

Why I'm an Anglican and I believe I shall remain so

“I have learned from Chenu that thinking is sacred ; the intellectual contains the spiritual¹”.

As a communicant member of the Church of England, I am an Anglican because I believe Anglicanism constitutes the only Christian tradition where I can be allowed to live fully my baptismal vocation and be a witness of Christ². As a matter of fact, I have chosen to join the Church of England which is now my spiritual home because of the “integral catholicity” of Anglicanism.

My first actual experience of Anglican worship was Evensong on a rainy day about thirteen years ago. The intended goal was to have a taste of the Church of England, without any commitment. Yet my life has been changed forever. It is very difficult to describe with adequate words how I felt during the service. My heart was caught by “the humility of awe before the divine mysteries of faith,” and language is not very competent “to define the ultimate paradox of experience.”³ I was literally brought “to the brink of the chaos in the presence of God.”⁴ For the first time in my life, I encountered God during a service. His presence surrounded me and His love was made known to me in a most peaceful and spiritually uplifting experience. The strangely powerful and moving atmosphere of the service allowed me to pray in a totally new way. Whereas I was usually oppressed by bad liturgies which made me suffer a lot, suddenly I was experiencing a redeeming freedom which awoke a new serenity in my inner self. My rather dark mind was dazzled by an irradiated light. I was inscribed in a tradition where the living present was tightly connected with an ancient past. Above all, my soul was touched by the power of music which led me through a deep spiritual process admirably described by Richard Hooker :

The very harmony of sounds being framed in due sort and carried from the ear to the spiritual faculties of our souls is by a native puissance and efficacy greatly available to bring to a perfect temper whatsoever is there troubled, apt as well to quicken the spirits that which is too eager, sovereign against melancholy and despair...⁵.

I came ill, hungry and thirsty; I left fed, healed and renewed by the beauty of holiness. As the 17th century poet George Herbert has so beautifully expressed it, I just sat down and ate⁶, testing “the vision of ever-forgiving and welcoming grace-filled Love,” or “the heart of Anglican Spirituality.”⁷ Evensong was definitively the liturgy which authorized me to have “the knowledge of God that can only come in praising God.”⁸ It has caused my conversion, as Saint Paul was converted on his journey to Damascus and has allowed me to understand that my experience of prayer is confirmed by the Anglican way of believing illustrated by the old

¹Edward SCHILLEBEECKX, *Un théologien heureux*, Paris, Cerf, 1995, p. 173.

² I would like particularly thank the community of my home-parish and especially the priests.

³Paul E. MORE, Franck L. CROSS, *Anglicanism: the Thought and Practice of the Church of England*, London, SPCK, 1935, XXXVII.

⁴ Aidan CAVANAUGH, *On Liturgical Theology*, New York, Pueblo Publishing, 1984, p. 74.

⁵ Richard HOOKER, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, V. 38.1, cited by ALAN BARTLETT, *A Passionate Balance, The Anglican Tradition*, London, Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 2007, p. 177.

⁶George HERBERT, Love III, “You must sit down, sayes love, and taste my meat/So I did sit and eat”, cited by *ibid.*, p. 187.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 189.

⁸ David F. FORD, Daniel W. HARDY, *Praising and Knowing*, Philadelphia, Westminster John Knox Press, 1982, p. 10.

adage “*Lex orandi lex credendi*”, based upon the argument used by a monk named Prosper of Aquitaine who, in the fifth century, wrote in his *Capitula Coelestini* that “the rites of the priestly supplications (...) are celebrated in such a way that the order of supplication determines the rule of faith.”⁹ Its ordinary understanding postulates that the substance of prayer determines the faith of the one praying. It also implies that the doctrine of the church is found in its liturgical resources and understood through the liturgical texts. It is particularly true in the case of the Church of England whose doctrine, according to its canon law, is found in the *Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, The Book of Common Prayer, and the Ordinal*¹⁰. It means that, firstly, two of these three historical formularies of the Church of England are constituted by liturgical resources and secondly, that the written sources of doctrinal authority are very limited. Therefore, Anglican doctrine is grounded “on the sound of Church bells,”¹¹ as Michael Ramsey nicely put it, rather than on a sophisticated juridical system. It is characterized by the expression of a certain economy. As a matter of fact, this doctrinal modesty is a consequence as well an illustration of a most decisive notion for Anglican self-understanding: the principle of *adiaphora*, which implies that Anglican beliefs tolerate diversity relating to “things which do not make a difference, matters regarded as non-essential, issues about which one can disagree without dividing the Church”.¹² This principle is asserted in article thirty-four, although this actual word is not used : “It is not necessary that traditions and ceremonies be in all places one or utterly alike; for at all times they have been diverse, and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's word”.¹³

The idea of the *adiaphora* reveals the Anglican moderation which is “the policy of reserving strong statements and conviction for the few things that really deserves them”.¹⁴ This circumspection, as well as its foundation in liturgy and practice, distinguishes the Anglican tradition from the Roman Catholic one, the latter being characterized by an overdeveloped doctrinal system, materialized by an ever-growing amount of documents, most of them being juridical.

The principle of *adiaphora* expresses the Anglican way of believing, particularly the Anglican comprehension of truth, which forbids at the same time a hazardous formulation of dogma, as well an unquestioning submission of the faithful to the teaching of a magisterium. This is not connected with indifference to truth, but rather with “the perception of the conditions under which truth must be sought and defined”¹⁵ and the way in which “beliefs are defined, legitimated, interpreted and maintained.”¹⁶ Indeed, as Archbishop Rowan Williams has underlined it, “theological truthfulness is not fully at our disposal because holiness is not fully at our disposal”.¹⁷ Anglicanism implies a “reasonable and rational faith”¹⁸ and is firmly

⁹ Cited by Paul DE CLERK, “*Lex orandi, lex credendi*: The original sense and historical avatars of an equivocal adage”, *Studia Liturgica* 24 (1994), p. 181.

¹⁰ <http://www.churchofengland.org/media/35588/complete.pdf> : *The Canons of the Church of England*, Canon A 5 : *Of the doctrine of the Church of England*: “The doctrine of the Church of England is grounded in the Holy Scriptures, and in such teachings of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Church as are agreeable to the said Scriptures. In particular such doctrine is to be found in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, *The Book of Common Prayer*, and the Ordinal”.

¹¹ Michael RAMSEY, *The Anglican Spirit*, Cambridge (MA), Cowley Publications, 1992, p. 19.

¹² *Windsor Report*, § 87, p. 38.

<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/windsor2004/downloads/windsor2004full.pdf>

¹³ <http://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/worship/book-of-common-prayer/articles-of-religion.aspx>

¹⁴ Oliver O'DONOVAN, *On the Thirty Nine Articles*, Oxford, Paternoster Publishing, 1986, p. 14.

¹⁵ H. H. HENSON, *The Church of England*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1939, p. 108.

¹⁶ PAUL AVIS, *The Identity of Anglicanism, Essentials of Anglican Ecclesiology*, London, T&T Clark, 2007, p. 49

¹⁷ Rowan WILLIAMS, *Anglican Identities*, London, Darton, Longman & Todd, 2003, p. 26.

¹⁸ PAUL AVIS, *The Identity of Anglicanism, op. cit.*, p. 33.

committed to the “liberty of prophesying” defined by Jeremy Taylor,¹⁹ which does not consist merely in an acceptance of sound learning, but which appeals to it by assigning it a very clear function in the search for truth, “both by interpreting afresh the sacred text, and by certifying through independent research the true verdict of Christian antiquity.”²⁰ It can even be said that the vocation of Anglicanism is not to determine and enunciate the truth, but rather “to create the climate of spiritual liberty in which individuals may bear witness to the truth as they see it, submitting themselves to the criticism of their peers without fear of ecclesiastical censorship.”²¹ It says a lot about Anglicans’ understanding of the divine-human relation: “God has delegated to the Church and to the individual Christians the responsibility to take informed and reasoned decisions.”²² Therefore, each Anglican can enjoy the immense privilege to be “continuously engaged in doing theology, in the true sense of reflecting on the things of God.”²³ Indisputably, it is “a serious theology of human maturity.”²⁴ As Bishop Westcott has said, “in the life of faith, our reason is not to be laid aside, but rather is awakened and stimulated. Reason and faith are not to be separated.”²⁵ It is a most important point for me as my spiritual pilgrimage cannot be dissociated from my intellectual journey.

Born in France from French parents, I was raised in the Roman Catholic Church. It has never been a spiritual home for my restless soul. Its apprehension of truth, its theology based on sin and culpability, the lack of intelligence in its discourses, and an erroneous conception of tradition have always oppressed me, hindered the strengthening and the deepening of my faith.²⁶ Above all, my spirit has never been able to submit to the unquestioning and absolute teaching of the magisterium which destroys “the obligation to Faith which ariseth from the rational evidence of Christian Doctrine.”²⁷ I could only agree with George Stillingfleet on the fact that deciding questions by infallibility “destroys all rational evidence of the truth of religion.”²⁸ As Austin Farrer stated it,

If God might be comprehended, he would not be God. An over-confident dogmatism is as fatal to theistic belief as scepticism itself; it pretends to prove and to define, only to discover that what it has defined and proved is not its Lord and God. You can no more catch God’s infinity in a net of words than...you can fish out the sea the glories of the dying day.²⁹

This is not to be interpreted as denigrating the importance of the search for God. Indeed, according to Joseph Butler’s position as explained by A. S. McGrade “disinterested love of God is a rationally and psychologically appropriate response to God’s goodness. How is

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ H. H. HENSON, *The Church of England*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1939, p. 59.

²¹ PAUL AVIS, *The Identity of Anglicanism*, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

²² ALAN BARTLETT, *A Passionate Balance*, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

²³ PAUL AVIS, *The Identity of Anglicanism*, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

²⁴ ALAN BARTLETT, *A Passionate Balance*, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

²⁵ Brooke WESTCOTT, *Essays in the History of Religious Thought in the West*, London, Macmillan, 1891, pp. 380-381, cited by ALAN BARTLETT, *A Passionate Balance*, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

²⁶ On this point, see Yves CONGAR, *Une passion: l’unité, Réflexions et souvenirs*, 1929-1973, Paris Cerf, 1974 ; Hans KUNG, *Liberté du chrétien*, Paris, Cerf, 1991 ; André NAUD, *Le magistère incertain*, Montréal, Fides, 1987 ;

²⁷ Edward STILLINGFLEET, *A Rational Account of the Grounds of Protestant Religion*, London, Rob. White for Henry Mortlock, 1665, p. 111.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, (1681), p. 243, cited by Henry MCADOO, *Anglicans and Tradition and the Ordination of Women*, Norwich, Canterbury Press, 1997, p. 82.

²⁹ Austin FARRER, “Does God exist”, in A. LOADES, R. MACSWAIN (eds), *The Truth seeking Heart: Austin Farrer and his Writings*, Norwich, Canterbury Press, 2006, p. 215

God's goodness to be known?"³⁰ Reason is "the only thing we have wherewith to judge concerning any thing, even revelation itself."³¹ "Not only the meaning, but also the morality and the evidence of revelation"³² can be assessed. Thus, Jesus has said in Mark 12: 29 that we must love the Lord our God "with all our hearts, and with all our souls and with all our minds and with all our strength", a sentence beautifully commented by Bishop Brooke Westcott:

Those who are 'in Christ' are bound to serve God with their whole being, with their intellect no less than their heart and their strength and their substance ... For them all that falls within human observation is a potential parable of spiritual realities, through which fresh vision may be gained of the glory of God. They will be the keenest of men to watch for the dawn of new ideas. For them there can be no despondency and no indifference. They bring to the Lord the first fruits of all that He has lent them and commit their gains to his keeping.³³

This occasioned an almost desperate intellectual quest for the truth of Christ which has led me to undertake a long educational journey that found its culmination in some post graduate studies. I was seeking to understand what I believed, according to the adequate formula of St. Anselm of Canterbury in the foreword of his *Proslogian*. As my reflection was developing, it progressively became clear that a move from the Church of Rome was going to be necessary. I was living in a fiction which had to cease. It was time to join a church where I would be able to discern freely the truth of Christ and to establish my conviction in the light of my conscience, with the help of the Holy Spirit. Although considerations were given to all the options which seemed reasonable enough, namely the Reformed and Lutheran Churches, the choice of Anglicanism reflected the reasoning that:

there is no Church whose every part so squares unto my conscience, whose articles, constitutions, and customes seeme so consonant unto reason, and as it were framed to my particular devotion, as this whereof I hold my beliefe, the Church of England (...) In brief, where the Scripture is silent, the Church is my Text; where that speaks, 'tis my comment; where there is a joynt silence of both, I borrow not the rules of my Religion from Rome or Geneva, but the dictates of my owne reason.³⁴

The Anglican understanding of truth has allowed me to accomplish my "quest for the divine through the use of human reason"³⁵, so that my spirit can be "the candle of the Lord,"³⁶ according to Benjamin Whichcote's beautiful formula. This can be done because although "Scripture, tradition, councils and fathers are the evidence in question", "the ultimate judge" is my "reason."³⁷

My move into the Church of England has saved me. Although I have left the so-called Catholic Church, I am now really catholic in the sense I can experience God's transforming power. Archbishop Rowan Williams has written that, "God speaks in a manner that insists we

³⁰ A. S. MCGRADY, "Reason", in Stephen SYKES, John BOOTY, Jonathan NIGHT, *The Study of Anglicanism*, London, SPCK, 1998, p. 120

³¹ Semons preached at the Rolls Chapel published in 1726, cited by *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Brooke WESTCOTT, *Christian Aspects of Life*, London, Macmillan and Co. 1897, p. 32, cited by ALAN BARTLETT, *A Passionate Balance*, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

³⁴ Sir Thomas BROWNE, *Religio medici* 1642-1643, ed. L. C. MARTIN, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1964, pp. 5-6.

³⁵ MICHAEL RAMSEY, *The Anglican Spirit*, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

³⁶ Benjamin WHICHCOTE, *Several Siscourses*, cited by Michael RAMSEY, *ibid.*

³⁷ Jeremy TAYLOR, *A Discourse of the Liberty of Prophesying*, Sect X, 5, in *The Whole Works of the Right Reverend Jeremy Taylor*, ed. R. HEBER, VIII, London, Longman, Brown, Green, 1850-56, pp. 97-98, cited by Henry MCADOO, *Anglican Heritage: Theology and Spirituality*, Norwich, Canterbury Press, 1997, p. 15.

continue to grow in order to hear.”³⁸ The Church of England is the only part of the One Church where I can grow and consequently hear God. I am able to do so because the Anglican tradition which has welcomed me so generously, not only allows me to be a mature believer, but encourages me to be so. I enjoy the liberty that Anglicanism gives me as a scholar, and that I could not find anywhere else. I can pursue the truth without fear. Anglicanism is everything but an open invitation to intellectual laziness! The moderation of our tradition influences greatly my inner faith. I am now happy to define myself against those who seem “to know more”,³⁹ not in order to affirm Anglican superiority over them but because I am confident in our tradition that invests each one of its members with a considerable dignity not only as a human but also and above all as a thinking Christian. That, combined with Anglican inclusivity, means that I am now an open, confident, and positive Catholic, who is able to be a witness of Christ without fear and shame. For the first time in my life, I now feel that my heart, faith and mind are in accordance with the teaching of my Church, to which I am proud to belong. My quest for holiness is fostered by our liturgies, marked by “an inclusive unity rather than an exclusive uniformity,”⁴⁰ which confers me a capacity for growth. I have become an Anglican by choice, a choice dictated by reason but also by the heart.

I believe I shall remain in the Anglican Communion because no other tradition possesses the “integral catholicity” of Anglicanism, namely its completeness, expressed in the Anglican ecclesiology, which defines the Anglican patrimony, although that point is very often misunderstood. This quality allows those who belong to the churches of the Anglican Communion to live fully their catholicity.

The Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus providing for personal ordinariates for Anglicans entering into full communion with the Catholic Church* mentions the “Anglican patrimony” without defining it.⁴¹ However, the constitution contains a precision helping to understand how the Holy Father perceives the Anglican patrimony, in the circumstances “the liturgical, spiritual and pastoral traditions of the Anglican Communion.”⁴² This erroneous apprehension of the Anglican patrimony reveals a total lack of understanding regarding the Anglican tradition. It rests on the idea that Anglicanism cannot stand on its own and that “the faith, practice and spirit of the Churches of the Anglican Communion” are “merely a product of the accidents of history, a legitimization, for reasons of expediency, of the way things have happened to turn out.”⁴³ This vision implicitly denies that Anglicanism is “the embodiment of

³⁸Rowan WILLIAMS, *Why study the past ? The Quest for the Historical Church*, London, Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 2005, p. 112.

³⁹L. WILLIAM COUNTRYMAN, *The Poetic Imagination, An Anglican Spiritual Tradition*, London, Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 1999, p. 32.

⁴⁰David STANCLIFFE, “Is there an Anglican Liturgical Style ?”, in Kenneth STEVENSON, Bryan SPINKS (ed.), *The Identity of Anglican Worship*, Harrisburg, Morehouse Publishing, 1991, p. 132.

⁴¹http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_ben-xvi_apc_20091104_anglicanorum-coetibus_en.html, Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus providing for personal ordinariates for Anglicans entering into full communion with the catholic Church* VI, §5 : “In order to address the particular needs of seminarians of the Ordinariate and formation in Anglican patrimony, the Ordinary may also establish seminary programs or houses of formation which would relate to existing Catholic faculties of theology”.

⁴²*Ibid.*, III: “Without excluding liturgical celebrations according to the Roman Rite, the Ordinariate has the faculty to celebrate the Holy Eucharist and the other Sacraments, the Liturgy of the Hours and other liturgical celebrations according to the liturgical books proper to the Anglican tradition, which have been approved by the Holy See, so as to maintain the liturgical, spiritual and pastoral traditions of the Anglican Communion within the Catholic Church, as a precious gift nourishing the faith of the members of the Ordinariate and as a treasure to be shared”.

⁴³PAUL AVIS, *The Identity of Anglicanism, op. cit.*, pp. 18-19.

some genuine ecclesiological truth, insight and principle, with insight or principle, with some degree of abiding relevance and with something of value to offer to the whole Church.”⁴⁴ The patrimony is commonly defined as anything inherited from the past that characterizes something. If Anglicanism is distinguished by its liturgical, spiritual and pastoral traditions, its main property, which forms its distinctiveness, resides in its ecclesiology, expressing “a dynamic orthodoxy.”⁴⁵

The definition of Anglican patrimony implied by the constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus* denies this quality and accredits the thesis according to which Anglicanism would have no doctrine or ecclesiology of his own. Anglican scholars themselves, such as John William Wand⁴⁶, Stephen Neill⁴⁷ or Henry McAdoo⁴⁸ have defended this idea. Until the creation of the ordinariate, the dangers of such declarations have been probably underestimated. If as Archbishop Robert Runcie has underlined it, it is true that the churches of the Anglican Communion “have never claimed to be more than a part of One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church,” it is very dangerous to assert that the survival of the Anglican Communion must not be “an end in itself”; the affirmation of Anglicanism’s provisional character must be cautiously done.⁴⁹ It can be made in accordance with the restraint specifying the Anglican tradition and in order to acknowledge that in the context of a divided Church, Anglican churches are only a part of the creedal Church, as all the other Christian churches, seen in an eschatological perspective. But being modest does not mean we should denigrate Anglican integrity. At the present time, as Paul Avis has pointed out, our greatest need as members of the Anglican Communion is to affirm openly our confidence in, among other things, our “definite and distinct ecclesiology”, endowed with an “abiding validity⁵⁰”. This distinctive character of Anglican ecclesiology resides in what I call its “integral catholicity” established on the combination of three essential bases “mutually supportive and mutually interpretative: catholicity, reformation principles, and scholarship freely pursued.”⁵¹ Bishop Charles Gore has explained this unique alliance:

It is the glory of the Anglican Church that at the Reformation she repudiated neither the ancient structure of Catholicism, nor the new and freer movement. Upon the ancient structure – the creeds, the canon, the hierarchy, the sacraments – she retained her hold while she opened her arms to the new learning, the new appeal to Scripture, the freedom of historical criticism and the duty of private judgement.⁵²

This “integral catholicity” constitutes the completion of the catholic paradigm, not yet achieved in every church. John Jewel underlined that the Church of England moved away

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁴⁶ J. W.C. WAND, *Anglicanism in History and Today*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1961, p. 46 : “it is the claim of the Anglican that he holds...no exclusive or distinctive doctrine”.

⁴⁷ Stephen SYKES, “Anglicanism and the doctrine of the Church”, in -, *Unashamed Anglicanism*, London, Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 1995, pp. 102-103: “Bishop Stephen Neill had been more sweeping still, denying not merely that there were no special anglican doctrines, but even that there existed a particular Anglican Theology”.

⁴⁸ Henry R. McADOO, *Being an Anglican*, London, SPCK, 1977, pp. 12-13: “there is then no distinctively Anglican Faith as such but rather the explicit claim of adherence to nothing but the faith once for all delivered”.

⁴⁹ Voir *The Truth shall make you free : The Lambeth Conference 1988*, London, Anglican Consultative Council, 1993, p. 13 cited by Paul AVIS, *The Identity of Anglicanism*, *op. cit.*, p. 4

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 6.

⁵¹ Paul AVIS, *The Anglican Understanding of the Church : an Introduction*, London, SPCK, 2000, p. 44

⁵² Cited par Paul AVIS, *The Identity of Anglicanism*, *op. cit.*, p. 26

from the errors of Rome, but not from the Catholic Church⁵³. The obliteration of Roman improprieties has conditioned the distinctiveness of the “integral catholicity”. Consequently, an expurgated Catholicism could integrate the contributions of Reform found in the way by which beliefs are “defined, legitimated, interpreted and maintained.”⁵⁴ If the Church of England professes “the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scripture,” the Church “is called to proclaim afresh this faith “in each generation.”⁵⁵ To the Anglican inheritance of faith and thus to the Anglican patrimony “belongs a concept of authority which refuses to insulate itself against the testing of history and the free action of reason. It seeks to be a credible authority and therefore is concerned to secure satisfactory historical support and to have its credentials in a shape which corresponds to the requirements of reason.”⁵⁶ It is expressed in the classical threefold Anglican cord of Scripture, reason and tradition. “Scripture contains the elements which it is necessary to believe to be a Christian. Reason comprehends our experience as human beings who think and feel and act. Tradition is the reach of the past into present: the way in which we inherit from the past the experience and knowledge of others who have shared our belief.”⁵⁷ These three sources “are combined in a dynamic way in order to serve as mutual qualifiers, checks and balances, not merely to restrict and to relativise each other but also to generate innovative thinking in dialogue with the Church’s cultural and ideological context.”⁵⁸

This classical feature of the Anglican tradition can be opposed to the Roman Catholic trilogy of “sacred tradition, sacred Scripture, and the teaching authority of the Church.”⁵⁹ Only the magisterium, and not reason, allied with tradition and scripture, is able to authentically interpret “the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition.”⁶⁰ This is why the paradigm of catholicity proposed by the Roman Catholic Church is incomplete, as “reason, never divorced from Scripture or apostolical tradition, sets us free from fundamentalism, traditionalism and theological idiosyncrasy⁶¹”. This “integrality” of Anglicanism allows the Anglican believer to live an “integrated catholic faith”. In our aggressively secularized world, it offers a model opening new, fresh, exciting perspectives not only for the disillusioned believer but for all. It is a message of hope for the world. Nevertheless, such a position raises a number of points it is necessary to address.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 32

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁵⁵ <http://www.churchofengland.org/media/35588/complete.pdf> : *The Canons of the Church of England*, Canon C 15, Of the declaration of assent: “The Church of England is part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church worshipping the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It professes the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds, which faith the Church is called upon to proclaim afresh in each generation”.

⁵⁶ Lambeth conference, 1986, Report, pp. 82-83, cited by *cited by Henry MCADOO, Anglicans and Tradition and the Ordination of Women, op. cit.*, p. 24

⁵⁷ Ian BULTING (ed.), *Celebrating the Anglican Way*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1996, p. 47 cited by *ibid.*, p. 57.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 32

⁵⁹ *Dogmatic Constitution on the Divine Revelation*, 10 in Walter M. ABOTT (ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II*, 1967, pp. 117-118, cited *ibid.*, p. 10.

⁶⁰ http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_PM.HTM, Catechism of the Catholic Church, 85: “The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ.” This means that the task of interpretation has been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome”

⁶¹ *cited by Henry MCADOO, Anglicans and Tradition and the Ordination of Women, op. cit.*, p. 57.

Anglicanism is often described as lacking coherence in central matters of faith. What does integrality mean in that context?

In Anglicanism, there is no substantial body of confessional material containing an exposition of the doctrine. Anglican faith is practical rather than confessional. The Roman combination of an “inflexible scholastic official theology and an unchallengeable magisterium”⁶² is utterly contrary to the intrinsic nature of the Anglican tradition. What Anglicans believe is stated minimally mostly in liturgical resources. It is simply the *lex credendi lex orandi*. “The Anglican Faith, which is set forth uniquely in the Scriptures and is summed up in the Catholics creeds, develops and grows under the guidance of the Holy Spirit within the life of the Church, the Body of Christ.”⁶³ Therefore, integrality means Anglicans are invested with a full ability of discerning the truth through the Anglican Way, as the Anglican faith is a faith in search of understanding.

In relation to matters of faith and order, the churches of the Anglican Communion are often accused of unilaterally altering the common catholic heritage, without the authority to do so. Surely catholicity means not deciding matters of faith on one's own, but in partnership with one's ecumenical sister churches? What about the “ecumenical damage argument”⁶⁴?

The churches of the Anglican tradition confess that “while their churches certainly belong to the One Church of Christ, they are only a part, portion of the whole catholic Church,”⁶⁵ thus admitting their provisional and incomplete nature. Consequently, in contrast to the Roman Catholic or Orthodox Churches, they can place the other churches “on the same footing with their own Anglican Church, as fragments of the whole, acknowledging that all are victims of disunity, all share the responsibility for schism, and all are called to work for the healing of the wounds of the body of Christ.”⁶⁶ This major achievement not yet attained by every church implies that the catholicity of other churches is not denied. It is primordial as the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church do not regard the churches of the Anglican Communion as true churches with valid ministries and sacraments.⁶⁷ So the “ecumenical damage argument” does not seem realistic. To push things further, one can even wonder if those defending this position are really convinced that their church is a true, catholic and apostolic church. If so, they should not have any problems with the fact that it “has sufficient authority within itself” to determine matters of faith and order.

As for the decision-making process pertaining to matters of faith, it is always better and even desirable to enjoy the support of an ecumenical consensus⁶⁸. Yet, this most attractive notion in theory becomes an almost empty reality in the context of a divided Church. A relative hypocrisy also lies in the very conventional discourses of our ecumenical partners regarding the changes affecting matters of faith. The actual reality must be faced, even it is not the one which we would like to see: in the present state of the One Church, “there is no machinery in existence for the churches even to consult together on fundamental questions of faith and order, let alone to take decision or act together.”⁶⁹ The meeting of an ecumenical council could be a solution for some. Unfortunately, given the current situation, it is not even possible

⁶² PAUL AVIS, *The Identity of Anglicanism*, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

⁶³ Cited Henry MCADOO, *Anglican Heritage*, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

⁶⁴ PAUL AVIS, *The Identity of Anglicanism*, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ On this argument, see *ibid.*, p. 129.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 126-127.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

to dream of such an eventuality. It is necessary to have in mind the miserable experience of the Council of Florence: a deficient conciliar experience can only become an element of further alienation. The consequence is sad, but ineluctable: as much as the creedal Church is not an actual reality, the churches have no choice but to act “unilaterally”, which means “that each particular church must act responsibly, in accordance with its conscience, and through its structures of conviviality and decision making, in fulfilment of its mission.”⁷⁰ The Roman Catholic Church, which regularly declares that it does not regard the Churches including itself, as authorized to change tradition, is not the last one to act “unilaterally”, to which the insertion of the *Filioque* into the Creed, papal infallibility, Marian dogma and much more testify.

Today, Anglicanism seems to be devastated by conflicts and divisions over gays and lesbians as well women bishops. If the media are not mistaken, Anglicans are permanently fighting against each other while Archbishop Williams desperately tries to hold the communion together in order to avoid a schism. How can I believe that I will remain an Anglican in this context?

Anglicanism has often been described as being the product of a secular will. The Church of England would have been created only to support and legitimate Henry VIII’s ambitions, and as a result, the Anglican tradition would not be established on sound theological foundations. The churches of the Anglican Communion would not be invested with the inherent properties of true churches. Eventually, these gaps would mean that Anglicanism could only collapse. A more open perspective “sees it as a distinctive inculturated expression of the Western form of the Church Catholic, shaped by the conciliar and reforming movements of the late Middle Ages and early modern period, to which sources the constitutional settlements under Henry and Elizabeth were subservient.”⁷¹

From the beginning, the contingency of Anglicanism has been a matter of fact. Yet the Anglican experience is nearly almost five hundred years old and is still alive after having gone through very severe crises⁷². The complicated situation of the Anglican Communion raises a number of important questions connected to the singularity of Anglican identity, but does not mean that a schism is about to come. The current conflicts from one perspective reveal the good health of our churches and testify to their integrality. Our distinctive appreciation of truth implies free and large debates to discern the right path as it cannot be given by a higher authority. The other churches are not very different from ours. They are not immune to pain and torments but these are not made widely known; they are often managed by an obscure and authoritarian governmental system and their burden is often carried by the innocent victims of an efficient system of censorship, promoting silence while the modesty and balance of the Anglican churches mean they deal publicly and openly with their problems. The Anglican Communion is not afraid to display its vulnerability. Nevertheless, a strengthened, more articulate and confident Anglican ecclesiology needs to be part of the future, both in terms of theological studies and greater awareness of our ecclesiological structures and how we resolve disputes between us.

Being an Anglican is much more than what is currently advertised by the media. Anglican global identity is not defined by a positioning in favour or against homosexual clergy and women bishops. The overall depth of our tradition, and particularly its spirituality and liturgy,

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 168

⁷² On these points, see *ibid.*, pp. 152-155.

still nurtures the life of millions of Christians, including some who have formally left. At the same time and although it is highly ignored, despite the so called desperated situation of the Anglican Communion, its churches welcome each year a considerable number of Christians who enjoy the spiritual solace provided by Anglican inclusivity. Faith in the Anglican Communion needs to be reaffirmed. With the help of the Spirit, as Jesus has promised it in John 6: 13, the truth will be discovered and will prevail. I still call myself an Anglican because I believe and hope.

In the final analysis, I am an Anglican and intend to remain so, because of love - "Love bade me welcome"⁷³ - the love of truth has brought me to the Church of England. The Church of England is the place where I experience God's love. Through this experience, I am able to know God better, to love Him more deeply, and to serve Him with greater passion. As a result of "love's redeeming work,"⁷⁴ I can try to become "a living Gospel that everyone can read,"⁷⁵ so that I can credibly testify of God's love.

⁷³ Georges HERBERT, "Love III", cited by Stephen SYKES, "Love bade me welcome", in -, *Unashamed Anglicanism, op. cit.*, p. 51.

⁷⁴ See the well-known hymn *Love's Redeeming Work* by Charles WESLEY.

⁷⁵ Kenneth LETTS, "L'unité des chrétiens : un témoignage donné à l'Europe", Cathedral of Metz, *Le Neuf de l'Europe*, May 9, 2010.