

# The Anatomy of a “Z”: Reflections on the High-Church Anglican Identity

Peter Robinson<sup>1</sup>

*This article endeavors to highlight and examine the attitudes and ethos of pre-Tractarian High Churchmanship towards the Predestination, the sacraments, liturgy, episcopacy, and ecumenicism, their role in defining a central Anglican tradition, and their continuing utility in defining an Anglican identity.*

**Keywords:** High Church, Sacraments, E. Harold Browne, Episcopacy, Liturgy

## Introduction

The two great Anglican theological movements of the late nineteenth century, Higher Criticism and Anglo-Catholicism, both served to weaken Anglican identity. The concepts of the authority of Scripture, the Fathers, and the Creeds were eroded by Higher Criticism, and the centrality of the Reformation, the *Articles of Religion*, and the traditional *Book of Common Prayer* were weakened by Anglo-Catholicism. This created confusion and contention over what constituted the theological core of Anglicanism, or even as to whether such a theological core exists.<sup>2</sup> This, in turn, has produced a series of responses, such as the Anglo-Catholic Affirmation of St Louis.<sup>3</sup> used by much of the post-1977

---

<sup>1</sup> The Most Rev. Peter D. Robinson is Rector of Good Shepherd Anglican Church Waynesboro, VA, and Presiding Bishop of the United Episcopal Church of North America. He can be contacted at [revpdr@msn.com](mailto:revpdr@msn.com).

<sup>2</sup> This is demonstrated by the Righter Case of 1997 which, in dismissing charges against the Rt. Rev. Walter Righter for ordaining a non-celibate homosexual, effectively declared there was no core doctrine in ECUSA.

<sup>3</sup> The Affirmation of St Louis, one of the founding documents of the Anglican Continuum, was approved by the Fellowship of Concerned Churchmen at a congress held in St Louis, MO, in September 1977. It departs from older Anglican documents in requiring assent among other things, to the first Seven Ecumenical Councils, and the Seven Sacraments. See - [http://www.dioceseoftheholycross.org/involvement/the\\_affirmation\\_of\\_st\\_louis.pdf](http://www.dioceseoftheholycross.org/involvement/the_affirmation_of_st_louis.pdf).

Continuing Anglican Movement, the Three Streams Theory<sup>4</sup> advocated by the Anglican Mission in America, among others, and a rigid Reformed Confessionalism of groups such as the Church of England (Continuing) to counterbalance the increasingly diffuse identity of the Anglican Communion. In many provinces, this has been reduced to a vague adherence to the Bible, the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds, the two Dominical Sacraments, and the Apostolic Succession as being a sufficient statement of the Anglican identity.

This has not always been the case. Although all but forgotten today, the pre-Tractarian High Churchmen created a strong Anglican identity that was neither Roman Catholic nor Calvinist but was a moderate Reformed Protestantism with a particular reverence for the Early Fathers and Councils of the Church. Despite a degree of animosity between the old High Churchmen and Tractarians, they forged a temporary mid-century alliance to uphold "Church Principles" against the Erastianism of Liberals and Evangelicals.

But the High Churchmen were destined to retreat to relative obscurity, and a primary reason for this was the way they were treated dismissively by the Tractarians and their successors. In his private correspondence, John Henry Newman often wrote disparagingly about the existing High Churchmen of the 1830s. He dismissed one as "a Z" and others as "a Church and King Man" or "an old orthodox two-bottle."<sup>5</sup> Newman's contempt for them stemmed from his Evangelical background but was exacerbated by his aversion to their cautious, conservative theology and undemonstrative spirituality. A further sin in Newman's eyes was their willingness to cooperate with sympathetic governments in enacting moderate reform to stave off the wave of anti-clerical feeling. Dean Church damned them with faint praise in his history of the Oxford Movement,<sup>6</sup> and this negative assessment persisted until the 1990s. Thanks to the work of Peter Nockles, Clive Dewey,<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Varley,<sup>8</sup> and others, the outlook and achievements of the pre-Tractarian High Churchmen have received a sympathetic and thorough reassessment.

---

<sup>4</sup> For the Three Streams theory popularized by Anglican Mission in America among others, see <https://threestreamliving.org/>.

<sup>5</sup> See Peter B. Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context: Anglican High Churchmanship, 1760–1857* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 33, for Tractarian use of party labels.

<sup>6</sup> R. W. Church, *The Oxford Movement: Twelve Years, 1833–1845* (London, 1892), <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/12092>.

<sup>7</sup> Clive Dewey, *The Passing of Barchester* (Hambledon Press, 1997).

<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth Varley, *The Last of the Prince Bishops: William Van Mildert and the High Church Movement of the Early Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 1992).

The heart of the old High Church program lay in the primacy of Scriptures and the Creeds, their reverence for the Early Fathers and Apostolic Succession, and their deep appreciation of the Liturgy and Articles of the Church of England. These aspects of this old High Church tradition found a home in Prayer Book Catholicism and Central Churchmanship in the UK and in the more conservative side of the Broad Churchmanship in the USA. It is my belief that the gradual decline of clerical Central Churchmanship reflects the final, not quite complete, dissolution of the old High Church Anglican ethos in the Anglican Communion and has contributed to the current crisis of identity. Lacking a Central Anglican tradition to define themselves against Liberals, Evangelicals, and Anglo-Catholics have become increasingly separate, dysfunctional expressions of Anglicanism.

A re-introduction to Anglicans of this fading High Church tradition is long overdue.

## Background

The English Reformation had created a church which was Protestant, episcopal, and liturgical. It was inclined to the Reformed position but remained uncommitted as to the details of its systematic theology. In part, this was due to the English formularies being written in the early 1550s, just as Lutheran and Reformed Orthodoxies began to emerge.<sup>9</sup> For seventy-five years following the Elizabethan Settlement, attempts to impose a narrow Calvinist orthodoxy on the Church were usually by either Council or by the Crown directly,<sup>10</sup> and despite the turmoil of Charles I's reign and the subsequent interruption of Anglican Church life during the Commonwealth, the eventual Settlement of Religion enacted in 1660-62 under Charles II was essentially that of Elizabeth I. However, the intellectual atmosphere in the Church had changed significantly during the Commonwealth. The association of Puritanism and Calvinism with rebellion and regicide, coupled with the first stirring of the Enlightenment,

---

<sup>9</sup> The controversy in the Rhenish Palatinate did much to create Lutheran and Reformed Orthodoxy, see D. Visser, *Controversy and Conciliation: The Reformation and the Palatinate 1559-63* (Pickwick Publications, 1986).

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth I was notoriously cagey about her religious views. Even in describing herself as 'inclined to the Augsburg Religion' she is probably referring to the Augsburg *Variata*, which was acceptable to the modern Reformed rather than the unaltered text adopted by the *Book of Concord*. It is also known that she studied Melancthon's *Loci*. See Hirofumi Horie, "The Lutheran Influence on the Elizabethan Settlement, 1558-1563," *The Historical Journal* 34, no. 3 (1991): 519-37, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X00017489>.

created a much more tolerant theological atmosphere after 1660. The Anti-Calvinist tradition had split between those who emphasized the Patristic basis of English Protestantism and the “Latitude-Men,” who played down the dogmatics distinctives of Anglicanism in the hopes of reincorporating Protestant Dissent back into the national Church. The Exclusion Crisis of 1679–81 led to the former gaining the enduring nickname of “High Churchmen” because of their staunch support for the prerogatives of the Church of England against both Roman Catholicism and Protestant Dissent, whilst the Latitude-Men gained the name “Low Church” because they took the opposite position to promote pan-Protestant cooperation against the threat of Roman Catholicism.

The High Church Party suffered a temporary eclipse under William III, particularly after the death of Mary in 1694, and a long period of disfavor under the first two Georges, but with the accession of George III, who favored a Tory and High Church vision of the Confessional State, began the process of recovery. The long Tory ascendancy during the Napoleonic Wars gave them a near monopoly on the bishoprics and cathedral chapters in England and Wales, which lasted until the Reform Act of 1832.<sup>11</sup> The Whig administrations of the 1830s and early 1840s broadened the range of ecclesiastical patronage, and this, accompanied by University and Cathedral Reform in the mid-nineteenth century, undercut the High Churchmen’s hereditary influence in the institutions that had long sustained them. In consequence, it gradually ceased to be a cohesive party by the 1870s and had faded from consciousness by the end of the century so that Trollope’s archdeacon and his allies seemed to belong to another world.

There was near unanimity within English Protestantism on the centrality of Scripture, on the Creeds, Original Sin, Justification, and Sanctification; the lines between Old Dissent and the Established Church, and between High and Low Church emerged on the topics of the Ministry and Episcopacy, Predestination and Election, the Sacraments, and Worship. We will look at the beliefs of the Old High Church Party on each of these areas using Tomline’s *The Elements of Christian Theology*<sup>12</sup> and Browne’s *Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*<sup>13</sup> as my principal sources. They were widely used as textbooks in the period in question,

---

<sup>11</sup> The general history of this period is covered in J. C. A. Clark, *English Society 1688–1832* (Cambridge University Press, 1985).

<sup>12</sup> George Tomline, *Elements of Christian Theology*, 2 vols (London, 1818).

<sup>13</sup> Edward Harold Browne, *An Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles: Historical and Doctrinal*, 11th ed. (London, 1878).

though oddly, despite Oxford being regarded as the High Church university, both Tomline and Browne were Cambridge men.

I suspect that nowadays, most people encounter the pre-Tractarian High Churchmen through the novels of Anthony Trollope. When he wrote *Barchester Towers* in 1859, they were still a major party in Church life, though they had been in marked decline since the Whigs came back to power in 1831. Although they no longer had the near monopoly on senior church appointments that they had enjoyed in the first three decades of the nineteenth century, they were still well represented on the Bench with Henry Philpotts of Exeter, Christopher Bethell of Bangor, Henry Pepys of Worcester, and Charles Longley of Durham,<sup>14</sup> all proteges of the Hackney Phalanx.<sup>15</sup> Some of these bishops were leftovers from William IV's reign, but one or two younger members of the party had been appointed by the short-lived Conservative administrations of Sir Robert Peel, and Lord Derby. Indeed, it is the fall of the Derby Administration that forms the background to the opening chapters of Trollope's *Barchester Towers* with the change of government which costs the archdeacon his hopes of lawn sleeves, and bringing the Broad Church<sup>16</sup> Dr. Proudie, with his Evangelical wife and chaplain, to the diocese. Dr. Grantly and his colleagues belonged to the older tradition, which Trollope describes in the following terms, "The clergymen of the city and neighbourhood, though very well inclined to promote High Church principles, privileges, and prerogatives, had never committed themselves to tendencies which are somewhat too loosely called Puseyite practices."<sup>17</sup>

Given that Puseyite practices are the core of modern High Churchmanship, a contemporary reader can be forgiven for wondering just what exactly made Trollope's Churchmen high. However, a couple of paragraphs later, Trollope states that

Dr. Proudie would abolish all forms and ceremonies, and therefore, Dr. Grantly felt the sudden necessity of multiplying them. Dr. Proudie would consent to deprive the church of all collective authority and rule, and therefore Dr. Grantly would stand up for the

---

<sup>14</sup> See Clive Dewey, *Passing of Barchester*, 151–168.

<sup>15</sup> The Hackney Phalanx was a group of High Churchmen active in the early nineteenth century who filled many of the higher positions in the Church of England and who also ran the *British Critic*.

<sup>16</sup> The term *Broad Church* has a different meaning in the UK and USA. In the UK it refers to the moderate liberalism of the likes of A. P. Stanley, whereas in the USA the term's meaning is akin to Central Churchman in the UK.

<sup>17</sup> Anthony Trollope, *Barchester Towers* (Leipzig, 1859), 1:61. The text of both volumes of this book is available online at <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3409/3409-h/3409-h.htm>.

full power of convocation and the renewal of all its ancient privileges.<sup>18</sup>

This reflects the brief mid-century reproachment between the Tractarians and the Old High Churchmen.

## The Ministry and Episcopacy

The *Articles of Religion* address the topic of Christian ministry twice, in Articles XXIII and XXXVI. The former requires a properly constituted ministry of Word and Sacrament and is clearly an expansion of Article XIV of the *Augsburg Confession*, whilst the latter in proclaiming the sufficiency of the Ordinal makes the historic threefold ministry the norm for Anglicanism. However, there was disagreement between High and Low Churchmen on the relative importance of the two Articles. Latitudinarians who saw episcopacy as one option among many for Church government, albeit the most historic, emphasized Article XXIII, whilst High Churchmen, who saw it as being of apostolic institution and necessary emphasized Article XXXVI. Cranmer's 1550 Preface to the Ordinal merely stated that "it is evident unto all men, diligently reading Holy Scripture and the ancient authors, that from the Apostles' time there have been these three Orders of Ministers in Christ's Church, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons."

In the 1560s and 1570s, this statement of historical fact was defended by Jewel in his *Apology* and by Whitgift in his controversy with Cartwright.<sup>19</sup> However, the increasingly strident advocacy of Presbyterianism by Thomas Cartwright, and then Walter Travers, led to a sharpening of the Establishment apologetic for bishops. In effect, the all-but *de jure divino* presbytery from Puritans such as Thomas Cartwright was met with the claims of an all-but *de jure divino* episcopacy from Bilson onwards.<sup>20</sup> The apostolic origin and universality of episcopacy in the early Church were asserted, but mindful of Roman claims, they tended to avoid any specific assertion that the office of bishop was a continuation in some sense of the apostles' authority over the

---

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> The extensive pamphlet war between Cartwright and Whitgift forms a major part of the Parker Society's *The Works of John Whitgift* ed. John Ayre, 3 volumes (Cambridge University Press, 1851–1853).

<sup>20</sup> What was to become the standard High Church defense of Episcopacy is given in Chapter 12 of Thomas Bilson, *The Perpetual Government of Christ's Church* (London, 1593), <https://www.anglican.net/works/thomas-bilson-the-perpetual-government-of-christs-church-1593/>.

Church. This remained the standard High Anglican apologetic for the episcopate throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, so it comes as no surprise to see it reproduced in both Tomline's and Browne's commentaries on the *Articles of Religion*. The former, after summarizing the Biblical evidence for the ministry, writes,

Since then we learn from the New Testament that Christ appointed twelve Apostles, and seventy disciples, to preach his religion; that the Apostles appointed deacons, and afterwards Elders, in the Church at Jerusalem; that St Paul appointed Elders in all the Churches he founded, and directed Timothy and Titus to do the same within their respective jurisdictions; since ecclesiastical history informs us that there has been an uninterrupted succession of ministers regularly ordained to their sacred office from the days of the Apostles to the present times, and lastly, since reason teaches us that uniformity of faith cannot be preserved... but by persons set apart by proper authority for that purpose.<sup>21</sup>

Having established the need for a ministerial commission, Tomline then makes the case for the apostolic origin of the episcopate, prefacing his remarks with the following:

From the passages in the New Testament which were just now quoted, it appears that not only that the Apostles appointed ministers for the discharge of the public offices of religion, but that there were different orders of these ministers – bishops, priests, and deacons, are all mentioned.<sup>22</sup>

Tomline then turns to the standard High Church apologetic tool of using the witness of the early Fathers to build a case that there was an episcopal succession from the apostles. The testimony of Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus, Tertullian, John Chrysostom, and Jerome are all quoted, and although he cannot prove a continuous succession beyond all reasonable doubt, he concludes that the preponderance of evidence supports such a contention. However, he stops short of making the apostolic succession a necessity for any true Church. He concludes his discussion of episcopacy with a long quotation from the writings of a Genevan, later Dutch, theologian, Jean Le Clerq, in favor of the apostolic

---

<sup>21</sup> Tomline, *Elements*, 2:378.

<sup>22</sup> Tomline, *Elements*, 2:378–79.

origin of episcopacy. Part of the significance of Le Clerq's testimony lies in the fact that having spent his career in churches governed by a classis or presbytery, he cannot be assumed to be automatically in favor of episcopacy.<sup>23</sup>

Browne's approach is similar. He begins his examination of Article XXIII with a brief review of the history of the article and its origin in the Anglican-Lutheran conferences of 1536 and 1538, noting the distinction the *Articles of Religion* make between the need for an ordered ministry and the threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter, and deacon. He then moves on to a fourteen-page examination of the patristic evidence, mainly drawn from the Ante-Nicene Fathers, to establish the case for the Apostolic origin of the episcopate.<sup>24</sup>

The pre-Tractarian High Churchmen were more nuanced in their application of the doctrine of apostolic succession than the later Anglo-Catholics. Their fundamental contention was that the Church should have an ordered ministry with a historic succession and that ministry should maintain the threefold arrangement of bishops, priests, and deacons seen in the Bible and the early Fathers. This did not prevent them from being open to non-episcopal ministries in the case of continental Lutheran and Reformed Churches, whilst rejecting the validity of domestic Protestant Dissenting ministries. The antipathy to Dissenters dated back to the Civil War and was exacerbated by the controversies of the late Stuart Period over Occasional Conformity,<sup>25</sup> and the Sacheverell Case.<sup>26</sup> Because of their differing attitudes to non-episcopal ministries at home and abroad, Browne is keen to exonerate the continental Lutheran and Reformed Churches of having *willfully* abandoned episcopacy. Of the Lutherans, he writes,

The Lutherans earnestly protested, that they much wished to retain episcopacy, but that the bishops forced them to reject sound doctrine... they "openly testified to the world that they would willingly continue the canonical government, if only the bishops would cease to exercise cruelty upon the Churches."<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> Tomline, *Elements*, 2:380.

<sup>24</sup> Browne, *Exposition*, 543–56.

<sup>25</sup> The Occasional Conformity Act of 1711 (also known as the Toleration Act of 1711) was designed to restrain Nonconformists who had received communion in the Church of England to hold office government from attending Dissenting places of worship.

<sup>26</sup> Henry Sacheverell was tried, and found guilty, for his 1709 sermon attacking Catholics and Dissenters, which compared the Gunpowder Plot to the execution of Charles I.

<sup>27</sup> Browne, *Exposition*, 556.



Browne then references the preparedness of both Calvin and Beza to accept a reformed episcopate,<sup>29</sup> such as that which emerged in the Hungarian Reformed Church. Thus, the High Churchmen were rigid episcopalians, but not to the point where they were prepared to “unchurch” those who, through no fault of their own, had lost the apostolic succession of bishops.

In 1841, this theoretical stance was given a practical form when the British Crown and the Archbishop of Canterbury were approached by Friedrich-Wilhelm IV of Prussia with the idea of a joint bishopric in Jerusalem in 1841, an initiative which the High Churchmen supported. Long distressed by the treatment of the Protestant churches in the Holy Land by its Ottoman rulers, Friedrich-Wilhelm saw that their status could be improved only through cooperation between the various Protestant traditions and that the Protestant Church in Jerusalem should be headed by a bishop. The proposed Anglo-Prussian bishopric received strong support from both the outgoing and incoming governments. The Archbishops of Canterbury and York, the Bishop of London—all High Churchmen—and the British Evangelical establishment all supported the plan, and its implementation was agreed with remarkable speed.<sup>28</sup>

However, the Tractarian reactions to the Jerusalem bishopric, initially mixed, gradually fell into line with Newman’s hostile assessment of the project. Nockles summarizes their overall response:

For the Tractarians, the implied solidarity and equality envisioned between the Church of England, and a non-episcopal body, amounted to a collaboration with ‘schismatics’, and was subversive of the status of the Eastern Orthodox churches. In short, it represented, ‘a flag of allegiance held out to Zurich and Geneva from Canterbury.’

The disdain for the foreign Protestant churches elicited in the Tractarian reaction to the Jerusalem bishopric can be contrasted with the eagerness of High Churchmen in the reign of Queen Anne

---

<sup>28</sup> William H. Hechler, *The Jerusalem Bishopric Documents: With Translations Chiefly Derived from Das Evangelische Bisthum in Jerusalem, Geschichtliche Darlegung mit Urfunden, Berlin 1842* (London, 1883), 25, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hw5lc7&seq=10>.

to support apparently similar projects to introduce episcopacy into the churches of the Prussian territories.<sup>29</sup>

The spread of the Tractarian concept of apostolic exclusiveness within the Church of England, coupled with increasing political tensions between the British and German Empires, was to be the undoing of the Jerusalem Bishopric, and the Prussian Evangelical Church withdrew from the joint bishopric in 1886.<sup>30</sup>

## Predestination and Election

Although the *Thirty-nine Articles* commit the Church of England to the doctrines of predestination and election, they do not closely define the teaching. By the middle of Elizabeth I's reign, Theodore Beza's development of Calvin's views had come to be widely accepted at both Oxford and Cambridge, but this aroused opposition. The quarrels between Antonio del Corro and John Rainolds at Oxford, and Peter Baro and other members of the theological faculty at Cambridge, reflected a growing discomfort with Calvinist orthodoxy.<sup>31</sup> Dissent from Calvinism was most engrained in the University of Cambridge, and it was here that Anti-Calvinism in the Church of England was first brought out into the open when tempers flared at Cambridge in 1595 over William Barret's attack on the doctrine of predestination during his exercises for the degree of bachelor's in divinity. This reignited a pre-existent dispute over how to interpret Article XVII, which maintains that "*Predestination to Life is the everlasting purpose of God...*" and an "*unspeakable comfort to godly persons.*"

Barrett's repudiation of some aspects of the doctrine of Predestination, coupled with Baro's defense of his pupil, led Archbishop Whitgift and six other bishops to try and resolve the dispute via the Lambeth Articles. Drafted by William Whitaker, the Regius Professor of Divinity, these Articles maintained a

<sup>29</sup> Nockles, *Oxford Movement in Context*, 158. The reference is to Daniel Ernst Jablonski's initiative with Friedrich I of Prussia, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, the Bishop of London, and others to create a united Anglo-Prussian Episcopal Church. It foundered with the death of three of the principles in 1713–15. See Barry Levis, "The Failure of Anglican-Prussian Ecumenical Effort 1710–1714," *Church History* 47, no. 4 (1978), 381–99, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3164314>.

<sup>30</sup> Due to the federal nature of the German Empire, the Jerusalem Bishopric remained under the Prussian Government even after 1871.

<sup>31</sup> Del Corro (1527–1591) was a Spanish monk who converted to Calvinism and arrived in England in 1567. He enjoyed the patronage of William Cecil and ended his life as a Prebendary of St Paul's. Baro (1534–99) was a Frenchman who had studied under Calvin and had been ordained by him c.1561. He later migrated to England and was befriended by Lord Burleigh and was admitted as a member of Trinity College, Cambridge, becoming Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity in 1573 through the joint influence of Burleigh and Andrew Perne.

rigidly orthodox Calvinist view to the extent that the bishops had felt it necessary to tone them down before publication. However, Whitgift faced opposition from the Queen, who resented the archbishop's display of independence in issuing the Articles on his own authority and for attempting to narrow the orthodoxy of the Church of England. Elizabeth's displeasure was further expressed when William Whitaker died in 1596, and she appointed the anti-Calvinist John Overall as his successor.

Overall was part of a group, which included Lancelot Andrewes, Richard Neile, and John Buckridge, who questioned the prevailing orthodoxy on predestination and election. Sometimes referred to as "Avant-Garde Conformists," the unifying thread between them was their Anti-Calvinist views on election,<sup>32</sup> but they were not uniformly Arminian. Overall wrote in his "Opinion of the Church of England upon Predestination" that

These things being thus adjusted on both sides, this seems to be the Order of God's Predestinating of us, set forth in the XVII. Article, viz. That God foreknowing the Fall of Mankind, did, for a Remedy of the same, determine to send his Son, out of his meer Mercy and Compassion, and so in him placed the condition of our Salvation: For the performance of which he did appoint necessary Helps, and sufficient Means, more or less, to all in general. But to those whom he hath chosen in Christ, out of the rest of Mankind, he hath, out of his good Pleasure bestowed and granted a greater and more abundant provision of Grace; whereby they are most certainly led on to Faith, Perseverance, and eternal Salvation.<sup>33</sup>

The point of agreement with Arminius is Overall's insistence on the foreknowledge of God being the instrumental cause of election, but otherwise, Overall's scheme is closer to that of Calvin. This skeptical attitude towards the strict Calvinist understanding of predestination and election was to remain

---

<sup>32</sup> Nicholas Tyacke, *The Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism, c.1590–1640* (Clarendon, 1990) provides a readable account of the origins the English opposition to Calvinism. I prefer Tyacke's term *Anti-Calvinists* to the more recent coinage—*avant-garde conformists*—as I believe that Andrewes, etc., reflect a conservative strain in Cambridge theology that went back to the 1550s.

<sup>33</sup> John Overall, "The Opinion of the Church of England concerning Predestination" appended to "The Lambeth Articles" see <http://www.anglican.net/works/history-of-lambeth-articles-with-views-of-lancelot-andrewes-john-overall-1710/#p5>. The present writer is struck by the similarity between Overall's language and that of the 11<sup>th</sup> Chapter of the Epitome of the *Book of Concord*, <https://bookofconcord.org/epitome/>.

commonplace among the High Church party for the rest of the seventeenth century. William Beveridge, writing in 1699, cautions,

And thus doth this reverend Father annex the same caution to this doctrine of predestination, that after him our reverend convocation did, even that, for all the truth of that doctrine, we are still to hope in God's promises and obey his precepts; or as it is here expressed, We must receive God's promises as they be generally set forth in holy Scripture: and in our doings the will of God is to be followed, which we have expressly declared unto us in the word of God.<sup>34</sup>

During the eighteenth century, the rejection of Calvinist orthodoxy became much more pronounced so that by the end of the century, there was a definite hostility towards it in some High Church circles. Herbert Marsh, who became Bishop of Peterborough in 1819, was particularly outspoken in his opposition to Calvinism, besides being the first English academic to engage with the Higher Criticism of the New Testament, having studied with Michaelis in Halle.<sup>35</sup> However, the outright rejection of the Calvinist doctrine of predestination derived not so much from the Caroline Divines but from the Latitudinarian Gilbert Burnet, who spent much of his twenty-page examination of Article XVII in a detailed refutation of the Canons of Dort. Burnet's repudiation of Dort was widely embraced by High Churchmen. George Tomline specifically mentions him<sup>36</sup> as a source for his objections to Calvin, also citing Daniel Waterland, the normative theologian of Georgian High Churchmanship, as being an opponent,

“The article on Predestination” says Dr. Waterland, “has been vainly enough urged in favour of the Calvinistical tenets; for, not to mention the saving clause in the conclusion, or it's saying nothing at all about reprobation, and nothing in favour of absolute predestination to life, there seems to be a plain distinction (as Plaifere has well observed) between two kinds of Predestination, the one which is recommended to us, and the other which is condemned. Predestination, rightly and piously considered, that is, considered not irrespectively, not absolutely, but with respect to faith in Christ,

---

<sup>34</sup> William Beveridge, *Ecclesia Anglicana, Ecclesia Catholica: or The Doctrine of the Church of England Consonant to Scripture, Reason, and Fathers* (Oxford University Press, 1847), 351.

<sup>35</sup> Nockles, *Oxford Movement in Context*, 311.

<sup>36</sup> Tomline, *Elements*, 2:317. He is referring to Gilbert Burnet's *Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles* (London, 1700), 145–67.

faith working by love, and persevering; such a predestination is a sweet and comfortable doctrine.”<sup>37</sup>

However, in Tomline, the classical Calvinist position is replaced by corporate election. The elect is identified with the baptized who had the Gospel preached to them, and those who are saved are drawn from that elect conditional upon their faith manifested in holiness and good works. In support of this contention, an analogy is made between the Old Covenant and the New to support the contention that not everyone who is called will be saved. This line of reasoning is reproduced in Browne’s *Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles*; however, he is no more sympathetic to Arminianism than Calvinism. At the commencement of his detailed discussion of the Scripture evidence for election, he writes, “Now the doctrine of Calvin rests on two premises: 1. That election infallibly means salvation. 2. That election is arbitrary. The Arminians admit the first premise, which is probably false, and reject the second, which is probably true.”<sup>38</sup>

Browne uses this statement as the jumping-off point for a lengthy discussion of the biblical evidence which expands considerably on the parallel passage in Tomline, coming down in favor of the doctrine of corporate election. When Browne has considered the evidence, he concludes,

If the foregoing investigation has been fairly conducted, we must conclude, that the revelation which has been given us concerns His will and purpose to gather together in Christ a Church chosen out of the world, and it is to that Church and to every individual member of it, He gives the means of Salvation. That salvation, if attained, will be wholly due to the grace of God, which first chooses the elect soul to the blessings of the baptismal covenant, and afterwards endues it with the power to live the life of faith. If, on the other hand, the proffered salvation be forfeited, it will be a consequence of the fault and wickedness of him that rejects it.<sup>39</sup>

Browne’s views align more closely with those of Overall and Beveridge than they do with Waterland and Tomline, which demonstrates that although united in their rejection of the Canons of Dort, the Old High Churchmen held a range of positions on the doctrine of predestination and election from Arminian, through Corporate Election, to broadly Lutheran.

---

<sup>37</sup> Tomline, *Elements*, 2:316–17

<sup>38</sup> Browne, *Exposition*, 419–21.

<sup>39</sup> Browne, *Exposition*, 419–21.

## The Sacraments

High Church spirituality emphasized sanctification, including the role of the sacraments, in producing godliness in humanity. Their understanding of both conditional baptismal regeneration and the real, spiritual presence of Christ in the Eucharist was rooted in their reading of Scripture, the early Fathers, the Reformers, and in the language of the Prayer Book and the *Articles of Religion*. This may be contrasted with the 'low' sacramental views of the Latitudinarians, who saw baptism as little more than an incorporation into the visible Church, and Holy Communion largely, but not quite completely, as the memorial of an absent Christ. The low sacramental views of the likes of Benjamin Hoadley had produced a series of apologetic works from High Church theologians such as Daniel Waterland and John Johnson on Baptism and the Eucharist, which came to define the High Church position.

During the nineteenth century, the Prayer Book declaration after baptism, '*Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that this child is regenerate, and grafted into the body of Christ's Church,*' led to a good deal of controversy once the Tractarians started to downplay the conditional nature of the regeneration received through the sacrament. The controversy became so intense in the 1860s and 1870s that moves were made by Evangelicals such as Lord Ebury to have the *English Book of Common Prayer* revised to eliminate such language, whilst in the United States, the founders of the Reformed Episcopal Church adopted the Latitudinarian 1786 draft Prayer Book, which had removed the language concerning baptismal regeneration.

However, the Prayer Book's affirmation that the child was regenerate through baptism is reinforced by the *Articles of Religion*'s declaration that baptism is "a sign of regeneration or New Birth, whereby, as by an instrument they that receive baptism rightly are grafted into the Church."<sup>40</sup> These statements must be understood in the context of the *Articles*' general teaching on the sacraments, which affirms them to be "not only badges and tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they be sure witnesses, and effectual signs of grace, and God's good will towards us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in him."<sup>41</sup>

In the eighteenth century, the minimization of the benefits of baptismal regeneration was characteristic of the Latitudinarians, whose sacramental

---

<sup>40</sup> Article XXVII, "Of Baptism."

<sup>41</sup> Article XXV, "Of the Sacraments."

theology was basically Zwinglian, whilst the High Churchmen preserved continuity with the English Reformation and with Calvin by affirming a doctrine of *conditional* baptismal regeneration. Baptism is treated as conveying a *sacramental* regeneration, which will be confirmed by subsequent spiritual renovation manifested by a devout life. Beveridge, Tomline, and Browne all shared this point of view, with Tomline being the most direct in his exposition of this idea. After examining the patristic and biblical evidence, he expresses the doctrine of baptismal regeneration in the following terms:

Baptism, therefore, is not a mere external badge or token of our being Christians; it is a new birth from the death of sin, and a regeneration to a new life in Christ; it is a change and renovation of nature by the spirit and grace of God; it is an infusion of spiritual life into the soul by which it is made capable of performing spiritual actions, and of living unto God.<sup>42</sup>

Although there were exceptions, High Churchmen did not believe that Baptism conveyed salvation itself, but that

Baptism is a federal admission into Christianity; it is the seal of a contract in which the privileges and blessings of the Gospel are on God's part conditionally promised to the person baptized; and they on the other hand engage by a solemn profession and vow to maintain the doctrines, and observe the precepts, of the Christian religion.<sup>43</sup>

Browne supports Tomline's view and appeals to St. Augustine of Hippo to support the High Anglican teaching on baptism. He summarizes the fourth- and fifth-century Father's position as follows,

He teaches, that Baptism is not in itself conversion of heart; and of adults he says, that a person may be baptized with water, and not born of the Spirit. In infants also, he says that the Sacrament of regeneration precedes conversion of heart. He considers that regeneration in Baptism consists in a grafting into the Church of Jesus Christ; a remission of all original sin... and moreover, in an assured presence of the Holy Spirit, which, if not obeyed, will profit

---

<sup>42</sup> Tomline, *Elements*, 2:465.

<sup>43</sup> Tomline, *Elements*, 2:467.

them nothing, but which, if held fast, and not received in vain, will lead... to that faith and conversion of heart, of which, in unconscious infancy, they had been incapable.<sup>38</sup>

Browne also examines in detail the reformation-era documents from Cranmer's translation of the *Catechism of Justus Jonas* to the second *Book of Homilies*, but especially the Prayer Book Catechism, the Office for the Baptism of Infants, and the Twenty-Seventh Article.<sup>39</sup> He concludes that the position of the English Reformers, led by Cranmer and Ridley, was closer to that of St. Augustine and Luther than Zwingli or Calvin.<sup>39</sup> Under the influence of the Tractarians, Evangelicals moved away from the tentative acceptance of baptismal regeneration seen in J. B. Sumner<sup>44</sup> to a more definite Calvinist position, which read the declaration "this child now being regenerate" in the Prayer Book as being a charitable presumption, the assumption being made that they were part of the elect and thus regenerate through baptism.

By contrast to baptism, where the High Church position was a modification of Luther's, their Eucharistic doctrine approximated that of Bucer and Calvin, though there were outliers, such as John of Cranbook, who advocated for the doctrine of virtualism.<sup>45</sup> Browne writes in the following categorical terms:

The doctrine of the real, spiritual presence is the Anglican doctrine, and was, more or less, the doctrine of Calvin, and of many foreign reformers. It teaches that Christ is really received by faithful communicants in the Lord's Supper, but there is no gross or carnal, but only a spiritual and heavenly presence there; not the less real, however, for being spiritual.<sup>46</sup>

Browne then devotes considerable time to reviewing the biblical, patristic, and Reformation-era material on the subject before making his final pronouncement on the subject largely by means of two lengthy quotations. The first is from Calvin's *Institutes* (Book IV. Chapter 17. 32), which reflects on the spiritual nature of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper. The second is from Richard Hooker's *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* Book V, Chapter 46.12,

---

<sup>44</sup> See John Bird Sumner, *Apostolical Preaching Considered, in an Examination of St. Paul's Epistles*, 6th ed. (London, 1826), 261–65.

<sup>45</sup> John Johnson, *The Unbloody Sacrifice and Altar*, 2nd ed. (London, 1724).

<sup>46</sup> Browne, *Exposition*, 678.



which affirms the reality of Christ's presence in the Eucharist without speculating as to the mode.<sup>47</sup>

Tomline held the same position, though his language is noticeably chillier, being more concerned with repudiating Transubstantiation and Consubstantiation than he is in defending the doctrine of a real, spiritual presence. Of the spiritual presence, he writes,

Since the body of Christ is not actually present in the eucharist, we can only eat it spiritually. Those that come duly prepared to this holy sacrament, and receive it rightly and worthily, are spiritual partakers of his body and blood; "they become one with Christ and Christ with them;" and they really and truly partake of the benefits of his passion, and living members of his body."<sup>48</sup>

However, despite some initial chilliness of language, he later states,

Thus instead of maintaining the groundless doctrine of the corporal presence of the body and blood, the flesh and bones of Christ, which is contradicted by our senses, is equally irreconcilable with reason and Scripture, and unknown in the Christian Church for the first seven centuries, we own a real spiritual presence of Him, who is 'the way, the truth, and the life,' and profess our belief, that while we worthily partake of the appointed emblems of His body and blood, and inward grace is communicated, which purifies our hearts, fortifies our minds against the temptations of the world, and animates our efforts 'in pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus'<sup>49</sup>

In concluding his treatment of Article XXVIII, Tomline breezily dismisses reservation, processions of the Blessed Sacrament, elevation, and worship of the host as having "evidently originated from the absurd doctrine of transubstantiation."<sup>50</sup>

In combining the views of Luther and Melanchthon on baptism with those of Melanchthon, Bucer, and Calvin on the Lord's Supper, High Churchmen expressed a consistent sacramental theology which closely bound outward

---

<sup>47</sup> Browne, *Exposition*, 725.

<sup>48</sup> Tomline, *Elements*, 2:492.

<sup>49</sup> Tomline, *Elements*, 2:493.

<sup>50</sup> Tomline, *Elements*, 2:493-94.

signs to inward spiritual grace. This produced a strong, though undemonstrative sacramentalism, the best visual expression of which is the well-known late-seventeenth-century engraving, used in Wheatley's *Rationale of the Book of Common Prayer*, showing the priest in surplice scarf and hood standing at the north end of the Holy Table celebrating the Lord's Supper whilst above Christ is seen, dressed in the Aaronic vestments, entering the heavenly sanctuary.

## Worship and Spirituality

High Church worship at the beginning of the Victorian period little resembled what we think of today. Anthony Trollope summarizes the liturgical practice of the rural High Church clergy in the following terms:

They all preached in their black gowns, as their fathers had done before them; they wore ordinary black cloth waistcoats; they had no candles on their altars, either lighted or unlighted; they made no private genuflexions, and were contented to confine themselves to such ceremonial observances as had been in vogue for the last hundred years. The services were decently and demurely read in their parish churches, chanting was confined to the cathedral, and the science of intoning was unknown.<sup>51</sup>

This was the product of an historical process which commenced when Elizabeth I and her Council returned to the Settlement of 1552–3. In doing so, they made small but significant changes in a conservative direction. The best-known of these is the infamous Ornaments' Rubric,<sup>52</sup> which technically allowed a wider range of vestments than the surplice only of 1552. Another conservative change was the combination of the 1549 and 1552 words of administration in the Communion service, producing a cumbersome but balanced formula which remained in use until the 1979 revision.<sup>53</sup> The Queen was unable to enforce these

---

<sup>51</sup> Trollope, *Barchester Towers*, 1:60.

<sup>52</sup> Which reads, "And here is to be noted, that the Minister at the time of the communion, and at all other tymes in hys ministracion, shall use suche ornamentes in the church, as wer in use by auctoritie of parliament in the second yere of the reygne of king Edward the .VI. according to the acte of parliament set in the beginning of thys booke." Effectively, this was the 1549 Prayer Book which was authorized just before the close of second year of Edward VI.

<sup>53</sup> See, for example, page 82 of the 1928 *Book of Common Prayer*.

conservative elements of the Settlement outside of the Chapel Royal<sup>54</sup> and, in an attempt to quiet the opposition, allowed the bishops to publish a series of Interpretations<sup>55</sup> (1561) and Advertisements<sup>56</sup> (1566), requiring a much lower standard of ritual and ceremonial.<sup>57</sup> This process culminated in the 1604 Canons<sup>58</sup>, authorized by James I, which remained in force until the late 1960s. This gave Anglicans two distinct worship styles, the choral service of the court and the cathedral and the largely spoken service of the parish church.

Since the 1560s, the usual morning service had consisted of an aggregation of Morning Prayer, the Litany, and Ante-Communion. Although sermons had been getting shorter, the average High Churchman would have preached for 20 to 30 minutes, so Morning Service would have lasted about an hour and a half. The ceremonial observances that Trollope refers to were bowing on entering and leaving the Church and at the name of Jesus in the Creed, together with the continued use of the “Prayer for the Church Militant” after the sermon.<sup>59</sup> This rubrical requirement had dropped out of favor in Low Church circles and was briefly controversial in the late 1830s when both Henry Phillpotts of Exeter and C. J. Blomfield of London reminded the clergy of their obligation to use it. Elaborate music was confined to the cathedrals and a handful of other choral establishments, and High Churchmen were slow to adopt hymns, retaining a preference for metrical psalms usually from Tate and Brady’s *New Version* (1699). Organs had long been a feature of town churches, but they had yet to make their way into most village churches in the 1850s. Where they were present, they were used to accompany the congregational singing and for voluntaries before and after the second lesson and at the end of the service. In the absence of more sophisticated musical provision, the parish band or the barrel organ was still a common feature of village worship. Choral services were confined to the cathedrals and a small number of other choral establishments, but High

---

<sup>54</sup> Patrick Collinson, *Archbishop Grindal, 1519–1583, The Struggle for a Reformed Church* (University of California Press, 1979).

<sup>55</sup> W. H. Frere, ed., *Visitation Articles and Injunctions, Volume III, 1559–1575* (Longman, Greens & Co., 1910), 59–73.

<sup>56</sup> Frere, *Visitation Articles*, 3:171–180.

<sup>57</sup> For how the Reformation was implemented in the parishes see Robert Whiting, *The Reformation of the English Parish Church* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>58</sup> See H. A. Wilson, ed., *The Constitution and Canons Ecclesiastical, 1604* (Oxford University Press, 1923).

<sup>59</sup> See Richard Mant, *An Explanation of the Rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer*, ed. W. D. Wilson (New York, 1864). Originally published 1844, this is, perhaps the best source for the ceremonial customs of c.1840 from a High Churchman.

Churchmen loved and defended the choral service and regarded attendance at such services as a privilege.<sup>60</sup>

Holy Communion was celebrated between four and twelve times a year in most parishes, with the sacrament being more frequently offered in town parishes than in the country. The priest would have stood at the north end in surplice, bands, tippet, and hood, and his assistant, if any, at the south side. Priests usually went to the chancel at the offertory, and the communicants either at “Ye that do truly and earnestly repent” or simply to receive the sacrament. The elements were leavened bread and undiluted wine. In a few places such as Durham Cathedral, clergy and choir still bowed at the *Gloria Patri* whenever it occurred in the liturgy, and, of course, those customs mandated by the Prayer Book and the 1604 Canons—the sign of the cross in baptism, the ring in marriage, and kneeling for communion—were maintained.<sup>61</sup>

## Conclusion

In an age where we have come to define High Churchmanship in very largely Anglo-Catholic terms, the Pre-Tractarian High Churchmen are something of an enigma. Whilst old High Churchman and Tractarians alike held a high view of the Church and stressed its catholic and apostolic nature, of episcopacy, baptismal regeneration, and the real presence of Our Lord in the Eucharist, there is no escaping the fundamental Protestantism of the former. The sympathy of divines such as George Tomline for Continental Protestantism stands in firm contrast to the disdain with which Newman and the other Tractarians regarded it. Although Anglican sensitivity about episcopacy deeply influenced the constitution of the Jerusalem Bishopric, its theological basis was the shared Protestantism of the English and Prussian Churches as the High Churchmen gave priority to theology over church government. They believed that the continental Protestant churches were incomplete and lacked something vital without episcopacy, but they were still brothers and sisters in the faith.

Although the focus for apologetic for both the Tractarians and the Orthodox was the patristic witness, there was a significant difference in their approaches. To quote Nockles, “In their (the Tractarians’) hands, antiquity became an

---

<sup>60</sup> See Dewey, *Passing of Barchester*, 66–69, for the liturgical sensibilities of the Old High Churchmen.

<sup>61</sup> A good deal of this material is summarized in Percy Dearmer, *The Parson’s Handbook*, 12th ed. (Oxford University Press, 1932), 179–227, where he draws attention to the survival of old customs post-reformation.

absolute standard and final court of appeal, rather than corroborative testimony to the truth of the Church of England's formularies and the teachings of her standard divines."<sup>62</sup> This contrasted sharply with the old High Churchmen's deep-seated commitment to the Reformation: "For old High Churchmen, the appeal to antiquity could not supercede that which the Reformers and the seventeenth century divines had already made, and which had been enshrined in the Church's authorized formularies."<sup>63</sup>

Therefore, although they accepted doctrines such as baptismal regeneration and the real presence, they were defined in Reformation-era categories. This put them at odds with the Tractarians, who preferred the patristic to the Protestant. When the Tractarians attacked the Reformation and Reformers, this put them at odds with the older High Churchmen, for whom the formularies of the Church were all but sacrosanct. This threw the latter first into a temporary and uncomfortable alliance with the Evangelicals and Liberals and then into an awkward alliance with Tractarians when the doctrine of baptismal regeneration was impugned in the Gorham Case of 1847–1850.

The Old High Churchmen did not disappear overnight, but their decline began with the destruction of the Revolution Settlement of 1688. Successive administrations continued to promote old High Churchmen, with Christopher Wordsworth the Younger becoming Bishop of Lincoln as late as 1869, during the series of translations that followed the death of another old High Churchman, Archbishop Charles Longley of Canterbury. They finally faded from view in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and the churchmen who still adhered to the old High Church Protestantism increasingly called themselves "Central Churchmen" to present themselves as mere Anglicans, whilst those who had imbibed from the well of Tractarianism started to refer to themselves as "Prayer Book Catholics." That shift caused "High Churchman" to become an umbrella term for all the various sections of Anglicanism that embraced a "catholic" identity, however defined, and preferred a decorous and ceremonial form of worship.

As I mentioned in my introduction, many of the specific theological positions of the Old High Churchmen became increasingly identified with what came to be called Central Churchmanship in Britain and with its near equivalent in North America, the Broad Church. The reverence for the Creed, Councils, and Fathers of the Church, for episcopacy, for the Prayer Book and the Articles, coupled with a decidedly establishment mentality, became as characteristic of Central

---

<sup>62</sup> Nockles, *Oxford Movement in Context*, 114.

<sup>63</sup> Nockles, *Oxford Movement in Context*, 114.

Churchmanship as it had the Old High Churchmen. Whilst American Broad Churchmanship tended to be more open to liberalism, the English Central Churchmen constituted a conservative-leaning, stabilizing influence. However, with the leftward bias of the post-war British Establishment, it was gradually replaced as the center-party within the Church of England by a Liberal or Affirming Catholicism, though without too much emphasis on the latter epithet. The loss of the center party has also had a significant negative effect on the post-1977 Anglican Continuum, and the Anglican Church in North America, both of which have difficulty defining Anglicanism in coherent terms. I believe that to solve the coherence problem, we need to look again at the Old High Churchmen and their spiritual successors to find a unifying identity that keeps the Evangelical, Neo-Evangelical/Charismatic, and Catholic strains within Anglicanism together. The Church has a deep need for a central tradition which represents a mere Anglicanism, an Anglicanism that is not looking over its shoulder to another Christian tradition for validation.