

‘TRUE RELIGION NOW ESTABLISHED’

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WITH the completion of the third volume of his massive history,¹ Father Philip Hughes brings the story of the Reformation in England to an end, though it is an end only in the sense that the Elizabethan settlement had reached, at the death of the queen, a certain stability in its development. The first duty of a reviewer must surely be to congratulate Father Hughes on a great achievement. He has covered the whole general ground in closely-studied detail, exploring all the printed sources with patient and accurate industry. Yet, immense as is the mass of fact he makes use of to elucidate events and the factors controlling them, we are never allowed to feel that the vital issues are obscured rather than illuminated; they stand out in his narrative with invariable clarity. The disciplined learning of his treatment of the complex evidence will make his book, for a long time to come, a classical exposition of the Catholic point of view in Reformation history. The writing is distinguished by a deep and sometimes passionate conviction, yet it is conspicuously fair; this is acknowledged by scholars who do not share Father Hughes’ presuppositions. ‘An historian’s book for historians’, it has been called by one such scholar, ‘a work of real value to all who wish to study the English Reformation at an advanced level.’

The truth of the saying *omnia abeunt in theologiam* is specially observable in Reformation history. The greatest of the non-Catholic historians of the period, as Father Hughes sometimes shows, can be at a disadvantage in appreciating to the full the influence of theological presuppositions upon thought and action on both sides. Father Hughes has the capacity to penetrate to the springs of action that are ultimately theological. At the outset of the period he lays bare, in a way that has not hitherto been approached for concentrated effect, the nature of the Henrician revolt as an attack, of a very subtle kind, on the foundations of faith. The superstructure of Catholic sacramental life and practice remained almost intact till the king’s death, but for the last

¹ *The Reformation in England*. By Philip Hughes. Vol. III: ‘True Religion now Established’. (Hollis and Carter; 42s.)

twelve years of the reign the divine authority upon which it rests had been removed, by a stroke of the pen, and a usurped human authority substituted for it. The springs of faith in the nation's life were imperceptibly cut off, and in consequence the faith itself fell a prey in the end to human respect.

This is the key to an understanding of what was done, and how it was done, during the whole of the period covered by these volumes. Even the restoration of Catholicism under Mary was carried through on behalf of a bewildered, though probably not unwilling, nation by the same apparatus of state that had brought about the previous changes. The history of our own times has taught us that the success of a revolution, engineered by ruthless leaders controlling the machinery of government, is no certain indication of the real feelings and wishes of the ordinary citizen. Creighton's confident judgment, half a century ago, 'that in England generally the religious settlement (1559) was welcomed by the people and corresponded to their wishes', if not completely reversed has been rendered at least highly questionable by the trend of modern scholarship. There can be little doubt that the outcome of the succession of changes was unsettled bewilderment. A graphic passage in this book illustrates the point by a description of the religious life-story of any one of Queen Elizabeth's subjects under thirty years of age at the beginning of the reign (page 51). A large number of the Marian clergy, and the greater part of their flocks, seem to have conformed with little enough enthusiasm, but with an unheroic eye to the consequences of refusal. It is a legitimate inference that in their bewilderment they were half-consciously waiting and hoping, far into the new reign, for yet another change, while what was left of true faith ebbed away, leaving only a vague nostalgia for what had been.

Father Hughes does not subscribe the thesis that Elizabeth was pliant and almost helpless in the hands of ministers, who exploited political and religious situations to force her into action. He shows reason for thinking that she had the independence, shrewd judgment and power of personality that was her father's, with an added discipline and control, though by contrast, it must be admitted, this enigmatic woman was on certain points strangely hesitant and pusillanimous. Father Hughes outlines the economic position at home and the situation as between France and Spain abroad, which formed the background of the religious measures

of the reign. It was the necessity of an independent England, with a powerful national sentiment built up round the Crown, that dictated these measures. If the Queen was herself religious at all, her religion was unconsciously made the instrument of her political ambition. She realized that a nation, united in a national Church, could give her the maximum of what she held to be necessary. On a national Church, cut to her own pattern, she insisted with calculated ruthlessness, whether against persistent puritan opposition or Catholic recusancy.

The story of recusancy, with all its complexities, is told in considerable detail. There can be little doubt that, from the time the first seminary priests entered the kingdom, complete extermination of the Catholic religion became the government's settled aim. From that time too the labours of the missionaries kept the officials in growing alarm at the rapid progress of recusancy through the reconciliation of many who had previously conformed by going to their parish church. Father Hughes rectifies the proportions in which the political negotiations to restore religion by foreign aid (undertaken by Allen, Persons and others) have commonly been viewed by the historians. While showing what a minor place they occupied in comparison with the work of the missionaries as a whole, he justifies the taking of such steps as natural in the circumstances, and to be expected, without endorsing their expediency. The main work of the missionaries was of course the maintenance and spread of the Faith and the support of the sadly harassed Catholic population, by purely pastoral means, as penal measures grew in savagery; this indeed was also the main work of Allen and Persons themselves.

Every possible expedient was used by the government, aided by the judges, to extend the scope of treason till it became practically identical with the profession of the Faith and entirely so with the exercise of priesthood. Government propaganda was indirectly aided by the fact that Elizabeth's Catholic subjects had been released from their allegiance by the Bull *Regnans in excelsis* of St Pius V. The circumstances in which this Bull was issued are even now obscure. What is known of the antecedent and subsequent actions of the Pope put it beyond doubt that the primary motive was not any contemplated invasion, but the relief of Catholic consciences in doubt as to whether a rising against Elizabeth, while she remained legitimate sovereign, could be anything but

sinful. The complex situation created by the Pope's action, and the relation of its validity and expediency to the individual conscience, has been widely misconceived by the historians, though Professor J. E. Neale comes closest to a just estimate of it when he says that 'theoretically the Bull had converted every Catholic into a potential rebel . . .'. Yet a potential rebel is not, and never need be, an actual one. It was of course the business of Burghley and his associates, by every expedient known to them, to make the contrary seem true. This was the purpose of the device, put into use after Blessed Edmund Campion's execution, of the 'bloody question'; an attempt to exhort answers from the victim as to what he would do in the hypothetical event of a foreign invasion for the restoration of religion. Refusal to answer could be, and was, construed as evidence of guilt, and the 'confession' then sedulously propagated to the public. The trials of the martyrs show conclusively that no priest or layman was ever condemned upon the evidence of these 'confessions' but always upon an allegation of fact; the 'confessions' however were extensively used to give these actual charges verisimilitude. Father Hughes' conclusion from the study of the trials is: 'The implication that there was a minority of priests condemned and executed as such, who really were guilty of conspiracy, has no support in the facts. History knows no such priests.'

In a long and fully documented chapter under the title 'Difficulties from within', Father Hughes deals with the process by which the Elizabethan settlement of religion found its feet and established itself firmly. Moral decay and ignorance among the 'insufficient ministers' of the new régime was widespread. The opposition of the party supported from Geneva and Zurich was virulent and unceasing. Its objective was the whole external organization of the Church of England, as it had been taken over entire from the Catholic past, together with a good deal of ecclesiastical vesture and symbolism. All this, with the exclusive use of a liturgy based on expurgated Catholic originals and ousting extempore prayer, and the severe limitation of preaching, was utterly uncongenial to the puritan mind, which aimed at establishing in full the spiritual autonomy of the primitive discipline according to continental models. *The Propheesyings*, meetings for extempore prayer and exposition of the Scriptures, which grew up spontaneously in many areas, were viewed by the Queen as a

potential danger to the Royal authority over the legal establishment and were severely repressed, in spite of the resistance of Archbishop Grindal and the previous encouragement of many of the Bishops. In nothing more than in her stand against this danger does Elizabeth appear as the architect and main support of the settlement of 1559.

Yet towards the latter part of the reign this politically constructed edifice, imposed by authority on an unenthusiastic nation, was in danger of collapse, both from its own inner incoherence and from the internal attacks of the puritan minority. It was saved by two circumstances. First, the restoration, at a most opportune moment, of coercive episcopal jurisdiction, exercised by means of the Court of High Commission, under the able leadership of Archbishop Whitgift and his still more able lieutenant Richard Bancroft, Bishop of London. But even this in itself would have been powerless to save the Church of England from complete disintegration by decay, but for the second circumstance; the rise of a movement, initiated by Bancroft, which began, under pressure of the occasion, the formulation of a considered intellectual basis for the order by law established. This movement derived not from the fissiparous doctrines of the Reformers, but from a return to the study of the primitive Church and the writing of the Fathers.

The Anglican Aquinas, Richard Hooker, a contemporary of this movement, gave it what subsequently proved to be an impressive philosophical and historical foundation in his celebrated work *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. Writing in controversy with the Puritans, he was not afraid to combine the scholastic appeal to reason with reliance upon the Church as the final interpreter of Scripture. In course of time his book proved to be a most powerful instrument for solidifying and making permanent the central core of the Anglican position. Father Hughes does justice to the importance of Hooker in the subsequent development of the Church of England. Out of the original groundwork that he had provided grew the catholicizing movement of the Caroline divines, when the Calvinism which had hitherto held a predominant theological place in the establishment was finally ousted from it, making way for more traditional ideas. From the Caroline divines and their strong patristic bent descended, in the nineteenth century, the Oxford Tractarianism of Newman,

Keble and Pusey. These combined influences played an enormous part in transforming the national establishment into the Anglican Communion as it is today, which can claim, not without grounds of justification, to be an almost world-wide Church. 'A Church which', to quote a highly placed leader in the Ecumenical movement whose judgment has every claim to impartiality, 'is no longer, as a hundred years ago, a Protestant Church in which some remnants of Catholicism have survived, but rather a "Catholic" Church which retains certain emphases of the Reformation.'

What is the significance of this phenomenon? The basic assumption of Catholicism, to use the term in its wider sense of historic pre-Reformation Christianity, is that from the beginning there has been development in the apprehension by the Church of the original revelation, given to it by Christ. This development necessitates a continuous infallible magisterium to distinguish what is true in it from possible error, and a necessary presupposition of this infallible magisterium is indivisible unity. The basic assumption of Protestantism is that the development in Christianity which took place from the beginning, followed very early a radically false line in regard to the nature of the means by which Christ's word is mediated to mankind in his Church. This false development was arrested, in the Protestant view, by the new insights in the understanding of the Scriptures given by the Holy Spirit to the leaders of the Reformation. It was resistance to these Spirit-guided insights that resulted in the break-up of Christendom in the sixteenth century and brought into being its present situation.

The Church of England in its development since the sixteenth century has become a microcosm of Christendom as a whole. Within its boundaries a view of the nature of the Church is widely represented which is an approach, and sometimes a near approach, to that of Catholicism. On the other hand, within the same boundaries equally authentic views are to be found which approximate closely to the basic assumptions of Protestantism. In essence therefore the Church of England is amorphous; apart from the *pietas* of its varied membership which cements men of widely different churchmanship into a kind of unity of ethos and outlook. For this very reason it exercises in the ecumenical movement a double influence upon World Protestantism by penetrating it with two opposing tendencies. Which influence will be

decisive in the future depends much upon the direction in which the Church of England itself moves.

Father Hughes' work as a whole and in particular his vindication, in its context, of the English martyrs is specially opportune and welcome at a time when it is beginning to be realized that, as a preliminary to fruitful work for unity, the Reformation period needs intensive re-study and re-assessment by Catholics and non-Catholics in common. The English martyrs died for the Mass and the primacy of the Holy See, and we honour them because their blood-shedding kept alive in their native country that faith in the divinely constituted unity of the Catholic Church which is our inheritance, and apart from which no true Christian unity can be realized.

SCIENCE AND THE MAP OF KNOWLEDGE

E. F. CALDIN

THERE are many unresolved questions about the relations of the natural sciences to Aristotelean-Thomist philosophy, and the accurate placing of science on the map of intellectual activities is one of the most important objectives of our time. The prestige of science is still so high that the relative neglect of it by Thomists is unfortunate, and a positive approach is of great value. The American Dominicans have therefore done wisely as well as boldly in setting up a permanent institution where scientists and philosophers can meet and collaborate, with a permanent staff most of whom have been trained in one of the natural sciences as well as in the Thomist tradition. This institution is called the Albertus Magnus Lyceum for Natural Science and is situated in a suburb of Chicago. Its leaders hope that, by bringing men engaged in specialized research into contact with a homogeneous intellectual tradition, they will be able to help scientists towards a synthesis that they feel to be necessary for the health of science itself as well as for modern culture generally. Clearly this venture could be of the greatest importance.

The present volume¹ is a report of an ambitious five-week

¹ *Science in Synthesis*. By W. H. Kane, O.P., J. D. Corcoran, O.P., B. M. Ashley, O.P., and R. J. Nogar, O.P. (Dominican College of St Thomas Aquinas, River Forest, Ill.; \$3.50.)