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The Elizabethan Settlement and the English Church

By **Charles F. Mullett**

Editorial Note: On May 9, 1959, a symposium was held at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., on the Religious Settlement in England in 1559. Prof. Charles F. Mullett of the University of Missouri read the following article as a part of the program. For a brief historical background of the Elizabethan Settlement the reader is referred to the article by Prof. Carl S. Meyer, "Fifteen Fifty-Nine Anno Domini," in the May issue of this magazine.

In surveying the Elizabethan Settlement and the Church of England one can do no better than introduce his remarks with a flash of insight from the Rev. Laurence Sterne. According to "my Uncle Toby" in *Tristram Shandy,* everything in this world has wit in it, and instruction too, if we can but find it out. That the Elizabethan Settlement illustrates this wisdom may be established by two "texts" from our own country.

"There was so much noise inside that Alice thought she might as well go in without knocking. The atmosphere seemed heavily charged with pepper. There was a faint whiff of burning incense, and some candles were smouldering unpleasantly. Quite a number of Articles were strewn about the floor, some more or less broken. '*Pax vobiscum,*' said the Duchess; 'there's nothing like a dead language when you're dealing with a live volcano. Something *must* be done,' she continued, 'but quietly and gradually, the leaden foot within the velvet shoe you know, it takes all the exertion I can spare to have any authority.' "

In this capsule, *Alice at Lambeth,* H. H. Monro ("Saki"), has wittily encased the English Church. If you prefer poetry let me draw upon the best-known Anglican layman of our time. St. Louis-born T. S. Eliot:

The broad-backed hippopotamus
Rests on his belly in the mud;
Although he seems so firm to us
He is merely flesh and blood.

Flesh and blood is weak and frail,
Susceptible to nervous shock;
While the True Church can never fail,
For it is based upon a rock.

The hippo's feeble steps may err
In compassing material ends.
While the True Church need never stir
To gather in its dividends.

The 'potamus can never reach
The mango on the mango-tree;
But fruits of pomegranate and peach
Refresh the Church from over sea.

At mating time the hippo's voice
Betrays inflexions hoarse and odd,
But every week we hear rejoice
The Church, at being one with God.

The hippopotamus's day
Is passed in sleep; at night he hunts,
God works in a mysterious way —
The Church can sleep and feed at once.

I saw the 'potamus take wing
Ascending from the damp savannas,
And quiring angels round him sing
The praise of God in loud hosannas.

He shall be washed as white as snow,
By all the martyr'd virgins kist,
While the True Church remains below
Wrapt in the old miasmal mist.

These two pieces at once portray the Establishment and illustrate a quality not found in all religious bodies, a capacity to laugh at one's own — even right out loud. Let me say that Mr. Eliot's experience as a church warden has now taught him that the church must stir mightily to garner its fruits of pomegranate and peach.

When I first thought about this occasion I immediately rejected concern with 1559 as such.* Not only will another essay on this program take care of that, but it seemed to me totally out of place to anatomize 1559 here, not least because it is May, when I find it harder and harder to pursue the elusive fact to its dusty answer and you find it harder to regard such pursuit of overweening importance. If anniversaries are legitimate excuses for celebration, how much more are they opportunities for an inventory of what is celebrated!

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* The symposium included the following papers: "The Elizabethan Settlement in Roman Catholic Perspective" and "The Elizabethan Settlement and the Reformed Tradition."

As I cast about for a reviewing stand I ran into difficulties. I hoped that other anniversaries, particularly the tercentenary, would suggest a scheme of viewing this great beginning. In 1659 the imminent Stuart Restoration left little time for the Elizabethan Settlement. In 1759 there was neither time nor inclination for ecclesiastical celebration. But 1859 gave me to hope and then to wonder. In those matchless periodicals which comprise the most enduring monument of the Victorian temper I found one paltry article on Elizabeth. Pages for hoop petticoats, the welfare of scavengers, the *Origin of Species,* not one word for the Elizabethan Settlement. Did national tact to Victoria hesitate to recall a greater queen? Did the Victorians disapprove of Elizabeth and all her works? Did Buckle and Darwin and the "seven against Christ" reflect a temper indifferent to the Settlement? Was the Settlement so taken for granted that no one thought to commemorate it? I have no answer.

Why do we care this year? Some credit must go to the sentiment that 400 is nicer than 300, more to the happy chance of Elizabeth II. Certainly had Victoria I been Elizabeth II I should have found reactions in 1859. Most credit, however, must go to our awareness that an institution which has proved a bulwark against anarchy and a spearhead for moderate reform, which, for all its faults, has preserved enduring values as it undertook new tasks, warrants examination. This incredible concoction, not of Henry VIII, of Edward VI, or even (I am not being merely paradoxical) of Mary, but of Elizabeth, has during four centuries remained true to type. Yet did Elizabeth have much to do with it? Perhaps, as Lytton Strachey suggests, she only gave "the final twist to a stem that had been growing for ages, deeprooted in the national life." The Elizabethan Settlement was, we all know, a complex event, and anyone who discusses it is less a Daniel come to judgment than a Daniel in the lion's den. Not least it was a political answer to a political problem, the succession of Elizabeth and the maintenance of England's independence. That it had theological overtones is clear, for no church lives by politics alone. Though the leaders may concentrate on power they seek theological justification for its exercise.

To stress that the English Church from the moment of conception has been nourished by parliament, court, and university, even to admit that it was in its making no glorious achievement, but political compromise, economic pillage, and doctrinal ambiguity, is, I hope, not to damn it entirely. Could any good come out of Westminster? Though many agree with Carlyle that the English Church turned its face in the right direction, others insist that to have preserved order and been an instrument of national policy was not enough. Yet the evil that institutions do lives in histories, the good is oft interred in the archives. With the rise of Puritanism, many Englishmen felt that Protestantism must be saved from its friends and monarchy from its enemies; long before James I, Elizabeth had perceived "no bishop, no king."

In creating an ecclesiastical community of the realm Elizabeth and her advisers exploited all the resources of adversity and ambiguity. They appreciated that "glasses with small necks, if liquor was poured into them suddenly and violently, would not be so filled, but would refuse to receive it." Consider the changes in the generation preceding 1558. In 1529, papal supremacy; five years later, royal supremacy but little doctrinal change; another five years, the sacramental system greatly modified and the monasteries gone; ten years pass, the first Book of Common Prayer; three years, the much more Protestant book; two years later, the pope restored and with him the sacramental system; five years, and we are at 1558.

Throughout the era of the Settlement what seems to us essential was rarely at issue. Men cried for truth, but no one wanted to refuel the fires of Smithfield. "The Church," says the 20th of the 39 Articles, "has the right to decree ceremonies, and authority to decide controversies in religion." But was the problem wholly ecclesiastical? The Copernican theory and geographical discovery as well as ecclesiastical discord had created the illusion that all coherence was gone. The conception of order was implicit in the Elizabethan mind. Phrased in cosmic terms, it was relevant to contemporary conditions as well. Order did not mean sameness but a chain of being, the interconnectedness of the whole world, the reunion of Christendom.

What indeed are we commemorating? To say that historians have given us many Elizabethan Settlements means that the Settlement must be surveyed from two standpoints: what it was and what innumerable commentators have said it was. The two cannot be separated, for we know the thing in itself only through historians who must honor facts. The Settlement must also be viewed in itself as near as we can get to it, and in its relations as near as we can get to them. Otherwise we shall either whittle away its trunk or lose ourselves in its branches. We must not, above all, endow the Settlement with power for good or evil beyond its capacity.

The words of two famous historians reveal the dangers of wisdom ex post facto. It is melancholy, wrote Macaulay in 1832, to think with what ease Elizabeth might have placed the nation in the same situation in which we at last stand, after all the heart-burnings, the persecutions, the conspiracies, the seditions, the revolutions, the judicial murders, the civil wars, of ten generations. Seven years before, Thomas Arnold had groaned (while reading Cobbett's *History of the Protestant Reformation,* which he thought a queer compound of wickedness, ignorance, and truth) to think that the real history and effects of the Reformation are so little known and the evils of the worldly policy of Elizabeth's government so little appreciated.

In our assessment let us remember some words of Churchill: "Many things in this island are not pushed to extremes, the British never draw a line without blurring it." So it is that the Church of Elizabeth has seldom received justice. Neither papist nor Puritan allowed any virtue to a settlement which the opposite one seemed to dominate. Had the essential situation wholly changed from the preceding reign? "We are busy in Parliament about expelling the tyranny of the pope and restoring the royal authority," wrote a prominent Puritan in February 1559. But had not Mary restored papal supremacy in Parliament, as she had restored Catholic doctrine? Erastianism is a coat of many colors.

Like all English revolutions the Elizabethan Settlement stressed continuity, and one must wonder how much the English Church owes to the almost insensible transition from Rome to Canterbury. Men might be said to have left the first without joining the second, since it was difficult to be converted to a faith which held the best bishoprics but no unique doctrines. In clinging to crucifixes and candles Elizabeth exasperated Reformers and amused papists. Had she had her way the Marian exiles would have been Elizabethan exiles too. She believed clerical offspring bastards and clerical wives concubines. She frightened the Dean of St. Paul's into incoherence when in his sermon he handled the subject of images roughly. "Leave that alone," she called out. "To your text, Mr. Dean, to your text! Leave that; we have heard enough of that." Hogarth could never have engraved his "Sleeping Congregation" that day.

Elizabeth sought a church Catholic in doctrine, English in polity, but a potent Puritanism in an increasingly powerful Parliament obstructed her. Moreover, pamphleteering was unconfined. Although John Knox protested his reverence for the "virtuous and godly" Elizabeth, she could not, I am sure, enjoy the toot on this theme: "How abominable, odious and detestable" is the usurped authority of women, how repugnant to nature and justice, how unfounded in law, and how unwarranted in history! If she could tolerate such dissonances, drawn from most inharmonious sources, she must detest the newly issued Geneva Bible, wherein the fate of Jezebel pointed, with marginal notes, the destiny of all her later sisters and republicanism was not even faintly disguised.

The Settlement had many facets besides the rubric "What Parliament hath joined, let neither pope nor Puritan put asunder." Particularly did it satisfy those who identified it with good government and national independence. While civil war tore other countries the ax rusted in the Tower. If now and again it brightened with men's blood, it did so later too. William Laud was beheaded less because he was a cantankerous conformist than because he believed in the Christian order. The Settlement also had great flexibility. To many it seemed a mingle-mangle of popery and Gospel, the clergy took the oath of allegiance and behaved as they pleased. Yet ultimate stability owed much to attacks from the extremes. When Puritans assaulted the very idea of a national establishment, tolerant or tyrannical, the defenders began to preface conventicles with "seditious," and some even foresaw for England what a later churchman saw in America: "in one street the blasphemer boldly declaiming against all religion, and in the next some delirious fanatic doing all that human folly can do to make religion ridiculous." No wonder they harried Puritanism without tarrying.

Dare I suggest that the English Church shall be known by its fruits, not its roots? We must remember conniving ecclesiastics, yes, and Hooker, Taylor, and Law, even Wesley and Newman, for the church was their spiritual springboard. With Eliot we must agree that a church is to be judged by its influence on the sensibility of the most sensitive and on the intellect of the most intelligent. Although the church has owed much to men who adapted it to a world Francis Bacon rather than Thomas Aquinas made, Hooker and Andrewes made it worthy of intellectual assent.

It was Clement VIII who said of Hooker: "There is no learning that this man hath not searched into; his books will get reverence by age, for there is in them such seeds of eternity that, if the rest be like this, they shall live till the last fire shall consume all learning." Hooker had no urge to convert 1559 into a New Year 1. He invoked the doctrine of development and found authority in reason and tradition as well as Scripture. For him the church was a visible society of men for worship, a corporate society within the invisible church. He did not teach that the English Church alone had insight into revelation, and he differed from those first reformers and later dissenters who perpetually pronounced their return to the primitive church with no idea of what it was. In composing the *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* against the threat to reduce the English Reformation to a mere echo of radical Protestantism, he awoke the Anglican communion to the realization that the English Catholic Church had a positive doctrine and discipline and a positive contribution of its own.

How far did the King James Version shape the church? Its translators avoided the scrupulosity of the Puritans and shunned the obscurity of the papists. They hoped that the church would gain all the more good fruit from their labors if they would be traduced by popish persons for making known God's truth into the people instead of keeping them in darkness and maligned by self-conceited brethren who liked nothing but what was hammered on their own anvil.

James himself declared that he was no heretic except in the eyes of those who made the pope their God, that as a Catholic Christian he believed the three creeds, reverenced the first four Councils, and quarreled only with the worship of images. With his position many agreed. John Donne, born a Catholic and exposed to Anabaptism, bade his Anglican listeners preserve their present constitution in church and state whilst obscure conventiclers instituted seditious prayers. The church, he said, is a binding together of men in one manner of worship. "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

The prevalent "itching in tongues and pens" to probe the deepest mysteries and the insolence of people who talked "with unbecoming liberty of public affairs" outraged those in authority. Yet though we hear most about attacks on church and state, many men denounced rebellion as "the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness as the wickedness of idolatry." And if rhymsters ridiculed, poets exalted the church. Henry Vaughan

"saw eternity the other night
like a great ring of pure and endless light."

George Herbert asked:

Could not that wisdom which first broach'd the wine
Have thicken'd it with definitions?
And jagg'd his seamless coat, had that been fine,
With curious questions and divisions?

And he rejoiced,

. . . dear Mother, when I view
Thy perfect lineaments and hue
Both sweet and bright

. . . .

A fine aspect in sweet array,
Neither too mean nor yet too gay,
Shows who is best.

. . . .

She on the hills, which wantonly
Allureth all, in hope to be
By her preferr'd

. . . .

She in the valley is so shy
Of dressing that her hair doth lie
About her ears.
While she avoids her neighbor's pride,
She wholly goes on the other side,
And nothing wears.
But, dearest Mother (what these miss),
The mean thy praise and glory is
And long may be.

Much more acidly Simon Patrick acclaimed the English Church's virtuous mediocrity "between the meretricious gaudiness of the Church of Rome and the squalid sluttery of fanatic conventicles." Whereas papists oppressed and stifled devotion with a multitude of garments and Puritans stripped her stark naked, till she is become cold and dead, the Church of England dressed her as befits an honorable and virtuous matron. The Church of Rome was overrun with wild grapes whence a poisonous potion is pressed forth, whilst Puritans, instead of moderate pruning, cut the vines by the roots; but the Church of England was a well-ordered vineyard.

It is pleasant to turn to bishops Bramhall and Taylor, to Charles II and the Marquis of Halifax. Bramhall asserted that his name was Christian, his surname Catholic. By the one he was known from infidels, by the other from schismatics. The English Church had only separated from Roman innovations and would indeed turn more Catholic, not less. He liked well the name of Catholic, but thought the addition of Roman a diminution. The English Church did not arrogate to itself any novelty. In substance it was the same it was, its Holy Orders the same they were, differing from their former state only as a garden weeded from a garden unweeded.

Jeremy Taylor asked what more could be desired than creeds, councils, Scripture, prayer book? Men should "not make more necessities than God made, which indeed are not many." He and his fellows neither surrendered the past nor relished innovation. They charged papists with too much dogma and Puritans with too little. They sought the mean between "too much stiffness in refusing, and too much easiness in admitting, any variation in public liturgy." They knew that the liturgy, composed in a live language, could be made better and that it could also be made worse, that churches must adapt their doctrines to the age, that the articles were "pious opinions fitted for the preservation of unity."

"How much the peace of the state is concerned in the peace of the church, and how difficult it is to preserve order and government in civil, whilst there is no order and government in ecclesiastical, affairs!" So Charles II in 1660 held out a branch to Presbyterians and cooled the arbitrary ambitions of bishops. Two years later he promised liberty to tender consciences, but by that time a policy alternately coercive and concessive hounded those who could not digest the Settlement and its younger brother, the Restoration. Nevertheless the spirit of comprehension and toleration did sire a policy that preferred choking dissenters with skimmed milk to choking them with the hangman's noose.

Halifax, the great Trimmer, rejoiced that England's religion had been "restored" (he meant 1559, not 1660) under more peaceful circumstances than elsewhere. Although he was very partial to its "trimming" position between dissenting sauciness and Romish sychophancy, he would not allow any church to be the sole exponent of truth. Indeed, he went on, most men's anger about religion was as if two men should quarrel for a lady neither cares for. Moreover, if the clergy did not live like temporal men, no prince could bring them under temporal jurisdiction.

Although Swift believed the Establishment fittest for preserving order and purity, several had no such happy image. "May we not congratulate our country on its wonderful uniformity of religion," asked a later pamphleteer, "when not even a bug can be destroyed within the purlieus of the royal household but by the hallowed fingers of a communicant, nor a post letter conveyed to any part of the kingdom by horses belonging to a Protestant dissenter." The civic outlawry was the more painful since no one knew when penalties might be imposed. Yet because many regarded the church as the state in its ecclesiastical aspect, they feared that toleration would breach an indefeasible union and encourage the lunatic fringe of dissent.

The Revolution of 1688 had such diverse consequences that we must beware of the tendency to homogenize its aftermath. Out of it came nonjurors whose influence vitalized English life. Out of it came pervasive toleration. Out of it came problems which were postponed until they solved themselves, if ever they have been solved. Throughout the 18th century the Revolution Settlement determined theory and practice alike. The Confessional Age had come to an end and with it unqualified uniformity. Political issues frankly took precedence over theological ones.

What would the historians of the Revolution have done without John Locke? For our purpose he is significant as the proponent of toleration, but we must only regard his essay as a pinnacle to which one has climbed by earlier essays and from which one descends by those that follow. His distinction consists in summing up what his predecessors had struck off at white heat. Locke did not denounce any ecclesiastical beast; he simply assumed that the church and state act for reciprocal benefits. He esteemed it above all things necessary to distinguish civil from religious business. The magistrate should execute the laws impartially and protect property; no one had given him the care of souls. A church, said Locke, is a voluntary society of men for worship; no one was born into it. God had prescribed no set form, and the Scripture alone was necessary to salvation.

The situation was not so simple for nonjurors, or indeed for many who regretfully concluded that to reject the new order threatened greater disaster than to accept it, though many, I am sure, never squared their decision with their consciences. When the Erastians argued that in urging the sovereignty of the state they were also protecting the church, they only convinced nonjurors that such a path must lead the gentry to deism and common people to dissent. For nonjurors a church robbed of its divinity had the status of a turnpike company; a state religion was no religion at all. Bishops made by the government spoke the government language, and when men saw the church under the state they more readily gave away to anarchy. Thus the church was laid low and fenceless. When nonjurors refused to swear allegiance, the resulting schism robbed the church of its more Catholic elements and some able spokesmen; the peevish remnant of later days, which exercised an influence beyond its merits, should not obscure the earlier loss.

The convocation controversy sustained nonjuring contentions. After William Wake proved that the king had power to call convocations and thereby to control the church, Hoadly of Bangor moved to demolish the visible church and to exalt religion as a private affair with sincerity as its touchstone. To this William Law replied that Hoadly was making any sect equal to the Church of England and that if equal freedom were allowed in politics the throne would have 5,000 pretenders. He also ridiculed sincerity as the touchstone, on the simple ground that vice is sincere. Hoadly, charged Law, was striking at all authority, at the obligation to obey. His doctrine, applied in the realm of the church, would readily extend to that of the state. Bishop Warburton sought to reconcile the division by teaching with Locke that the church and state were interdependent, but wound up by making the church a pork barrel for the less intelligent offspring of the nobility.

At few periods has the English Church been so charged with indifference and immorality, and nowhere have accusations fallen so heavily as upon the bishops. They have been debited with serving their political masters in order to be translated to richer pastures, with neglecting ordinations, visitations, and confirmations, and what touched more people, with setting a bad example to their clergy. During the very years Hoadly was playing huckster to his political superiors Bangor went ten years without an ordination. Yet Hoadly and Warburton (with Carlyle I believe that it spoils a man to make a bishop of him) did not sum up the Church of England.

Even some members of the hierarchy were concerned about their responsibilities. One told his clergy that to seem good one must be so and that they could not display themselves to better spiritual advantage than to perform their duties. Another pleaded for larger revenues for the poorer bishops, for greater episcopal independence, and for more conscientious administration. Farther down the ladder a rector declared that the clergy deserved their low reputation: they aped their superiors, slumbered in their stalls, and took pride in ignorance.

Not all was negative. William Paley, characterized by Bury as an expert attorney for the Almighty, thought the Establishment justified by utility. It preserved and communicated religious knowledge, and could not be supported without a test. In order to prevent prevarication and controversy the test should be simple and adaptable to changing conditions. The Church of England had secured tranquillity amongst the clergy, and equal tranquillity could be secured among dissenters by allowing them as much freedom as public welfare admitted. Burke was less generous. The perils of the revolution in France prompted him to defend religion as the bulwark of the state and to insist that England was a Christian commonwealth in which church and state were one.

Coleridge, acidly described as a "damned Methodistical lay preacher," believed that the fatal error of the English Reformation, that of clinging to court and state instead of cultivating the people, had borne bitter fruit. Not even Hooker put the church on the true foundation. When it had ceased to be extranational, it had unhappily become royal, and since 1688 it had been chilled by a pagan morality which had substituted prudence for faith. Christianity without a church was vanity and delusion. The Church of England, the last relic of English nationality and the vision of unity, must be reconciled with English history and English society.

This reconciliation Coleridge's disciples sought to consummate. Some turned, as he had, to history. Histories, he believed, should deal with men and their ideas, not abstractions. Those historians who wrote under his inspiration were alive to contemporary spiritual crises and therefore had a deep and wide conception of human history. They did not assume progress, but they did stress unity and complexity and development. Thomas Arnold, the most seminal, thought that "if we do not root out Dissent, and keep the Establishment coextensive with the nation, we must extend the Establishment or else in the end there will and ought to be no Establishment at all, which I consider one of the greatest of all evils." Frederick Maurice, the chief Anglican theologian of the century, had a similar sense of chaos and vision of unity. For him the sects destroyed society. For him also the creeds, the articles, and the Book of Common Prayer comprised eternal truth, and when true to itself the Church of England was human society in its normal state, the Church Universal *in parvo.*

Such men were needed. Throughout the 19th century, especially during the first half, the church was a beleaguered city. The times are very evil, said Newman in 1833, and well he might. Industrialism disrupted the episcopal and parochial organization. Widespread hostility damned every monopoly. Parliament opened its doors to men who resented the church. Geology was eroding Genesis, as Benthamism was eroding Episcopacy. In France, in Scotland, in England, the future of an Established Church was dismal. When Evangelicalism, Tractarianism, and, later, Christian Socialism sought variously to reconcile the church to an industrial society or recall it to its historic mission, many men suspected the therapy, especially Tractarianism. To allow that the church was a perfect society must subvert the Establishment or impair its usefulness. Yet although Tractarianism frightened some churchmen, the Bishop of Oxford in 1838 welcomed anything which recalled forgotten truths. Four years later he pleaded that Tractarianism be answered with reverence, but cautioned against remedies more insidious than the disease. For his part Christopher Wordsworth regretted that the church preferred "the perfection of them that like her not to the defect of them whom she loved" and pleaded that the state should promote the glory of God.

In 1850 the papal appointment of Wiseman as Archbishop of Westminister, an "insolent and invidious" act, excited more indignation than alarm, but whatever the spur, the church did look to her weapons. The church reformed would exercise more power spiritually and politically, gain more revenue, and above all, disarm the patent hostility. As a step in reform the church (1851—53) surveyed attendance, accommodations, social distinctions, attitude of the poor, the conduct of the ministry, both social and spiritual. Like its predecessors this census owed much to the desire to secure the legally established government in church and state. At the same time the English Church had allies as well as critics. Indeed its most powerful critics, the Presbyterians, also were allies in that they deplored the "Erastian usurpation of civil power in spiritual matters" in the face of court decisions which promised to fix the Establishment as a department of the state. Though they involved Presbyterian congregations, such decisions were relevant in coming from English judges in English courts.

Any assessment of the Elizabethan Settlement must recognize that men quickly came to regard it as predestined. The materials for tracing its career are immense but unexploited. The stress upon individuals and upon structure in current research suggests that we need to study personalities and periods so that we do not make a man spokesman for a world he never knew or generalize about 1688 in terms of 1870. We need to turn from symptoms to fundamentals. The church has often washed its dirty linen in public, but the linen has been washed. Deplorable as this public laundering may be, far more deplorable are those instances when the linen of quiescence remained unaired. Here I refer less to the manifest subservience than to its ultimate consequence — alienating the people by leading them to suspect the church of being an instrument of oligarchy. Happily Erastianism has never wholly triumphed. Indeed I think it overemphasized when I recall the steady insistence on the priority of Christian society, an insistence no man has charted. Historians, we all know, repeat one another, play up procedures, detect cant quicker than honest devotion. They have seen that spiritual inertia was the price of peace; they have not so quickly seen where the church did turn in the right direction or where even its failures were fertile.

Nonjurors, Tractarians, Disruptionists were not dead ends. Their ideas were not academic protests but restatements of Thomas More's wonderful words: the king's good servant but God's first. Out of them came a plea for disestablishment on the ground that only thus could the church fulfill its function, uncommitted to state policy. The most stalwart advocate of this latter view, Hensley Henson, had before 1900 ardently defended the Established Church, but by the 1930s he recognized that times had changed and that the church must change with them. For him the Establishment had become irrelevant.

We have in our lifetime witnessed innumerable attacks on Christianity, overt and covert. The later is far more dangerous. Communism and Fascism are easily refuted, but dilution from well-meaning nice people is far more insidious. The assertion that it does not matter what a man believes leads straight to claptrap. Edifying maxims with little effort can be made either nonsense or unedifying. If organizations often seem to exist primarily for the painless extinction of the ideals that gave them birth, we can still call the organizations back to those ideals, whereas an edifying maxim dissolves in its own syllables. A creed, despite the poet, is never really outworn if it is a creed and not an expedient.

The leaders of the English Church have had different concepts of its role; and by trading its spiritual birthright for material security the church has on occasion lost as much by indifference as surrender. With Eliot, "I am not blind to the peculiar dangers that beset the English Church." They have been besetting it, lo, these four centuries. "Nevertheless, if suffered to drop out of existence, nothing like it can ever take its place." If it did not exist you could not invent it. Recent Lambeth conferences variously illustrate its refusal to limit its constitution by too many finalities. Their reports, reeking with platitudes, commonplaces, and ambiguities, should be viewed less as instruction to the faithful than as reflections of the ways in which the church is moving. Yet insipid, evasive, obscure, and even foolish, as they are, would a manifesto from us here today sound any better? We must never disregard English compulsion to frame a principle so as to include all allowable exceptions, "a situation guaranteed to drive a papist or a Presbyterian crazy, but it exactly suits the Anglican temperament with its hatred of coercion and its innate distrust of anything cut and dried." This last has given the church a strong sense of liberty and discipline, of process and solidarity, of capacity for survival. Amid the dust of nuclear urgency there are few more secure havens of sanity.

Columbia, Missouri