

THE ANGLICAN FELLOWSHIP FOR SOCIAL ACTION

by

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ABBREVIATIONS

AFSA	Anglican Fellowship for Social Action
AO	<i>Anglican Outlook</i>
CC	<i>Canadian Churchman</i>
CCF	Cooperative Commonwealth Federation
CSL	Church Socialist League
CSS	Council for Social Service of the General Synod of the Church of England in Canada
CSU	Christian Social Union
DCSS	Diocesan Council for Social Services (Montreal)
FCSO	Fellowship for a Christian Social Order
GSA	General Synod Archives, The Anglican Church of Canada, Toronto
<i>GSJP</i>	<i>General Synod, Journal of Proceedings</i>
GSM	Guild of St. Matthew
ICF	Industrial Christian Fellowship
SCC	Society of the Catholic Commonwealth
<i>SDMJJP</i>	<i>Synod of the Diocese of Montreal, Journal of Proceedings</i>

NOTE: The word "Church" is used to refer to an institution such as the Church of England in Canada. The word "church" is used more generally to refer to the People of God, the Body of Christ.

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INTRODUCTION

Christendom is dead. No longer can it be claimed that ours is a society of believers ruled by faithful leaders and founded on values proclaimed by the Gospel. That this fact is becoming more widely acknowledged is good news -- at least it is good news inasmuch as Christendom was long ago buried by the secular powers. Unfortunately, the memory of a supposedly Christian society is still alive among the churches in North America. It is a kind of ghost wandering among empty pews and posing in stained glass windows. The illusion that our society as it is today is ultimately founded on Christian faith and values persists in the hearts and minds of the majority of Christians in this country. Indeed, it is a confidence in the respectability of their faith which binds many together, cutting across denominational lines at home and often separating the majority from their brothers and sisters abroad. There is, however, a growing minority among the faithful in North America who recognize that the Gospel demands commitment to a kingdom that is not of *this* world. These Christians have found it impossible to accept our society as it is and, inspired by the teaching and example of Jesus, have become involved in various attempts to change it. The men and women who constitute this minority have become critical of the *status quo* and have chosen to move "against the stream". While their experiences and analyses may vary, they all share this basic orientation to the world characterized by alienation from society, criticism of the *status quo*, and some kind of involvement in the struggle to transform it.

Roger Hutchison pointed to this orientation in his dissertation on the Fellowship for a Christian Social Order. Using categories derived from the work of Gibson Winter and Richard Allen, he developed a typology of relations

to the social order involving a "conservative", supportive tendency to accommodation on the one hand and a "radical", critical tendency to alienation.¹ In this thesis, I will use elements of his typology, understanding these tendencies as indicative of opposite stances or poles in a continuum of possible relations to the world. "Accommodation" represents a basic acceptance of society as it is, support of the *status quo*, and action to maintain it. "Alienation" is characterized by a fundamental rejection of society as it is, criticism of the *status quo*, and action to change it. There is one element of Hutchison's typology which I will not use. Following Allen, he identified accommodation as "conservative" and alienation as "radical". This may be misleading, as it suggests that a tendency to accommodation necessarily represents a conservative ideology. While this element of the typology was appropriate to the studies of the Social Gospel and the FCSO for which it was developed, it fails to account for the type of conservatism that is an alienated response to society. Specifically, it does not account for the fact that the corporate view of society advocated by Edmund Burke or the Tractarians is conservative, yet represents an alienation from liberal bourgeois society. This is an important recognition in the study of Anglican groups, as such a corporate view has been the basis for some Anglican social theology.² Therefore, I will assume both radical and conservative ideologies to be indicative of alienation. The difference between the two lies in their understanding of the nature of society. The conservative wishes to critique and change the *status quo* in

¹ Roger Hutchison, *The Fellowship for a Christian Social Order: A Social Ethical Analysis of a Christian Socialist Movement*. ThD dissertation, Victoria University, Toronto. May 1975. pp.7-16.

² See the discussion of this issue in Edward Alfred Pulker, *The Role of Anglicans in Reform of the Economic Order in Canada 1914-1945* PhD thesis, University of Ottawa, Ottawa. 1973. pp.14-31

accordance with an older vision of society that has been superceded by an individualistic liberalism. The radical bases his critique on the contradictions within the liberal *status quo* and seeks to effect change in accordance with a new vision of society.

The concern of this thesis is the tendency to radical alienation among Christians and the creation of theologically-informed, alternate visions of the world which it implies. Because this stand "against the stream" tends to place individuals and groups in a relatively powerless, minority position on the margins of the Church and society, the emotional and spiritual support of others is needed if the stand is to be maintained. Because theology tends to be written from an accommodated stand and alternate visions are rarely "given", intellectual resources are needed to facilitate the struggle for change. Such resources and supports can be found in dialogue with others, both Christians and non-Christians, who share the tendency to radical alienation and constitute the "protesting minority" in the Church and the world.³ Whatever the particular form of alienation experienced by an individual, the experience and reflection of others can inform his critique of the dominant forces in society and support him in articulating alternatives. The actions and struggles of progressive groups in the community -- co-operatives, anti-racism lobbies, women's collectives, citizens' committees, political bodies, workers' organizations, writers, artists, and theatrical companies -- can give one strength to carry on in one's own endeavours. Similarly, the work of Christian thinkers who have attached themselves to or are participating in movements against the stream can provide tools for theological reconstruction. Elements of an alternate vision of the Church and society can be found in the writings of liberation theologians

³ The term "protesting minority" is used in Douglas Hall, *The Canada Crisis: A Christian Perspective* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1980) p.85.

in the Third World, political theologians in Germany, some social ethicists, and black and feminist theologians in North America.

It is also helpful to look to the past. Through a reconsideration of those individuals and groups in one's history who found it impossible to accept the world as they experienced it and moved against the forces dominant in society at the time, one may discover helpful ideas and symbols. Older categories and formulae may take on new meaning. One may also discover stories which can be spiritual resources for those working to build a more just society. More important, perhaps, one may recover a sense of continuity with history as one comes to identify with a past that is relevant to the alienation experienced in the present.

Such an attempt to recover historical sources has been made by others. Letty M. Russell calls it a search for a "usable past" and recognizes the importance of such an approach for feminist theology.⁴ James H. Cone considers a re-interpretation of black history to be a source for black theology.⁵ In Canada, this look to the past has usually led to a consideration of the Methodist Social Gospel tradition and the history of Canadian socialism as resources.⁶ In the introduction to his work on the FCSO, Roger Hutchison wrote,

A re-examination of the social gospel will help us to rediscover resources in our Canadian experience for social ethics and social action, and to assess the merits and limitations of contemporary attempts to understand and transform society.⁷

4. Letty M. Russell, *Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective: A Theology* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974) pp.72-103

5. James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Philadelphia and New York: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1970) pp.53-60.

6. An appreciation of the importance of the Social Gospel and the tradition of the CCF in this regard was evident in two conferences held in 1977. See B.G. Smillie, ed. *Political Theology in the Canadian Context* (Unpublished papers of the conference held at the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, March 10, 11, 1977) pp.3,63,167 and Gregory Baum, "A Look to the Past for the Sake of the Future" in *Institute for Christian Life in Canada* (Proceedings of the 1977 Conference, August 21-27, 1977) pp.34f

7. Hutchison, *FCSO*, p.1

A similar approach underlies Gregory Baum's study of *Catholics and Canadian Socialism*.⁸ There are also specifically historical works which serve to make present these elements of the Canadian experience. Two of these are Stewart Crysedale's *The Industrial Struggle and Protestant Ethics in Canada* and Richard Allen's *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada 1914-1928*.⁹ Unfortunately, none of these deals adequately with the contributions to be made by the Anglican tradition in Canada.

An attempt to fill this gap was made by Edward Alfred Pulker in his dissertation on *The Role of Anglicans in Reform of the Economic Order in Canada 1914-1945*. Pulker was critical of Crysedale and Allen because, in general, their work focused on the Methodist-United Church tradition and assumed the value of a Church's role in social change to be a function of its acceptance of the social gospel.¹⁰ His denominational study was an effort to show that "the social gospel was in fact not the influence among Anglicans that it was among other Protestants." He suggested as a general rule that "the basis for Anglican interest in reform was the conservative tradition that society is a corporate unity within which all parts have a responsibility for the welfare of each other."¹¹ He identified Edmund Burke as the proponent of the paradigmatic conservative view. While he acknowledged the possibility of exceptions to the general rule, Pulker claimed that "Canadian Anglicans tended to share with (Burke) a belief in certain principles which came from their common inheritance of the Anglican

⁸ Gregory Baum, *Catholics and Canadian Socialism: Political Thought in the Thirties and Forties* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Co., 1980) p.212

⁹ Stewart Crysedale, *The Industrial Struggle and Protestant Ethics in Canada* (Toronto, 1961) and Richard Allen, *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada 1914-1928* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973)

¹⁰ Pulker, *Role of Anglicans in Reform*, pp.5, 343

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.6

tradition."¹² Some of these principles were: that the destiny of individuals and of society lies in the hands of Providence, not in human ability; that the government, as the agent of God, should be the source of reform in society; that continuity with the past is important and evolution, not revolution, should be the mode of change; that society is a corporate unity in which each individual has his particular role or vocation; and that human nature is selfish and will therefore tend to corrupt any social organization.¹³ Pulker centred on the corporate vision of society and showed that, because it opposed the assumptions of laissez-faire capitalism, it could, and indeed did, become a basis for reform of the economic order in Canada. He also noted that the interdependence implied by this vision opposed the individualism of the Evangelical wing of the Church.¹⁴

While Pulker's analysis is true of the majority of official Church pronouncements in Canada, it does not acknowledge adequately the ways in which this corporate world view was assimilated by the Christian Socialist tradition from Maurice to Temple and transformed into a primarily theological world view to support a radical alienation. There were other Anglicans, as deeply rooted in their tradition as Burke was, who found the seeds of an alternate and progressive vision in the corporate understanding of the nature of society. Pulker's work is also misleading if it suggests that only Anglicans have relied on such an anti-individualistic, corporate view. As Roger Hutchison shows in his dissertation, a primarily United Church group, the FCSO, developed a vision of society based on the concept of "mutuality".¹⁵ Important elements of this

¹² *Ibid.*, p.18

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp.14-18

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.24f

¹⁵ Hutchison, *FCSO*, pp.28f

vision were "the discernment of the essential structure of the social order as a whole" and "beliefs in the unity of life, and in the importance of viewing man as a social being who is characterized by individuality and relatedness."¹⁶ Thus the FCSO points to a corporate view of society that was used as the basis of a radical critique.

In this thesis I will examine another expression of this alternate vision. The Anglican Fellowship for Social Action (AFSA) was a Canadian group which looked to the distinctively Anglican tradition of incarnational theology which transcended the conservative world view and used its corporate vision to support a tendency to radical alienation. AFSA's story may be a spiritual resource to others who feel themselves to be at odds with the world as it is and marginalized within the Church.

To date, there has been only one work written specifically on AFSA: an M.Th. thesis prepared for Trinity College, Toronto, in 1974 by Edward J.E. Morgan.¹⁷ It provides a helpful sketch of AFSA's history, but it falls short in its documentation and fails to appreciate the group's relationship to the FCSO, the Christian Socialist tradition in Britian, and, especially, William Temple. The need for a deeper consideration is evident. No doubt one of the problems encountered by Morgan (this may be a partial explanation of his thesis' weaknesses) was the lack of available material on AFSA. Even the existing denominational histories only mention the group; Archbishop Carrington's *The Anglican Church*

16. *Ibid.*, p.245 n.8

17. Edward J.E. Morgan, *The Anglican Church and Social Action: The Effect of the Anglican Fellowship for Social Action on the Development of Social Action in the Anglican Church of Canada* (M.Th. thesis, Toronto School of Theology [Trinity College], Toronto, 1974)

*in Canada: A History*¹⁸ has only one paragraph (which he places incorrectly in a discussion of the Depression), and John Irwin Cooper's history of the Diocese of Montreal, *The Blessed Communion*,¹⁹ fares only slightly better with a couple of pages focussing on AFSA members' actions in Diocesan Synod and its committees. A much more helpful resource (probably unavailable to Morgan) is Pulker's thesis. He provides a good background for a study of AFSA and his treatment of the group is well supported by footnotes and personal interviews with some AFSA members from Nova Scotia.²⁰ In this thesis, I will confine myself to a consideration of the AFSA group in Montreal. While there were AFSA units in Nova Scotia, Toronto, and New Jersey, the Montreal group was the first and the most active.

The primary sources are varied. *The Canadian Churchman* for the years 1940 to 1955 and *The Montreal Churchman* for the years 1940-1946 (when it ceased publication) are helpful, as AFSA members occasionally used these as vehicles for making their views known. Similarly, the *Journals of Proceedings* of both General Synod and Montreal Diocesan Synod can indicate whether or not AFSA members were on certain committees or introduced specific motions in the Church courts. Unfortunately, these official records do not give an account of the actual debates but are limited to reports, motions, and decisions.

The most important primary sources are *The Anglican Outlook and News Digest*, collections of personal papers, and the reminiscences of AFSA members. *Anglican Outlook* was founded in 1945 as an alternative to the more conservative *Canadian Churchman*. As such, the *Outlook* became a sympathetic medium for AFSA. The group was involved in decisions related to editorial policy as early as

¹⁸ Philip Carrington, *The Anglican Church in Canada: A History* (Collins: Toronto, 1963)

¹⁹ John Irwin Cooper, *The Blessed Communion* (The Archives Committee of the Diocese of Montreal, 1960)

²⁰ Pulker, *Role of Anglicans in Reform*, pp.291-309

October, 1946, and in March, 1949, AFSA members in Montreal assumed responsibility for both the production and editorial content of the paper. For this reason, and given that editorials were discussed in AFSA meetings before publication, I will consider unsigned editorials published after March, 1949 to be indicative of "AFSA's position". It was widely acknowledged that *Anglican Outlook* was the "semi-official organ" of the Fellowship, although it is likely that the paper out-lived AFSA. *Anglican Outlook* became the *Christian Outlook* in 1960.

The personal papers of those involved in AFSA are the only source of original AFSA documents, of which I have located three: the "Manifesto";²¹ a "Bulletin" by John Peacock titled *A Christian Economic System*,²² and; a copy of the *Principles, Rules, Prayers, and By-Laws of the Anglican Fellowship for Social Action*.²³ The letters of the Rev. Frederick Hastings Smyth have been an invaluable resource for an understanding of the Fellowship's relationship with the Society of the Catholic Commonwealth and some of the divisions that existed within the AFSA membership.

Interviews with former members and their contemporaries are important for adding detail and colour to the sketches provided by the documentary material. Not only do the personalities and stories of the actors provide a more immediate sense of AFSA, but their recollections help in discerning the relative importance of certain ideas and issues. I have interviewed six former members:

²¹ The AFSA "Manifesto", n.d., 4pp. Papers of C.H. Powles; Papers of Frederick Hastings Smyth, and; *Montreal Churchman* (April 1945) p.7

²² John Peacock, *A Christian Economic System* (also known as "AFSA Bulletin #1"), n.d., 4pp. Papers of C.H. Powles

²³ *Principles, Rules, Prayers, and By-Laws of the Anglican Fellowship for Social Action*, n.d., 8pp. Papers of Frederick Hastings Smyth

Dr J.C. "Flynn" Flanagan; the Rev. S.L. Pollard; the Rev. J.C. Kirby; the Rev. J.O. Peacock; the Rev. V.I. Goring, and; the Rev. C.H. Powles. It would have been interesting and informative, although perhaps more confusing, to have interviewed more of the actors involved, but this has not been possible due to the time and distance involved. Similarly, there are potentially useful collections of personal papers to which I have not had access. These oral and written sources would have to be investigated fully before a more complete and authoritative historical study of AFSA could be produced.

In studying AFSA, I am looking for spiritual and theological resources. AFSA has already functioned as a spiritual resource to many who have heard of the group and are excited that such a group existed. There has developed a kind of "standard version" of the story which is somewhat romanticized. It pits a helpless, but dedicated cluster of forward-looking priests, against the massed forces of the "blue meanie" businessmen and their conniving bishop. I hope this myth can be refined. In looking to AFSA for spiritual resources, I will describe the group and its alienation. What issues did AFSA work on? How did it act for social change? How did it relate to other groups? How did it deal with opposition? Dealing with these questions demands an historical approach. The first two chapters will deal with the background, development, struggles, and decline of the group.

In looking to AFSA for theological resources, I will describe the group's thinking. In what terms did AFSA articulate its alienation? What theological ideas or images did it use to defend its stance against the *status quo*? And what was the alternate vision on the basis of which they advocated a transformation of society? As no AFSA member has produced a systematic theology, there are theological questions in answer to which we can only sketch elements of

an "AFSA position". However, there is sufficient material on the group's thinking to point us to major sources which are well-documented, such as William Temple. The final chapter will deal with the group's alienation from capitalism, its critique of the Church, and the theological vision of human-ness which it presented. In the Conclusion, I will reflect on AFSA's usefulness as a resource for Christians alienated from a post-Christian society and living at the margins of the church.