

# St Boniface Trust Essay Competition

## Why I am an Anglican and believe I shall remain so

**Geoffrey Smith**

*[Apart from some reformatting, little has required editing in this essay. A few footnotes have been added in explanation of information which the author has assumed we would know. The Author is a retired priest living in Carlisle, England. One of the judges commented, "Quite outstanding, a very personal story of pilgrimage."]*

My being baptized as an Anglican was not an accident.

My Father was a Roman Catholic and my Mother was a member of the Church of England. My Paternal Grandmother came from an Irish immigrant family in Manchester and had a reputation for being very religious. My Grandfather was an avowed atheist and a socialist who humoured his wife's faith.

When the children were born she named her first daughter Mary and her son, my father, Joseph. It was her strongly held hope that her son would offer for the Catholic Priesthood.

My Mother's family came from a long line of servants, labourers, miners and millworkers they were nominally Anglican but did not attend the Parish Church, St Mary's, Droylsden in South Manchester. Instead they attended a mission church around the corner which had been built to house the working class congregation who would have been uncomfortable in the Parish Church.

When my parents married, out of respect for my Grandmother's deeply held faith, my maternal Grandparents not being church goers, the Marriage was held in the Catholic Church. My Mother told me some years later that after the ceremony, whilst she was still catching her breath, along with the registers, she was handed a form for signature, she asked what it was and was told it was a requirement for all brides married in a catholic church. It was only later that she discovered that she had promised that the children of the marriage would be raised in the Roman Catholic faith.

My parents dealt with this situation in an unusual fashion, they both stopped attending church and despite my being baptized I was never taken to church by my parents. Occasionally, and only very occasionally, my Aunt Mary would take me, with my cousins Rita, Celia and Francis to the catholic church of The Sacred Heart near my home in Gorton, Manchester. I have strong memories of these occasional visits, the rituals, the atmosphere in the building, the scents and aromas, the Priests in their rich vestments and the statuary.

In this way I grew up without any particular church affiliation. I took part in the schoolboy battles between the pupils of my school, Old Hall Drive, and the pupils of the Catholic Sacred Heart School, these took place during term time in the park between the two schools and on Sundays I was taken by my parents on their motorcycle out into the countryside.

At some point I joined a youth group which was attached to the local Methodist Church and from that I joined a Sunday school and began to regularly attend a monthly church parade. On one occasion I even won a prize, a Methodist Hymn Book, in a Sunday school competition.

In Manchester in the late 1950's the Whit Walks were still a significant feature of local community life and even of local community pride. There are photographs of me in my new Whitsunday clothes walking in the processions.

I remember on one particular occasion a service, I now know that it was an ecumenical Service, took place at the Methodist Church in which the Anglican Church of St Philip's participated. During this service something happened to me which meant that I began to wonder about this group of Christians and their pastor and so, quite spontaneously on the next Sunday I took myself off to St Philip's, which was across the park from where I lived, and attended their service.

I was possibly 13 years old at the time.

What I found was a meeting point between my two experiences of church. Between the dryness and wordiness of the Methodist Church and the rich flamboyance of the Catholic Church, surprisingly I felt immediately at home. Later of course I came to understand all this theologically as the 'via Media' but then it was just an emotional response from a young and unformed mind.

It was at this point that my family moved and I began to attend a Church local to my new home in Hartshill, Stoke on Trent. I became a regular attendee; I was confirmed and became immersed in the life of the Parish through my membership of the youth club, my participation in social occasions, parish activities, and a parish walking group, Lent groups, regular worship and other aspects of life in a busy Anglican parish in the early sixties.

During this time I encountered a number of individuals young family men, choir members, PCC members and others who were all involved in parish life and who became for me role models whose example I began to follow as I matured both as a Christian and as a human being.

A key moment for me was the arrival in the Parish of a new young curate. With his encouragement I began to develop a sense that God was calling me into ministry and I began to make enquiries as to just what might be involved and was disappointed to learn

that amongst other things it would be necessary to acquire some basic qualifications before I could even contemplate offering myself for a selection conference.

But it was during this time that I also began to reflect a little on my mixed heritage as both a Roman Catholic and an Anglican and began to explore the possibility of becoming a Roman Catholic.

There were no great Damascene moments during this period of my life. I simply set about, in as thoughtful way as I could, to consider whether the Catholic Church could provide me with a spiritual home in which I could settle and which would nurture me in my pilgrimage toward ordination and life as a parish priest.

During this time my Father spoke to me at length about the importance of celibacy in the life of a catholic priest and shared with me his own view that he felt drawn to life as a married man rather than as a celibate and that it was this as much as anything that meant that he could not accede to his Mother's wishes and offer for the Priesthood.

My Mother, sensing my drift towards the Catholic Church, also spoke to me about her own inheritance in the Church of England, of how as a young woman it had nurtured her in the small chapel where she attended worship and the events surrounding her marriage and what she saw as the deceit of not only the Priest but her future sister-in-law.

I read widely and explored with the Curate Fr. Harper, who was himself celibate, what it was in the Church of England that had attracted him over the claims of Catholicism. Eventually my conclusions settled around three areas which I realized were central to who I was as a person then and which would shape the person I wished to become in the future:

The first was authority: I found the claim of infallibility deeply troubling and questioned how any individual could make such a claim or how such a claim could be made about an individual.

The second was around the person of Christ. It seemed to me absolutely central that if faith was to be real and nurturing then my relationship to Christ needed to be direct and was realized in the first instance through a close and personal reading of the New Testament.

Thirdly of course was celibacy. I did not feel called to a celibate life but equal I could not accept my Father's rationale for celibacy in the priestly life. It seemed to me then and it seems to me even more now that I would not have been half the priest I was without the help and support of the person who became my wife.

In due course I studied at Salisbury Theological College and was ordained into the Ministry of the Church of England. Of course, I read more into the history of the Church of England and became aware whilst at Salisbury of Richard Hooker<sup>1</sup> who was sub-dean and who lived as I did in the Close.

---

<sup>1</sup> [Richard Hooker, 1554-1600, became sub-dean of Salisbury Cathedral in 1591, with the prebend of Netheravon, and the rectory of the parish of Boscombe; before that he was Public Preacher at Paul's Cross, Rector of Drayton Beauchamp in Buckinghamshire, and then Master of the Temple Church in London. The appointment to Salisbury was merely designed to give him time to write what became his great work, 'Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie', the first volumes of which appeared in 1594. — Ed]

Over the years I have continued to admire and value the Ministry of the Roman Catholic Church.

There is a lovely story told about Pope John 23rd, who was asked following his election what his hopes for the Church were, apparently he crossed the room and opened a window; and of course, this was exactly what Vatican Two did, and the Church has in so many ways become more open and welcoming as relationships have become so much warmer at both the institutional and the personal level.

My parents found it hard to believe when I told them of a wedding which I conducted in Newcastle when the couple, one Catholic and the other Anglican, were married in the presence not only of myself as the Parish Priest but of the Roman Catholic University Chaplain, the couple both being students at the University.

Now that I am retired I find myself in a situation where, as someone who over the years has defined himself as a Prayer Book Catholic or a Liberal Catholic, I am living in an Anglican Parish which owes more allegiance to Geneva than Canterbury, in a Diocese where the Evangelical Tradition is strongly promoted.

I have a Ministry in the Diocese of Europe and am a member of the Guild of Priests at the Cathedral and attend Chapter, but retirement has become in many ways a lonely place. This loneliness is reinforced because directly opposite my house is a Catholic Church where, when I have attended worship, I have been made especially welcome and so my lifetime's question continues to ask itself.

The papal invitation to join the Ordinariate has brought that question sharply into focus, but hours of quiet, prayerful reflection have led me to the conclusion that it is right for me to remain an Anglican and to seek to continue to exercise my ministry as a Priest in the Church into which I was Baptized, Confirmed and Ordained as both Deacon and Priest.

Many years ago I had a conversation with the wife of our second curate in the parish of St Peter ad Vincula, in Stoke on Trent. The conversation arose during a seminar – she was tutoring me for my Religious Studies GCE during the time I was collecting the minimum academic qualifications necessary for a selection conference.

I recall that conversation because we had been discussing my sense of being caught between two traditions, my Father's Catholicism and my Mother's Anglicanism. I had shared my view that I had thought that maybe I should convert and seek ordination in the catholic priesthood.

Her response was to talk with me about Grace. The grace that I had received as a gift of the Holy Spirit had been received via the ministry and spirituality of the Church of England. If that Grace was real and not imagined, could I then deny and in effect reject the ministry of the Church through which it had been received?

My response then and now is No.

The validity of orders is guaranteed via the Grace received, the sacraments, the ministry, the pastoral support are all mediated through and as a gift of the Holy Spirit, which I understand in John V. Taylor's terms, described in his book *The Go-Between God* as the 'sweat between clasped hands'.

Furthermore in my own ministry as I have ‘broken bread and spilled wine’, I have always been conscious that my own unworthiness to offer this sacrifice is already recognised and forgiven by the Church and set out in an extreme form in Article 26 where it is recognised that the unworthiness of the minister does not ‘hinder’ the effect of the sacrament.

My faith, which even now is a work in progress, has been nurtured in and through the ministry I have received via the Church of England. My theology and my spirituality is essentially Anglican, and if I were to offer and be received into the Ordinariate I would always feel that in some way I had turned my back on the Church that has been both my formation and my home, and the Grace that I have received through its pastoral care and through the sacraments I have been privileged to receive.

The Thirty Nine Articles now seem an old fashioned and out dated set of principles to underpin the faith of any Church. We live in a fast moving technology-based society, with our computers, lap-tops, iPads and iPhones, and communication is instant and ethics relative. The moral ground has shifted and whole areas of human life have been relativized, marriage is no longer for life, contracts can be re-negotiated and we tend to think of rules as guides broadly indicating the general direction in which society is moving rather than as prescriptive indicators of the path to be followed. (This observation of course does not apply when using a sat-nav as a driver.)

However, as a historic definition of the ‘Via Media’ between Geneva and Rome the Thirty Nine Articles form the basis of Anglican thought and practice.

It is interesting to note that Anglicanism has always avoided owing itself to any one individual. There are names to conjure with, of course: Hooker I have mentioned, Cranmer<sup>2</sup> whose Liturgy I still admire and use, Tyndale<sup>3</sup>, whose literary skills in the Authorized (King James) Version of the Bible so impressed the literary critic Harold Bloom writing in his latest book *The Shadow of a Great Rock*; but there is no Calvin, no Luther<sup>4</sup> and no Papacy enforcing the views and ideas of one individual over others.

Whether it was the translation of Holy Scripture or the definition of the historic faith of the Church, the Church of England always worked by committee and gloriously achieved its aim of preparing a theologically literate view that was well placed to stand solidly on its foundations; rather than, when flaws were identified in the logic of, say, a Calvin, the whole edifice was shaken.

Given that each time I have been inducted into a new living or been licensed to a new charge I have given my consent to the Articles of Religion it is as well that I have been comfortable with both what they claim and what they require of me.

The first eight articles deal with the essentials of our faith in the Death and Resurrection of Christ and place the Church of England firmly in the context of its catholicity as both catholic and reformed. It is quintessentially Trinitarian, and despite David Jenkins’ famous ‘conjuring trick with bones’ makes clear that the resurrection of Christ was a bodily Resurrection.

---

<sup>2</sup> [Thomas Cranmer, 1489-1556, Archbishop of Canterbury; burned at the stake under Queen Mary’s Counter Reformation persecution. - Ed]

<sup>3</sup> [William Tyndale, c1494-c1536, Bible translator; he too was executed as a heretic. - Ed]

<sup>4</sup> John Calvin, 1509-1564; and Martin Luther, 1483-1546, protestant reformers. — Ed]

That faith is based on the self-revelation of God to humanity as Creator, Redeemer and Nurturer; therefore to declare faith in God is to recognize that in the Trinity God is perceived as a community of persons-in-relationship, and that this community forms the basis of all human and Christian communities. This faith which is both catholic and reformed is based on traditions which are rooted both in Scripture and the credal formularies of the early Church.

I am comfortable with this and whilst I may find a similar doctrinal statement within the teachings of other Christian churches I am not persuaded that I need to move away from my Anglican heritage to find a more convincing statement. In other words it is both philosophically and experientially satisfying.

For the largest part of my ministry I have been engaged in social and community issues. I have worked as a Diocesan Social Responsibility Officer and Adviser to the Bishop, I have worked at Selly Oak Colleges in the Centre for Applied Christian Studies and I have worked in both the public and the charitable sectors.

I have never been convinced that religion is or should be a purely personal matter and have always been persuaded and tried to articulate the view that we must be as aware of structural sin and the capacity of society to respond by developing structures of compassion and justice as we are of personal sin and personal justification.

It is this particular emphasis that has meant for me that the Church of England as an established Church and with its Bishops at the heart of Government and its parishes at the heart of society is uniquely placed to speak 'truth to power'. I do not believe that any Church could for example have commissioned the report *Faith in the City* or managed to conduct its investigations into poverty and injustice in the United Kingdom with either impartiality or integrity, other than the Church of England.

It was especially interesting to me that, when I authored our Diocesan report to the Commission<sup>5</sup>, the Bishop, who chaired the meeting of his Council where the report was welcomed and approved for submission, then wrote a personal letter to the Commission distancing himself from the 'creationism' contained in the document and emphasizing the salvation achieved by Jesus Christ on the cross.

This was of course a debate about what in the Articles can be described as the economy of salvation. The mean between Luther's justification by faith and the fact that good works can be both an expression of faith and a means of salvation, place the Church of well within its defining genius as steering a middle way between the extremes of faith which England from time to time can be seen in both the Protestant and Catholic Churches in both the UK, America and in Continental Europe.

For the Church and for the Christian Gospel it is essential that the Church has a voice in the public square.

I was reminded of this most forcefully in Ephesus on a visit as a tourist. Having been to Mary's House and reflected on the likelihood that St John had brought Mary to Ephesus in response to Jesus' direction on the Cross that he was to care for her as a son would for a

---

<sup>5</sup> [The *Faith in the City* report was published in 1985 and was the work of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas. — Ed]

mother, I wandered down into the Arena. Here in the dusty setting under a hot sun, I looked down the path that led to the original harbour. It was all too possible in that dramatic setting to imagine St Paul arriving along that path and embarking on his preaching in that very Arena.

In 1 Corinthians 15.32, St Paul describes himself as ‘fighting with wild beasts in Ephesus’; whether he is speaking literally or figuratively or whether he is referring to religious controversy or even physical danger is not clear. What is clear is that he attracted controversy but nevertheless continued to preach the Gospel, purposely seeking out the public squares where he could speak and engage in debate in order to press the claims of Jesus Christ as both Lord and Saviour.

In *The Shadow of a Great Rock*, Harold Bloom identifies the debate between Paul on his great journeys and Peter in Rome as leading to the essential separation between the Church of Rome and the Protestant Churches at the Reformation, and especially in that context Luther’s adoption of the Pauline statement that individuals are justified by faith.

This debate has played out in many different ways over the history of the Church but in the thinking that led to the formulation of the Anglican Church’s distinct position, the concept set out in Articles 19 - 31 reinforces the view that faith in the public venue, that is the institutional church, is central to our understanding of what it means to be Anglican.

The final articles tend towards a tidying up of details which might separate Church from State, address the notion of commonly held property and the issue of clerical Celibacy.

This was obviously a fraught issue; one only has to think of Mrs. Cranmer secreted in her wagon and unacknowledged as she followed her husband around both Europe and England.

But the wisdom of the Article 32 on this subject is worth quoting. It was what I felt when my father defended the celibacy of the clergy and it reflects my experience of the value and support I have received from both my wife and my children in my exercise of a ministry that at times has meant that I have neglected them when I should have been more supportive and relied more heavily on them than was reasonable.

*‘Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, are not commanded by God’s Law, either to vow the estate of single life, or to abstain from marriage: therefore it is lawful for them, as for all other Christian men, to marry at their own discretion, as they shall judge the same to serve better to godliness’.*

This position is clear, biblical and humane, whereas the current catholic position seems to me to be confused and prejudged. As a close Catholic friend of mine who has felt a late calling to the Priesthood, but who is married, has observed, his vocation would not be recognised because he is married; whilst if I chose to join the Ordinariate, mine would.

In 1985 I was privileged to be offered a fellowship at the Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA, where I majored in Christian Social Ethics with Professor David Hollenbach, himself a Roman Catholic.

It was the Episcopal Divinity School in 1985 that I had my own Epiphany moment with regard to the ordination of women into the Priesthood of the Anglican Church. I was attending a mid-day Eucharist in the College Chapel. As the vestry door opened I recognised the Celebrant as Carter Heywood; the Deacon was Sue Hiatt and another woman

Priest was sub-deacon. Now these were names to conjure with in 1985, having being illegally ordained in Philadelphia in 1974; both Carter and Sue, who were on the staff of EDS, were, in the words of Gerry O'Grady the fellowship course leader, 'angry women'. I knew that if I stayed in the Chapel and received communion then I was making a significant personal and political statement about my attitude to the ordination of women. I stayed and of course set myself at odds not only with the Church of England, but also the Roman Catholic Church.

I could of course renege on the position I adopted at that lunch time Eucharist in Cambridge but to do so would be inconsistent with the broad direction that the Anglican Church has adopted on this significant issue in recent years. It is a direction which Anglican theology in both its formative period and more recently with regard to the ordination of women has revealed its character and its wisdom and demonstrated the underlying consistency and integrity of its theology.

In his sermon at Westminster Cathedral during The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 2011, Canon Giles Fraser made this comment with regard to the Ordinariate:

*'from the Anglican perspective, this new invitation to swim the Tiber can sometimes have a slightly predatory feel; in corporate terms, a little like a take-over bid in some broader power play of church politics. And if Anglicans do feel a little like this, I wonder if things really are all that rosy in the ecumenical garden.'*

He continued in the following way:

*'During the Pope's visit last September he spoke at Lambeth Palace of our country's "deep and widespread hunger for spiritual nourishment." This, he rightly emphasized, is where we find common cause. Here is our deeper source of unity. For those of us who can't really understand the Ordinariate or are anxious about its purpose, this is something very much worth holding on to.'*

My intention by remaining within the Anglican Church is to commit myself to responding to this 'deep and widespread hunger for spiritual nourishment'. I do so as an Anglican because it is within this tradition and its theology that my own deep and widespread hunger for spiritual nourishment has been fed and watered.

In my own understanding of the unique claims of Anglicanism, I am not unaware that the Church can be experienced as elitist, that it appears to possess only one model of ministry, the Vicar-Curate Model, which has in many ways ensured that, for example, so many Cathedral chapters are dysfunctional, that certainly in my own experience its pastoral care of clergy is at times extremely poor and its treatment of many individuals and groups from women to gay people has been reprehensible. But to say that the Church is not perfect is possibly to acknowledge that perfectibility is simply not achievable here below.

The genius of Anglicanism is its ability to function as the Church of the land, to speak truth to power, to articulate the hopes and dreams of people, to offer within distinct and local communities pastoral care and a personal ministry to represent Christ to the people and the people to Christ.

My ministry has extended over a period of forty years. During this time I have been a Curate twice, a Civil servant twice, a Vicar once, a Canon twice, an Academic and the Chief Executive of an Anglican voluntary organization.

Throughout this time I have found myself concentrating more and more on what is essential. I have concluded over that time that only three things are necessary: to follow Jesus' Commandments to Love God; and to Love your neighbour as yourself; and after this, to break bread with other Christians as Jesus commanded that we should.

I find that in this effort to reduce things to their essential I am following in a tradition that begins with Hooker and is developed by Cudworth and South<sup>6</sup>.

Hooker writes:

*that the drift of Holy Scripture is to make men wise for salvation, the Old Testament by teaching of Him Who should come, the New by teaching that the Saviour is actually come.*

Cudworth seems to reinforce this simple message even more emphatically when he writes,

*'the Gospel is nothing else but God descending into the world in our form and conversing with us in our likeness that he might deify us, that is, make us partakers of the divine nature.'*

South, even more starkly declares: *Jesus Christ is the Son of God*'.

When these words were written Anglicanism was being defined as distinct from both the Roman Church and the new Protestant Churches. The Roman Church had, it was argued replaced reliance on the authority of Scripture at the heart of faith with the scaffold of traditions which had been constructed around it whilst the Protestant reformers had brought their own unbalanced exposition of isolated texts, (rather demonstrating that history continues to repeat itself).

In 1993 I wrote a script for CFM radio, a local radio station based in Carlisle. The programme was broadcast at Easter that year and the radio Station decided to enter the tape for a competition called Easter on FM.

The programme won the first prize and as a result of winning the competition I was invited to the WACC, World Association of Christian Communicators' conference which is held every four years and that year was being held in Metepec in Mexico.

This was an extraordinary, ecumenical meeting with professional communicators from across the world meeting to discuss the challenges and opportunities for communicating the Christian faith in an increasingly secular world.

As the conference unfolded a rumour began to circulate that the Bishop of the Chiappas, the indigent peoples of Southern Mexico was planning to attend. The rumour gained

---

<sup>6</sup> [Dr Ralph Cudworth (1617-1688), author of *'The True Intellectual System of the Universe'*; Robert South (1634-1716) Public Orator of Cambridge University and sometime prebendary of Westminster. — Ed]

momentum as it was revealed that the Roman Catholic Churches support for the people of the Chiapas had brought them into conflict with the landowners. The landowners had taken out a contract on the life of the Bishop whose preaching had threatened their livelihoods and social position and consequently he was under protection and could not publish his diary in advance.

Nevertheless the rumours strengthened until one evening in the Dining Room as representatives of seventy nations were sitting down to supper, spontaneous applause broke out around a figure, surrounded by bodyguards, whom we recognised as the Bishop.

He spoke briefly to the conference delegates and in his address shared with us his vision of the kingdom of God, when the nations of the world could share a banquet in peace.

It was a very sobering moment in the conference proceedings and a reminder that the strength of the Church is to be found in its weakness.

I mention this here because of course it was one of those moments when my first reaction was a sense of pride that I stood in the same tradition as this Christian leader, and whilst I was not embracing personal danger through my preaching and taking what then was called 'an option for the poor', nevertheless we were together, disciples of the same Jesus Christ.

As Giles Fraser implied in his sermon at Westminster Cathedral, if the Church of Rome is serious in its ecumenical mission then it must itself embrace weakness if it is to become strong. The Ordinariate is not in the end a serious option for Anglicans because in practice it requires us to surrender more than we should of a faith which was hammered out in the most trying of times, a faith for which brave men were prepared to sacrifice their lives.

Tyndale, whose translation of the Bible became the foundation of the Authorized (King James) Version was burned at the stake having been arrested in Hamburg and brought back to England for Trial.

The Anglican Martyrs Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley<sup>7</sup> were both executed by burning in 1555. Latimer a former Bishop of Worcester fell in and out of favour as he pressed for an English translation of the Bible and greater sympathy with the protestant reformers on the Continent.

Restored to favour during the reign of Edward VI, as the English church moved in a more Protestant direction, he served as chaplain to Katherine, Duchess of Suffolk. However, when Mary came to the throne, he was tried for his beliefs and teachings in Oxford and imprisoned.

In October 1555 he was burned at the stake outside Balliol College, Oxford alongside Nicholas Ridley. For Ridley, his notoriety, if that is the right word, was his support for the wearing of vestments against the view of, among others, John Hooper<sup>8</sup>. Ridley saw the wearing of vestments as an indifferent matter and certainly not as Hooper maintained, sinful. But Ridley's greater crime was his dismissal of Mary's claim to the Throne of

---

<sup>7</sup> [Hugh Latimer (1487-1555); Nicholas Ridley (1500-1555), Bishop of London. — Ed]

<sup>8</sup> [John Hooper, c1495?-1555, Bishop of Gloucester. — Ed]

England and both these reformers were victims as much of the politics of the reformation era as the reforms themselves.

Thomas Cranmer's legacy is the Book of Common Prayer, which offered a complete liturgy for the new, reformed, English Church. Through the Prayer Book and the Homilies published with it, Cranmer influenced the Church's understanding with regard to the Eucharist, the celibacy of the clergy, the role of images in places of worship, and the veneration of saints.

Cranmer has been described as a heretic to Catholics and a martyr to Protestants; he also was burnt at the stake.

This poem to Cranmer was published in my recent book, *The Poem Must be Spoken*:

*The Dangers of Fire*

*beat the body down crushed bones into flames  
 the roaring fires all-consuming energy sparked  
 to the stake he comes embraces naked flames  
 beat the body down crushed bones boiling blood  
 the rich mix calcium phosphate glowing  
 with his right hand embraces wood and fire  
 bright holograms pictures a face his beard on fire  
 sightless now incandescent cadescent acrid stench  
 no beauty here just the beaten body burning  
 the fire gets up he neither stirs nor cries  
 unrepentant unprotesting shriven annealed  
 friend of king but not of queens or rome  
 they beat the body down into crushed bones of ash damp earth  
 words remain the book remains they cannot burn the book  
 the psalms are recited vulgar words remain even as  
 they beat the body down as fire draws his life out  
 with indrawn fiery breath he draws back his words  
 they beat the body down scatter crushed bones to the wind  
 unsudden death comes slow lightning sparks tempestuous fire  
 this pain more than I can bear I am beaten into earthen ends*

It is the courage of these men, known as the Oxford Martyrs, and their wisdom, which is the hallmark of Anglicanism and it is in essence the reason why I will remain an Anglican.