



## The Anglican *Via Media*: The Idea of Moderation in Reform

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### ABSTRACT

This essay examines the concept of the Anglican *via media* and its historical development into its present form. It argues that the Anglican *via media* is properly understood not as a fixed program of reform, but as moderation in reform, following the classical notion of moderation as a mean between two extremes. The essay traces the theological theme of moderation in reform through the figures of Jewel, Parker, Hooker, Hall, Montagu, Cosin, Forbes, Bramhall, Puller, Knox, to Jebb's idea of Anglican exceptionalism, and, ultimately, to Newman's attempt to create the doctrine of the Anglican *via media*.

KEYWORDS: Anglicanism, Catholicism, moderation, Newman, Puritanism, reform, *via media*

Comprehending something of both yet falling in with neither, the English Church has for some time been thought of as a *via media* between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. Seeing the English Church as lying mid-way between 'Popery' and 'Dissent' can be traced back with clarity to the seventeenth-century writings of George Herbert (1593–1633), who in his poem 'The British Church', famously described the English Church when he wrote, 'The mean thy praise and glory is'.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, but less charitably, Simon Patrick (1625–1707), the Bishop of Ely, spoke of 'that virtuous mediocrity, which our Church observes

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2. George Herbert, *The Complete English Poems* (ed. John Tobin; New York: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 102.

between the meretricious gaudiness of the Church of Rome, and squalid sluttiness of fanatic Conventicles'.<sup>3</sup> Despite the extreme difference in tone between these two divines, the language of both shows that some sort of historical notion of the English Church as a *via media* between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism had developed within Anglicanism by at least the seventeenth century.

The wider claim of the *via media Anglicana* as a way of self-understanding, however, has come under recent criticism.<sup>4</sup> In particular, Diarmaid MacCulloch has argued that the idea of the Anglican *via media* is part of 'the myth of the English Reformation' due largely to the claims of John Henry Newman.<sup>5</sup> As MacCulloch has said, 'The myth of the English Reformation is that it did not happen, or that it happened by accident rather than design, or that it was half-hearted and sought a middle way between Catholicism and Protestantism; the point at issue being the identity of the Church of England.'<sup>6</sup> In light of such a statement it must be asked, 'Is there any legitimate understanding of the Anglican *via media*?' By way of response this essay seeks to identify and elucidate a historical strand of thinking about moderation in reform in the English Church that follows the classical ideal of the *via media* as a mean between two extremes, rather than associating it with any fixed program of reform. While this essay will undoubtedly not be the last word on the subject, it is hoped that such an exploration will contribute a voice to the ongoing conversation about Anglican identity by showing that the idea of moderation in reform was uniquely part of the Anglican genius.

### *Moderation as a Virtue*

The idea of moderation as a virtue goes back to Aristotle (384–322 BC) who in his *Nicomachean Ethics* defined the idea of the mean (μεσότης) as the ethical ideal of moral excellence determined by right reason (ὀρθὸς λόγος). 'Excellence', Aristotle said, 'is a mean between two vices'. Moral excellence avoided the pitfalls of 'excess' or 'deficiency' of what was right in both passion and action. Not every action admitted a mean.

3. Simon Patrick, *A Brief Account of the New Sect of Latitude-Men, &C.* (London, 1662), p. 4.

4. For a helpful overview of the history of the interpretation of the Anglican *via media* see Dewey D. Wallace Jr, 'Via Media? A Paradigm Shift?', *Anglican and Episcopal History* 72.1 (March 2003), pp. 2-21.

5. Diarmaid MacCulloch, 'The Myth of the English Reformation', *Journal of British Studies* 30 (January 1991), pp. 1-19.

6. MacCulloch, 'The Myth of the English Reformation', p. 1.

Acts like 'adultery, theft, murder' were entirely bad and had no mean as were 'unjust, cowardly, and self-indulgent action' because such were 'an excess of excess, and a deficiency of deficiency'. On the other hand, neither was there an 'excess or deficiency of temperance and courage' because these themselves were the mean, and 'in general there is neither a mean of excess and deficiency, nor excess and deficiency of a mean'. Many things, however, did admit a mean. For example, 'courage' was the mean between 'feelings of fear and confidence' because the excessively confident person was 'rash' while one who lacked confidence was a 'coward'. The mean between 'pleasures and pains' was 'temperance' with the excess of pleasure being 'self-indulgence' and its deficiency being 'insensible'. The mean between 'honour' and 'dishonour' was 'proper pride'. Being 'good-tempered' was the mean in 'anger' between the excess of 'irascibility' and the deficiency of 'inirascibility'. The mean of 'pleasantness in giving of amusement' was to be 'ready-witted', with its excess being 'buffoonery' and its deficiency being 'boorishness'.<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, the poet Horace (65–68 BC) in his Ode X written to Licinius, spoke of 'the golden mean' (*aurea mediocritas*) as the virtue of moderation. Horace said, 'Better wilt thou live, Licinius, by neither always pressing out to sea nor too closely hugging the dangerous shore in cautious fear of storms. Whoso cherishes the golden mean, safely avoids the foulness of an ill-kept house and discreetly, too, avoids a hall exciting envy.' The golden mean guided one between riskiness and over cautiousness, between living in squalid poverty or of being disheartened by unattainable wealth. Following the golden mean was the wise path because then a person was 'hopeful in adversity, anxious in prosperity', and had a heart that was 'well prepared for weal or woe'. Horace admonished Licinius to 'wisely reef thy sails when they are swollen by too fair a breeze!' Even good fortune, if left unchecked, could lead to ruin. The virtue of moderation provided safety from acting on impulse and uncontrolled passion. Right action was temperate action.<sup>8</sup>

The virtue of moderation can be said to serve as the classic rule of life, an idea summed up by Ovid (43 BC–17 AD) in his phrase, '*medio tutissimus ibis*', or 'the middle is the safest path'.<sup>9</sup> However, as Aristotle had

7. Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation* (ed. Jonathan Barnes; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), II, pp. 1748–50 (1107a–1108a).

8. Horace, *The Odes and Episodes* (trans. C.E. Bennett; Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952), p. 131.

9. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (2 vols.; trans. Frank Justus Miller; Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921), I, pp. 68–69 (2.136–37).

already pointed out, that while ‘there is a standard which determines the mean states which we say are intermediate between excess and defect, being in accordance with right reason’, such a statement was meaningless until ‘it should be determined what right reason is and what is the standard that fixes it’.<sup>10</sup> That is, of course, the inherent difficulty and ambiguity of any golden mean when applied to human behavior. People may well agree that one should be neither foolhardy nor cowardly, but what exactly constitutes courage in any given situation is more difficult to determine. The principle of moderation is logical enough, but what it means in everyday life can easily be contested.

This is also, of course, the inherent problem with the notion of the English Church being a *via media* of any sort. At best, such an idea will always be, in some sense, ill-defined. In what, exactly, does its moderation consist? Is the *via media* between Reformed churches, between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, or between doctrines? Such questions themselves go a long way to show that those in the English Church who embraced the notion of a *via media* (or its corollaries of moderation or mediocrity) were following classical understanding, rather than any fixed program of reform. In ecclesiastical matters, what constituted both the mean and its extremes was very much open to debate. Nonetheless, this ambiguity did not stop attempts by some leading divines to assert that the English Church took a path of moderation in reform.

#### *Early Ideas: The Via Media*

The ecclesiastical historian and poet Richard Watson Dixon (1833–1900), said of the phrase *via media* that ‘the earliest example of that phrase, a phrase which I dislike very much, is in Humphrey’s *Life of Jewel*’ (1609) where Humphrey spoke of holding to a middle way in reform.<sup>11</sup> The Bishop of Salisbury, John Jewel (1522–71), had put forth in his *Apology* the idea that the English Church was a reformed Catholicism that had kept apostolic orders, priestly absolution, the sacraments, and a belief in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, while

10. Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, II, p. 1789 (1138b).

11. Richard Watson Dixon, *History of the Church of England* (6 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1878–1902), VI, p. 161 n 2. The Latin text is as follows: ‘Etsi vero, ut illi superiores non debemus esse superstitiosi, nec ut isti posteriores, furiosi, tamen esse possumus officiosi, ut media quaedam via, et regia, et divina et aequabilis, teneatur.’

at the same time it had opposed papal primacy, communion in one kind, using the power of the keys for auricular confession only, clerical celibacy, transubstantiation, eucharistic processions, masses for the dead, purgatory, and the propitiatory sacrifice of the mass.<sup>12</sup> Unlike Roman Catholicism with its excess, Jewel believed that the English Church had maintained the Vincentian criteria of 'antiquity', 'universality', and 'consent' of the Church Catholic.<sup>13</sup> Jewel summed up the argument of his *Apology* when he said that 'from the primitive church, from the apostles, and from Christ, we have not departed'.<sup>14</sup> Yet the idea that Jewel held that the English Church to be a *via media* is not so much wrong, as incomplete. The idea had occurred earlier in one of John Jewel's letters to Peter Martyr Vermigli wherein Jewel lamented the current state of the Church in which some were trying to introduce certain practices 'as if the Christian religion could not exist without something tawdry'.<sup>15</sup> Jewel went on to say that, 'Our minds indeed are not sufficiently disengaged to make these fooleries of importance.' He wanted more strident reform and lamented that, 'Others are seeking after a *golden*, or as it rather seems to me, a *leaden* mediocrity; and are crying out that the half is better than the whole.' He was, it seems, unhappy with Matthew Parker's moderation in reform.

Matthew Parker (1504–75), Archbishop of Canterbury under Elizabeth I, quite intentionally strove to lead the Church of England to a 'golden mediocrity' that continued the program of reform started by Elizabeth's father King Henry VIII.<sup>16</sup> In a letter to William Cecil, Parker said that his attempts at moderation met with difficulties from both Queen and the clergy. Elizabeth I thought him 'too soft and easy' on the one hand, whereas his brethren, on the other, thought him 'too sharp and too earnest in moderation, which towards them I have used, and

12. John Jewel, *An Apology of the Church of England by John Jewel* (ed. John E. Booty; New York: Church Publishing, 2002), pp. 22–39.

13. Jewel, *Apology*, p. 93.

14. Jewel, *Apology*, p. 98.

15. 'Letter IX', in *The Zurich Letters* (trans. and ed. Hastings Robinson; *The Parker Society*; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1842), p. 23.

16. Patrick Collinson, 'Sir Nicholas Bacon and the Elizabethan *Via Media*', in *Godly People: Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism* (London: Hambledon Press, 1983), p. 137; Owen Chadwick (ed.), *The Mind of the Oxford Movement* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1960), pp. 15–16; Owen Chadwick, *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement: Tractarian Essays* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 6–7; G.W. Bernard, 'The Making of Religious Policy, 1533–1546: Henry VII and the Search for the Middle Way', *The Historical Journal* 41.2 (1998), pp. 321–49.

will still do, till mediocrity shall be received amongst us.<sup>17</sup> In another letter to Cecil, Archbishop Parker related a conversation he had through an interpreter with the French Ambassador who had inquired about 'the order and using of our religion'.<sup>18</sup> Parker said that the French Ambassador was 'delighted in our mediocrity, charging the Genevians and the Scottish of going too far in extremities.' Parker perceived that the French Ambassador wrongly thought the English Church 'had neither *statas preces* [fixed prayers], nor choice of days of abstinence, as Lent, &c, nor orders ecclesiastical, nor persons of our profession in any regard or estimation, or of any ability, amongst us'. Of this misconception, Parker said, 'I did beat that plainly out of their heads.' As a result of this conversation the French Ambassador 'seemed to be glad, that in ministration of our Common Prayer and Sacraments we use such reverent mediocrity, and that we did not expel musick out of our quires, telling them that our musick drowned not the principal regard of our prayer'. Moderation in reform allowed the English Church to keep many of its Catholic practices that other Reformed churches abandoned. Yet there was no exact rule of what should be included or excluded. What was a leaden mediocrity to Jewel, was to the French Ambassador and Parker a golden mediocrity that became the enduring position of the English Church.

#### *Hooker's Mediocrity in Reform*

The ideal of 'moderation' or 'mediocrity' in reform against Puritanism in the Elizabethan settlement was formally put forward by Richard Hooker (c. 1554–1600) in his *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. Hooker thought it 'unsound' to have a policy of having 'no agreement with the church of Rome'. He believed the Puritans had gone too far in their dislike of Rome and because of this the English Church was 'yet at controversy' with the Puritans about 'things indifferent in the Church of Rome'. Hooker asked whether 'that also which is indifferent be cut off with it' until 'no rite or ceremony remain which the Church of Rome has, being not found in the word of God'. The idea that one should purge the Church of things indifferent as the Puritans did was 'too extreme'. Hooker compared the Puritans to those who think that 'a crooked stick is not straightened unless it be bent as far on the clean contrary side,

17. 'Letter CXXVII,' in *Correspondence of Matthew Parker, D.D.* (ed. John Bruce and Thomas Thomason Perowne; The Parker Society; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1853), p. 173.

18. 'Letter CLXIV', in *Correspondence of Parker*, p. 215.

that so it may settle itself at the length in a middle estate of evenness between both'. This way of thinking was problematic for Hooker. He questioned, 'When they urge us to extreme opposition against the Church of Rome, do they not mean we should be drawn to it only for a time, and afterwards return to a mediocrity? or was it the purpose of those reformed Churches, which utterly abolished all popish ceremonies, to come in the end back again to the middle point of evenness and moderation?' If this was not the case, Hooker said, 'Then we have conceived amiss of their meaning' because 'we have always thought their opinion to be, that utter inconformity with the Church of Rome was not an extremity whereto we should be drawn for a time, but that the very mediocrity itself wherein they meant we should ever continue'.<sup>19</sup>

Moderation in reform was a more reasonable route than trying to rid the Church of all vestiges of popery. The reformation in Germany (i.e., the Lutheran) 'had stricken off that which appeared corrupt in the doctrine of the Church of Rome' while at the same time 'in discipline' it retained 'very great conformity', whereas 'France' (i.e., French-speaking Geneva) 'took away the popish orders which Germany did retain'.<sup>20</sup> While Hooker seemed to be at peace with the reforms in Germany he was troubled by the more extreme reforms in Geneva that were influencing the Church of England. He said of them, 'there has arisen a sect in England, which following still the very selfsame rule of policy, seeks to reform even the French reformation, and purge out from thence also the dregs of popery'.<sup>21</sup> Hooker noted that there were different 'kinds of reformation' that had taken place, and he spoke of 'this moderate kind, which the church of England has taken, as that other more extreme and rigorous which certain Churches elsewhere have better liked'.<sup>22</sup> While Hooker understood continental reforms to be legitimate, he certainly favored the English Church's moderation in

19. Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity: A Critical Edition with Modern Spelling* (ed. Arthur Stephen McGrade; 3 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), I, pp. 210–11 (4.8, 4.8.3). On 'moderation' and 'mediocrity' see I, pp. 211 (4.8.3), 239–241 (4.14.6); II, pp. 1, 2 (5. Dedication 2, 4), 183 (5.62.5), 292 (5.77.14).

20. Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, I, p. 211 (4.8.3). For Hooker's use of France to refer to the French-speaking Calvinists in Geneva see the commentary in Richard Hooker, *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiasticall Politie* (gen. ed. W. Speed Hill; 7 vols.; The Folger Library Edition of Hooker's Works; Cambridge, MA & Tempe, AZ: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press & Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1977–98), IV, p. 622.

21. Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, I, p. 212 (4.8.4).

22. Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, I, pp. 240–41 (4.14.6).



comparison to over-zealous Puritan reforms because the English Church was 'aiming at another mark, namely the glory of God and the good of his Church'.<sup>23</sup>

In this sense, moderation was more than a classical virtue for Hooker. It was something rooted in the plentitude of truth that the Church had received from Christ and the Apostles. For example, by affirming Christ had two natures that subsisted in one person, the Council of Chalcedon had kept 'warily a middle course shunning both that distraction of persons wherein Nestorius went awry' and also the 'confusion of natures which deceived Eutyches'.<sup>24</sup> The theological idea of moderation containing the fullness of truth is found also in Hooker's understanding of the Eucharist. The Sacramentarians on the one side, and the Lutherans and Roman Catholics on the other, obscured the fact that there was 'a general agreement' about 'the *real participation* of Christ and of life in his body and blood *by means of this sacrament*'.<sup>25</sup> On the one hand, the Sacramentarians thought of the Eucharist as 'a shadow, destitute empty and void of Christ', while on the other the Lutherans and Roman Catholics were 'driven either to *consubstantiate* and incorporate Christ, with the elements sacramental or to *transubstantiate* and change their substance into his'.<sup>26</sup> Against these more defined, and thus extreme views, Hooker favored a moderation embodying the fullness of divine truth agreed upon by all sides that the Eucharist was a real means of participation in Christ, without making the question of an elemental presence *de fide*.

### *The Via Media as a Way of Peace*

As a result of the canons declared by the Synod of Dort (1618–19) the Quinquarticular Controversy erupted in England. As the name of the controversy implies, at issue were the Five Articles taught by Jacob Arminius (1560–1609) and set forth in the Arminian Remonstrance of 1610 and the Calvinist opposition to them at Dort. The Bishop of Norwich Joseph Hall (1574–1656), who had been sent by James I as an English representative to the Synod of Dort, argued for moderation on the issue of predestination in his undated *Via Media: The Way of Peace, in*

23. Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, I, p. 213 (4.9.2).

24. Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, II, p. 144 (5.52.4).

25. Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, II, p. 223 (5.67.2).

26. Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, II, p. 222–23 (5.67.2).



the five Busy Articles, Commonly Known by the Name of Arminius.<sup>27</sup> Throughout his *Via Media*, the Calvinist bishop frequently spoke of the virtue of 'moderation',<sup>28</sup> something also addressed in his two books on *Christian Moderation*.<sup>29</sup> Hall's reason for moderation on the issue of predestination was that the irresistibility of grace was not an article of faith (*de fide*). Those who thought so needed to 'be taught the difference, betwixt matters of faith and scholastical disquisitions' because the former 'have God for their author' whereas the latter arise from 'the brain of men'.<sup>30</sup> Following Horace's notion of moderation, Hall believed that the English Church could be 'free' of those 'differences' that are 'found in foreign Schools and Pulpits' if it 'shall listen to that wise and moderate voice of our Church' – that of John Overall (1560–1619), Bishop of Norwich – 'who, after the relation of the two extreme opinions resteth in this, *medio tutissimumus* [safest middle]: that men are so stirred and moved by grace, that they may, if they attend thereunto obey the grace . . . and that they may, by their free-will also resist it'.<sup>31</sup> Hall thought that Overall's explanation 'goes a midway bewixt' the Calvinist and Arminian by following St Augustine's teaching.<sup>32</sup>

What is striking about Hall's argument is how he understood the English Church's teaching about Scripture as the rule of faith leading to doctrinal moderation. Article 6, 'Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation', taught that if something could not be proved by Scripture it was not required to be believed for salvation. This teaching prohibited making debatable issues like irresistibility of grace *de fide*. In regard to the 'Belgic quarrel', Hall said, there was 'no possible redress' but 'a severe Edict of restraint' to keep 'from passing those moderate bounds, which the Church of England, guided by the Scriptures, hath expressly set'.<sup>33</sup> Since Scripture did not speak with clarity neither could the Church. Moderation between the extremes of Calvinism and Arminianism would, on the face of it, seem to place Hall's notion of a *via media* firmly on the Reformed side. However, Hall's argument

27. Joseph Hall, 'Via Media: The Way of Peace', in *The Works of Joseph Hall* (12 vols.; Oxford: D. A. Talboys, 1837–39), X, pp. 474–98. This treatise was written by Hall as Dean of Worcester before his enthronement as Bishop of Exeter (1627) and translation to Norwich (1641).

28. Hall, *Works*, X, pp. 480, 491, 494, 496, 498.

29. Hall, *Works*, VI, pp. 365–461.

30. Hall, *Works*, X, p. 480.

31. Hall, *Works*, X, p. 494.

32. Hall, *Works*, X, p. 487.

33. Hall, *Works*, X, p. 480.

against the irresistibility of grace being an article of faith was part of the official teaching of the English Church.<sup>34</sup>

*Moderation between Papist and Puritan*

Puritans desired a reformation of the English Reformation. This fact alone placed the established Church somewhere between Roman Catholicism and Puritanism. This is evident in the work of Richard Montagu (1577–1641). In reply to a Roman Catholic living in his parish, John Heighman who had written *The Gag of the Reformed Gospel* (1623), Montagu wrote as treatise entitled *A Gagg for the New Gospell? NO: A New Gagg for an OLD Goose* (1624). For this treatise Montagu was accused of Arminianism when in fact he was following the teaching of the early church Fathers.<sup>35</sup> In the first line of his Preface to *A New Gagg*, Montague stated, 'Protestant or Papist, English or Roman Catholique, Christian if thou be, though to all or any, I intend what I write' and in a letter to John Cosin he said he hoped that God 'will one day raise up some to stand in the gapp against Puritanisme and Popery, the Scilla and Charybdis of antient piety'.<sup>36</sup> Interestingly, we start to see in Montagu the use of the term Protestant to refer to the Puritan position,

34. For example, Article 16 taught restoration after fall from grace, even in the case of some mortal sins. Further, the *Westminster Confession of Faith* had placed the doctrine 'Of God's Eternal Decree' as third, after the doctrine 'Of Holy Scripture' and 'Of God, and of the Holy Trinity' whereas the English Church gave predestination much less importance as Article 17. This can be seen also in the difference between the Preface to the Articles of Religion which said they were 'for the avoiding of the diversities of opinions, and for the stablishing of consent touching true religion' and that of the *Westminster Confession* whose purpose was 'for the settling of the government and liturgy of the Church of England; and for the vindicating and clearing of the doctrine of the said Church from all false aspersions and interpretations'. Respectively, Gerald Bray (ed.), *Documents of the English Reformation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), p. 285; and 'An Ordinance of the Lords and Commons assembled in Parliament ... June 12, 1643' as in *Westminster Confession*, corrected and reset ed., reprint, 1646 (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1994), p. 13.

35. Peter White, *Predestination, Policy, and Polemic: Conflict and Consensus in the English Church from the Reformation to the Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 215–16. For the ascription of *The Gag of the Reformed Gospel* to Heighman rather than Matthew Kellison, see p. 218.

36. Letter dated June 24 in John Cosin, *The Correspondence of John Cosin, D.D.*, Sutees Society (Durham: Andrews & Co., 1869), p. 21. Elsewhere Montagu used similar language to describe the position of the English Church as one between 'Jesuite or Puritan' (p. 40) and 'Puritans ... Popery' (pp. 48–49).

as against the notion of the English Church as Catholic. Montagu's use of moderation between Papist and Puritan was similar to that of Cosin's own.

The Bishop of Durham John Cosin (1594–1672) said in his treatise *On the Form of our Service and the Consonance of it with Others*, 'We are blamed by the puritans that we come too near the form of the papists; and by the papist we are condemned for going too far off; nay, for not taking the self-same for that they have in all things. To the first Mr. Hooker has given a sufficient answer. To the second we say, that our Church has done no more than holy men before have given direction and warrant to do.' Cosin went on to describe the English Church's moderation in retaining some ceremony while abolishing others, and he concluded that 'a mean therefore was kept, and in godly resolution here taken by the Church of England, to remove only such things as were new and superfluous, retaining the rest which were old, and behoveful for the edifying of the Christian people'.<sup>37</sup> Thus, in his eyes, the English Church followed the classical sense of mean: it pursued a mean between the excesses of both Papist and Puritan.

Similar moderation in reform can be seen in the work of Bishop William Forbes (1585–1634). Two months before his death, Forbes was appointed by Charles I the first Bishop of Edinburgh. His posthumously published *Considerationes Modestae et Pacificae Controversiarum* (1658) were written as a reply to Cardinal Bellarmine and later reprinted as part of the *Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology*. In this work Forbes dealt with topics of justification, purgatory, invocation of the saints, Christ the mediator, and the Eucharist by showing in each case how the Church of England's moderation in reform differed from both 'rigid Protestants' and Roman Catholics.<sup>38</sup> For example, Forbes held to a moderating doctrine of the Eucharist in which the mode of that presence made no difference as long as the real presence was affirmed. What Forbes said at the end of the first part of his *Eucharistia* may be taken as the tenor of his whole work, 'May God grant that avoiding every extreme we may all seek in love for pious truth, which very often

37. Cosin, *Correspondence*, pp. 5, 13, 15.

38. William Forbes, *Considerationes Modestae et Pacificae Controversiarum Justificatione, Purgatorio, Invocatione Sanctorum, Christo Mediatore, et Eucharistia* (2 vols., repr. 1658; *Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology*; Oxford: J. H. Parker, 1850). See Forbes' summaries of justification (pp. 495–501), purgatory (pp. 136–38), invocation of the saints (pp. 313, 223), Christ the mediator (pp. 363–64), and the Eucharist (pp. 507, 611–13).

lies in the *via media*.<sup>39</sup> Forbes sought a *via media* between the diverse doctrinal opinions of rigid Protestants and Roman Catholics as a way to affirm basic truths clearly articulated in Scripture and held by the Fathers, yet which also allowed liberty on things indifferent (*adiaphora*).

‘Due Moderation’ in Reform

This idea of moderation became more explicit in the work of the Archbishop of Armagh, John Bramhall (1594–1663). Bramhall spoke of ‘due moderation’ as the unique inheritance of the English Church in its separation from Rome.<sup>40</sup> In his *Just Vindication* of the Church of England from the charge of schism, Bramhall argued: ‘Three things are necessary to make a public reformation lawful; just grounds, due moderation, and sufficient authority.’<sup>41</sup> The English reformers were different from their continental counterparts because they held ‘due moderation in the *manner* of their separation’.<sup>42</sup> First, the English Church did not ‘deny the being of any Church whatsoever’, nor the ‘possibility of salvation in them’, especially if they held to ‘the Apostle’s Creed’ and ‘the Faith of the first four general Councils’.<sup>43</sup> While the English Church did ‘require subscription to our Articles’ for ‘those who seek to be initiated into Holy Orders’ or for ‘ecclesiastical preferment’ it did ‘not from strangers’.<sup>44</sup> Further, Bramhall said: ‘Neither are our Articles penned with anathemas or curses against all those, even of our own, who do not receive them; but used only as a help or rule of unity among ourselves.’<sup>45</sup> The thirtieth canon of the Church of England explicitly stated: “[It] was so far from the purpose of the Church of England to forsake and reject the Churches of Italy, France, Spain, Germany, or any such like Churches, in all things which they held and practised, &c. that it only departed from them in those particular points wherein they were fallen both from themselves in their ancient integrity, and from the Apostolical Church, which were their first

39. Forbes, *Considerations*, II, p. 507. See also Mark D. Chapman, *The Fantasy of Reunion: Anglicans, Catholics, and Ecumenism, 1833–1882* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 136.

40. John Bramhall, *The Works of Archbishop Bramhall* (5 vols.; Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology; Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1842–1805), II, pp. 580–99. See also II, pp. 35, 187, 305, 311, 347, 546; I, pp. 106, 11, 168, 179, 197.

41. Bramhall, *Works*, I, p. 168.

42. Bramhall, *Works*, I, p. 197.

43. Bramhall, *Works*, I, p. 197.

44. Bramhall, *Works*, I, p. 197.

45. Bramhall, *Works*, I, p. 197.

founders'''.<sup>46</sup> Second, Bramhall pointed out that 'our separation is from their errors, not from their Churches, so we do it with as much inward charity and moderation of our affections, as we can possibly'.<sup>47</sup> Third, Bramhall said that the English Church did not claim for itself 'either a new Church, or a new religion, or new Holy Orders' but that, 'Our religion is the same it was, our Church that same it was, our Holy Orders the same they were, in substance; differing only from what they were formerly, as a garden weeded from a garden unweeded; or a body purged from itself before it was purged'.<sup>48</sup>

Such idealistic language does demonstrate at least that Bramhall had a firm conviction that the English Church held to a reformed Catholicism different from other attempts at reform. For example, in his *Replication to the Bishop of Chalcedon* Bramhall said that 'we honour Calvin for his excellent parts, but we do not pin our religion either in doctrine or discipline or liturgy to Calvin's sleeve'.<sup>49</sup> The English Church had its own integrity because it had not departed from the Church Catholic in its doctrines of the faith. As Bramhall saw it, the English Church was thoroughly Catholic:

But for all ancient Churches, 'Grecian, Armenian, Ethiopian,' &c. — none excluded, not the Roman itself, — we are so far from forsaking them, that we make the Scriptures, interpreted by their join belief and practice, to be the rule of reformation. And wherein their successors have not swerved from the examples of their predecessors, we maintain a strict communion with them. Only in rites and ceremonies, and such indifferent things, we use the liberty of a free Church, to choose out such as are most proper for ourselves, and most conducive to those ends for which they were first instituted ... And all this with due moderation, so as neither to render religion sordid and sluttish, nor yet light and garish, but comely and venerable.<sup>50</sup>

Things indifferent were not important enough to cause a division with other churches, while at the same time, the English Church had 'forsaken no Sacraments either instituted by Christ or received by the primitive Church', would 'refuse no communion with any Catholic Christians at this day, and particularly with those "ancient Churches"', and did 'still maintain communion in Sacraments with Roman Catholics', whether or not they maintained communion with Anglicans.<sup>51</sup>

46. Bramhall, *Works*, I, pp. 197–98.

47. Bramhall, *Works*, I, p. 199.

48. Bramhall, *Works*, I, p. 199.

49. Bramhall, *Works*, II, p. 62.

50. Bramhall, *Works*, II, pp. 34–35.

51. Bramhall, *Works*, II, p. 35.

In Bramhall's work, while not denying the validity of either, there is a growing understanding of the *via media Anglicana* as mid-way between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism because of its due moderation in reform. Like Montagu, Cosin, and Forbes, Bramhall pushed moderation in reform in the classical sense of a golden mean further in the direction of a formal *via media Anglicana* between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. The English Church reformed the excesses of Roman Catholicism and avoided the deficiencies of more strident Protestant reforms. The Articles of Religion functioned neither like the canons of Trent nor as the Protestant confessions. The English Church was unique in the manner of its separation from Rome. As Jeremy Taylor (1613–67), the Bishop of Down and Connor, said in Bramhall's funeral sermon, 'He was a faithful servant to his masters, a loyal subject to the king, a zealous assertor of his religion against popery on the one side, and fanaticism on the other.'<sup>52</sup>

#### *Moderation in Reform as the English Ideal*

Bramhall's concept of due moderation in reform was taken up and set forth as the ideal of the English Church by the divine Timothy Puller (c. 1638–1693) in his work *The Moderation of the Church of England* (1679). Picking up on Aristotle's notion of reasonableness (ἐπιεικεία) and finding scriptural support in the AV's translation of the word in Phil. 4.5 as 'moderation', Puller placed the English Church firmly between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism.<sup>53</sup> Throughout his work, Puller asserted that the moderation of the English Church in following the Aristotelian mean was proven by the opposition it received from the extremes on either side. As Puller said:

... the Romanist think us too short and deficient in most of our measures, and therefore they would needs have us stretched, if not upon the rack: the sectaries count us redundant in many superfluities, and would fain have us cut precisely according to their models: so their mutual

52. Jeremy Taylor, *The Whole Works of the Right Rev. Jeremy Taylor, D.D., Lord Bishop of Down, Connor, and Dromore* (10 vols.; rev. and corr. Charles Page Eden; repr. 1970; London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1847–54), VIII, p. 422.

53. Timothy Puller, *The Moderation of the Church of England: Considered as Useful for Allaying the Present Distempers Which the Indisposition of the Time Hath Contracted* (ed. Robert Eden; repr. 1843; London: A. Pigott, Hennington-Gate, 1679), pp. 2–19. Puller follows St Thomas's *Summa* 2a2ae.120.1, and cites *Nichomachean Ethics*, 5.10 for understanding ἐπιεικεία but holds that it carries the same meaning as Aristotle's mean discerned by right reason (ὀρθὸς λόγος in *Nichomachean Ethics* 6.1) so that he may ground the idea in Scripture.

testimony rightly applied, may thus far be accepted; that indeed we are guilty of neither extreme, but really do bear the test to be in the golden mean.<sup>54</sup>

The opposition from both extremes also demonstrated the mean of the English Church as neither Roman Catholic nor Protestant (i.e., Puritan) but a reformed part of the Church Catholic.<sup>55</sup> As with Hall, Scripture as the rule of faith set the English Church in the mean against both extremes. Following Article 6, Puller said 'this article of the sufficiency of the Scriptures, and the use of them as a rule, is the very dividing point, at which those of the separation, on either hand, leave our church and her moderation at once'.<sup>56</sup> Elsewhere Puller made his point more explicit: 'The idea or form of our Reformation was neither taken from Luther nor Calvin, (as the Romanist love to speak of us) nor from any other, but from the Holy Scriptures, according to the use of the primitive Church'.<sup>57</sup>

Like Bramhall in following moderation in reform, Puller declared that the English Church's scriptural separation from Rome was not schismatic because it did not separate itself from the 'primitive Church'.<sup>58</sup> It avoided both the corruptions of Roman Catholicism and the zealous deficiencies of Puritanism. The Geneva-trained classical scholar Isaac Casaubon (1559–1614), who wrote a defense of the catholicity of the English Church, had argued this very point. Puller quoted Casaubon's dedication to King James I – found his polemical work against Ceasre Baronius's (1538–1607) *Annales Ecclesiastici* – which said that "'no church whatsoever comes nearer than yours to the form of the primitive flourishing Church, having taken just the middle way [*mediam viam*] between those that offended in excess and defect"'.<sup>59</sup> Under English law Puller noted that both Roman Catholics and Puritans were

54. Puller, *Moderation*, p. 28. Also, quoting Hammond, "'it being the dictate of natural reason in Aristotle, that the middle virtue is most infallibly known by this, that it is accused by either extreme as guilty of the other.'"

55. Puller uses the term 'Protestant' to refer to Puritans often, that is: '... they who call themselves our Protestant Dissenters, cannot be induced to come into entire union with our excellent reformed Church; but rather choose to unite with those Romanist in many of their unreasonable cavils'. Puller, *Moderation*, p. xxx. See also pp. 60, 252, 254, 262, 269, 271, 288, 289, 299, 306, 307, 308. For 'Protestant' generally see pp. 34, 53, 57, 125, 146, 215, 247, 251, 257, 262, 272, 284, 285, 289, 321, 331.

56. Puller, *Moderation*, p. 33.

57. Puller, *Moderation*, pp. 265–66.

58. Puller, *Moderation*, p. 272.

59. Casaubon, *Exercit. in Baron. Ep. Ded. Lond.* 1614 in Puller, *Moderation*, p. 330.



both treated as 'Separatists' because they did not hold to mean of moderation.<sup>60</sup> Puller claimed 'the same moderation which exonerates the Church of England from the guilt of schism with respect to the Romanist, doth aggravate also the schism of other Separatists'.<sup>61</sup> While the Dissenters did not 'acknowledge the moderation of our church', nevertheless, Puller said 'we trust its constitution, being most primitive, will be also most lasting in the esteem of the Church Universal, and in the approbation of wise and good Christians'.<sup>62</sup>

The works of Bramhall and Puller show that by the seventeenth century seeing the English Church as a *via media* between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism (or Puritanism at least) because of its moderation in reform had become well established as the English ideal in the minds of certain divines. It also appears that the language of moderation in reform had become common place enough to be accepted officially to some extent in the Church of England as a point of self-identity. For example, the Preface of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer stated that, 'It hath been the wisdom of the Church of *England*, ever since the first compiling of her publick Liturgy, to keep the mean between the two extremes, of too much stiffness in refusing, and of too much easiness in admitting any variation from it.'<sup>63</sup> When speaking about the nature of the changes made to the 1662 Prayer Book the Preface went on to state that the editors 'endeavoured to observe the like moderation' that was used 'in former times'.<sup>64</sup> This moderation consisted of rejecting alterations that were 'either of dangerous consequence (as secretly striking at some establish doctrine, or laudable practice of the Church of *England*, or indeed of the whole Catholick Church of Christ) or else of no consequence at all, but utterly frivolous and vain.'<sup>65</sup> Moderation was a virtue for the English Church even in Prayer Book reform.

### *A Peculiar Moderation in Reform*

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the English virtue of moderation in reform was united to the idea of catholicity articulated

60. Puller, *Moderation*, p. 292.

61. Puller, *Moderation*, p. 331.

62. Puller, *Moderation*, p. 331.

63. *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, 1662* (ed. Brian Cummings; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 209.

64. *Book of Common Prayer Texts*, p. 210.

65. *Book of Common Prayer Texts*, p. 210.

by the Vincentian Canon in the work of Irish Anglican lay theologian Alexander Knox (1757–1831), who was a descendant of the Scottish reformer John Knox (c. 1513–72). Alexander Knox held that the English Church, like other Reformation churches, subscribed to the principle of the authority of Scripture, but unlike other churches, Knox asserted that the English Church subscribed to the addition principle of catholicity. Knox said:

The Church of England adopts one principle, which other branches of the Reformation hold in common with her, that Fundamentals must have Holy Scripture for their basis, and that nothing is, or can be fundamental, which is not to be proved from the Sacred Word. But she also maintains a second principle, peculiar, I believe, in the great reformed body, to herself,—that in elucidating fundamentals, or in deciding secondary questions, relating not to the essence of Christianity, but to the well-being and right-ordering of a Church, the concurrent voice of sacred antiquity, the Catholic rule—*quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*—is, next to Sacred Scripture, our surest guide; and, in the matters to which it is justly applicable, a providentially authoritative guide, nay more than providentially, rather, where the indication is clear, divinely authoritative, because as Christ has said—“Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.”<sup>66</sup>

This claim to catholicity in following the Vincentian Canon of ‘that which is believed always, everywhere by all’ gave the English Church a ‘peculiar’ character. One cannot help but notice Knox’s continuity with Hall, Cosin, Bramhall, and Puller in asserting that the rule of Scripture limits what may be said to be required for belief after the manner of Article 6. At the same time, the tradition of the Church is given a more elevated position as the living voice of Christ, something that led Knox to conclude that the English Reformers had adopted a different approach from others. Accordingly, ‘our Reformers’, Knox said, were most decisive, ‘In asserting, though in strictest subordination to Scripture, the authority of the Catholic Church, so far as it was discoverable of the *consensus omnium* [by the agreement of all]. They were led, in this primary instance, as in all subordinate arrangements of importance, to adopt a medium between the Protestant and the unreformed Church.’<sup>67</sup> The authority of tradition found in the English Church’s following of the Vincentian Canon meant for Knox that it alone was unique among the Reformation churches. While using the Vincentian Canon as the

66. Alexander Knox, *Remains* (4 vols.; ed. J.J. Hornby; London: James Duncan, 1834–37, 2nd edn), III, p. 43.

67. Knox, *Remains*, III, pp. 65–66.

criteria of catholicity can be found in the work of Hooker, Bramhall, and Puller, they generally treat it as showing how the English Church, in removing the excesses of Roman Catholicism, was not schismatic from primitive Catholicism. But Knox further understood it as giving the English Church a peculiar character of catholicity different from either Roman Catholicism or Protestantism.<sup>68</sup>

Knox's thinking on the peculiar nature of the English Church influenced his good friend John Jebb (1775–1833), the Bishop of Limerick. Echoing Knox's idea of the 'peculiar' character of the English Reformation Jebb wrote a tract entitled 'The Peculiar Character of the Church of England' (1815). In it he asserted Anglican exceptionalism because the English Church alone remained faithful to catholic tradition by holding to the Vincentian Canon, and thus was uniquely a *via media* between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. In the first line of his tract Jebb claimed, 'At the present day, it is by no means sufficiently considered, that the Church of England occupies a very peculiar station in the Christian world; constituting as it were, a species in herself.'<sup>69</sup> With the Reformed churches 'scripture alone' was the criteria for an article of faith yet with the Church Catholic the English Church also sought the aid of tradition in interpretation of 'sacred text'.<sup>70</sup> The English Church held to the authority of the canonical scriptures, the first four councils, and the scriptural decisions of other general councils as stated in Elizabeth I's Act of Supremacy.<sup>71</sup> The basis for Jebb's claim was that in a special sense the Church of England alone held to the teachings of Vincent of Lérins against both Protestants and Roman Catholics. This was evident in 'her own uncompromising adherence to derivative episcopacy, and by her rejection of all clerical orders which have not emanated from that source' as the Preface to the Ordinal stated, and by her adoption through 'the precise rule of antiquity' of "'the universality, antiquity, and consent of the Catholic and Apostolic Church'".<sup>72</sup> When the Protestant church sought 'to divest the church of all authority' in 'England alone this procedure was felt to be an extreme

68. Bramhall, *Works*, II, pp. 69, 463; V, pp. 218, 271; Puller, *Moderation*, pp. 24, 58–60.

69. John Jebb, *A Tract for All Times, but Most Eminently for the Present. Peculiar Character of the Church of England, as Distinguished from Other Branches of the Reformation, and from the Modern Church of Rome* (repr.; London: Rivingtons, 1835 [1815]), p. 3.

70. Jebb, *Peculiar Character of the Church of England*, p. 4.

71. Jebb, *Peculiar Character of the Church of England*, pp. 4–5; Bray, *Documents of the English Reformation*, p. 327, par. 20.

72. Jebb, *Peculiar Character of the Church of England*, pp. 7, 8, 10.

alike pernicious and unreasonable'.<sup>73</sup> Jebb said of the English Church's peculiar claim to catholicity:

The Protestant communions on the continent have not so much as pretended to revere antiquity. The Church of Rome has not been wanting in this pretension; but, instead of revering antiquity, she has idolized herself. The Church of England alone has adopted a middle course; moving in the same delightful path, and treading in the same hallowed footsteps, with Vincentius, and the Catholic bishops, and the ancient fathers; proceeding as far as they proceed, and stopping where they stopped.<sup>74</sup>

The peculiar nature of the English Church was that it alone kept continuity with the primitive Church. According to Jebb, the interpretation of Scripture was a case in point: 'The great mass of Protestant communities sends each individual to the Bible alone', and conversely, the Church of Rome 'sends her children neither to the Bible alone, nor to tradition alone ... but to an infallible living expositor'.<sup>75</sup> From such examples, Jebb reached this conclusion: 'The Church of England steers a middle course. She reveres the scripture – she respects tradition.'<sup>76</sup>

Through his use of Vincent of Lérins's teaching, Jebb wedded the idea of catholicity to the peculiar nature of the Church of England as a *via media* between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism because it alone maintained a primitive catholicism. Jebb's idea of Anglican exceptionalism would come to have a profound effect on the understanding of the *via media Anglicana* because it was Knox's and Jebb's thought that provided the key for Newman's understanding of the English Church laying claim to Catholic antiquity because it held a unique position mid-way between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. As Newman himself said, 'We are a "Reformed" Church, not a "Protestant"'.<sup>77</sup>

73. Jebb, *Peculiar Character of the Church of England*, p. 8.

74. Jebb, *Peculiar Character of the Church of England*, p. 16.

75. Jebb, *Peculiar Character of the Church of England*, p. 23.

76. Jebb, *Peculiar Character of the Church of England*, p. 23.

77. John Henry Newman, *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman* (32 vols.; ed. Charles Stephen Dessian *et al.*; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978–2008), pp. 314, 325. Jebb's treatise was also behind Newman's controversy with Abbé Jager over tradition. See Louis Allen, *John Henry Newman and the Abbé Jager: A Controversy on Scripture and Tradition* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 5–6.

*Newman's Anglican Via Media*

John Henry Newman (1801–90) first made an argument for the Anglican *via media* in the short Tracts 38 and 41 of the *Tracts for the Times*, which appeared anonymously under the title *Via Media No. I* and *Via Media No. II* in 1834.<sup>78</sup> Newman said in Tract 38, ‘The glory of the English Church is, that it has taken the VIA MEDIA, as it has been called. It lies *between* the (so called) Reformers and the Romanists’.<sup>79</sup> Newman developed his idea of the Anglican *via media* in three major works. In his *Lectures on the Prophetical Office of the Church viewed relatively to Romanism and Popular Protestantism* (1836), Newman portrayed the English Church as a reformed Catholic Church that held to the doctrines of the primitive Christianity against the narrowing of ‘popular Protestantism’ and the excesses of ‘Romanism’.<sup>80</sup> To this volume was joined a second that contained essays about the Anglican *via media*. Both volumes were reprinted under the title *The Via Media I* (1837) and *The Via Media II* (1830–41). The third volume of Newman’s thoughts concerning the Anglican *via media* was titled *Lectures on Justification* (1838). Newman said of them: ‘These Lectures on the doctrine of Justification form one of a series of works projected by the Author in illustration of what has often been considered to be the characteristic position of the Anglican Church, as lying in a supposed *Via Media*, admitting much and excluding much both of Roman and of Protestant teaching.’<sup>81</sup>

Newman, however, transformed the notion of the Anglican *via media* as moderation in reform between Protestants and Roman Catholics when he attempted to take the idea a step further by establishing it as an actual ‘doctrine’ of the English Church.<sup>82</sup> To him, the notion of the

78. John Henry Newman, *Tracts for the Times*. X. *The Works of Cardinal John Henry Newman Birmingham Oratory Millennium Edition* (ed. James Tolhurst; introduced with notes by James Tolhurst; Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), pp. 102–28. For the attribution of these tracts to Newman, see H. P. Liddon, *Life of Edward Bouverie Pusey* (4 vols.; London: Longmans, 1893–97), III, pp. 475–76.

79. Newman, *Tracts for the Times*, p. 108.

80. John Henry Newman, *The Via Media of the Anglican Church* (ed. H.D. Weidner; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. xiii.

81. John Henry Newman, *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification* (repr.; London: Longmans, Green and Co., 3rd edn, 1908 [1874]), p. ix.

82. As Newman said in the preface to the third edition of *The Via Media* ‘the formal purpose of the Volume was ... the establishment of a doctrine of its own, the Anglican *Via Media*’. John Henry Newman, *The Via Media of the Anglican Church* (2 vols.; repr.; London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1901 [1837]), I, p. xv.

Anglican *via media* was problematic because it existed only as a religious 'theory' and, as such, was open to the suspicion of paper existence when the 'proof of reality in a doctrine' was 'its holding together when actually attempted'.<sup>83</sup> A theoretical *via media* was open to the criticisms of being antiquarian, a learned subtlety, or even an illusion.<sup>84</sup> So Newman set out to demonstrate that the Anglican *via media* existed in reality. But such a claim had to be tested because other ways of viewing things did exist, and not merely on paper, but in the actual piety of the Christian life. As Newman said:

Protestantism and Popery are real religions; no one can doubt about them; they have furnished the mould in which nations have been cast: but the *Via Media*, viewed as an integral system, has never had existence except on paper; it is known, not positively but negatively, in its differences from the rival creeds, not in its own properties; and can only be described as a third system, neither the one nor the other, but with something of each, cutting between them, and, as if with a critical fastidiousness, trifling with them both, and boasting to be nearer Antiquity than either.<sup>85</sup>

In Newman's mind, the Anglican *via media* was to be an 'approximation to that primitive truth which Ignatius and Polycarp enjoyed',<sup>86</sup> and 'the very truth of the Apostles'.<sup>87</sup>

To make the Anglican *via media* a reality, Newman turned to the teachings of those seventeenth-century High Churchmen who were historically called 'Anglo-Catholics'.<sup>88</sup> This was 'the religion of Andrewes, Laud, Hammond, Butler, and Wilson'.<sup>89</sup> By invoking these divines, Newman said that he hoped to accomplish 'a second Reformation' that would be a 'better reformation, for it would be a return not to the sixteenth century, but to the seventeenth'.<sup>90</sup> The teaching of seventeenth-century Anglo-Catholicism allowed Newman to assert the catholicity of the English Church over and against the claim that it was merely the result of the Protestant Reformation. In fact, the meaning of

83. Newman, *Via Media I*, pp. 15–16.

84. Newman, *Via Media I*, p. 17.

85. Newman, *Via Media I*, p. 16.

86. Newman, *Via Media I*, p. 7.

87. Newman, *Via Media I*, p. 17.

88. Peter B. Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context: Anglican High Churchmanship 1760–1857* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 41–43.

89. Newman, *Via Media I*, p. 17.

90. John Henry Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (ed. Martin J. Svaglic; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 50.

the term 'Anglo-Catholic', which denoted the same way of thinking as the old High Churchmen's, changed in Newman's hands. Whereas the Old High Churchmen had interpreted Scripture in light of antiquity, for the Tractarian 'Anglo-Catholics', antiquity and not Scripture became the rule of faith.<sup>91</sup> Newman took quite literally the teaching of a canon of 1571 that said preachers should never teach anything 'except that which is agreeable to the doctrine of the Old and New Testament, and which the *Catholic Fathers and ancient Bishops have collected* from that very doctrine'.<sup>92</sup>

While the Anglican *via media* could be drawn out of the various writings of the Anglo-Catholic divines, currently it existed only in disparate parts of the Church and lacked formulation into an actual coherent 'system'.<sup>93</sup> Since the 'doctrine of the *Via Media*' had been applied to 'the Anglican system by writers of repute', it was left to Newman to turn the Anglican *via media* into a 'positive religious system'.<sup>94</sup> 'We require a recognized theology', Newman said, in hope that his work would be 'a first approximation to the required solution in one department of a complicated problem'.<sup>95</sup> He wanted 'the formation of a recognized Anglican theology' that was neither Protestant nor Roman Catholic.<sup>96</sup> It had to be faithful to antiquity and yet genuinely Anglican by meeting the requirements of the Formularies of the Church of England by conforming to the Prayer Book, the Thirty Nine Articles, and the Ordinal.<sup>97</sup> Newman later said of his project: 'I wanted to bring out in a substantive form a living Church of England, in a position proper to herself, and founded on distinct principles; as far as paper could do it, as far as earnestly preaching it and influencing others towards it, could tend to make it a fact; — a living Church, made of flesh and blood, with voice, complexion, and motion and action, and a will of its own.'<sup>98</sup> So Newman tried to build such a system of theology through his Anglican *via media* even though he recognized, by his own admission, that such an attempt was a 'tentative Inquiry'.<sup>99</sup>

91. Nockles, *Oxford Movement*, pp. 113–18.

92. Newman, *Apology*, p. 85.

93. Newman, *Via Media I*, p. 23; Newman, *Apology*, p. 74.

94. Newman, *Apology*, p. 70.

95. Newman, *Via Media I*, p. 25.

96. Newman, *Via Media I*, p. 24.

97. Newman, *Via Media I*, p. 23.

98. Newman, *Apology*, p. 73.

99. Newman, *Apology*, p. 74.



Key to Newman's attempt to define the Anglican *via media* as a doctrine of the English Church was tradition. As he wrote, for Roman Catholics tradition filled out a system of belief based on the New Testament because the teaching of the apostles was 'too varied'.<sup>100</sup> In opposition, Protestants appealed to Scripture as the rule of faith, but they too had to acknowledge both Scripture and the doctrine of inspiration as products of tradition.<sup>101</sup> Where an appeal to Scripture would remain inconclusive when it came to competing interpretations, Newman appealed to antiquity.<sup>102</sup> Traditions could only be accepted as legitimate if they were found in antiquity. Even so, Newman did not see Roman Catholic and Protestant claims as equal to one another. Controversies with Protestants were about 'opinions', while controversies with Rome were about 'matters of fact'.<sup>103</sup> Rome was guilty of doctrinal corruption. Nevertheless, there remained a seed of truth: 'Romanism holds the foundation, or is the truth overlaid with corruptions'.<sup>104</sup> Romanism was guilty of 'misdirection and abuse, not the absence of right principle'.<sup>105</sup> The doctrinal corruptions of Romanism were not as easily dismissed as Protestantism because, 'Rome retains the principle of true Catholicism perverted; popular Protestantism is wanting in the principle'.<sup>106</sup> Protestants had gone too far at the time of the Reformation by pulling down the Church and rebuilding it when it only needed restoration.<sup>107</sup> But this was not the case with Anglo-Catholicism, Newman said, because 'we Anglo-Catholics do not profess a different religion from that of Rome, we profess their Faith *all but* their corruptions'.<sup>108</sup> This teaching was set forth in an Anglican canon law which stated, 'The abuse of a thing doth not take away the lawful use of it'.<sup>109</sup> Newman thought Anglicanism had rightly kept the apostolic tradition it inherited from medieval Catholicism, but had jettisoned the corruptions.

The error of Roman Catholicism was that it had substituted 'the authority of the Church for that of Antiquity', when antiquity, and not authority, was the mark of true catholicity.<sup>110</sup> Yet Newman found

100. Newman, *Via Media I*, pp. 31–32.

101. Newman, *Via Media I*, p. 35.

102. Newman, *Via Media I*, pp. 37–38.

103. Newman, *Via Media I*, pp. 39–40.

104. Newman, *Via Media I*, p. 40.

105. Newman, *Via Media I*, p. 41.

106. Newman, *Via Media I*, p. 41.

107. Newman, *Via Media I*, p. 42.

108. Newman, *Via Media I*, p. 42.

109. Newman, *Via Media I*, p. 42 n. 5; Canon 30.

considerable agreement between the English Church and Rome in the notion of the primitive Church. Whatever had the consent of catholicity was apostolic.<sup>111</sup> This was summed up in the Vincentian Canon, which taught, 'that is to be received as Apostolic which has been taught "always, everywhere, and by all"'.<sup>112</sup> Like Jebb, Newman said, 'Catholicity, Antiquity, and consent of the Fathers, is the proper evidence of the fidelity or Apostolicity of a professed Tradition.'<sup>113</sup> If a doctrine was not primitive according to this rule, it could not be considered apostolic, and therefore could not be required to be believed as *de fide*, as Roman Catholicism had done. Private opinions about purgatory, prayers to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the denial of eternal damnation could never be made the faith of the Church because they lacked apostolicity.<sup>114</sup> That was, at least, the way Newman understood the Anglican *via media* prior to his conversion to Roman Catholicism, and before he concluded it was 'heresy'.<sup>115</sup> Until that point, Newman thought the English Church was more Catholic than Roman Catholicism. Anglicanism was Catholicism without corruption because it alone had maintained the unaltered teachings of the primitive Church.

The point that seems to have been missed by some scholars is that Newman's Anglican *via media* was a 'constructive' theological attempt to build a system of Catholic doctrine and not merely a means to travel from Canterbury to Rome.<sup>116</sup> Newman's claim was not a historical one. While there was evidence from history for the idea of the Anglican *via media* in Newman's mind, his project was different. He attempted to construct a living *via media* as a whole system of thought that consolidated Catholic doctrine. The three theological points of the *via media* were 'dogma, the sacramental system, and anti-Romanism'.<sup>117</sup>

110. Newman, *Via Media I*, p. 49.

111. Newman, *Via Media I*, pp. 49–50.

112. Newman, *Via Media I*, p. 51.

113. Newman, *Via Media I*, p. 51.

114. Newman, *Via Media I*, pp. 52–53.

115. John Henry Newman, *Certain Difficulties Felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching Considered* (2 vols.; New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1901), I, pp. 363–400 (379, 392).

116. Newman said, 'I have written in all, (good or bad) 5 constructive books—My prophetic office (which has come to pieces)—Essay on Justification—Development of Doctrine—University Lectures (Dublin) and this [*Grammar of Assent*].' Newman, *Letters and Diaries*, XXIV, pp. 390–91. His *Prophetic Office* and *Lectures* both were attempts to establish the Anglican *via media*.

117. Newman, *Apology*, p. 71.

Newman thought that both Roman Catholics and Anglicans held certain doctrines necessary for salvation and that sacraments were supernatural means of grace.<sup>118</sup> This doctrinal and sacramental commonality derived from the fact that Anglicanism was a 'branch' of the Church Catholic and was thus 'identical with that early undivided Church, and in unity of that Church it had unity with the other branches', which were the Latin and the Greek.<sup>119</sup> The catholicity that Anglicanism shared with the Great Church gave Anglicanism its peculiar character and made a theological *via media* possible, even if it was not, strictly speaking, a historical *via media* between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism.

Newman was so effective in proving his argument for the Anglican *via media*, that he was followed by generations of later scholars, even though this was something Anglicanism had never formally stated, and was, moreover, something that Newman himself later in life would famously claim to be 'absolutely pulverized'.<sup>120</sup> Yet to borrow a term from Newman's own work on the development of doctrine, his doctrine of the Anglican *via media* has something of a 'chronic vigour'.<sup>121</sup> This is true, if for no other reason than that the English Church's moderation in reform has retained much that is Catholic, a fact which distinguishes it from more zealous Protestant reforms.

### Conclusion

The classical virtue of the *via media* as a path of moderation between extremes was adopted by some of the leading divines of the early English Church in their teaching of moderation in reform. The scriptural warrant for this teaching was found in Article 6 which taught that what was not clear in Scripture could not be required for salvation as an article of faith (*de fide*). This placed the English Church between the Canons of Trent and the narrower teachings found in certain Protestant confessional statements (i.e., Dort). Yet what exactly constituted that moderation meant different things to different divines. What was a leaden mediocrity to Jewel was a golden mean to Parker. What was

118. Newman, *Apology*, p. 71, i.e., Trinity, incarnation, atonement, original sin, regeneration by the supernatural grace of the sacraments, apostolic succession, the necessity of both faith and obedience, and future punishment for the wicked.

119. Newman, *Apology*, p. 72.

120. Newman, *Apology*, p. 111.

121. John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), p. 437.

moderation in reform against the Puritans for Hooker was for Hall a *via media* between Arminians and Calvinists. What was moderation in reform between Papist and Puritan for Montagu and Cosin was for Forbes a *via media* in doctrine between the two. What was moderation in separation from Rome for Bramhall became the English ideal of moderation between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism for Puller. What was a Catholic moderation in holding to the Vincentian Canon for Knox, was Anglican exceptionalism for Jebb, and it became in the hands of John Henry Newman the doctrine of the Anglican *via media*. While the idea of moderation in reform is well established in Anglicanism, only time will tell if this idea will succeed, and if Newman's development of it in his doctrine of the Anglican *via media* will endure and be received as the unique identity of the Anglican Communion.