THE CAROLINE DIVINES AND THE CHURCH OF ROME

A CONTRIBUTION TO CURRENT ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE

Mark Langham

ROUTLEDGE

The Caroline Divines and the Church of Rome

In the early seventeenth century, as the vehement aggression of the early Reformation faded, the Church of England was able to draw upon scholars of remarkable ability to present a more thoughtful defence of its position. The Caroline Divines, who flourished under King Charles I, drew upon vast erudition and literary skill, to refute the claims of the Church of Rome and affirm the purity of the English religious settlement. This book examines their writings in the context of modern ecumenical dialogue, notably that of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) to ask whether their arguments are still valid, and indeed whether they can contribute to contemporary ecumenical progress.

Drawing upon an under-used resource within Anglicanism's own theological history, this volume shows how the restatement by the Caroline Divines of the catholic identity of the Church prefigured the work of ARCIC, and provides Anglicans with a vocabulary drawn from within their own tradition that avoids some of the polemical and disputed formulations of the Roman Catholic tradition.

Mark Langham is a priest of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Westminster. From 2008 to 2013 he worked in Rome at the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, where he was responsible for relations between the Vatican and the Anglican Communion, and was co-secretary to the official dialogue between the Catholic Church and Anglican Communion (ARCIC). In 2010 he provided the BBC commentary for the visit of Pope Benedict to England, and is currently based at Cambridge as Catholic chaplain to the University.


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To the Anglican Centre in Rome
where I conferred with the Caroline Divines
under a Roman sun.


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Foreword

As former co-chairman of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, I warmly commend this study of *The Caroline Divines and Church of Rome* by Mark Langham. Monsignor Langham has wide experience of ecumenism and worked for several years in the Council for Christian Unity in Rome. This original work deserves a wide readership.

Gestures can reveal the burden of centuries. When Pope Paul VI placed his Fisherman's ring on the hand of Archbishop Michael Ramsey in 1966, he was undoubtedly aware of a context of negative Roman judgements upon Anglican orders, and a more recent history of polite but implacable cold-shouldering. Yet the action of Pope Paul revealed a deeper insight which recognised a common Christian identity and even family likeness between Anglicans and Roman Catholics. Both he and Archbishop Ramsey were to give institutional expression to this relationship by the establishment, soon afterwards, of an official Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC), to engage in a serious dialogue in order achieve 'that unity in truth, for which Christ prayed'.

It is in the nature of human discourse that disagreements often claim most attention, while things held in common, which are not an object of dissent, are taken for granted and even forgotten. Anglicans and Roman Catholics have, historically, been conscious of what separates them, rather than what they share. It has been the task of ARCIC painstakingly to bring to light that large area of agreed doctrine, founded in centuries of common history, and bonds of scholarship and culture, to set forth the real, if imperfect, communion between the two traditions. This is the basis on which disputed issues can then be investigated, in 'respect, esteem and fraternal love'.

The strength of that close relationship, and the discovery of such a rich common theological and spiritual heritage, owes a great deal to those seventeenth-century English theologians traditionally known as the 'Caroline Divines'. Their remarkable scholarship, sensitivity to catholic and Apostolic Tradition and their desire for the unity of the Church, enabled them to engage in dialogue rather than polemic. They were willing to go a long way in acknowledging the claims of Rome in order to focus creatively on their areas of disagreement. Of course, their context, language and theology was of another age, but their larger vision of what it means to be catholic is an important foundation for modern ecumenical discourse.

This is a fascinating story to be told, a pre-history of the modern ecumenical movement. Even in themselves, however, the Caroline Divines deserve a new audience, especially within the Roman Catholic (but even in the Anglican) world. The Divines remind us that the search for unity is a task of intense scholarship, but more than that, of imagination, creativity and holiness. I sincerely hope that this book will be widely read by all people interested in a growth in unity between Anglicans and Roman Catholics.

Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor

Preface

In 1609, Bishop Lancelot Andrewes, the most respected and capable theologian of the Church of England, undertook a correspondence with Cardinal Robert Bellarmine, chief controversialist of the Roman Curia. The scholarship deployed by both sides was formidable, and the correspondence was robust, but, given the period, remarkably broad-minded and civilised. It was, it can be argued, the first official dialogue between the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church, and a reminder that ecumenical discussion is only slightly younger than the Reformation. The yearning to re-unite the different strands of Christian tradition emerged soon after the division of western Christianity, and although in these early decades theological exchanges could be pointed and bitter, there were always individuals who sought to give some expression to the wider unity of Christendom. This is the pre-history of ecumenism, an engagement that endured the hostilities and persecutions of the centuries before the modern ecumenical movement.

This 'back story' of ecumenism has been largely neglected by modern ecumenical dialogue. The official exchanges between the Roman Catholic and Anglican Communions, undertaken by ARCIC (The Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission), have called to witness biblical and patristic sources, but have left largely untouched the theological engagements of the early modern era. The omission was noted by the head of ecumenism at the Vatican, Cardinal Kasper, when he addressed the bishops of the Anglican Communion gathered at the 2008 Lambeth Conference, challenging them to look beyond recent controversies:

> It occurs to me that at critical moments in the history of the Church of England and subsequently of the Anglican Communion, you have been able to retrieve the strength of the Church of the Fathers when that Tradition was in jeopardy. The Caroline Divines are an instance of that, and above all, I think of the Oxford Movement. Perhaps in our own day it would be possible too, to think of a new Oxford Movement, a retrieval of riches which lie within your own household.

While the Cardinal's reference to the Oxford Movement underlines a familiar element of the catholic Tradition within Anglicanism, his passing

reference to the Caroline Divines calls attention to a lesser-known historical phenomenon (certainly for Roman Catholics) which might be considered a resource for modern theological issues. Shortly after the Cardinal's intervention, the Caroline Divines were again summoned forth in an ecumenical context at the General Synod of the Church of England in July 2009 during discussion of the 1994 ARCIC Document *Life in Christ*. Presenting the document to Synod, the Bishop of Guildford commented:

> *Life in Christ* was surprisingly thin historically on both Anglican and Catholic moral theology [. . .] It is certainly perplexing that Caroline moral theology, including the innovative and eventually influential theological work of Bishop Jeremy Taylor was not flagged.

His point was reinforced by the Archbishop of Canterbury, who talked of the 'sophisticated tradition of casuistry', pastoral practice and ethical foundations developed by Jeremy Taylor and other seventeenth-century theologians.

This book is an attempt to revisit that earlier history of contact between Roman Catholic and Anglican theologians, to ask what these exchanges may contribute to current debated ecumenical themes. In particular, the work of the seventeenth-century theologians popularly known as the Caroline Divines will be considered in the light of modern ecumenical discussion. These theologians wrote widely and in detail on the relationship of the Church of England to that of Rome, producing an impressive body of work which should, at the least, form a background to contemporary discussion, and which may indeed have potential to help progress the agenda in some areas.

Acknowledgements

Without the existence of the Anglican Centre in Rome, I should had neither resources nor opportunity to pursue this study. Its holding of essential texts was one thing; the warmth of welcome and support from its Director, Canon David Richardson and his wife Margie, and their successor Archbishop David Moxon, made study, even in the intense Roman heat, a pleasure. Fr Norman Tanner SJ guided me perceptively and patiently through my work, and to him I owe an enormous debt of gratitude. My colleagues and superiors at the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity were encouraging, generous and not a little bemused. I have to thank especially Mrs Silvana Salvati for checking proofs, and Bishop Brian Farrell for allowing me time off to address the elaborate bureaucracy of the Gregorian University. In Cambridge, Dr James Hawkey cast an expert and essential Anglican eye over the draft, while from far off Durham Professor Paul Murray helped hone my arguments. Behind them all, my profound thanks are due to Cardinal Cormac who sent me to work in ecumenism, his own great love, and thus kindled my own passion for the subject; and to Canon Christopher Tuckwell, who (although he won't remember it) first introduced me to the Caroline Divines.


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Abbreviations

ARCIC	Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission
CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church
CCHEL	The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature
CDF	Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
DI	Dominus Iesus
DS	Denzinger-Schönmetzer
DV.Dei	Verbum
FOAG	Faith and Order Advisory Group of the Church of England
G&S	Gaudium et Spes
IATDC	Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission
JEH	Journal of Ecclesiastical History
LACT	Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology
LG	Lumen Gentium
M&C	More & Cross
NCMH	The New Cambridge Modern History
ODCC	The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church
ODNB	The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
OiC	One in Christ
PCPCU	Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity
RenQ	Renaissance Quartely
SCar	Sacramentum Caritatis
UR	Unitatis Redintegratio
USCCB	United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
UUS	Ut Unum Sint
VS	Veritatis Splendor


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1 The historical context

The work of the early seventeenth-century Caroline Divines (we shall discuss that title later) cannot be separated from their historical context. They were members of, and spokesmen for, a Church that had emerged from a turbulent sixteenth century, but which still faced threats from within and without. Queen Elizabeth had sought to contain a wide range of churchmanship within her Settlement, epitomised by Francis Bacon's adage that the Queen wished to make 'no window into men's souls'.[1] However, the corollary was suppression and persecution of those who would not subscribe to her (admittedly idiosyncratic) view of the state of the Church – and in practice that meant both Puritans and Roman Catholics. 'Puritan' is a broad and rather imprecise term for who felt that the English Reformation had not gone far enough, and that, in the words of the Marian exile John Jewel, the Elizabeth settlement was a 'leaden mediocrity'.[2] The first task of the conforming theologians immediately after Elizabeth's reign was, then, to defend, against the Puritans and in positive terms, the *status quo* of the national Church, demonstrating its authenticity and suitability for the English people.

A particular threat, however, was felt to be presented by the Roman Catholic Church, which was assuming a more aggressive theological stance towards those who rejected its authority. Heresy was considered by Rome to be a matter of ignorance, to be combatted by clear reasoning and firm argument.[3] The readiness of Roman theologians to enter into debate – most notably Cardinal Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621) who 'answers all the arguments in the world, whether it be possible or not possible'[4] – increased the pressure on the Church of England to provide spokesmen capable of conducting its defence. Rather than repeated denunciations of Roman positions, what the Church of England most needed was a positive statement of its ecclesiology that would establish the religion of the Church of England in the hearts of its citizens as the natural form of religion for the country.

Defending the settlement: Jewel and Hooker

The shape that this project took was defined by the historical situation in which the seventeenth-century Divines found themselves. Modern

scholarship has rightly affirmed that the English Reformers were sensible of their connection to a 'Protestant International'.[5] But against this can be set a chauvinistic element in the English Reformation. The process of reform in England was seen to be providential and distinctive, and the growing sense of nationhood throughout Elizabeth's reign included an understanding of the place of the Church within, and its role in forming, the nation. Above all, Queen Elizabeth's resolve to have conformity only in essentials, and to tolerate diversity in non-essentials, contrasted with the Genevan model which demanded absolute adherence to scriptural principles in all details. Rightly or wrongly, the Elizabethan Church assumed that its Reformation had been distinctive, a system of belief and worship peculiarly suited to the life and culture of the nation. This view was to receive a definitive expression in Hooker's *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, which insisted that the 'extreme and rigorous' measures taken by the continental reformers were not suited to the 'moderate kind which the church of England hath taken'.[6] Cautious reform, and elevation of the 'middle path', called by Archbishop Matthew Parker the 'golden mediocrity' of the English Church, together with the stress upon the continuity of the English Church with its predecessor, were themes which would be developed by Jacobean and Caroline Divines into overarching characteristics of the English Church.

John Jewel (1522–1571) wrote perhaps the first clear defence of the Church of England. The *Apologia ecclesiae Anglicanae* refuted the claims of Rome on grounds that were to become familiar to seventeenth-century theologians. For Jewel, the English Church is governed 'as much as we possibly could, very near to the order used in the old times', so that while it is true that the Church of England has departed from the Roman allegiance, 'yet for all this, from the primitive Church, from the Apostles, and from Christ we have not departed'.[7] Accordingly, the *Apologia* employs the texts of antiquity, notably the Fathers and Canons of early Councils, to establish the nature of the early Church, and thereby to demonstrate that the English Church truly represents it in the modern age.

Richard Hooker (1554–1600) was a friend and protégé of Jewel, whose masterful Laws[8] was an attempt not merely to justify the Elizabethan religious settlement, but to present it as the natural and reasonable form of religion for the English people. Eventually published in eight books, the entire work reflects Hooker's vision not just of the Church, but the just ordering of society. With early fans such as King James I and his son King Charles, the *Laws* achieved magisterial status within Anglicanism.[9] Acknowledging that scripture contains all things necessary for salvation, Hooker argues that this is not the same as saying that all truths are explicitly apparent therein. The aim of scripture is salvation, not laying down the precise model of Christian polity, and there is always the need for judgment and decision: 'Much of that which Scripture teacheth is not always needful, and much the Church of God shall always need which the Scripture teacheth not'.[10] Hooker attacked Puritan criticism of rites and customs that they claim are not directly sanctioned by scripture, making a distinction that was to

be crucial in seventeenth-century theology between things 'essential' and 'things indifferent' – *adiaphora*. Under this second category fall disputed usages, which are not to be rejected outright, but rather judged according to the axioms of godliness, antiquity, expediency and adaptability.

Hooker's monumental work is of such significance that he is sometimes accused of having constructed, rather than consolidated, the faith he expounded.[11] But even if his writings became something of a political football in the centuries following his death, his themes, and the method he used to treat them, were highly influential on theologians who succeeded him.[12]

In the first place, Hooker established a tone of debate that was reasoned and moderate, a 'measured tranquility'.[13] While, for Hooker, authority in society derives ultimately from God, he was adamant in allowing a role for human reason. The heady polemics of Jewel did not appeal to him, nor did the outright refusal to admit any virtue whatever in the Church of Rome. Serenity, however, did not betoken timidity. Hooker took the fight to his opponents, comfortably employing Aquinas to support his arguments, and bequeathing to English apologetics the confidence to make use of medieval scholastics who were considered the champions of Roman Catholicism.

Hooker's treatment of scripture is another important legacy. He argues powerfully that scripture cannot be left to the unaided subjective interpreter, since not all truths rise immediately from its pages. Those aspects of the Church that have no express authority in the Bible, what Hooker termed 'things indifferent' or *adiaphora* (a category including particularly the rites and ordering of the Church), are to be judged also by reason and Tradition. This will mean giving due weight to history and common experience. Hooker therefore tended to diminish the aspect of revolution within the Reformation, viewing it not as a break in the Church's history, but rather claiming that English reformers were only 'reducing [the Church] to that perfection from which it hath swerved. In this case we are to retain as much . . . of former things as we may'.[14] This sense of continuity was to be a strong inheritance for the Stuart divines.

Hooker's treatment of ministry is notable for the relatively low importance he attributes to preaching. His views on the sacraments, in particular the Eucharist, are not themselves exceptional or out of tune with reformed views; what is radical is the prominence he gives to them at the expense of preaching. At the same time, Hooker's affection for the liturgy, and in particular the Book of Common Prayer, is clearly evident, and helped establish an Anglican piety and taste for decorum in religion for centuries to come.

The English Church in the seventeenth century

At the dawn of the seventeenth century, the attitude of the new king, James I, and that of his son Charles I, to the threats and demands of religious dissenters forms the background to the world of the Jacobean and Caroline Divines, and is essential for understanding their true contribution to the history of Anglicanism.

James I was an interested and informed amateur theologian. Although he never swerved from his preferred Calvinism, he liked the breadth and moderation of the Church of England, and left Puritans in no doubt that he was unwilling to accede to their demands for further reformation of the Church. On the other wing of the Church's life, the king at first appeared conciliatory towards Roman Catholicism, but concrete gestures to bring relief to Catholics did not materialise, and radical elements within the Catholic community perpetrated the fateful Gunpowder Plot in 1605. Following the failure of the Plot, Parliament enacted rigorous anti-Catholic legislation. James himself took a more nuanced line, insisting on an Oath of Allegiance to be taken by Catholics explicitly rejecting papal authority in the temporal sphere. It was the summary dismissal of this strategy by Rome that induced James to respond in the extravagantly entitled pamphlet *Triplici nodo, triplex cuneus*: 'A triple wedge for a triple knot' – the triple knot being two papal briefs and Cardinal Bellarimine's letter that had refuted the royal Oath. To this Cardinal Bellarmine responded in a pamphlet under the name of his secretary: *Responsio Mattei Torti*; this elicited from James a *Premontion to Christian Princes* and drew into the fray a host of other apologists on both sides. John Donne published his *Pseudo-Martyr* in 1610, mocking contemporary Roman Catholics who compared their plight to the martyrs of antiquity. It was, however, to a reluctant Lancelot Andrewes that James turned for the major refutation of Bellarmine. Andrewes' *Tortura Torti* of 1609 denied papal power to dispense Catholics from moral and civil laws, and defended the Royal Supremacy. Bellarmine responded in the following year, with his *Apologia pro Responsione sua*, which elicited from Andrewes the further reposte, *Responsio ad Apologiam Card. Bellarmine*. Despite the intense nature of this controversy, Andrewes' *Responsio* was to be his most systematic and convincing exposition of the differences between the English and Roman Churches. Responding point by point to the Cardinal's work, he refutes many key tenets of Roman Catholicism, but also demonstrates that he is willing to enter into theological debate on these issues. Andrewes' conciliatory and even liberal attitude towards the Roman Church was in contrast to the invective of many protestants, and was to herald the more constructive and pacific approach of the emerging High Church party.

James' son and successor, Charles I, was as devoted as his father to the Church of England, but not to its Calvinist theology. Already, as heir, his tastes had allied him to the High Church party, and Lancelot Andrewes, as Dean of the Chapel Royal, had encouraged him in this direction, not least by selecting appropriate preachers and chaplains for the royal chapel.

High Churchmen, popularly known as 'Arminians', had been, before the reign of Charles I, in a small minority, but the new king saw in this party a bulwark against Puritan troublemakers. Within months of becoming king in 1625, he promoted its members to key posts in the Church, thereby arousing the suspicion of his Puritan critics that he favoured, or even professed, Roman Catholicism. From 1629 Charles ruled without Parliament, allowing the Arminians unchecked authority to impose their

views. It was William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1633, who in his person came to symbolise (particularly for its opponents) the Arminian cause. Laud's reforms were met with horror by many within the English Church: chalices and patens were to be used instead of Protestant communion cups. Communion tables were moved to the east end of churches, dressed as altars, and divided from the nave by communion rails. The sermon, always a central issue for the Puritans, was downplayed. Charles' attempt to enforce a version of the Book of Common Prayer in Scotland in 1637, with a heightened emphasis on the Eucharist, ceremonies and order, resulted in rebellion which spiralled into broader conflict between Parliament and the King.[15] William Laud records that the General Assembly that met in Scotland in 1638 condemned Episcopacy, and expressed abhorrence at the Prayer Book and its rituals. Under increasing pressure, Charles made concessions to the Puritans; Laud was sent to the Tower, and Charles found himself disowning much of the worship and order that was dearest to his heart. When, through a succession of bad luck and appalling judgement, Charles faced execution on the scaffold, he begged his son to stand by the Church, and to remain 'as I hope you are already, well-grounded and settled in your religion, the best profession of which I have ever esteemed that of the Church of England [. . .] as coming nearest to God's word for doctrine and to the primitive examples for government'.

Following Charles' execution, with the abolition of episcopacy and the establishment of a Presbyterian government, the Caroline bishops either retired, fled abroad or languished in prison. Yet Oliver Cromwell himself was inclined to toleration in England, while Parliament and the Westminster Assembly never formally defined their religious position. There had been indications that considerable sympathy remained for the old established Church. A book purporting to contain the final thoughts of King Charles, the *Eikon Basilike*, became a best seller, elevating the memory of the executed (or 'martyred') king to cultic status. Even before an official restoration, Church ceremonies were reinstated, and in 1662 the new Book of Common Prayer enshrined forever much of the teaching of the Divines. It was to be a victory for the Laudian party, and an indication that the labours of those Stuart Divines had not been in vain; rather, they had identified and had helped form what eventually became known as 'Anglicanism'.

The Caroline Divines

The seventeenth-century Church of England, seeking to defend the settlement of the established Church and to articulate a viable theology of the Church of England against attacks both Puritan and papist, was fortunate to have within its ranks scholars of formidable erudition and eloquence. Particular reverence is bestowed upon 'the Caroline Divines' (to whom Cardinal Kasper referred at the Lambeth Conference). While this title simply indicates that most of them flourished during the reign of Charles I and Charles II, the Caroline Divines have been traditionally a point of reference

for High Church Anglicans, most famously the Oxford movement, which drew heavily upon their works.[16] Within their writings, emphasis upon continuity with medieval devotion, the structure and role of the Church, and ceremonial, were perceived to have pre-figured the agenda of the Tractarians.

In recent times it has been increasingly difficult to view the Caroline Divines simply as a High Church pressure group and still less as a crypto-Roman Catholic movement. The Oxford Movement, wishing to portray these earlier theologians in a way favourable to its own agenda, implied a common identity that exaggerated their relationship and seriously underestimated the presence of a puritan narrative within the mainstream church. Situating the Caroline Divines in a proto-Oxford Movement within Anglicanism, quotations and selections from their works were overlaid with the opinions and preferences of subsequent centuries. The solidity and authoritative nature of the *Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology*, in which their major works are gathered, implies a coherent body of doctrine, which belies the incomplete selection of those theologians whose work it includes. To this extent, the Oxford Movement may be accused of having itself invented the Caroline Divines.[17] There was, in truth, no Caroline 'movement' comparable to the Oxford Movement, and the Divines themselves would not have recognised any such. The seventeenth-century Church of England was broad and dissent within it was varied; Puritans did not necessarily form a block outside its structures, and even among the Carolines there could be diversity of opinion.

Accordingly, the popular term 'Caroline Divines' has been superceded in favour of other titles which either expand or contract the membership of their company. Their own age employed the label 'Arminians', largely because no other terms of abuse were available. Jacobus Arminius, a Dutchman, had revised the harsh Calvinist doctrine of predestination, and by analogy the term came to be applied by their enemies to that faction within the English Church perceived as lacking sympathy for the most thorough implementation of the Reformation. In addition, the terms 'Laudians' or 'Sacramentalists' or even 'avant-guarde conformists' have all been used to describe this group. However, the Caroline Divines are not to give up without a fight. While it is true that the Caroline Divines were not an organised movement, and cannot claim to represent the totality of early seventeenth-century scholarship, they do present as a 'fairly homogenous group' who developed a largely coherent body of doctrine and spirituality at a formative period of the Church of England.[18] The writings of the Caroline Divines have been a major element in the self-understanding of the Church of England and worldwide Anglicanism, so that their works have been called a 'standard not only for faith and doctrine but also for public worship and personal spirituality'.[19] Moreover, and importantly for this study, while firmly asserting their protestant faith, their attitude to the claims of Rome allowed them to travel some way in positively assessing Roman Catholicism, and engaging in a creative discussion on ground familiar to both parties.

Moreover, the possibility of identifying a Caroline 'family likeness' begins with the network of personal connections between them, arising from friendship at university or court, or subsequent patronage. Scholarship provided another bond; then, as now, scholarly correspondence could cross boundaries of age, location and even confession. The Caroline Divines were also drawn together by less tangible influences. Most of them looked to Hooker for inspiration; many of them had sat at the feet of Andrewes. From these scholars they drew insights into the Church of England defined by the trinity of scripture, Tradition and reason. Sharpened by the hostile forces of Catholicism and Puritanism, the Caroline Divines developed a theology and a language to define what the Church of England itself was – not merely what it was *not* – to justify its claim to apostolic authenticity. The Divines, living in the more reflective generation after the Reformers, were able to form a relatively consistent body of thought and a 'distinctive outlook on the English Church'.[20] In this way they bestowed upon the Elizabethan settlement a 'soul', enabling the Church to describe itself proudly as 'catholic and reformed', with an unmistakable feeling of the destiny and calling of the Church of England. It was the beginning of the notion of the *Via Media* not as compromise or as the lowest common denominator, but as real attempt to recover purity and simplicity of primitive Christianity.

Allied with formidable theological acumen was a personal holiness which added weight to their words. Many of these Divines were noted for personal spiritual (and even saintly) qualities. Their appreciation of the 'Beauty of Holiness' was expressed not only in godliness of life but in an insistence upon dignity and decorousness in liturgy and furnishings. This was the age of the music of Orlando Gibbons and Thomas Tomkins, the architecture of Inigo Jones, the religious poetry of John Donne and George Herbert, and the sermons of Lancelot Andrewes and Jeremy Taylor, which included that supreme monument to English religious genius, the Authorised Version of the Bible. The Caroline Divines, imbued with a love of the English liturgy, were bound together by a lasting love of language, a facility in capturing the mood of a congregation, or indeed the nation, in prayer, and a satisfying, but suitably restrained, ceremonial liturgy.

The faults of Rome were not glossed over, however. It was the Divines' strong contention that Rome, rather than England, was guilty of straying from the apostolic path into schism, and that the English Church was a more perfect embodiment of the catholic Church. At the same time, their denunciations of Romanism were softened by their acknowledgement that the Roman Church was a true Church, by their unwillingness to condemn the Pope as Antichrist, and their readiness to concede a common source to many shared traditions.

In this they were, in their own eyes, merely defenders of the established form of the Church, who advocated the suitability of the Church of England for all the citizens of the realm, and sought to win over all Englishmen through its moderate and reasonable nature. The Caroline Divines saw

themselves as part of the mainstream Church, a Church both catholic and reformed, and were united by principles of methodology where reason was brought to bear upon scripture and Tradition, and by a strong sense of the shared antique roots of the Church. With some caveats, then, I consider it possible to regard the Caroline Divines as a reference point whose work may be considered in the light of current theological and ecumenical issues.

The Caroline Divines and modern ecumenical dialogue

Our task is to interrogate the theology of the Caroline Divines in the light of current ecumenical debate. Their rich heritage can easily remain an evocative but distant legacy, tinged with hagiographical excess. Can the Caroline Divines really offer a perspective on modern Anglicanism and its relations with the Roman Catholic Church? Cardinal Kasper challenged the Anglican Communion to use the Caroline Divines to rediscover its catholic roots; his implication is that they *do* have something to contribute to contemporary dialogue. Against this must be set the obvious perils of comparing two very different eras, and a notion of ecumenism that the Divines would not have recognised. Yet it is possible to argue that the Caroline Divines were, so far as the conventions and politics of their day permitted, themselves engaged in an ecumenical project. They were at the forefront of engagement with the Roman Catholic Church, and relations with that Church figured large in their self-understanding, so that they debated the outstanding contested issues of the day with their opponents. Their concern was the nature of the Church, and the relative claims of the Churches of Rome and England – the very themes at the heart of the contemporary Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue. Modern theological discussion between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church can thus be seen, in this light, as the successor to those endeavours first undertaken by the Caroline Divines. It is therefore not inappropriate to their memory and achievements to bring together these two phases of relationship between the Roman and English Churches.

Any contemporary recourse to the theology of the Caroline Divines must from the first take into account one practical reality. The range and quantity of material produced by the Caroline Divines is vast, covering almost all areas of ecclesial, liturgical and spiritual life. If their contribution to the contemporary scene is to be considered in any meaningful way, some term of correspondence must be found that will focus on areas relevant to latter day concerns. The most obvious and practical strategy is to engage with topics that have been considered by the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) since 1970. This Commission has, in its dialogue, sought to move beyond polemical historical positions to find elements common to both traditions, and to clarify remaining open questions. ARCIC has produced a series of agreed statements on a range of topics which have sought systematically to treat traditional areas of disagreement between Anglicans and Catholics. This range is by no means exhaustive, but does include some of the most important issues upon which Roman Catholics