

## THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE PRINCIPALS

Two educators of Anglican Ordinands were invited to speak at this Symposium: the Revd Canon Dr Robin Ward, Principal of St Stephen's House, Oxford, and the Revd Fr Peter Allan CR, Principal of the College of the Resurrection, Mirfield. The Symposium's Chairman, the Bishop of Norwich, introduced them as follows:

When I was starting out, I remember that I saw my diocesan director of ordinands once, for ten minutes, before going to a selection conference. It was so different 45 years ago. After my selection conference I saw my diocesan bishop, Cyril Easthaugh, Bishop of Peterborough, of blessed memory, who I think was out of time even in those days. He told me I was going to Cuddesdon. Well, I did not have any views on anything, so I went there. I think he thought it was the same as it had been when he was there, many years previously. He had not realised that it had got into the grip of liberal theology in the meantime! It was very soon after that that I paid my first visit to the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, which I've got to know rather well over the years. There, I was told by another ordinand, who became an archdeacon in the end, that Chichester was the only Catholic college because it was the only one – whether this was true or not – that had votive candles in the chapel. They are now everywhere in the Church of England. I saw them in a Methodist church the other day. It suggests that Catholicism really has altered since then. The processes of discernment, selection and all the rest seem labyrinthine nowadays. Having been chair of the Ministry Division, I have probably contributed to that – or at least not been able to stop it.

I suppose the majority of us look upon St Stephen's House and Mirfield as the colleges today which are most distinctively Catholic; but I do know, through ordinands from my diocese who have gone to both, that there is an extraordinary mixture of people who go to both these colleges, compared with some years ago. We are privileged to have Robin Ward and Peter Allan to reflect on what Catholicity means to their students when they arrive, and how they may perhaps have changed when they leave. Robin has now had eleven years at St Stephen's House. Although Peter has had a shorter period of time as principal of the College of the Resurrection at Mirfield, many who trained there, including perhaps some of you, will have known him over the years as a teacher and tutor. So Robin first, and then Peter. #

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### THE REVD CANON DR ROBIN WARD

Thank you very much. I want to start off by talking about the ways in which the experience of Catholicity has changed, looking back at my own experience when I trained at St Stephen's House in the 1980s, but I also want to talk about some of the ecclesiological issues that the *Catholicity* Report proposes, and how one can posit a Catholic ecclesiology for those training today for ministry in the Catholic tradition in the Church of England today.

From my own experience, I would say it is much easier now to give a holistic Catholic account of the Catholic ascetical life and liturgical life in colleges. In the late 1980s, two things, I think, made that quite difficult to do. The first thing was a tremendous paranoia about Roman things. The point about the votive candles that Bishop Graham mentioned is interesting; but liturgical life in colleges was very much 'sat upon' in case anything perceived as being Popish should put off sponsoring bishops. It was often quite difficult to tell what

these Popish things were. They did not include vestments, although it seems to me that these are quite Popish; and it probably did not include incense; but there were other things – too much Mariology, and things like that. People are much more relaxed about all this now, and that makes it much better. The second thing, of course, was the undigested nature of the relationship of Anglo-Catholicism with homosexuality, and a tremendous paranoia that if somebody lit a candle for the office or saw a nice vestment, then unnatural vice would break out on a tremendous scale and everything would fall apart – sort of *Unguarded Hours*. [Footnote: a novel by A. N. Wilson published in 1978, about the ‘goings on’ in an Oxford theological college.] My word! They know nothing! I take the view that the best people to wear lace cotters are overweight, middle-aged, married men who are running theological colleges, and then any erotic aura that might attach to these things rapidly disappears! So those things are much easier today than they used to be.

The great French confessor and spiritual director Huvelin [Footnote: Fr Henri Huvelin 1830 – 1910], wrote of the first seminary founded in France in the seventeenth century, Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet: ‘I would not have liked to have been at the seminary, but I would have liked to live in the street opposite so that I could go to the services there’. Nobody in the late 1980s would have lived in Marston Street to go to the services at St Stephen’s House! I think people do now – so that, too, is rather different – and it’s possible to offer a quite fulsome and lived experience of the Catholic tradition in colleges today.

How bishops perceive this, though, is an interesting question, because although I think bishops are often sympathetic to having Catholics around, it’s a bit as if their dioceses were zoos, and – as zookeepers – they like to have a flamingo house. They are pleased that there are flamingos in it. They would not like the whole zoo to be full of flamingos – that would be too much – but if the flamingos were to fly away or die off, then penguins could probably be put in the space that was left. So I think Catholics are valued as a minority, as people who have a particular liturgical expression that makes them a bit difficult to deploy, but interesting to have around, partly for heritage reasons and partly because it adds to the flavour of the mix.

So I think that introducing people to what you might call the Catholic ascetic, the Catholic life, the lived Catholic life, is now rather easier to do than once it was, because particular issues to do with how Anglo-Catholicism was and how the Church of England has become more relaxed. I still think there is a difficulty in presenting the Catholic lived life as something coming out of doctrine, something coming out of the encounter with the person of Jesus Christ, rather than as simply a particular preference that can be introduced to people as an option – a bit of incense and a candle one week, a bit of Charismatic the next, and so on.

That is the experience of teaching people and introducing people to the lived Catholic life, but I want to touch now on ecclesiological issues. What does one propose to candidates who come looking for a strong Catholic identity? How does one give a theological account of what it means to be the Church? This, I would say, is much more problematic, much more complicated.

In 1947, if you were a Catholic-minded young man going to a theological college, I think you would have had three options of ecclesiology to take off the shelf, so to speak. Most obvious would have been the Branch Theory. If you arrived at Cuddesdon, you would have read Bicknell’s theological introduction to the 39 Articles. If you were a bit more high church,

you might have read Vernon Staley's *Catholicism*. Such books propose a branch theory of the Church – that is, that certain churches preserve Catholic order: the Roman Church, the Russian Church and other Orthodox Churches, and the Anglican Church. These are the three branches, together with the various little Oriental branches, that make up Catholicity. Although we might be sympathetic to some strands of non-conformity, these are the real thing, because these have Catholic order and Catholic practice.

Of course, this relates very closely to Empire. For Latin-speaking nations there is the Roman Catholic Church. For Slavs and Greeks there are the Orthodox Churches; and for the bits of the map painted red there was the Church of England – Anglicanism as a Communion corresponding to Empire, corresponding to Commonwealth, with the very attractive feature that, away from the sort of dank Protestantism of England, churchmanship actually shapes up in a rather more Catholic way. If you look at Vernon Staley's early editions of his book on Catholicism, there are long lists of bishops to convince one that this is a great international communion, an aspect of Catholicity. This view comes to its peak in Lockhart's biography of Cosmo Lang, where one of the chapters is entitled *Alterius Orbis Papa* – Pope of the Outer Isles. It is almost inconceivable to think of a term like that being used now in relation to the Archbishop of Canterbury. Perhaps it would be quite good to revive it! I do not know. It would send us back in the right direction. *Alterius Orbis Papa* – a vision of a branch of the Church, authentically Catholic throughout. I have to say that this now appears fantastical, because there are all sorts of doctrinal issues that have made for what seems to be a rescission from Catholic faith and order in various ways.

Without touching on particularly controversial issues, I draw attention to the question of Confirmation. Confirmation figures very strongly as a sort of Anglican delineator in this 1947 Report, mentioned on several occasions. Lionel Thornton, of course, was very firm about its importance. But the number of confirmations in the Church of England has halved in the last ten years, and is becoming increasingly associated, I am afraid, with the sort of *zareba* of traditionalist Anglicans demarcated by alternative episcopal oversight. The Bishop of Fulham, the bishop who offers that oversight in London and Southwark, confirmed 256 people last year. That is not a spectacular number. It is five each week. This is not some great boast for the efficacy of alternative episcopal oversight; but he confirmed more people than were confirmed in fifteen dioceses in the Church of England. There are dioceses where confirmation figures hover at around 100 – not just one or two dioceses, but many.

So the branch theory, with its very clear-sighted idea of the Catholicity of the Church of England based on the three-fold ministry – on Confirmation, on the Sacraments, on the visible church – is much more difficult to propose today, when you look at the way in which the Anglican communion has become more Protestant in its self-understanding, more Evangelical, Charismatic Evangelical – where the American church calls itself the Episcopal Church and defines itself over and against being part of the Anglican communion in some ways, and also appears to be very theologically liberal and rather fading away. So *Alterius Orbis Papa* is not easy to propose to people as a means of defining themselves ecclesiologically.

Second, for the more intellectually-minded ordinand in 1947, you had the classic Anglican fusion of patristics plus Hegel. The report is rather scathing about Hegel, but actually it contains all sorts of Hegelian suppositions. People who are Catholics in Papua New Guinea, rural Portugal, Ghana and places like that do not say to themselves: 'I look forward to my Catholicity coming to fruition in a synthesis in the future'. They say: 'I'm either a Catholic

or I'm not'. But for the second generation of the Oxford Movement – particularly those who were influenced by the Hegelianism of Bailey, Jowett, Charles Gore, the Lux Mundi School – the Hegelian philosophy of movement towards synthesis was very appealing. It gave a very clear account of how it was that the rather unpromising material of the Church of England could be seen in a very ideal Catholic sense; and so we have kenotic theology, kenotic Christology. If Jesus did not know during his earthly life that he was God incarnate, so the Church will not have a proper self-knowledge of herself until the life of Heaven. This has been a tremendous influence on Anglican ecclesiology. We see it in William Temple, a classic Hegelian, and of course in Rowan Williams, who is patristics plus Hegel *par excellence* for our own age. This is a tremendously strong part of Anglo-Catholic self-identity, but one evidently in eclipse. We had a Hegelian primacy for ten years, and the synthesis took a long time coming. I am not actually sure we now look for synthesis in the same way – the aspiration that, out of conflict, a synthesis leading to a higher level of consciousness will arise. So that model, I think, is not quite discredited, perhaps, but waiting for a better age.

It is also the case, I think, that the Anglican attachment to patristics as the sort of 'definitive theology' that 'top people' do has taken a great knocking. There was a very astute book written by a French scholar on the Church of England and Christian antiquity, published about five years ago, which talks about the way that patristics was used after the Restoration to sort of whack dissenters around the head, because the knowledge of Greek and Latin required to be an effective Patrologist was only acquirable in Anglican educational establishments, so Anglican education privileged itself in that way. Quantin says that both in Roman Catholicism in the 1950s, with the resource movement, but also in the Church of England, what was considered a means of enforcing a conservative outlook back to patristics actually shook things up in all sorts of different ways. That whole sense of people in Oxford libraries saying, 'I'm sure there is something in Philoxenus of Mabbug about this which will resolve our issue about confirmation or whatever it might be', is a rather outdated way of doing theology. It is not something that, in the academic world or in Christian dialogue, is particularly pertinent any more as a means of resolving ecumenical questions.

The third sort of ecclesiological self-definition is, of course, Anglo-Papalism. It was always a much smaller movement, but I think it did nevertheless reflect a key insight of the Oxford Movement from the beginning – that the Oxford Movement was a movement. It was designed to go somewhere. In going somewhere, it needed to have reunion as part of that picture. To a certain extent, the Hegelian high summer of the Church of England between about 1890 and 1914 seriously knocked that off the agenda, so we were not able to benefit, for example, from the Thomist revival. It is very interesting that Eric Mascall was not included in the theologians who wrote the 1947 Report, although he mentions the process of writing that Report in his book of memoirs, *Saraband*.

Of course, Anglican Papalism today, with the Ordinariate, is a very dissipated movement. People like to patronise the Ordinariate a bit. It is, of course, made up of Anglicans, so perhaps we should be a bit more sympathetic. We can see that some themes of Anglican Papalism have come to their consummation in the Ordinariate, small as it is; but it is very difficult now, given the way we have a very fractured ecclesiology within the Catholic movement, to give an account of Anglican Papalism that serves as a means of giving self-definition to a priestly ministry for an ordinand in the way it did in the 1980s, when reunion did really seem just around the corner, with the Pope and the Archbishop of

Canterbury kneeling together in Canterbury Cathedral. This option now seems much more difficult to articulate.

Having been through those three options by which Anglo-Catholics used to define themselves, we come to where we are now. I think it is very difficult. In 1917, the British Army used to sing: ‘We’re here because we’re here because we’re here.’ There is an element in which this is our ecclesiology as Catholics in the Church of England today. This is the place in which we have received the faith. This is the Church into which God has called us to work. Anything more than that, I think, is quite problematic. That may seem a pessimistic conclusion for the Society of the Faith, but I think there is a real ecclesiological deficit. I think it is one of the reasons why, proportionately, Catholic ordinands in the Church of England are at quite a low ebb. We shall see what happens. Perhaps this will be the beginning of something different....

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#### THE REVD FR PETER ALLAN CR

It is something of a challenge to follow Robin, but I will do my best. I want first to say a huge thank you to Robert Gage and Stephen Tucker for inviting me to be part of this Symposium, because I am aware, day by day, just how much is at stake. I have to say that, for me, the whole issue of Catholicity is very much bound up with where our understanding of the human person has got to in the beginning of this third millennium, and as yet I see little serious intellectual engagement with that.

There is, to my mind, a magnificent television series. If you happen to have access to Netflix then you should watch *Ainsi soient-ils*, which is *The Churchmen*. It is a quite extraordinary telling of a story of a seminary, the expiration of French Catholicism in relation to international Catholicism and tensions between the French state and the Vatican. The whole thing is there. The ordinands/seminarians are very recognisable. I say no more. If you have not seen it, then you should.

I am also very conscious of standing, in a sense, where Lionel Thornton stood. At the risk of squandering my few minutes, there are two memories of Lionel in the Community which are cherished. One is when, at a very busy Saturday afternoon tea some guests saw a brother sitting all by himself at the far end of the refectory and asked: ‘Who is that?’, somebody replied, ‘Oh, that is Fr Lionel Thornton. He is writing a book on the common life’. The other story is that, at the end of his life, Lionel had a great horror of anything at all liberal and had fallen out with Geoffrey Lampe over his book *God as Spirit*. The Infirmarian, not knowing whether Lionel was dead or not, said: ‘Lionel, Geoffrey Lampe is here to see you’.

I want to begin by setting out, in a slightly formal way, but only very sketchily, my hopes for what students take away from Mirfield, and then to fill it out with a little more anecdote and autobiography. The formal part consists of three ingredients, with one presupposition and one implicit consequence. My presupposition is that there has to be an acceptance of the Church as the divinely constituted extension of the Incarnation into which the baptised are incorporated by grace. It sounds very uncontroversial, but the fact is that so many elements of this are a bit tenuous at the moment. One of the things that saddens me daily is the loss of our appreciation of baptism as the absolute foundation of Christian life. This makes talk of

discipleship so complicated. The three ingredients are (i) confidence in the sovereignty of God, (ii) confidence in the sacramental economy, and (iii) confidence in the liturgical celebration of word and sacrament as participation in the *missio Dei*, again utterly uncontroversial but extraordinarily difficult to convey in our generation.

Again, just to try to give some context, I was very struck some years ago by a book by Reinhard Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things*. Hütter is a German-American Protestant theologian struggling to articulate an ecclesiology, and finding that in the end it was probable that you could only have a satisfactory ecclesiology that was essentially Catholic. It is a fascinating book – a very dense piece of work, but fascinating. Hütter’s work is paralleled in a sense by the way in which so many of the German Lutheran religious communities have found themselves being drawn more and more into a Catholic ecclesiology in order to sustain their self-understanding.

So then, just a word or two more about these three ingredients.

Confidence in the sovereignty of God. This is of course reminiscent of the Barthian insistence on God as the subject of theology, but not even Barth had anticipated the success of the project of modernity in undermining our need for God to the extent that, whereas Aquinas can include the human inclination for God so effortlessly, search for the truth about God is now set in question. Inevitably, this has led to an anthropocentrism driving much theological writing and much of the life of the Church. Further, as the spotlight focuses ever more narrowly on the human being, so the experience is of fragility, vulnerability, isolation and inadequacy. It is not accidental that there is great talk about the need to give ordinands training in resilience. Any tendency to separate the creating and reconciling work of God runs the risk of increasing polarisation and alienation. Confidence in the sovereignty of God can only be found in a profoundly Catholic appreciation of the unity of God’s creating and reconciling work. As creatures fashioned out of love by the good God, utterly dependent on God’s grace and compassion, we are invited to find life through what James Alison memorably calls ‘the joy of being wrong’.

The second ingredient – confidence in the sacramental economy – begins for me with the apparently effortless simplicity with which Charles Williams understood Christian life as life in two dimensions – life here and now, and life in the Kingdom – summed up in his memorable response when somebody saw him coming and said: ‘Williams, how are you?’ ‘In the city and under the protection.’ This continues in the sense articulated so unambiguously by Nicolas Zernov 45 years ago, that at the heart of sacramental theology is the recognition that matter can be spirit-bearing. Symbols are not open to human definition and interpretation, but are divine gifts, direct communication by divine initiative.

The third ingredient is confidence in the liturgical celebration of word and sacrament as participation in the *missio Dei*. This is pushed back against the emerging dominant picture of worship as mediocre entertainment. Worship is not entertainment, nor is it anthropocentric didacticism. Rather, like the disciples on the Emmaus road, worship is the recognition of, and encounter with, the risen Lord in word and sacrament. In parentheses I should say that 35 years of monastic life has profoundly changed my understanding of liturgical life. I am aware that this is not a perspective that is readily available to all, but I am thankful that in some sense it is available to our students at Mirfield.

The implicit consequence of this is that I hope to see persons going from Mirfield to serve the body of Christ in the ordained ministerial priesthood and diaconate with a deep-rooted sense of the intimate connection between response to the holiness of God and commitment to social justice and the transformation of society.

So then (though not with quite the same verve as Robin managed) let me add a little anecdote and autobiography to that. In the course of the 30 years I have been teaching at Mirfield, the picture has changed dramatically. Going back even earlier to the 1970s, when I was a student, I shared the same experience as Bishop Graham, only meeting my Diocesan Director of Ordinands once – but that was in a lay-by on the A23. I never met the bishop. When I was at Mirfield in the 1970s, Mirfield, with Kelham, was viewed with some suspicion by the pukka Catholic colleges. We were altogether too monkish, and our embracing of Catholic practices was thought to be unsound and altogether too much coloured by the Book of Common Prayer. There were, it was thought, too many floppy, so-called Prayer Book Catholics and incipient liberals amongst us.

By the late 1980s, with the increasing polarisation in the church, Mirfield joined with Chichester and St Stephen's House in seeking to claim and defend the Catholic territory – a territory that became disastrously contested with all the events that followed from 1992 onwards. [Footnote: 1992 was the year in which women were first ordained as priests in the Church of England.] Ordinands at that time were more uniformly black-suited and much more likely to end up as priests of the Roman Catholic Church – so much so that one former student, who had become secretary to the Archbishop of Birmingham, brought his Archbishop on a visit to Mirfield to see the seminary where so many of his priests were trained. There was one slightly tricky moment when we were coming back down the corridor, and I suddenly realised that one student had the Papal arms on his door. Seeing it, the Archbishop said: 'Does the young man know what that is?' I said: 'I am afraid he does, Father.' Although in that period it seemed easier to identify the elements of a Catholic identity, I am not at all clear that there was a shared participation in the life-giving mystery of Catholicity, but rather a sense of Catholicity as a means of excluding from communion and fellowship those thought to be lacking in a few or in many ways.

Since then, coming into this millennium, there has been another big shift. It is now common for ordinands to arrive with little or no experience of the liturgical calendar, the basic practices of Catholic Christianity or the disciplines of the spiritual life. On the other hand, there are students from a great range of backgrounds and church experience who come with a curiosity and an openness that is deeply attractive. This entails a substantial problem of time. Inhabiting a way of life, learning a culture, takes time and persistent attention. Ordinands are characteristically with us for 18 months, despite the fact that we attract a higher than usual proportion of young candidates, some of whom have three years in training. This is a desperately short time for acquiring the elements of the spiritual life, as Harton called it, or an understanding of practical divinity, as the Caroline Divines would have it. Most are drawn by the reliability of the shared prayer of the Monastic community and the stability that equates to the steadfastness of God. They hanker after such a disciplined life, but are rarely able to lay aside so much of contemporary culture that inhibits the kind of radical and mutual interdependence on which it is founded.

Wrapped up in all of this is what for me is best described as epistemological fragility, something acutely significant for the very notion and practice of Catholicity. When I was about 12, I found myself with a group of young teenagers being taken around

Chichester Cathedral by a friar. We youngsters were peering at this and that in a typically desultory fashion and, unknown to us, had sauntered past the Blessed Sacrament. Our watchful guardian corralled us, and taught us with no ifs or buts to genuflect in the presence of the Sacrament. Way back then, over 50 years ago, there was a large enough reservoir of meaning and practice for that instruction to resonate, and for us to be confident that it came from more than one friar's peculiar habits.

Today, that reservoir of meaning has gone. We want perhaps to believe that gestures and practices have deeper meaning but, for all that, we are bound to spend much effort on persuading ourselves of the meaning we choose to give to the choices we make. Now, as I observe students, guests and monks arriving for evensong, there is evidence of devotion, but it is first of all expressive of individual need, feeling, capacity. Some do still genuflect. Some make a profound bow. Some scamper past slightly guiltily. Some stroll nonchalantly past. I am not suggesting that there is anything wrong with this diversity, but the demands of post-modern authenticity have taken away the possibility of a shared action that encourages and deepens acceptance of the mystery, except when that shared action is in some sense agreed by a group for its own purposes.

That is just a very small illustration of something that is, for me, profoundly problematic about the way in which not just Catholicism but the communication of the Gospel is being challenged in our generation. I find it an immensely exciting moment. The way students are willing to engage with this gives me hope; but, as I suggested at the beginning, my anxiety is that at the moment our theological thinking is too narrow. I have been struck by the challenges posed, for instance, by the writings of Noah Harari, and I think there is much there that we need to take on board if we are to share with the whole of the Catholic world a message of good news for our generation. [Footnote: Yuval Noah Harari: *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* 2011, and *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow* 2015.]

For us at Mirfield, there is one dimension that we have lost over the last 15 or 20 years: the international dimension. Because of the policies of the present Government, the restriction of visas has had a disastrous effect. One of the great things about Mirfield was that its Catholicism was always international – it was the Catholicism of the Anglican Communion with the Community in South Africa – but it was also deeply fed by the Community's relationship with the Benedictine Abbey of St Matthias, Trier and German Catholicism, with whom we have shared communion and a recognition of ministries, with the knowledge of the bishops, since the 1970s. It has also extended into our relationships with the Romanian Church and the Armenian Church. The loss of this dimension is, I think, a very serious one for reflecting on what it means to be a Catholic Christian. So I fear our own students are now slightly restricted in what they are able to achieve in the time; but I am happy that we still have some.