Pass or the neighbourhood of Aberglaslyn. He will see a different view from each place, and unless he be the fortunate occupant of a good motor-car he cannot see all the views on the same day. Similarly the Reformation Settlement is a very large thing, and any one who sets out to define his attitude to it will be wise if he selects some aspect of it and is therewith content. Now without making any attempt to compile a complete list of the aspects of the Reformation Settlement, I think we may at once pick out three which deserve ample consideration. Let me mention them in a rough historical order.

Firstly, there is the Constitutional aspect. In the mediæval period the Church of England had to some extent lost its national character and, in spite of frequent protests, had come under the power of the Papacy. The first stage of the Reformation was the abolition of the usurpations of Rome, and the establishment of the King as Supreme Head on earth of the Church of England. This was done by a long series of important Acts of Parliament, first passed under Henry VIII, then repealed under Mary, and finally re-enacted in substance in the early years of Elizabeth. Secondly, there is the Liturgical aspect. With few exceptions, the pre-Reformation services in England had belonged to the Western type, and had been in a language not understanded of the people. The two Prayer Books of 1549 and 1552—the latter followed by slightly altered new editions in 1559, 1604 and 1662—gave us a new thing. In them we have a type of service distinctively Anglican. It is liturgical, but it is based upon Eastern models as well as Western, and it is throughout in the vulgar tongue and intended to be thoroughly congregational. Thirdly, there is the Doctrinal aspect. This was more slow in its development. All through Henry's reign there was a conflict of opinion between the advocates of the

old and the new learning ; and although the new learning attempted to establish itself in popular esteem through the publication of the Ten Articles of 1536 and the Institution of a Christian Man or Bishop's Book of 1537, yet Henry was to the end loyal at heart to the old learning, and the anti-Reformation party triumphed when they secured the passing of the Statute of Six Articles in 1539 and the publication of the King's Book in 1543. It was not until the very close of Edward's reign that the publication of the Forty-two Articles sealed the success of Reformed doctrine, and even then Anglican Theology was not finally settled until the Forty-two had been reduced to Thirty-eight in 1563 and expanded to Thirty-nine in 1571, under the inspiration of Elizabeth and Archbishop Parker.

Of these three aspects the one which has been most present to our minds in recent years is the Liturgical. That has been forced into prominence by the issue to Convocation some ten years ago of the King's Letters of business to revise the Prayer Book, and every one of us has his own opinion of the revision proceedings now happily or unhappily drawing to a close. The Constitutional aspect has also suddenly forced itself upon our attention. The very centre of the Constitutional settlement is the close control exercised by the State over the Church through the Royal Supremacy and all which it involves, and that control will necessarily be considerably modified now that the Life and Liberty movement has succeeded in accomplishing its programme, and the Enabling Bill has passed into law. The Doctrinal aspect has not come into the arena of public controversy in quite the same way as the other two, but the growth of the Modernist movement as well as of the Anglo-Catholic movement testifies to its profound importance, and I wish in the present paper to suggest some thoughts on the attitude which Evangelicals should adopt towards it. I take the Thirty-nine Articles as the accepted official description of this aspect.

There is, perhaps, a previous question on which a few words ought to be said. We are to consider our attitude to a Settlement. That means that we may accept it, or reject it, or accept it in part and reject it in part. Are we justified in doing any such thing ? There is at the end of the Prayer Book a very fearsome-sounding paragraph in the King's Declaration prefixed to the Articles, which is probably less frequently read by the average hard-working Parish Priest than even the Articles themselves. Let me quote it. " In

these both curious and unhappy differences, which have for so many hundred years, in different times and places, exercised the Church of Christ, we will, that all further curious search be laid aside, and these disputes shut up in God's promises, as they be generally set forth to us in the Holy Scriptures, and the general meaning of the Articles of the Church of England according to them, and that no man hereafter shall either print, or preach, to draw the Article aside any way, but shall submit to it in the plain and full meaning thereof: and shall not put his own sense or comment to be the meaning of the Article, but shall take it in the literal and grammatical sense." It is added that if anybody disobeys this injunction, the King will see that due execution be done upon him. On what ground are we to escape this due execution for venturing to discuss our attitude to the Settlement? The answer of course lies in the present form of the Declaration of Assent to the Articles and Prayer Book which clergy subscribe at their Ordination and on subsequent occasions. It will be remembered that this was the outcome of a long agitation which led to the appointment of a Royal Commission on the subject of Subscription in 1865, and that it replaced an earlier and much more stringent form of Declaration which had become intolerable. There can be no doubt that the purpose of the alteration was to relieve us all from bondage to the "literal and grammatical sense," and to give us a much wider liberty of thought. The significance of the present Declaration is very well put by my friend Canon Battersby Harford in the Prayer Book Dictionary. He says, "A careful study of the Articles and the Prayer Book reveals the fact that Anglican Theology moves along certain definite and distinctive lines. These lines of doctrine distinguish it from Romanism on the one hand and the extreme forms of Protestantism on the other. Subscription to the Articles should imply loyalty to these distinctive principles. It is not compatible with adherence to those opposing principles and practices which are distinctive of Rome on the one hand or Anabaptism on the other. But within its own lines there is scope for a genuine evolution of Anglican Theology in the light of present day knowledge. Theology is a living science. The immense progress made in other departments of thought in the nineteenth century could not fail to show itself also in Theology. Biblical criticism and natural science have thrown new light upon the problems of Theology.

Men think in new categories, and it is inevitable that the definitions and propositions of the sixteenth century should be inadequate to express the best theological thought of our own day. But it is one thing to recognize the need for restatement and quite another to put forth any restatement which would command universal assent. This may be possible some day. When that day comes, let the task be taken in hand in humble dependence upon the guidance of the Spirit of God. Meantime subscription to the Articles must be regarded as made, subject to such qualifications as are necessitated by the new light thrown upon certain doctrines in recent times."

With that interpretation of the Declaration I take it that almost everybody will now agree. Differences between us will begin to arise when we begin to consider where to draw the line between those subjects upon which a definite position was deliberately taken up at the Reformation in face of opinion to the contrary, and those subjects upon which no particular discussion then took place, but upon which an opinion was pronounced in an incidental manner and upon which, accordingly, departure from the sixteenth century view is possible in the light of later knowledge and discussion without any stigma of disloyalty. There are certain subjects which we shall all agree to place in the list of those upon which no serious divergence of opinion is consistent with loyalty. There are other subjects where some will regard the received opinion as fundamental, not merely to Anglicanism, but even to the Christian faith itself, while others will prefer to keep an open mind about them. There are still other subjects upon which, at any rate, many will say that the view expressed or implied at the Reformation is proved untrue or inadequate in the light of further research and discovery.

Differences between us will reveal themselves. They will reveal themselves all the more because we are Evangelicals ; because, therefore, we cling tenaciously to that right of private judgment which is more or less correctly regarded as a fruit of the Reformation Movement ; because, as I firmly hold, we are a school of thought in general agreement with each other and not a party with a rigidly uniform set of views. These differences must be seriously faced, and all of us must patiently and diligently search for Truth under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Meanwhile we ought to dwell in charity with one another, and join together as heretofore in work for the extension of the Kingdom of God.

It remains for me to give a few illustrations of the application of the principle which has been thus enunciated. I cannot examine the whole of the Thirty-nine Articles with a view to classifying them under this heading or that, or this paper would run to a very undesirable length. It will, I hope, serve the purpose if I make a selection in order to elucidate and justify my principle.

1. Let me begin by naming three subjects where the Articles undoubtedly lay down a definite position, outside the limits of which it is not possible to go without disloyalty.

(*a*) Take the very fundamental Sixth Article. "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an Article of the Faith, or be thought requisite necessary to salvation." This asserts that Holy Scripture, and It alone, is the final resting ground of what doctrine is or is not necessary to salvation. It was framed in deliberate opposition to the decree passed at the Fourth Session of the Council of Trent in April, 1546. I quote the important words in an English translation, "'The sacred . . . Synod of Trent . . . keeping this always in view that . . . our Lord Jesus Christ . . . first promulgated [the Gospel] with His own mouth and then commanded [it] to be preached by His Apostles to every creature as the fountain both of every saving truth and also of the discipline of morals; and perceiving that this truth and discipline is contained in the written books and in the unwritten traditions which, received by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ Himself, or from the Apostles themselves, at the Holy Spirit's dictation, have come down even to us, transmitted as it were from hand to hand: [The Synod] receives and venerates, with equal affection of piety and reverence, all the books, both of the Old and also of the New Testament . . . as also the said traditions, both those appertaining to faith as well as those appertaining to morals, as having been dictated either by Christ's own word of mouth or by the Holy Spirit and preserved by a continuous tradition in the Catholic Church." Here is a perfectly definite issue. Are the ecclesiastical writers, ancient and mediæval, of equal authority with the primitive Scriptures, or do they occupy a position, useful indeed, but strictly subordinate? An affirmative answer must be given to one half of the question or the other, and his choice stamps a man as a Romanist or a Protestant. He cannot be both.

(*b*) In the Seventeenth Article we are precluded from an error coming from precisely the opposite direction. Augustine, in his dispute with Pelagius over the questions of divine grace and human freedom, had, partly by what he said and partly by what he implied, emphasized one side of a rather complex and difficult truth in a very dangerous way. Augustine's views were taken up by the great Frenchman who became the leading Reformed theologian, John Calvin, and were by him worked out with a remorseless logical precision to a thoroughly one-sided result in the style which we have now grown accustomed to associate with theses for German divinity degrees. Calvin's Institutes were published in 1536, but the treatise *De Predestinatione*, which summed up the great Genevan discussion on the subject, only came out in 1552. This was the year in which the Articles were first drawn up, and it has therefore been doubted whether Calvin's views were distinctly in mind when the Seventeenth Article was framed. However that may be, there is no doubt that there was a strong current of Calvinistic thought in this country, first among the Edwardian Anabaptists, and then among reputable Church theologians of the Elizabethan period. The Seventeenth Article, both by the things which it says and by the things which it carefully leaves unsaid, directs us to abandon any attempt to secure logical consistency if thereby we may return to the illogical but far more true and satisfactory theology of the Epistle to the Romans.

(*c*) Let me take one more illustration. It shall be from an article which, like a famous character in the Pilgrim's Progress, faces both ways. It guards us at once from an error first associated with the name of the mediæval theologian, Paschasius Radbert, who taught that after the consecration prayer in the Eucharist there is " nothing else save the Body and Blood of the Lord," and from an opposite error, rightly or wrongly associated with the name of the Reformed theologian Zwingli, that sacraments are mere ineffective signs. I refer, of course, to Article XXVIII on the Lord's Supper. You will remember that the first paragraph says that " The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another ; but rather it is a Sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death " : while, on the other hand, the second paragraph tells us that " Transubstantiation . . . in the supper of the Lord, cannot be proved by

Holy Writ; but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions." There is room for considerable difference of opinion on the precise character of the Eucharist within the limits here laid down. There would seem to be a place for those Evangelicals whose views approximate to Calvin's as well as those High Churchmen whose views bear close resemblance to Luther's. What is clear is that while the English Church officially admits variety of view on this subject, she has drawn two clear frontier lines, and to pass beyond them in either direction is not consistent with loyalty or honesty.

2. We must now leave that list of subjects on which there is plainly a distinctively Anglican theology, and pass to that other list of topics upon which no considered polemical opinion was pronounced. Here, I venture to think, we may, without disloyalty, diverge from the position expressed or implied in the Articles if we are constrained by new discoveries of truth or new modes of thought to do so. Sometimes this divergence may not amount to more than a preference for another mode of expressing a doctrine with which substantially we are in agreement. Sometimes it may be of a more serious character. Again let me illustrate what I mean.

(*a*) I will begin with a case which can truthfully be described as a case of divergent expression rather than of divergent opinion.

Article VIII asserts that the three Creeds "ought thoroughly to be received and believed: for they may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture." This is tantamount to putting the Athanasian Creed as a Schedule to the Articles. Now the Athanasian Creed consists of two parts, a central section containing an expression of belief about the Holy Trinity and the Person of Christ, and the warning clauses at the beginning and end about the results of rejecting that belief. Questions arise under both these heads. The warning clauses are of course very misleading in their English dress, and must be corrected by reference to the Latin. But even when they are taken in Latin, and even when we remember all that Bishop Dowden[1] has so ably and convincingly said about the historical origin of the Creed and its reference not to intellectual belief but to moral fidelity, there are still those who think that the clauses go beyond anything which Scripture warrants. For these

[1] See his *Further Studies in the Prayer Book*.

people there is a conflict between a definite doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture in Article VI and a doctrine implied in Article VIII. They can only reject the latter in loyalty to the former.

But I really referred to the Athanasian Creed in order to call attention to its doctrines of the Trinity and of the Person of Christ. With the essence of those doctrines nobody who fairly reads the New Testament can disagree. But the language in which they are expressed is quite another matter. It comes from the fifth century. It has its background in the metaphysic of that age, and cannot be properly understood apart from it. It deals in terms like substance and person. The modern mind does not appreciate that metaphysic, and is not much helped by the expression of Christian truths in terms of it. This is particularly so in regard to Christology. Quite a stream of modern writers agree in finding the old Christology unsatisfactory, and in seeking to construct a new theory of the Person of Christ which shall be at once true to the basic facts of the New Testament and intelligible to modern thought. Professor H. R. Mackintosh's *Person of Jesus Christ* is a case in point. Theology as a living science cannot do otherwise than thus seek to restate.

(*b*) My next illustration shall be in the human sphere instead of the Divine. Article IX is an attack upon the Pelagian theory of sin. The Pelagians asserted that every child starts with a pure soul and falls exactly as Adam did by his own fault. The Augustinians asserted the existence of a taint in the race due to transmission of the effects of Adam's fall, and the Article ranges itself on their side. Now two scientific positions are implied in what is said. The first is that the whole human race goes back to a single progenitor, or rather to a single pair. The second is that the effects of sin are transmitted from parent to child. Both positions are matters of scientific controversy to-day.

The acceptance of the theory of the evolution of man from lower orders of being opens out at any rate the possibility that mankind as we know it is not descended from a single progenitor, and that the tremendous differences between the races of men are best explained by supposing that there were many progenitors instead of one. In this case the Article would be unhappily worded in assuming the existence of a single Adam. Again, scientific opinion is acutely divided over the possibility and method of the transmission from

parent to child of acquired characteristics. It is well known that a great scientific authority like Weissmann totally denied such transmission, and that Dr. Tennant of Cambridge wrote what is practically a new theology of sin upon the basis of Weissmann's scientific results. The latter says in his book on the *Origin of Sin*, "It cannot be said that man inherits a bias to evil" (p. 101 note); or again: "If the upholder of the doctrine of a fallen nature sees in an exhibition (of selfishness, passion, etc., in a young child) . . . one of the marks of inborn depravity, the naturalist reads there only a sign of future sanity and vigour. The young child is for him a sentient automaton, admirably suited by nature for self-preservation and development under the conditions of its early nurture. . . . The apparent faults of infantile age are in fact organic necessities" (p. 100). Here again, if Dr. Tennant is right, the Article is sadly wrong.

Personally I am inclined to disagree with the views to which I have been referring. I understand that there is ample scientific opinion in support of the view that the human race does go back to a single pair. The subject is discussed in that sense in Chapter VII of Professor Keane's *Ethnology*, published in 1909. Similarly, in spite of Weissmann's scientific difficulties over the method of transmission of acquired characteristics, there are not wanting equally eminent scientists who agree with popular opinion about the reality of the fact. But the point is not, for the moment, which side is right in the controversy. The point is this. A dispute exists involving the truth of the Article. That dispute has arisen in consequence of scientific research and discovery since the date of the Article. The Article merely says what everybody believed to be a scientific fact at the time it was written. It is no more characteristic of Anglican theology than of any other type. Is a man, then, disloyal to the Articles if he holds Dr. Tennant's views? I feel bound to answer in the negative. He must abide by the results of his researches, and he and we who disagree with him must have faith that some day the real truth will emerge more clearly than it has done at present.

(*c*) I should like to give one more illustration. It is of the same type as the last, but it is less obscure and much more thorny. It arises partly out of Article VIII on the Creeds, but more directly out of Article II, which asserts the Virgin Birth of Christ, and Article

IV, which asserts His bodily resurrection in very explicit terms. Now, once again, let me say, to prevent misunderstanding, that I accept as facts the Virgin Birth and the bodily Resurrection. But why do I accept them? Not because the Creeds and the Articles affirm them. Nobody disputed them when the Articles were written, and the assertion of them does not belong to distinctive Anglican theology. I accept them, in accordance with Article VI, because I believe that they can be proved from the Holy Scripture when that is examined in the light of modern criticism. I accept them on no other ground than this; though no doubt I am delighted to find that most people through the Christian centuries have been in agreement with me in my conclusion. But it is idle to deny that the very same Biblical criticism which seems to me to justify these beliefs seems to certain other people to condemn them. What am I to do? Am I to hurl the Creeds at their heads? Am I to deny the lawfulness of criticism? I cannot do either. Neither can I accuse them of disloyalty to the Articles. They must abide by the results of their criticism until they see reason on critical grounds to change their opinions.

Difficult situations will no doubt arise. They have already arisen, and much distress has been caused here and there. All this is very regrettable, but it is almost inevitable in an age of new discovery and progressive thought. It is the task of statesmanship to use all possible consideration and tact so that the existence of divergent views shall cause as little distress as possible. But whatever the distress may be, it does not seem to me to invalidate that principle of freedom of thought in searching out new truth for which I have been arguing. Where new light comes, the rigidness of the Declaration of Assent must be relaxed; though how far the relaxation should go is a question more easily asked than answered: our Fathers in God have here much need of patience and wisdom. Happily, however, the number of subjects involved in restatement is comparatively small, and we can be thankful that we have such an excellent and comprehensive summary of distinctive Anglicanism as our Thirty-nine Articles.

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