

PIETAS ANGLICANA

THE second volume of Lord Halifax's life¹ completed a first-rate biography of a striking and dynamic personality. It gives to the many who only knew him externally, in his chivalrous championship of Reunion ideals, and in the part he played in the domestic politics of his own Church, a vivid picture of the whole man. Mr. Lockhart sketches with skilful pen Lord Halifax's mental background, his temperament and character, his inner spiritual life and his family, social and ecclesiastical relationships. And this complete portrait, seen by most of us now for the first time, will compel thoughtful Catholics to search afresh for the answer to the question: What was it that kept so exceptionally gifted a man, whose high principle and personal integrity no one could question, unwaveringly faithful to the Church of England through a long life of incessant preoccupation with Catholicism, during which he came to hold almost every doctrinal truth which the Church proposes to the faith of its members? The answer to this question, if it could be found, is likely to provide the answer to another of great moment: Do the causes which operated to keep this one man faithful to the Church of England operate also to keep many others, similarly circumstanced, to the same allegiance?

Two characteristics in Lord Halifax, on which the biography lays stress, seem to be the key to his constant fidelity to the Church of England, and these were in no way peculiar to him; they may stand as typical of the average Anglo-Catholic. One was his strong conviction that the Catholic Revival was destined ultimately to lead to the Reunion of Christendom; the other was his strong sense of *pietas* towards the Church of England itself. Speaking of the many Roman Catholics who had attempted to persuade him to make the submission which seemed to them the logical outcome of his beliefs and activities Mr. Lockhart says:

They never quite understood that what restrained him was not any feeling *against* Rome but a feeling *for* the Church of England.

¹ *Viscount Halifax, 1885-1934*. By J. G. Lockhart. (Geoffrey Bles.)

He had a favourite phrase, *pietas Anglicana*, to describe a quality possessing which a man would be securely anchored in Anglicanism, without which he was in jeopardy every hour. It was a sense of the grandeur and continuity of the Church of St. Augustine, her lineage, her traditions, her inalienable privilege as the Catholic Church in England. Her Orders were valid, her Sacraments—as none was better assured than Halifax—were effective. She had a title which no dereliction or scandal could invalidate. For a man to abandon her because of the folly of a bishop or the trespass of a secular court was to convict himself of a false sense of proportion; as though he were to disown his mother because she had caught a cold in the head. That the Church should have been marred and despoiled was not a reason for leaving her; it was merely an incentive to work for her reparation (p. 216).

Yet, though in his *pietas Anglicana* and in his belief in the part that the Church of England was destined to play in the Reunion of Christendom Lord Halifax may stand as the typical Anglo-Catholic, there were developments of the movement which appeared to make no impression on him because he was temperamentally incapable of taking them into account. The growth of the intellectual and critical school of which Bishop Gore was the leader began, especially after the Great War, to cause an increasingly marked division within Anglo-Catholicism. Two distinctly defined groups have now emerged. A smaller group, called by their opponents the Papalist party, which approximates in belief very closely to the Catholic Church. It is disposed to accept the full truth of the doctrine of the universal jurisdiction and infallibility of the Holy See as defined by the Vatican Council, and it is a fruitful ground for conversions. But it is out of sympathy with the main stream of Anglicanism and carries on its life to a great extent in isolation from it. Having little individuality of its own, it has become hardly more than a close imitation of ourselves, and generally of our worst selves, uneasily yoked with the spirit and organization of the Church of England. Moreover, its intellectual vitality appears to be at a low ebb, it produces little or no constructive theological thought and seems to have few contacts with contemporary intellectual life. The Church of England has a genius and tradition of its own by no means wholly protes-

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tant; a movement that aims at catholicizing it from within has little chance of success if it rejects that genius and tradition; it must develop and transform it. Failure to attempt this has been a fault of the Anglo-Catholic movement, in certain of its phases, from the beginning. The Papalist group has canonized this fault; *pietas Anglicana* is at a discount within it and its influence on the main body of Anglicanism is in consequence not considerable.

The larger and less definite group which forms the main body of Anglo-Catholicism presents a much more complex problem to the Catholic observer. Its leaders are occupied with the problems raised by the impact of modern knowledge on traditional theological positions, with the application of Christian principles to the social question, and with the working out of a coherent theory of authority which will at the same time secure the sacramentalism of the movement with proper sanctions and reconcile the independence of the Church of England with their claim that it is an integral part of the Visible Church. In the search for a theory of authority which will justify the present position of the Church of England there is a general tendency to jettison the infallible magisterium of the Church in any form at all, and some members of the group have come to emphasize the part played by Christian experience in the development and formulation of dogma to such an extent as to make it the ultimate basis of authority. This group has in its ranks some of the best thinkers and scholars in the Church of England and their work is of high importance in the growth and spread of the movement.

Lord Halifax stood mid-way between the two groups. In doctrine he was identified with the Papalists, but in his *pietas Anglicana* and in many of his sympathies and friendships he belonged more to the main body of Anglo-Catholicism. But though more than ordinarily gifted, his interests were not intellectual. He retained to the end a traditional attitude towards social and industrial problems and his mind appears never to have taken in the deep-seated differences of tradition and ethos, which, even more than actual disagreement in doctrine, separate Canterbury from Rome. His was a

powerful personality and a dominating will, and his very enthusiasm for the cause of Reunion seems to have swept aside difficulties of every kind and imposed itself on those with whom he came into contact, even when their more cautious judgment allowed them to see, better than he did, how great were the obstacles that lay in the way of its realization.

Since Lord Halifax's death the divergence between the two groups within the Anglo-Catholic Movement has hardened considerably. The Papalists maintain that the main body of Anglo-Catholicism has been diverted from its true line of development and now consciously aims at the formation, in union with the Eastern Orthodox and the Old Catholics, of a solid *bloc* of non-Roman Catholicism in opposition to the Roman Catholic Church. Moreover, the Papalists insist very strongly that Modernism is fast disintegrating the rest of the Anglo-Catholic Movement, and many of them hold in consequence that their object must be to work for Reunion with the Holy See in the near future in order to save as large as possible a remnant of "true" Anglo-Catholicism.

Modernism is a comprehensive word and in consequence misleading. It may be used to cover any deviation from the traditional, even when that deviation implies no real opposition to the defined dogmas of the Church. It often implies only a too great readiness to accept such deviations in the interests of an immediate reconciliation with critical and scientific hypotheses. The word also comprehends a very subtle error which undermines the whole Catholic doctrine of supernatural revelation. The Catholic Church has had to meet the attacks of the advanced critical schools and to deal with the reactions that these have produced amongst its own members. It has done so by the exercise of a strong disciplinary authority primarily designed to protect the faith of those who are not equipped for dealing with the problems thus raised. In this way it has succeeded in keeping the unlearned and non-expert steadily anchored to authority in the troubled seas of intellectual disturbance. Meanwhile scholars and qualified experts are encouraged to use the

critical apparatus of modern scientific and historical research and to apply its results so long as authority is obeyed, revealed Truth is recognized as supreme in its own sphere and conjecture in other spheres not treated as certainty till it has been demonstrated.

The Church of England has also been compelled to face the same problems, but though the brunt of the attack, especially in the realm of biblical criticism and of Christian origins, has been borne by non-Catholic scholars, amongst whom the names of Anglicans have held and still hold a high place, there have been disastrous weaknesses in the defence; in particular the absence of a systematic study of dogmatic theology, with its attendant habit of close theological thinking, and the lack of a strong disciplinary rule to act as a steadying and restraining influence. The result has been that without authority or dogmatic principle many have wandered into extravagant speculation; dogmatic definitions of the Church have been undermined and a general, if vague, feeling of uncertainty in regard to the very foundations of Christianity itself has been spread abroad. "Wave after wave of theory," writes the Dean of Winchester ("Christ in Nineteenth Century Thought," *Theology*, January, 1937), "has come from the advanced critical schools in this country and in Germany, and hurled itself in vain upon the lighthouse of the Catholic faith. . . . All these waves of critical theory reached their crest, broke upon the lighthouse rock and ebbed away. And they ebbed away, not because they were suppressed by authority, but because their intrinsic weakness was exposed by the very methods of enquiry which had been held to justify their advance." These words contain a half-truth of which the Church of England may well be proud, but they hide the other side of the picture; they make no mention of the very many thousands who have been swept away by the force of these waves, and lost. Modernism therefore in the Church of England must be taken, to some extent at least, to represent the defence put up by her members, unaided by external authority, against attacks upon the foundations of Christianity. The weakness of the defence on its authoritative side has resulted in many

aberrations and vagaries on the part of those who have sincerely attempted to face and solve the problems created by these attacks, and in the loss to religion of great numbers of others who have been incapable of dealing with these problems themselves.

There is however within the Church of England to-day a remarkable movement towards an orthodox Christology in which the Cross is wholly central and which is accompanied by a more Catholic conception of the Visible Church and the sacramental system. This is partly due to certain movements on the Continent and in particular to that associated with the name of Karl Barth; but it is due far more to the penetrative power of Anglo-Catholicism and it has affected not only the Church of England itself but the Free Churches and many of the Continental Protestant bodies with whom Anglican theologians come into contact owing to their participation in various movements for the promotion of Christian unity. It is often assumed that the Church of England has no individuality; that it is nothing more than a congeries of mutually opposed and antagonistic parties bound together only by the external and fortuitous bands of material possession and establishment. Beneath the surface however it is possible to detect a very real if partial homogeneity, based upon a common belief in those fundamentals of Christianity which find expression in the Creeds, however vaguely these may sometimes be held, and cemented by *pietas Anglicana*. All parties, in spite of great divergences, share in this common unity, and only small groups of extremists, Protestant, Modernist and Papalist, stand altogether outside it. The main body of Anglo-Catholicism has secured a recognized place within this unity and there are signs that it is slowly permeating the whole Church of England; individuals from every other section are constantly moving out of positions already held towards a more Catholic position, attracted at first by some particular point of doctrine, devotion or discipline. In this way many of the basic ideas of Catholicism are being slowly absorbed by the Church of England, not in opposition to its tradition and genius, but by way of evolution and transformation. The process is a gradual one, and

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its result is that the Church of England as a whole and the Anglo-Catholic party within it exhibit an astonishingly variegated appearance to the outsider which makes them difficult to understand. But there can be no doubt that an Anglo-Catholicism that is very English, very much in accord with the spirit and genius of the Church of England, yet strong in its belief in supernatural revelation and grace, in the Incarnation and Redemption, in a visible Church and in sacramental life, is steadily permeating it.

One of the most remarkable events in its recent history has been the Conference between the Commission of the Rumanian Church and the Church of England Delegation held at Bucharest in June 1935. At this conference two statements—one on the Holy Eucharist and one on the Seven Sacraments—were drawn up and accepted by both sides. These two statements contain definitions of the Real Presence and the Eucharistic Sacrifice and of the Seven Sacraments which are an adequate presentation of the Catholic doctrine on these points with the one exception that the definition of transubstantiation is not included in them. These statements have been formally accepted, by the Upper and Lower Houses of Convocation of the Provinces of Canterbury and York, as the doctrine of the Church of England, and to that extent they have become an official interpretation of its formularies. These statements will be presented for the approval of the whole Anglican Communion at the Lambeth Conference of 1940. It is true of course that other interpretations are allowed, but the event shows to what an extent the whole Church of England has now been penetrated by Anglo-Catholicism.² A witness who has every claim to complete impartiality has said: "There is no fair observer who denies that Anglo-Catholicism is succeeding in making the Church of England aware of the 'Catholic' elements of its heritage, so that to-day it is no longer as a hundred years ago a Protestant Church in which some reminiscences of Catholicism have survived, but rather a

² Vide *Anglican and Rumanian Orthodox Relations*, Dom Bede Winslow, O.S.B., *Tablet*, January 30th, 1937, p. 154.

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Catholic Church, which retains certain emphases of the Reformation.''³

For Catholics who are trying to understand the Anglo-Catholic problem Lord Halifax is an interesting and instructive figure. He comes at the end of a line which has now almost passed away. He stood in the tradition of Liddon and Pusey rather than in that of the new Anglo-Catholicism, yet, as we have seen, he shared in that *pietas* or genuine love of the genius and tradition of the Church of England which is the connecting link between the old and the new. He had no first-hand experience of, and apparently little interest in, the intellectual problems concerning the Christian faith with which Maurice, Lightfoot, Westcott, Gore and other lesser figures were and are occupied. Their contribution to the stream of Anglican Church life and to the fostering of its *pietas* has been of great importance, but the wayfaring man who is taken up with the ordinary business of daily life has neither time nor capacity for an understanding of the fundamental problems of religion. If he is to live the religion of Christ deeply and sincerely it must come to him upon an authority which he can accept readily and with confidence; without such an authority the majority will fall into indifference to spiritual realities. Lord Halifax stood for such an authority and his Anglican *pietas* led him to believe that one day the Church of England would accept it. But the new Anglo-Catholicism is still seeking an authority and has not yet found one that fully satisfies it. It has rediscovered much Catholic truth; perhaps its last discovery will be this.

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³ *Anglo-Catholicism and Orthodoxy* by Dr. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, General Secretary of the World's Student Christian Federation, p. 28.