

APPENDIX

The Reconciliation of Memories

On December 1, 1981, the Roman Catholic community in England celebrated the fourth centenary of the martyrdom of the Jesuit, Edmund Campion. Of the Elizabethan and Stuart martyrs, he is probably the best known outside the Catholic community. But, in the community at large, the names of the earlier martyrs, John Fisher and Thomas Moore, are much better known, as are the Protestant martyrs, Cranmer, Latimer, and Ridley. The difference is significant. Fisher and Moore died in the reign of Henry VIII. They were central figures in a Christian commonwealth, which was not yet fragmented. They are remembered as public figures, who belong to all England: Fisher, among other things, as Chancellor and great benefactor of the University of Cambridge, and Moore as Lord Chancellor of England. Forty-five years later, when Campion returned to England as a Jesuit missionary, he did so as a man, who had deliberately rejected the Church of England, to serve the cause of a persecuted minority. That is, the community, which has continued to remember him. To put the point differently: Anglicans do not naturally think of Fisher and Moore as "Roman Catholics". They do think of Campion, if they think about him at all, as a "Roman Catholic". He figures in the history of the Anglican community, only as an outsider.

Most informed Anglicans are, indeed, scarcely aware of the Roman Catholic martyrs, who died in England between 1570 and 1680. If Campion's name is known, that is, chiefly, because of the biography written by Evelyn Waugh. Yet, any Anglican, who comes into close contact with English Catholicism, will soon discover the vital importance to that community of the tradition of the martyrs. He will find a community, which keeps the memory of those martyrs alive by liturgical observance, and for whom it is as natural to ascribe the cause of their deaths to the Church of England,

as it was natural for a medieval Christian to ascribe the cause of the death of Jesus Christ to the Jews.

This, I can illustrate, from recent experience. A few months ago, I was invited to lunch by one of the local Roman Catholic clergy – an extremely open, friendly, and ecumenically-minded man. Also present was a young seminarian. I asked the seminarian why he wasn't in his seminary. He replied that they had a free day, for the feast of the Douai Martyrs. "Who are they?", I asked. "Some of the ones you killed", replied the parish priest.

There can be no institution, to whose self-understanding, these traditions are more important than the Venerable English College in Rome, founded, in 1579, by Pope Gregory XIII, for the training of priests for the English mission. The first name in its register of students is that of Ralph Sherwin, who was to be executed at Tyburn, together with Edmund Campion, and who, with Campion, is now canonised as one of his church's martyrs. I mention him, because, until I spent two months as a visiting member of the College, in 1979, I had never so much as heard of the generous-hearted Sherwin; yet he was the most illustrious of the "old boys" of a foremost institution of English Roman Catholicism. He was not part of my history. Only when I had been welcomed as a member of a community, of whose history his memory was a constitutive part, did he become, in a sense, part of my history.

The point of these anecdotes is to bring out the connection between our self-identification, as members of particular communities, and the stories we tell about the past. It is by the things we remember, and the way we remember them, and by the things we fail to remember, that we identify ourselves as belonging to this or that group. What we remember, or do not remember, moulds our reactions and our behaviour towards others, at a level, deeper than that of conscious reflection. This is as true of the history of families as of larger communities. It is astonishing to discover what different memories adults, who are brothers or sisters, will have of their common childhood. An incident, at which both

were present, will be scarred on the memory of one, and completely forgotten by the other. Thirty or 40 years later a child will still be hurt by some action, to which its parents gave no further thought. The experience of neglect is particularly poignant, precisely because it cannot be deliberately intended. Marriages are, likewise, littered with memories, exploding like landmines, under the feet of the ignorant, or the careless.

It is, of course, notorious that warring communities have their different stories of history, which they share, and which, yet, divides them. In the British Isles, one, naturally, thinks of the Protestants and Catholics of Ulster. In itself, it is quite natural and proper that the various groups and societies we belong to should be characterised by particular myths and stories, which, like modes of dress and speech, help to form our sense of identity. Sin comes in when difference is turned into division, and when our different stories, with their distinctive emphases, distortions and omissions, are put to use for the maintenance of grievance, for self-justification, and for keeping other people in the wrong. Myths sustain institutions, and institutions (such as separate schooling) sustain the myths. Sin borders on blasphemy, when Christians justify their fear, loathing, and persecution of each other in the name of the Christ, of whom we read in the gospel, that He died to gather into one the scattered children of God. It is characteristic of such divisions that we more readily remember the hurts we have received than the hurts we have inflicted; that we hold the children responsible for the sins of their fathers; and that we should be seriously put out if the "others" were actually to repent of the sins we hold against them. All of this can be illustrated from the history of the English churches, and not only from relations between Anglicans and Roman Catholics. It is sobering, and, sometimes, quite a shock, for an Anglican to discover that Methodists and Roman Catholics react in the same way to the unconscious superiorities, which go with "the establishment". Anglicans think of John Bunyan as a great Christian writer; Free churchmen think of him as a preacher, persecuted by the Church of England. In the same way, part of the offence of Anglicans, as perceived by Roman Catholics, is that they are simply

unaware of the Catholic martyrs. The same thing could, undoubtedly, be said about Roman Catholics, in countries like Bohemia or Italy, where they have held political and social power, at the expense of other Christians. It is also true that, however much we may say we want unity, most of us become alarmed when practical steps are ever proposed. This is because moving the boundaries makes us insecure.

Christians are kept apart, much more, by these social facts than by their ostensible theological, or religious, differences. To say this, is not to deny, or to underestimate, the importance of theological arguments, nor is it to deny the centrality of the search for truth in the quest for unity in Christ. But schism occurs, not when Christians disagree, but when their disagreements take institutional form. Then, because they have a bad conscience about disunity, they tell bad stories about each other, to justify their own positions. Theological arguments take their place in these stories, primarily as justification for the status quo. Division, once institutionalised, perpetuates disputes, which, within one communion, would never be seen as sufficient cause for the breaking of Christian fellowship. No “theological” agreements between churches will be sufficient for the restoration of communion, unless they form part of a much more profound social reconciliation, in which we can learn no longer to see each other as strangers, but, rather, to trust one another as friends.

This means, among other things, that we must learn to tell new stories about ourselves, and about one another. In other words, we need to reeducate our memories. We need to look at the past afresh.

Many Christians suppose that, to attend to the past, in such a way, is, at best, an irrelevance, and, at worst, will serve only to keep us enmeshed quarrels and memories we could better leave behind. It is, indeed, true that the present and the future are of more consequence than the past. It is also true, that talk about the past can provide yet more excuses for failing to serve Christ together in the

present. It is also true that the actual business of working and living together acts like nothing else in opening up a gap between inherited story and experienced reality. Nevertheless, those who have actually engaged in close cooperation, or community life, across denominational boundaries, very soon discover that they cannot escape the past; or, rather, they find that they cannot escape it until they have faced it. Just at the point, when one party thinks that there can be no objections to a proposed course of action, it will find that it raises all sorts of spectres for the other. Differing attitudes to habits of devotion, to the exercise of authority, or to the relationship between the Christian community and the world at large, reveal unquestioned assumptions, both in ourselves, and in each other, of whose existence we were scarcely aware. It is when we get close to each other that we begin to discover how deeply rooted are the prejudices and fantasies, through which we see one another. Sooner or later, the past has to be faced. We must find out how far our prejudices conform to the facts, and what the same events look like to those, who are heirs to another story. We must find out why we remember some things, and others remember others. Only in this way, can we get free of our fantasies.

This is, above all, a spiritual exercise. It is also an intellectual exercise; but it is primarily an exercise in self-examination. It is a law of the spiritual life that there is a direct proportion between the accuracy of our perception of others and the accuracy of our self-perception. To achieve a properly-detached and dispassionate view of the fears and fantasies of others, we must acquire a proper detachment towards our own anxieties and needs. This is as true of a community, as it is of an individual.

A classical model for growth in self-knowledge, and detachment, is furnished by St Ignatius Loyola, in his well-known directions for the examination of conscience. This takes the form of a five-finger exercise, comprising the following points:

- (i) thanksgiving for the favours we have received;

- (ii) prayer for grace to know our sins, and to be rid of them;
- (iii) the examination, or review, hour by hour, of the period in question;
- (iv) prayer for forgiveness;
- (v) resolution to amend, with the grace of God, concluding with the Lord's Prayer.

Four characteristics of this method are of particular significance to Christians, who are concerned, as we are, to make of their past a source, not of division, but of reconciliation.

1. The process begins and ends with attention to God. It begins with thanksgiving and praise; it continues with prayer for the light of the Holy Spirit; it concludes with the Lord's Prayer, with the petition that, in all things, God's will may be done, and with the prayer for grace to do it. To centre everything on God, to enclose everything in attention to Him, is to put everything that is not God in its proper place. The God, who thus enfolds us, is the God of us all.
2. It is of great importance that St Ignatius directs us to begin with thanksgiving for the favours we have received, just as St John Chrysostom ended his life with the words, "Glory to God for all things." In the context of our search for unity, we do well to thank God first, for the gifts we share with all Christians: the knowledge of God in Christ, the gift of the Holy Spirit, our common baptism, our mission in the world, the holy scriptures, the example and prayers of holy men and women, and the hope of God's kingdom. These gifts, shared in common, are infinitely more important than the things which divide us.

As well as these gifts and promises, which we share with all Christians, there are the particular gifts, which God has given us in England, which are also a common inheritance. There are the churches, great and small, which fill our land, still cared for, with love and devotion, a visible remembrance of a time, when our communion was unbroken. We have a common tradition of Christian literature and devotion. Not only do we share the treasures of a common past, *The Dream of the Road*, Julian of Norwich, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, the miracle plays, and carols of medieval England. A glance at any modern hymnbook, or book of prayers, will show how much we also draw on the gifts, which God has given us in our separation: the poems of Donne, Southwell, and Herbert, the hymns of Newman – “Lead, kindly light”, which he wrote as an Anglican, and “Praise to the Holiest in the height”, which he wrote as a Roman Catholic – and the poems of T. S. Eliot. We do not only share the treasures of the past. In our own day, theology and spirituality are increasingly seen as a common enterprise. We use each other’s retreat houses, and conference centres. We take advice and direction from each other’s spiritual guides. We read each other’s books – so that I was astonished to see how many copies of Bishop Michael Ramsey’s addresses on *The Christian Priest Today* were to be found on students’ bookshelves in the Venerable English College.

We may thank God, too, for the particular gifts He has given to others, and which, by His mercy, we may enjoy: John Bunyan (who placed both Giant Prelate and Giant Pope among his ogres), Richard Baxter, Isaac Watts, Charles Wesley, P. T. Forsyth, C. H. Dodd. Where God raises up His saints and teachers, none of us can say that there is “no church”.

This brings us to another important matter of thanksgiving. We must thank God for the diversity of His creation, and for the otherness of other people. We should thank Him, not only for bringing us to where we are, but also for bringing others to where they are. Though we find one another baffling, and, at times, quite incomprehensible, that is because of the limits of our own understanding and sympathy. It is human sin, which turns diversity into division, and which perpetuates, and multiplies, division, by giving it institutional form, so that the sins of the fathers are visited on the children, and we go on sinning against each other. Nevertheless, despite what we do with it, our otherness remains a fundamental gift from God, and so, a matter for thanksgiving. We are to enjoy what God has put into the world, and into the church, even if sin has marred it. God's creative hand does not give up when sin comes on the scene. He makes something new, for which we are also to praise Him. This matter of thanking God for our differences, even when we do not understand them, of accepting the fact that God's work in us is not yet complete, and of trusting Him to bring it to perfection in his Kingdom – this is central to our ecumenical work.

3. After thanksgiving, comes prayer for the illumination of the Holy Spirit. The point of this is that we should put ourselves into the hands of God before we turn to the examination of ourselves, and of our past. In other words, we are not going to tell Him what we have done; we are asking Him to show it to us. If we tell our story, or our forefathers' story, it will be full of self-justification, and self-pity. It will be a story told against someone. St Paul's principle is crucial: we are to refrain from judgment, both of ourselves, and of others. We ask for the light of God's true and merciful judgment. So, we ask for the light of the Spirit, that we

may see all things in Him – in both constructions of that phrase – we want to see all things by His light, as being ourselves enfolded in Him; and we want to see all things, as they are enfolded in Him. Thus, as we pray for light and understanding, we pray for the action of God upon us. We put ourselves into His hands.

4. It is only at this point that we turn to self-examination, or to the examination of our memories. By asking God to call the past to mind, we open ourselves to noticing facts and events, of which we were scarcely, if at all, aware; we open ourselves to the recollection of experiences so painful that we had suppressed all memory of them; we open ourselves to the consciousness of the hurts, which we, or our fathers, have inflicted on others; we open ourselves to the rearrangement, and reinterpretation, of the past.

When the individual examines his life, he tries to recollect, and observe, his thoughts, and words, and deeds, as dispassionately as he can; he abstains from rewriting the story, either for praise or blame, leaving judgment to God. This leaves space for a proper gentleness and compassion, both towards oneself, and towards others. The same principle applies to our examination of our communal past. To examine the past, not in order to justify or to blame, but in order simply to understand, brings with it a gentleness, and a compassion, towards our embattled ancestors. Protestants begin to appreciate the Catholic martyrs, and Catholics the Protestants. We begin to perceive the deep ambiguities of the situation, in which all found themselves. We see that there were few really bad men, but that there were many confused and frightened men, whose vision was conditioned by their own memories and fears.

One of the most hopeful aspects of the ecumenical scene in England is that, at last, we are beginning to get free of apologetic history. It still hangs around, to be sure, particularly in regard to the 16th century. But historians are helping us to see the whole terrible tragedy with a greater measure of objectivity and compassion. They are helping us to see what our fathers did to each other (and to others, such as Free churchmen), what we, following in their footsteps, have continued to do to each other, and also how we have come to do it. This can only do good. Why? Because it helps us to face our memories, our fears, our resentments, and our hurts, and to face them together. There are three steps here:

- (i) we see more clearly and dispassionately what our fathers did;
- (ii) we take responsibility for their deeds, acknowledging that we are, indeed, their children;
- (iii) we face the past together with those from whom we were estranged, asking each other for forgiveness.

As we do this, we learn to see that those who suffered and died, though deeply estranged from each other in this life, died for the one faith. That the Church of England, in its revised calendar, should include both Thomas Moore and Thomas Cranmer as martyrs, is a sign of hope in the God who has reconciled us all to Himself by the cross. So, too, is the fact that, when Pope Paul VI canonised the Catholic martyrs of Uganda, he also remembered the Anglican martyrs, who had died for the same Jesus Christ.

For Christians, remembrance is an inescapable category. At the heart of our religion is obedience to the Lord's command: "Do this in remembrance of Me." He did not tell us to forget the past, as

containing memories too painful to be borne; He told us to remember it, and to find, in remembrance, both healing and hope. He told us to remember His death: the body given for us, and the blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Now, it is impossible to remember the night, on which Jesus was betrayed, without remembering who it was that betrayed Him; impossible to remember His abandonment, His condemnation, His mockery, and His death, without remembering who abandoned Him, who judged Him, who mocked Him, and who killed Him. These things were done by men, who, because they happened to be there, were acting out the fear and violence, which is in us all. It is, therefore, impossible to remember the cross without calling our own sin to mind; or rather, it is not possible to remember the cross as a healing sacrifice, nor to appropriate it as the instrument of our own forgiveness, other than by the painful process of appropriating and repenting of our own sins. Only those who recognise their own hand in the process can recognise the body as truly given for them. Without remembrance, there is no repentance; and without repentance, there is no forgiveness.

This has profound consequences for our understanding of Christian and human unity. To look on the cross, in faith and repentance, is to see our own fear and violence made into the instrument of our peace and healing. If the Son of God has united all the pain and sorrow we inflict on each other with the pain He bore on the cross, then, whenever we look, with faith and repentance, on the hurt we have done to one another, there, too, we may find the healing of the cross. If we do not own up to our deeds, we cannot be sorry for them. The tears of sorrow offered, and accepted, are a necessary condition for the tears of joy in reconciliation.

This life-giving remembrance of the past is inseparably linked with hope. When we celebrate the eucharist, we remember the death of the Lord until He comes. So, what we look for, when, as still separated Christians, we remember our martyrs together, is much more than the reconciliation of the broken fragments of the church.

Rather, what we look for is a living sign of that healing of all the sins and hurts of mankind, which brought the Son of God to the cross. When, by forgiving one another, we have all accepted the forgiveness of God, then Christ's work in us will be done.

There are signs of this universal hope, even in the bitterness of the 16th century. On both sides, the truth was perceived, that the mark of the true disciple is union with the crucified Christ. Thus, that implacable Protestant, John Foxe, introducing his account of Protestant suffering at the hand of Catholic persecution, wrote of the continuity, through all the ages, of "the poor, oppressed, and persecuted church of Christ". Edmund Campion, on the other side, was a Jesuit, a follower of Ignatius of Loyola, for whom the Christ, with whom he and his companions were united, was Christ poor, scorned, and carrying the cross. Though men's differences ran so deep, that they felt constrained to die for them, all died for the one Christ, whom all tried to serve, and to follow. That, indeed, is what makes a martyr: a martyr calls us to the imitation of Christ. The martyrs transcend our causes, our partial perceptions of the truth. They belong to us all, because they witness to Christ, who is Lord of us all.

On both sides of that rent in the body of believers, men sought to serve not a partial cause, but the universal church of Christ. It was explicitly for the sake of the church's catholicity that Thomas Moore rejected the actions of Henry VIII: "Sith (since) Christendom is one corps, I cannot perceive how any member thereof may, without the common assent of the body, depart from the common head." But it was not only the "Catholic" side, which had a sense of the universal church. Foxe prefaces his account of *The Acts of God's Holy Martyrs, and Monuments of His church* with a calendar, which includes the martyrs and confessors of the Reformation, in one list, with the apostles and evangelists. He had no doubt that Christ had founded a universal and continuing church. But nothing is more eloquent than the words of Campion, as he faced his death, words which speak of the fellowship of Christians as a communion of forgiven and reconciled sinners: "Almighty God, the Searcher of

Hearts, sending us Thy grace: set us at accord before the day of payment, to the end we may, at last, be friends in heaven, where all injuries may be forgotten.”

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