

## THE BRANCH THEORY<sup>1</sup>

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EVERY ONE has heard of the Anglican Branch Theory by now; no doubt many Catholics will think it hardly worth while to discuss it yet again. Nevertheless, there are points about it that have still, perhaps, scarcely been sufficiently considered. In its vague general form, as set out by the average High Churchman (it is the only form in which you will hear it), it is that the Catholic Church, undoubtedly one Church, exists in several branches now unhappily no longer in communion with one another. These branches are the Roman, Eastern, and Anglican churches. When William Palmer went to Russia in 1840 he had his Branch Theory at his finger-tips and he was always proposing it to astonished Russians. Once he got hold of a Father Maloff at Petersburg. As usual, out came the Branch Theory: "I think that the true Catholic Church is divided by misunderstandings into *three* parts or communions. He (Maloff) looked puzzled<sup>2</sup> and asked, How into *three*? I replied: First into the Eastern and Western, and then the Western again into the Continental and the British."<sup>3</sup> That is the theory as they had evolved it seventy years ago. They have not got any further with it since.

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted from *The Tablet* by permission and revised by the author.

<sup>2</sup> They all did that, *cfr. e.gr.* p. 276, where the Procurator of the Holy Synod "seemed to be staggered," also pp. 166, 248, &c.

<sup>3</sup> W. Palmer: *Notes of a Visit to the Russian Church* (Longmans, 1895), p. 174.

The most amazing thing about their theory is not its want of logic, its absurd principle of a Church visible and one, and yet not visibly one, its defiance of history, its repudiation by both the two large branches, or any other of the points that naturally strike a Catholic when he hears it. The really wonderful thing is that Anglicans have not yet found out what they themselves mean by it. It seems incredible. Their whole position stands or falls by this theory; they cannot, do not claim that the Church of England alone is the whole Church of Christ; she is a branch among other branches. And yet they cannot tell us which are the branches and why. It seems an absurd paradox and yet it is perfectly true that the famous Branch Theory has not yet got as far as being a theory. One need not argue against it. Ask a High Church Anglican to tell you what he means, and you find that he cannot. He has never thought it out sufficiently to be able to formulate the theory on which his whole position rests.

There are two consistent theories of the Church. The Catholic view is at any rate perfectly logical. There is one visible Church in communion with herself all over the world, one great corporate united body. Every one outside that corporate and united body is in a state of schism. Then there is the consistent Protestant Theory, logical enough too: namely, there is no visible Church, no one Church in any corporate sense at all. Any one who follows, or means to follow Christ, has an equal right to be considered a Christian and a Catholic (the Dissenters are claiming the name too now); it is absurd to talk about schism, schisms do not matter; no one is a schismatic. Between these two intelligible positions comes the High Anglican, as usual, with his compromise. We know that compromising *via media* in many questions: in none is it so hopeless as in this. He, the High Anglican (the Low Churchman of course still cheerfully gives Communion to Lutherans and Dissenters), agrees with neither. He cannot accept the Roman view, or where would he be? Neither is

he consistently Protestant. He talks about the one Catholic Church, her teaching and authority. He abhors the crime of schism (Romanism in England is a terrible example of schism). He looks out over the enormous number of churches and sects that divide Christendom and tells us that some of them are branches of the Catholic Church, others are schismatical sects. Surely it is not too much for us to expect him to tell us which are which. But that is just what he cannot do. Anglicans are incapable of saying which are the branches; they are if possible still more incapable of giving us any test at all by which we may know a true branch from a sect. Both these points can be shown easily. We take first the question of which bodies are branches, without asking why. It is really amazing that they have not yet made up their minds about that.

Palmer's naïve three branches will not do at all. That idea breaks down hopelessly in both East and West. As for the East—what do Anglicans mean by the "Eastern Church?" Some of them seem to think that all Eastern Christendom is united. It is an extraordinary misconception. The East is riddled with heresies and schisms almost as badly as the West. We can count about a dozen separate Eastern churches. There is the great Orthodox Church and the Bulgarian Church in schism with her. There is the Nestorian Church, there are four large Monophysite churches (Copts, Abyssinians, Jacobites, Armenians), there are those quarrelsome people along the Malabar coasts, and there are the Uniates. The Orthodox, Bulgars, Nestorians, Monophysites and Uniates all anathematize each other as schismatics and (except the Bulgars) as heretics too. Are they all, in spite of that, true branches of the Church? It is no good asking Anglicans; they do not know, most of them own that they do not know, that they did not even know the fact of all these divisions in the East. Shall we try to apply the Anglican tests? We shall see how uncertain these tests

are. But meanwhile, without discussing it, let us try what they usually say: "Valid Orders and the Creeds." Here we are pulled up again, Which Creeds? The Athanasian Creed must be left in the background at present. Its application is very doubtful all over the East, as we shall see. If we take the others, more or less, and do not bother about the *Filioque*, this test will cover all Eastern sects. So it would follow that all are branches of the Catholic Church. Some Anglicans seem to think so. An Anglican writer not long ago distinctly claimed that the Armenians are.<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to understand the conduct of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Mission to the Nestorians unless these gentlemen think the Nestorians a branch of the Church too. They print Nestorian service books for use in church, preach in their churches, keep one of their members in the Nestorian Patriarch's house as his adviser, protest continually that they do not wish to convert Nestorians, and are indignant with the Roman missionaries who do.<sup>2</sup> Would they do this for heretics and schismatics? Is it possible so to co-operate with schism? One can hardly imagine High Anglicans doing all this for Methodists or Calvinists. And does not their attitude towards our missionaries prove the same? If the Nestorians are outside the true Church the Anglicans ought surely to rejoice at their turning Uniate. A Uniate is in communion with Rome, and therefore a member of, at any rate, one branch of the Church. Surely it is better to belong even to the Roman branch than to be outside altogether? But the Anglicans at Urmi call these Uniates schismatics. So I see nothing for it but to suppose that they do consider the Nestorians a branch, although possibly a rather unsatisfactory one. Once more it is no good asking them. One can get no clear answer to a plain question: "Are the Nestorians a branch of the Catholic

<sup>1</sup> E. F. K. Fortescue: *The Armenian Church* (Hayes, 1872), pp. 212, 218, 220, &c.

<sup>2</sup> The little paper published by the Mission is full of these complaints.

Church?" They tell one that the Anglicans do not print or preach anything heretical, that they hope for a future corporate reunion with the Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch, and so on. All that is beside the point. If the Nestorian body is a heretical sect it is wrong to co-operate with it in religious matters at all, and each Nestorian ought to be brought back to some branch of the Church. That is their own principle in other cases. Once more, what would a High Churchman say to Anglicans who treated Methodists so, and who repudiated any idea of converting them?

But if Nestorians and Monophysites are Catholics, what becomes of the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon? One does not need to be very "advanced" to admit these as Oecumenical. So most Anglicans, as a matter of fact, when pressed, throw overboard the Nestorian and Monophysite sects, although, oddly enough, they all seem to prefer them to the Uniates. Anything seems better than the Pope, in spite of the fact that he stands at the head of the overwhelmingly largest branch in their theory. The test of valid orders and the creeds will not do in the East. We must try later to find some other test. We shall not succeed.

Meanwhile, we may take as the opinion of the average High Anglican that in the East the Orthodox only are the right thing. But then the Bulgars. Are they Catholics, too? If so we have the impossible situation all over Macedonia of two rival Catholic bishops (exarchist and patriarchist) in the same place in schism with one another. Who is the lawful bishop, for instance, at Saloniki, or even at Constantinople? Then there are all the Uniates. They belong to the Roman branch in the Anglican theory (at least they are in communion with the Bishop of Rome just as much as Spaniards or Bavarians). So one does not see how it can be denied that they are Catholics. Surely a Catholic is a member of any one branch of this variegated Church. Nevertheless one finds that Anglicans nearly always describe the Eastern Uniates as schismatics,

because they are not in communion with their "lawful Patriarchs." These lawful Patriarchs are, of course, the Orthodox ones in the case of Melkites. But who is the lawful Patriarch of an Armenian Uniate? The Monophysite gentleman at Echmiadzin? And if the Uniates are Catholics we have again on a very large scale the paradox of rival bishops, in this case teaching different doctrines, in the same place, yet both Catholic bishops. We must leave the branch theory in a confusion as regards the East. When we turn to the West we find the confusion as great.

Which are the Western branches? The old-fashioned answer is simple enough, as Palmer expressed it: "The Continental and the British," Roman and Anglican. We may leave the Anglicans out of account. True, a branch of the Catholic Church (in the Ritualists' sense) that contains such people as the Bishops of Hereford, Newcastle, Durham, as Canon Hensley Henson and the Kensitites, whose Primate could declare that she teaches Receptionism in the Holy Eucharist, tolerates the Lutheran theory, and forbids more than that,<sup>1</sup> such a branch is a curious phenomenon. But let that pass; our object is not to criticise the branch theory so much as to show that there is none, none at least that can even be stated. Only in passing we may note this, that the common High Church practice of using the word Catholic as a party name for High Churchmen only is the most absurd thing of all. If the Church of England is a branch of the Catholic Church all her members are Catholics, the Low and Broad Churchmen just as much as the extreme Ritualists. To be a Catholic is not a thing that admits of degrees. You either are a member of the Catholic Church or you are not. If you are one in any case as being an Anglican, you cannot make yourselves more so by using incense and

<sup>1</sup> Archbishop Temple in his Visitation Charge of 1898 (C. Androustos, *The Validity of English Ordinations*, Grant Richards, 1909, p. 89).

vestments, or by changing the Prayer Book service into a very bad imitation of the Roman Mass.<sup>1</sup>

But it is the rest of the West that presents the difficulties. What branches have we here? Rome only? That will not do at all. We find quite a number of churches or sects not in communion with Rome that must be admitted. First we have the Jansenists, whom it is a point of honour to describe as the "Church of Holland." To them we may safely add the various Old Catholic bodies in Germany, Austria, Switzerland; though, by the way, Dr. Michaud presents as much difficulty as any Anglican Broad Churchman. We shall get too confused if we try to find room for Bishop Mathew and his new sect in England. On the Branch Theory, what is he doing here? The correspondent in *The Guardian* lately spoke pertinently when he hinted that Bishop Mathew in England is as bad as the English Romanists. But we have more branches abroad. There is the Lusitanian Reformed Church. Probably most people have never heard of the Lusitanian Reformed Church. There really is such a body though, and *The Guardian* of April 29, 1910 (p. 577) tells us that three Anglican bishops (Irish, of course) have been ordaining people in Portugal for it. If ordaining does not mean inter-communion, what does? Then there is Señor Cabrera and his sect in Spain. He, too, was ordained bishop by Anglicans. And is there not some little con-

<sup>1</sup> This use of the word "Catholic," meaning High-Church or Ritualistic, is one of the strangest results of the Anglican confusion of ideas. One meets it at every turn. For instance, *The Church Times* of August 5, 1910 (p. 162), publishes a letter in which a correspondent explains that St. George's, Goodwood, is "the one church in South Australia where the Catholic faith is taught without compromise," where the men are "out-and-out Catholics." One tries to imagine one of our people writing thus to one of our papers and finding it necessary to explain that the clergy of, say, Spanish Place or the Oratory are "out-and-out Catholics"; and one asks oneself: Do these people really claim that the Church of England as a body teaches the Catholic faith, and is a branch of the Catholic Church, or not? Apparently not. Apparently it is only the extreme section of one party that is "Catholic." Then what on earth do they mean by Catholic, and where is the Branch Theory?

venticle in Italy? There was Count Campello, till he came back to Rome. There is M. Loyson and his Catholic Gallican Reformed Church in France. And what is Mar Timotheos doing now? He had some kind of sect somewhere. In Poland there are these Mariavite people, and there are all sorts of little schisms of Poles and others in America. Now are all these branches of the true Church too? It would seem so. Cabrera and the Portuguese people get their orders from Anglicans. Moreover, on what ground can they be rejected if the Old Catholics are admitted? Is it that they do not teach the Catholic faith? We do not pretend to know what the Catholic faith in this theory may be; but at any rate they claim that they agree with the faith of the Church of England, and they use her Prayer-Book and formularies. It seems hardly safe to reject them on that ground.

If they are to be admitted, we have quite a number of branches in the West instead of Palmer's two. And indeed it is difficult to see on what grounds an Anglican can reject these sects if he admits the Old Catholics. But, once more, it is hopeless to look for any kind of agreement among them. In spite of the action of their own bishops, most High Churchmen will have nothing to say to Señor Cabrera or the Portuguese and Italian people. They generally describe these bodies, very correctly, as contemptible little schisms. The English Church Union even went so far as to astonish the Archbishop of Toledo by a letter of apology when the Anglican Archbishop of Dublin ordained Cabrera. But they acknowledge the Old Catholics, apparently because they thought that that schism was going to be a success (they can hardly think so now), and many of them were, perhaps still are, enthusiastic over M. Loyson and his infinitesimal sect. Why Loyson if not Cabrera? Again we must leave this unanswered.

Our conclusion, then, is that the Anglicans have not yet considered their Branch Theory sufficiently even to be able

to tell us which the branches are. In both East and West they admit that they do not know themselves. Not only do no two Anglicans agree as to which of the numerous Christian churches are branches of the Catholic Church, but no one seems to have thought of it. It is the easiest thing in the world to make an Anglican contradict himself over and over again simply by asking him plain questions. Are the Armenians a branch? The Copts? The East Syrians, Old Catholics, Mariavites, Portuguese, Spanish and French reformed churches? He will answer all kinds of things, will retract what he has said when a new case is brought forward, and will end generally by confessing that he has not considered the question and really does not know—an honest answer that does him credit. But it is not astonishing that they have not considered the basis of their whole position even enough for this? As we said, the really wonderful thing about the Branch Theory is that it has not yet got even as far as being a theory.

The only possible basis for an answer to each particular case would be a consistent test, a criterion that one could apply to any body of Christians. What conditions are required to be a branch of the Catholic Church? And they have no such criterion. There is no test they can suggest that will apply to all and only the churches any one claims; all the conditions they propose either exclude some or admit too many. This is the fundamental impossibility of their theory. No wonder then that they cannot tell us which are the branches.

## II

We have seen that Anglicans cannot tell us which of the numberless Christian sects make up the branches of what they call the Catholic Church. It is one more case of the vagueness, the confusion of their ideas on most theological subjects. And here, too, the confusion comes from the usual source. They cannot answer obvious questions

because they have no criteria. They cannot tell us which are the branches to which they always vaguely allude, simply because they have no test. Such a test would, of course, dispense them, and us, from trying to draw up a list. It would be enough to give the test. You might then apply it for yourself. The churches or sects that satisfy it would be true branches and not any others. But there is no test. It is not that their criterion is wrong, unfounded in any particular system of theology or insufficient for any other reason: the amazing truth is that they have simply no criterion at all. *The Church Times* for May 27, 1910, tells a correspondent with its usual sovereign finality that members of the "Reformed Episcopal Church" "would not be in communion with the Catholic Church." That is all very well, if one pools one's religious convictions on the *ex cathedra* assertions of *The Church Times*; but has one not the right in this and other cases to ask: Why not?

The old-fashioned, fairly simple criterion that one generally hears first from an Anglican is that to be a branch of the Catholic Church two things are required—Valid Orders and the Creeds. We might at once question the reasonableness of this test before going any further. Why valid orders? That supposes the dogma of the Apostolic Succession and the inherent character of the priesthood. Why should that dogma be an *articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiae* any more than the Papacy or the Sacrament of Marriage, or many other things that were reconsidered at the Reformation? It is not because all the Reformers, or all the English Reformers, were agreed as to this particular dogma. Is it because this dogma is plainly in the Bible, was clearly held by the early Church? Well, plenty of good and learned people deny that. A man who sees no Pope in the fourth century may well be excused if he sees no bishops in the first. Why, since after all every Reformed church has reconsidered the whole body of dogma, rejecting parts, keeping other parts, why are bishops

essential? Must one satisfy one's private judgement as to this (it would involve much study), or must one accept the High Church party, and *The Church Times*, as shepherd and teacher of all Christians? But we need not discuss this. We may let the Anglican choose any test he likes and see if he can use it.

So be it, then—valid orders and the creeds. Both elements are fragile, the second is no good at all. As for valid orders—what is meant by that? Orders acknowledged by every one as valid, or orders claimed as valid by the sect in question? If the first, over goes the Church of England at once. It may be a regrettable, it is however a certain, fact that her orders are not acknowledged by practically any one in Christendom except her own members. The Roman Communion rejects them; as for the Orthodox, Professor Androustos' damaging book (*The Validity of English Ordinations*, Grant Richards, 1909) ought to leave no doubt in the mind of the most hopeful Anglican. He will not even discuss Anglican orders "as being generally and fundamentally valid," because Anglicans are heretics (p. 5). It is a well-known Orthodox principle that, as we knew, always made Orthodox recognition impossible. This disposes of the two overwhelmingly greatest churches, so that one need hardly trouble about the others. But, if one asks further, the Jansenists agree with Rome, foreign Protestants for the most part reject the whole theory of orders, so that they can hardly acknowledge those of Anglicans. Even Bishop Mathew adds the voice of his little sect to the general chorus of rejection. The smaller Eastern sects do not appear to have considered the matter. No doubt Señor Cabrera and the Lusitanian Reformed Church admit Anglican orders—possibly some other insignificant little sects too. But as far as being acknowledged goes, Anglican orders come off very badly indeed.

Or are the orders required those that are claimed by any given sect? If so, we have too many people as branches. The Methodist Episcopal Church, the Reformed Episcopal

Church, the Lutherans in Scandinavia, all have people they call bishops, and all claim for them orders in some sense that they consider the true one, a sense at any rate not less vague than that of most Anglicans. The Anglican will answer that what he wants is really valid orders, and that it does not matter who does or does not acknowledge them. This means, of course, such orders as a Ritualist would recognize; and so this fraction of the Anglican body is to be the judge of an essential note of Catholicity for all Christendom, East and West. The situation is curious; it repeats itself again.

But it is the second test that is so impossible. Not only valid orders are wanted; to be a true branch one must have the creeds. We ask at once, Which creeds? Creeds are professions of faith drawn up by some synod or Pope, or even private person. Any number of them have been made at various times by various people, and creeds contradict each other as much as the people who made them. A creed is only a compendium of what some person or persons believe on certain points: none even pretend to be revealed by God. So we ask, Which creeds? If our Anglican friend is very naïve, he will answer: "Those that are used or admitted by all Catholics," and so (since it is just the creeds that are going to tell us who are Catholics) he will give away crudely the whole vicious circle to which in any case he will come eventually. By "the creeds" they mean really the three that happen to be in their Prayerbook—the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian forms. These are to be the test; and so again we have the amusing situation that the Church of England—on their own theory the least of all branches, or very nearly so—is the judge of Catholicity for the whole world.<sup>1</sup> However, here again we

<sup>1</sup> This curious complacency always emerges from Anglican theories. In the old days, when they were not at all ashamed of being in communion with the other Protestant sects, before ritualism and branch theories were invented, they were very pleased with the idea that they were the best kind of Protestants. At the time of the famous Anglo-Lutheran Jerusalem bishoprick the Archbishop of Canterbury welcomed

need not quarrel with their criterion. We may let them choose what they like; nothing they can suggest will work. These three creeds will not work at all; not one of them will apply. The Apostles' Creed must go at once. It is an expanded rearrangement of an old Roman baptismal profession of faith. It does not appear in its present form till about the 6th or 7th century (see Denzinger, *Enchiridion*, ed. 10, pp. 5-6). It has no authority of a general council; it is unknown to any Eastern church. The Athanasian Creed is no test either. This, too, is a Western (Spanish or Gallican) compilation, made quite late (7th century) by some unknown person. It has no authority at all in any Eastern church;<sup>1</sup> it may even be disputed whether it has any symbolic position in the Roman Church. It has no authority of any council or Pope *ex cathedra*.<sup>2</sup> There remains the Nicene Creed. Here we have something quite different. This creed has the authority of general councils behind it; both Latins and Orthodox regard it as a symbolic profession of faith in the strictest sense. Shall we, then, make the Nicene Creed our test? Alas! that would be the worst of all. It is just about the Nicene Creed that the great dispute between East and West rages. There is that *Filioque* clause. Agreement in the Nicene Creed will not cover even the Roman and Orthodox churches, and

the scheme because it would bring about entire agreement of "discipline as well as of doctrine between our own Church and the less perfectly constituted of the Protestant Churches of Europe" (Statement of the Archbishop in 1840). So Anglicanism is always the best of its kind, whether frankly Protestant as of old or pseudo-Catholic as now. But, after all, every sect thinks itself the best, of course.

<sup>1</sup> The Orthodox now print a modified translation of the Athanasian Creed in their Horologion, but they never use it officially, and they refuse to it any symbolic authority.

<sup>2</sup> The only claim this creed has to authority among Latins is its insertion in the Divine Office. But the Office contains many things that are not official statements of the faith. At first the *Quicumque* was not called a creed at all; it is rather a hymn, a *psalmus idioticus*, like the *Te Deum*. Of course, we all believe everything in it; but that is not the point. We are discussing its right to be considered a test, a standard. Any one could draw up a list of statements that are all *de fide*, as did the unknown author of this document. But such a list does not thereby become a creed.

they must be branches whatever happens. Nor can it be said that the *Filioque* does not matter. Each side calls the other heretical *stricto sensu* because of this. To the Orthodox our creed-tampering ways are the most vicious of our habits. They would never admit the creed as sung by Latins (or Anglicans either) as evidence that we are members of the Church of Christ. Rather that very creed proclaims us heretics. So no creed is any use as a test. But let us again concede all an Anglican may ask, and let us pretend that the *Filioque* does not matter. Shall we say that the Nicene Creed (with or without that fatal clause) is the criterion? No again, because now we are letting in too many people. All the Eastern heretics, Nestorians, Armenians, Copts, Jacobites, &c., have valid orders and accept the Nicene Creed; and yet how can they possibly be Catholics, since they are condemned as heretics by undoubted general councils? The Nicene Creed does not touch the issues that affect them either way. No creed mentions all questions of faith, even from a High Anglican point of view. A man could accept all the creeds and yet believe in no sort of Real Presence in the Holy Eucharist at all. So no creed can be a sufficient test.

The Anglican will now shift his ground and give as his criterion: "Valid Orders and the Catholic Faith," and so he embarks on what is as perfect a vicious circle as was ever made by man. First we notice that this leaves no room for schism. If a new sect in England got valid orders from some wandering Eastern bishop and professed something that a High Anglican would acknowledge as the Catholic faith (the other day a very High Church clergyman told the writer that the Irvingites hold the whole Catholic faith), that sect would be a branch of the Church. There is no such thing as schism. But we may leave this consideration and turn to the palpable sophism of the test in itself. For one must then ask: How are we to know what is the Catholic faith? Now there is no answer to this question that does not involve a vicious circle. If we are told that

it is the faith of the Catholic Church,<sup>1</sup> that is, all that is held conjointly by all branches, the thing is manifest at once. Out of the many Christian sects you pick some and say that they are Catholics because they hold the Catholic faith; and the Catholic faith is what they hold! If it is said that the Catholic faith is what has been laid down by general councils the difficulty is only removed one degree; for which are the general councils? The only answer can be: Those that have been held or acknowledged by the Catholic Church. There are many councils that claim to be Oecumenical; the Roman Church has twenty. But, we are told, thirteen of these are not so really, because a great part of the Church (all the East) had no share in them. On the other hand, there is not one council that has the allegiance of all Christendom; even at the first there were the dissentient Arians. The Nestorians reject Ephesus, the Monophysites Chalcedon, just as the Orthodox reject Florence, and the Anglicans Vatican. How, then, is one to know which councils really are Oecumenical? Those admitted by all Christians? There are none such. Those admitted by all the true branches of the Church? Yes, but which are the true branches? Those that accept the general councils. And so we go round and round. One could hardly invent a more perfect vicious circle. A branch of the Catholic Church is one that has (valid orders and) the Catholic faith. The faith is what was defined by the

<sup>1</sup> The extreme High Churchman's idea of what he calls the Catholic faith is very curious. He is more and more unwilling to accept any Anglican pronouncement as decisive. He appeals to the "Catholic faith," that is, what is held in common by all branches, behind anything that may be said by any Anglican authority; and he insists that all Anglican formulas must be understood as agreeing with this, however much they have to be twisted to do so. As it is the Anglican principles that are thus tested, the consent in question can only be that of the other two branches, Rome and the Orthodox. But this very consent is against the Anglican's whole position. Rome and the Orthodox repudiate the whole branch theory, deny any place to the Church of England, reject Anglican orders. What it comes to, then, is that the High Churchman quotes "the consent of the whole Church" when it agrees with some point for which he is fighting against Low Churchmen, and ignores it when it tells against himself.

general councils. Those councils are general which are acknowledged by all branches of the Church. An Armenian would, of course, say with the same right that he holds all the Catholic faith, that is, all that has been defined by general councils. Chalcedon was not a general council because the Church of Armenia has never accepted it. Every heretic believes that he holds all the true faith, and that councils which establish what he does not accept are not Oecumenical, because his sect does not acknowledge them. The famous "undivided Church" is the same thing again. When was the Church undivided? Not when all Christians were united, for there has never been a time when some heretics did not exist. No, it was when the true branches were in visible union. But which are the true branches? Those that were united—when they were united; those that accepted the councils—that they accepted. So we go round.

We have come to the end of the Anglican criteria for being a branch of the Catholic Church. All those quoted above have been proposed really and seriously by Anglicans repeatedly. We have never heard any others suggested. Indeed, no others seem conceivable. And all are quite hopeless. Either the tests do not fit the very cases for which they were invented, or they are too wide, or they rest on an absurd vicious circle. No wonder, then, that no Anglican can tell us the result of applying his tests, that none know which are the branches of their imagined system. We have still to examine a further and final paradox of the Branch theory and to see whence this theory really is derived.

Meanwhile, we may sum it up fairly that: The Branch Theory is that certain separated churches combine to make up the one Church of Christ. These churches are, at any rate, those of England, Rome, and the Orthodox. No one knows which others must be added; and no one can give any reason for the inclusion or rejection of any church at all.

The real reason is that they must include the Church of England because they are Anglicans, they must include Rome because she is so big, they must include the Orthodox because that is a big church too and is a mighty ally against Rome. They have never worried about any one else and have never even troubled to consider on what basis they can admit these.

### III

As a last paradox we have the situation of people being at the same time Catholics and schismatics. Since no one of the famous three branches except the smallest (the Anglican) will have anything to say to the theory at all, they, of course, ignore it in practice. Romanists and the Orthodox agree entirely as to the fact that there can be one, and really only one, Church of Christ, in communion with herself and teaching the same faith everywhere. And both are quite logical in claiming that this one Church is their own. So both treat all outsiders as schismatics (mostly as heretics too), and send missionaries to convert them. The Orthodox do so, but Rome is the most obvious instance. So there are Romanist bodies gathered from other branches, converted Anglicans and Orthodox. Now, are such people Catholics or not? The Romanists in England are the nearest example. We are certainly members of what is by far the largest branch of the Church, so surely we are Catholics, *Roman Catholics*, but Catholics. What is to be a Catholic if not to be a member of one of the branches of the Church? If an Anglican is one because he belongs to one branch, surely we are Catholics too as belonging to another branch. And yet we are schismatics as well. Supposing the Church of England to be the lawful Church of Christ in this country, supposing the Anglican bishops to be the Catholic pastors of their dioceses, here are we in open and shameless schism, setting up altars against their

altars, seducing people from the church of their baptism, obviously out of communion with the lawful bishops. Nor do the more consistent High Church papers hesitate to call us schismatics continually. Dr. Bourne is the "Romanist titular so-called Archbishop of Westminster"; he has lately perpetrated a fresh outrage on the Catholic Church of the land by pretending to consecrate his big dissenting chapel in the parish of that little church at the corner of Morpeth Terrace.

Now, so far from feeling hurt at this language, a reasonable Roman Catholic will only rejoice that so far at least they are consistent and logical. Logic is the first step towards putting an end to our differences. Supposing their claim, they are perfectly right. We should be a most brazen example of schism if the Bishop of London, for instance, were the Catholic bishop of the place. Let us agree to that and keep to it always. There cannot be rival *Catholic* authorities, mutually in schism, at any rate *in the same place*. If we keep our Anglican friend to that principle we shall go a long way towards showing him the absurdity of the whole branch theory. But then surely we are not Catholics at all. If the terms Catholic and schismatic are not mutually exclusive, what can "Catholic" possibly mean? It seems the clearest case of contradictory terms. A Catholic is a man who is in the Catholic Church, a schismatic one who is outside it.

Moreover, this principle, supposing their branches, leaves few Romanists who are not schismatics. For wherever there are "Catholic" non-Roman bishops the Romanists must be in schism, because not in communion with them. So we are schismatics throughout the British Empire, in the United States, and wherever else may be Anglican bishops—otherwise, again, there would be two rival Catholic authorities in the same place. We are schismatics in China and Japan (so are the Orthodox too, of course), since there are Anglican bishops there. In China the Anglican body has begun to call itself the "Holy

Catholic Church of China";<sup>1</sup> evidently they think so. All Uniates and Latins in the Levant are schismatics. We are schismatics in Holland because of the Jansenists, in Germany and Switzerland because of the Old Catholics, in France because of M. Loyson. Indeed, do not the Reformed branches in Spain, Portugal, and Italy make us schismatics in those countries too? The authentic Roman branch of the Church sinks to small proportions.

Or rather—if only the Anglican were logical—the schism of one part of that Roman branch must make it all schismatical, wherever it is. This, too, follows from the contradictory nature of the terms. For all the Roman Church is in communion with us Romanists in England. So, if we are schismatics, all the other Romanists are too. A Catholic cannot be in communion with a schismatic, nor a schismatic with a Catholic. Each man is either inside the Church or out. Being in communion with Catholics means being inside, being a schismatic means being outside. The same man cannot be both at once.

But one can go on tying this absurd branch theory up in a tangle indefinitely. Instead of further hunting down what is such poor quarry, we will end by examining whence the theory comes. It certainly does not come from the Bible, the Fathers of the Church, or antiquity. The New Testament supplies the symbol of branches in a vine, but they are branches joined to each other visibly and really by their common life in the trunk, which is Christ. The same sap comes from him, and runs through all joined together. It is the picture of *united* branches. As for a separated branch, separated from Christ by being cut away from the vine (and the other branches), our Lord tells us about that too: "it shall be cast out like a branch and shall wither, and they shall gather it up and cast it into the fire and it

<sup>1</sup> To an ordinary reasonable man this new name, even on their own theory, is surely a most amazing piece of effrontery. Why are the Anglican missions in China the "Catholic Church of China" more than the Orthodox or Roman ones? Is it that wherever Anglicans choose to appear they eclipse every other branch?

shall burn" (John xv, 6). We hear much of branches, of local churches and their organization in early times, but not the remotest hint of churches in schism with one another and yet all Catholic. There were schisms enough in the first ages, and the Fathers discussed them at length; but invariably a schism, that is a breach of intercommunion, meant that one at least of the parties was schismatic. No one ever seems to have conceived the possibility of anything else. There may have been discussions as to which was the schismatic; but that neither was did not even occur to any one. The Donatists were not heretics, and all the Church was moved against them simply because they had broken communion with the rest. The Meletian schism at Antioch is the one case quoted for the opposite. There was discussion while it lasted as to which communion was Catholic and which schismatic. But that, as a general proposition, breaking communion is schism, and that people in schism are schismatics and not Catholics—this was not doubted by any one. The third chapter of St. Cyprian (*De Unitate Ecclesiae*) seems plain enough: "He (the devil) invented heresies and schisms by which he might undermine the faith, corrupt the truth, break unity. He gains and deceives by a new kind of error those whom he cannot keep in the blindness of the old way (paganism). *He steals men from the Church.*" That is what a schism means, not an unfortunate misunderstanding, in spite of which both sides remain Catholic, but stealing men from the Church; the man in schism has left the Church. In short a schism, that is a breaking of intercommunion, means that the people in it are schismatics; and schismatics are not Catholics. It is surely as obvious now as it was to St. Cyprian.<sup>1</sup>

We may take this as one of the most obvious things of all in the age of the Fathers; it is enough alone to destroy

<sup>1</sup> See Dom John Chapman's answer to Bishop Gore's theory of schisms *inside* the Church in *Bishop Gore and the Catholic Claims*, chap. viii: "The Nature of Schism."

the whole High Anglican theory. Certainly there are many points that may be discussed about the early Church, points that were discussed then. Rights of bishops, patriarchs, even Popes, the mutual relation of local churches, all manner of questions of Canon Law—no one pretends that all this is always perfectly clear or that there has been no development since. But we may keep to this one point as plain in any case: the idea of a Church separated into mutually excommunicate branches, built up of bodies in schism with one another and yet mocked with the name of one Church—this idea would have been as inconceivable to any Father as it is to us. Even if we were to admit that a Father—say St. Augustine or St. Basil—who came back now would hesitate as to which body, Latin, Orthodox, or Anglican, is the Church of Christ, he most certainly would never admit that all are. We are so often challenged to find certain of our dogmas in antiquity; let our adversary find his branch theory there.

And yet this theory is not entirely an invention of the modern High Churchman. It has a history behind it, though one of which he will not be proud. The idea of a Church made up of separated bodies is in fact the most typically Protestant part of the Anglican system. It began with the Reformation, it is held not only by Anglicans but by all Protestant bodies, Lutherans, Calvinists, Presbyterians, Methodists, all of them, and only by them. It is all Protestant and only Protestant, one of the few dogmas common to all the Reformed sects.

How entirely the old Churches repudiate it is obvious enough. That Rome will have none of it needs no demonstration. It is amazing that some Anglicans<sup>1</sup> have tried to claim the Orthodox as at least not rejecting some kind of branch theory. The better-informed among them now candidly give up this attempt,<sup>2</sup> for indeed the Orthodox Church makes it quite as plain that she considers herself

<sup>1</sup> *E.gr.*, Dr. Neale: *History of the Holy Eastern Church*, I., p. 1199.

<sup>2</sup> A. S. Headlam: *The Teaching of the Russian Church*, p. 1.

the whole only Church of Christ as does her Latin rival. She declares this in all her professions of faith, claims it unceasingly in her encyclicals, teaches it in the plainest language in her catechisms, and acts on it invariably, receiving all non-Orthodox Christians to her communion with a ceremony of conversion, in which they are absolved solemnly from heresy and schism, and admitted to the one holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. If she is to be tied to the Latins and Anglicans in a triple bundle that feigns to be one body, it is in spite of her vehement protest. She calls Latins heretics and schismatics in the plainest language always, and says the same quite as uncompromisingly of Anglicans. So of the three branches it is only the smallest, and she only in one party of her communion, that knows what she really is. The two big branches indignantly deny any connection with each other or her, and insist each of them that she is the whole tree. Truly the Church of Christ is in a parlous state.

But the Anglican will find supporters for his branch theory, alas ! not where he would. There are people who claim to be sister-branches with his body, and they are just those whom a High Churchman will not have. The Reformation began this idea. The new sects, Lutherans, Calvinists, and so on, broke communion with the old Church, but they could not manage to unite among themselves. Each, of course, claimed to be a true church ; all Protestants thought themselves Catholics, but no one sect (except, perhaps, the Anabaptists), had the effrontery to claim to be the *whole* Catholic Church that they still confessed in the creed. So they evolved the conception of a church existing in all their bodies in spite of their schisms. Whether they added Rome as a branch or not depended on the vehemence of their anti-Papal ideas. The first Protestants (and some still) described Rome as no church at all, but a Synagogue of Satan. Milder ones later admit Rome as a branch, though a grievously corrupt one. That is still the position. Each Protestant sect thinks

itself, like the Anglicans, a branch of the Church of Christ ; none, or none of any respectability, claims to be the whole Church. So all stand by this branch theory, with, of course, in each case their own body as the best and purest branch. The member of the Established Church of Scotland sees no difficulty in want of intercommunion ; he willingly admits the Anglicans as members of another branch, and is hurt that the Anglican—the High Church Anglican—will not return the compliment. Why not ? Is it because Presbyterians have no bishops ? That only shows that their branch does not consider such persons profitable. All branches have their little disagreements : the Anglicans have no Pope, the Orthodox no *Filioque*. The Protestant dissenter in England would say the same. His sect is to him only one branch, the one that suits him best ; he gladly acknowledges the others. Schism does not matter. So we have the real and consistent branch theory, typical of Protestantism. What it comes to is that there is no visible corporate united Church at all. There are churches, that is bands, groups of Christians, all having equal rights to settle their own affairs and follow Christ as seems best to them. It is one theory ; the Catholic (or Orthodox) one of a corporate Church founded by Christ is another.

And the High Anglican ? He has taken this Protestant theory and spoiled it. It has some consistency, some possibility of being defended if it admits all Christian bodies. But he has tried to compromise between it and the Catholic idea, and has made a hopeless muddle of the whole thing. The High Churchman takes the branch theory from the Protestants who admit it, tacks it on to the two old churches who indignantly reject it, adds his own body to this strange combination, and then talks about one Church. The point of this form of the theory that is specially illogical is that it admits separated branches that teach different doctrines, and yet does not admit all Christian sects. What possible criterion can there be for admitting the Church of England as a branch that will not

equally fit the Swedish Church, the Presbyterians, Irvingites, and all the others, unless we make that particular fragment of the Catholic faith that happened to be kept by the English Reformers (or rather the still more arbitrary fragment that appeals to some High Churchman) the test for the whole world? That is what the High Churchman always assumes. *His* selection of dogmas, whichever it may be, is the "Catholic faith." Anything beyond that—Papal Infallibility, Consecration by the Epiklesis—is an addition to the faith; anything less—only two Sacraments, no Real Presence—prevents a man being a Catholic at all. And then he has to square his Low Church co-religionists.

The Anglican branch theory, then, is nothing but a tattered relic of Protestantism. In itself it is as typically Protestant as anything can be. All the High Churchman has done to it is to spoil it by taking away every vestige of consistency it ever had.

A writer in *The English Church Review* lately described as the main danger of Popery its specious simplicity.<sup>1</sup> That must seem a very real danger to them, for opposed to this hopeless confusion the real Catholic has a test that he understands and that works. The Catholic has no difficulty in saying who are the members of the Church of Christ, because he knows what criterion to apply to any one in the world. To be a Catholic you must be in union, in real union, visible communion with all the other Catholics. And this intercommunion among us is guaranteed and secured by our common communion with the Church "that presides in the place of the Romans." Moreover, this test has other advantages besides its simplicity. They talk to us about the Primitive Church. Was it some modern Pope who said: "Ad hanc enim ecclesiam propter potentiorum principalitatem necesse est omnem convenire ecclesiam?"

<sup>1</sup> F. C. Kempson: "Roman Fever," in *The English Church Review* for June, 1910, pp. 263-266.