



On Love & Tradition

So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter.

Our dear communion carries with her unique characteristics all her own. To some, she is as lovely as Solomon's *Rose of Sharon*. To others, she is a hag entirely fraught with warts. Regardless of whichever lady she emulates, there is no doubt that she is *peculiar*. I for one, and by God I pray that I am not the only one, find it all to be rather charming -exhilarating, really. One simply cannot take their eye off of her. Whether like a work of art or a train wreck, I will leave to the reader to decide. In either case it's hard to look away. The famous misquote puts it well: "The Church is a whore, but my mother nonetheless". Whether it was St. Augustine or Fr. Luther who uttered these words doesn't matter, it is true all the same. Anglicanism, whatever she may be, is truly my mother.

And, as is the case with every man's affection toward his mother (with few exceptions), one does not take kindly to disparaging comments directed her way. As accurate and articulate as some such criticism may seem, there is no place for them within the hearts of loyal sons. Not even James Matthew Barrie's Peter Pan, a boy who never knew his mother, was immune to such subtle and relentless instinct of heart to defend the honor of "mother". In fact, given the context, a comment out of place might earn one's nose an unpleasant encounter with a knuckle or two. If aggression is naturally directed toward the outsider, surely there is a greater severity for the brother and fellow son who speaks verbal matricide. Again, such honorific instinct is entirely natural, on this point Plato and Confucius agree. This is, quite simply, all because of *love*. I have said time and time again that whatever the circumstance or subject, love is always the Christian's chief point. I may lose *faith* in the Church's abilities, and there may come a day when I may no longer *hope* for her restoration, but I can never lose love for her. *Love perseveres* (1 Corinthians 13:7). Of the three Theological Virtues, "the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13).

It was with love that St. Polycarp gave his body over to the wild beasts, and it was the same love that compelled Bishops Latimer and Ridley to face the flames. It was this love which conditioned these men to, in the words of John Foxe, "play the man"¹. The simple profundity of the matter is that love makes men, *Men*. This is because love *is* a Man. There is no more valiant an act than to love, and nothing more costly. "For God so loved the world that he *gave*..." (John 3:16). And I will be the first, though I hope that I am not the first, to assure you that it will hurt. Whether it be the bearing of a cross or the bearing of a child, rest assured that a labor of love is just that: it is labor. Concerning the graces of God made available to the Christian, the martyred Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote:

¹ John Foxe, [*Foxe's Book of Martyrs*](#). Chapter XVI

“Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: "ye were bought at a price," and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us”.²

What I have made the instigation of Love, or what Bonhoeffer has termed “Costly Grace” are really the same thing, they are the same Man: the Lord Jesus Christ. And if it cost him, it will cost us. It will require of us, it will hurt, but never as severely as betraying that love. Rembrandt’s *Judas Returning the Thirty Pieces of Silver* captures this well. The poor wretch is brought to his knees, pulled down by the gravity of what he has done. It is as if the hands of hell grasped him by the shoulders; all the while his employers, the men whose evil will he carried out, look away in scorn. Even the fellow wicked find him contemptuous. He is alone in the dark, and his own heart condemns him. He experienced the same Good Friday as the Apostles, he witnessed the blackening of the sun and felt the earth shake, but there was no Easter Morning for Judas. He is alone, the Son of God is still dead to him, and he weeps. Our own Archbishop Thomas Cranmer knew this same betrayal as his life was brought to an end. Though appointed to be a shepherd and guide, fearing persecution and for the sake of comfort and transitory life, he betrayed our Church. It was only by the grace of God that Queen Mary’s empty promises revealed her duplicitous nature. The queen’s act of betrayal served as God’s catalyst to redeem our faltering Archbishop who, like Samson, stood resolute in the end. Though sentenced to the flames he recanted his recantation and once more embraced the Church he loved, and who has continued to love him in return. Though, the weight of his shame followed him even to his final breath. “THIS HAND HATH OFFENDED!”³ he cried. I am sure that the flames that licked his betrayer’s hand felt like a cool relief to the seemingly unquenchable burning of guilt in his chest. But God is gracious, and I digress.

But what does any of this have to do with Tradition? To put this all in less flowery terms and sidestepping my tendency to pontificate, the point is this: love our Church. For love has everything to do with Tradition! It is true that ours is not perfect and at times frightful, and yet “love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8). Love does not make excuses for sin, but neither does it abandon the sinner. It is true that our beloved Mother Church is in trying times. Not just our Apostolic Branch, but within the whole trunk there can be found one rot or another. Our Articles tell us:

“As the Church of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch, have erred, so also the Church of Rome hath erred, not only in their living and manner of Ceremonies, but also in matters of Faith.”⁴

Now, by our obstinacy and willful rebellion, we are forced to inscribe our own name on this list of transgressors: “So also the Churches of Canterbury, America, and Canada hath erred...” But even in this God is merciful, but He will require of us. Love is not simply a countenance, it is not an aura. Love *acts*. Our Lord acts. But how are we to act? The same as He: loving His bride even unto death (Ephesians 5:25). We may take our cue from the “Father of Orthodoxy”, St. Athanasius. In the heat of the Arian controversy, he did not abandon Christ’s bride, but rather relentlessly fought for her sanctity. He loved her. It is easy to seek a purer Church, but no such thing exists. There is only *the* Church. She is either pure or she is being purified, but there are no alternatives.

² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*. Chapter I

³ Henry John Todd, *The Life of Archbishop Cranmer*. Volume II

⁴ Article XIX

What is the first step? “Honor thy Father and Mother”, this is the first commandment with a promise (Ephesians 6:2). The biblicists will have to excuse me for applying this verse to God our Father and our Holy Mother Church, but it seems more than fitting. Stop speaking ill of your Mother! Nobody is as disparaging toward our Church than her own children. This is not to say that there are not errors that ought to be rightly pointed out, but these errors are *not* Anglicanism. They are innovations and corruptions which have crept under her skirt. Nor is it every man’s duty to make every controversy his business. There is something to be said for authority. Many are fond of the Historic Episcopate and our Catholic Orders, but few actually *submit* to them. We are quick to take any perceived controversy in doctrine into our own hands. Thinking ourselves wise we act foolishly, and all semblance of godly order is forfeited for the sake of our ego. All men think themselves popes these days. There are too many stories that can be recounted here, but I will bite my tongue for the sake of charity and spare myself a trip to the confessional. Simply let the laity be laity and bishops be bishops.

I believe that the Venerable Fulton Sheen once said that “love defends”. It is a persistent and valiant thing; defiant even in some instances. It is funny then, that those who feign a deeper “catholicity” are the first to jump ship at the first sign of trouble. Strange that they who (if their boasting is to be taken seriously) ought to have the deepest sort of affection for our Church are more often than not the most ashamed of her. “But we cannot have communion with such people!” one of the sort will say, as if he were qualified to determine such matters. I simply reply in question. Did St. Athanasius abandon the Church? Did The Cappadacian Fathers? What of St. Anthony the Great? In the height of heresy and godlessness the men we remember are the ones who remained faithful. “A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand”, but the Saint remains nonetheless. (Psalm 91:7) Expediency is the more enticing offer though. I am more than sympathetic to those who choose complacency or schism, but such persons are far from the mind of the Church. One would think that a communion born out of the fire and blood of the Reformation would know a thing or two about *warfare*, but apparently this is not the case. Where are the Augsutines? The Ambroses? Cowards fill their shoes. I understand why people leave, the Lord knows that I have been tempted on more than one occasion, but I do not comprehend how those same people express surprise when our Church falls to the heresy that they have abandoned it to. All they have done is simply play a part in their own self-fulfilling prophecy. No sailor is surprised to see his ship sink beneath tumultuous waves when the whole crew has abandoned her to them. If our Church is to succeed, then we must remain with her. If we had but a mustard-seed of the same faithfulness expressed by our Fathers, we would not be so bad off. The flock is not saved by abandoning it to wolves. This common clamoring after the “truer” more “catholic” Anglicanism is the worst kind of Puritanism. The Churchman fights, the Saint is resolute.

It is for this reason that I keep three icons at my desk at all times. If you were to step into my room, immediately turn right, and peek into the closet that serves as a makeshift study, you would see them hanging brightly. The first is of the aforementioned St. Anthony the Great, that I might continue to pray as he does. As the reader may well know, he was the first Monastic. When the Arians were singing their corrosive chorus to a false Christ, the Church of Alexandria looked to Abba Anthony, the man of prayer, for guidance. We would all do well to remember that there is no lasting orthodoxy apart from prayer, and few greater insights into the way of Christ. Conversely, there is no greater remedy for a faltering Church than the life of prayer. *Common Prayer*. The second icon is of St. George the Dragon Slayer. Lifting high the cross, his valiant figure urges me continuously to fight for the Church for whom he serves as patron. Funny that the man who slew dragons died a martyr’s death; what a fitting metaphor

for the Christian's life! He instructs us to fight and to die, all for the good of Christ's Bride. Finally, the last and most dear to me is the image of St. Justin, the martyred philosopher. He exhorts me to study that I too might make a continuous *apology*, a *defense*, for that great hope with which we were sealed with in Baptism. -Pray, fight, and defend.- If we are steadfast in these, we will surely withstand the world and the duplicity of our own hearts.

But pray for, fight for, and defend *what?* Our lives. Our Lord warned: "And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand" (Matthew 12:25). Our very *selves* are on the line. Return then to traditional Churchmanship! Only by cleaving to the tradition can we ward off the individualism that plagues our Church. "Evangelical", "High Church", "Low Church", "Anglo-Catholic", "Calvinist", *et al* ought to be forfeited for something far superior: the English *Church*. There may have been a day when such "*isms*" were useful, perhaps even necessary, but that day has long passed. They now only serve for needless distinctions, often without any real difference. Who can tell anyone what an Anglo-Catholic is? Speak to twenty laymen and you will find twenty different definitions; speak to twenty clerics and you will have a hundred. The same goes for all those other polemically pandering parties just mentioned. Rather, "you may with one mind *and* one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ". Say the prayers when it's difficult to do so. Wear the surplice even when you don't want to. Submit to the bishop in all things, in so far as Christ allows. *Die to self*.

It is true that the whole of Christ's Church shows signs of distress, but we are no use to her if our particular member of the Body openly bleeds. A leperous hand is no good even to itself after all. It infects rather than heals, regardless of the intention. "First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." (Matthew 7:5) The blind cannot lead the blind (Luke 6:39), and a sick physician is of no use to anyone. This is why we must remain faithful to tradition; *our tradition*. "It follows that if Anglicanism is to play its part in the ecumenical movement it must be true to itself".⁵ Tending to our own house we may be of some good to others. (1 Timothy 3:5) We must steward what is ours, and not forfeit it so easily. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much." (Luke 16:10) How pitiable we would be if we were to follow the example of Esau and trade our birthright for a measly bowl of lentils. This is all in accordance with love. Holy Scripture has promised that a little faithfulness goes a long way. Only God knows the future of our province, and the battle is not nearly over, but Christ, our one true Head, will surely lead us through these dark times. Now, if I may be permitted, I will conclude by bastardizing Shakespear's *Henry V*: "Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more! Dishonour not your Mother; now attest that those whom you call'd Fathers did beget you. The game's afoot: Follow your spirit, and upon this charge Cry 'God for Foley'⁶, England, and Saint George!"⁷

⁵ Martin Thornton, *English Spirituality*. Part I, Chapter 1 §5

⁶ The Rt. Rev. Foley Beach currently serves as the second Archbishop of the Anglican Church in North America

⁷ See William Shakespear, *Henry V*. Act III, [Scene I](#).