

**THE FOURFOLD DIFFICULTY OF  
ANGLICANISM, OR, THE CHURCH  
OF  
ENGLAND TESTED BY THE NICENE  
CREED, IN A SERIES OF LETTERS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649489039

The Fourfold Difficulty of Anglicanism, or, The Church of England Tested by the Nicene Creed,  
in a Series of Letters by J. Spencer Northcote

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**J. SPENCER NORTHCOTE**

**THE FOURFOLD DIFFICULTY OF  
ANGLICANISM, OR, THE CHURCH  
OF  
ENGLAND TESTED BY THE NICENE  
CREED, IN A SERIES OF LETTERS**



p,

THE  
FOURFOLD DIFFICULTY  
OF  
ANGLICANISM,  
OR  
*The Church of England*  
TESTED BY THE NICENE CREED.

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS.

BY  
J. SPENCER NORTHCOTE, M. A.  
LATE SCHOLAR OF CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE,  
OXFORD.

**London:**  
THOMAS RICHARDSON AND SON,  
172, FLEET STREET; DUBLIN, 16, DAWSON STREET,  
AND DERBY.  
1846.

W. R.  
W. R.

Church of England - Doctrine



THE  
FOURFOLD DIFFICULTY  
OF  
ANGLICANISM,  
ETC.

---

LETTER I.

MY DEAR —,

You desire me to tell you what were my reasons for becoming a Catholic, or (as you somewhat strangely express it,) for joining the Romanist schism in this country; and you assure me that you make this inquiry, not to gratify a mere idle curiosity, still less with the determination not to be convinced, but with a real practical purpose, and an honest desire of knowing the truth. You are not, you say, extensively acquainted with patristic, mediæval, or even with modern theology; but you have for some years held what are called High Church principles, in which your reading, such as it is, has confirmed you more and more; and you have been taught further to consider these principles as the surest, if not the only safeguard, against the corruptions of Popery; but recent events, in particular the “secession” of

many educated persons, both clergy and laity, including some friends of your own, and one or two to whom you had looked with especial veneration, have caused you much uneasiness. You cannot define your doubts, for, in truth, they are hardly of a specific character; you can only say generally, that your confidence in your religious position is shaken, that each new secession startles you afresh, and that you are therefore anxious to learn, in each instance, what has led to the step taken, that so you may judge for yourself whether new questions have been suggested, or old ones put in a new light by these modern schismatics. You add, that with this view, you have looked into most of their publications; but you complain of Mr. Marshall's "Twenty-two Reasons," as exhibiting conclusions only, silently passing over the whole process by which they were attained: on the other hand, you think Mr. Newman's Essay too long and difficult, not handy enough for general use, but requiring an extensive knowledge of Ecclesiastical history for its just appreciation: Mr. Oakeley's short Letter was rather a personal apology for himself, than an exposition of principles for the guidance of others: and Mr. Faber's arguments are directed against a position with which you never sympathized, and which indeed you could never reconcile with any known rules either of logic, ethics, or theology. In a word, nothing that you have hitherto met with from the pen of any of the converts, has come home to you, as of practical service to yourself, or likely to help those many others who are in similar circumstances.

J. G. V. M.



All this does not encourage me to attempt the statement you require ; for were I to do so, in all probability I should only furnish you with fresh matter for complaint ; because the path which led me into the Catholic Church is one which you have never trodden, and in which I should find it difficult to trace back to you my own steps ; indeed, I fear you will only be incredulous, when I simply state the fact, that I became a Catholic by the reading of Anglican works of controversy ; that I sat down to the study of Leslie and Barrow, an almost undoubting Protestant, and rose from it, all but thoroughly convinced of the validity of the Papal claim. Instead, therefore, of entering at present into the details of my own conversion, I think I shall better comply with the spirit of your request, by laying before you some general grounds, on which, as I believe, you and all others ought to join the Roman communion likewise. The line of argument I propose to adopt, is one which appears to me to admit of universal application, quite independently of the accidents of previous study, or of any peculiar modes of thinking. I shall only assume that you believe in the sacramental character of the Christian Church, i. e. that you believe in the existence of a visible body upon earth, the one appointed channel, whereby grace is conveyed for the restoration of fallen man, and from which it is therefore wicked and dangerous presumption either wilfully to separate, or wilfully to continue separate.

Here, at least, is common ground for us both ; and I presume you will hardly deny but that this Church must have certain outward signs or tokens, whereby

it may be distinguished from false rival societies: God has surely set some plain indications of His Presence upon that body, which is really His, and in which He vouchsafes to dwell, that so strangers may be drawn towards it, and all His sheep be gathered into one fold. The question then arises, what are these signs and tokens, the outward and visible notes of the One True Church?

Both you and I publicly declare, in one of the sacred symbols of our faith, that we believe in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church; it must be fair then to test our respective claims to be considered members of God's Church by this simple rule—to which communion do these notes most unequivocally belong, to yours or to mine? the English or the Roman?

And this method of inquiry is the more satisfactory, because the notes here spoken of are easily intelligible, and answer entirely to the natural sense and judgment of our own minds. It is obvious to all, that *Unity* must be a characteristic of Christ's Church, because that Church is the depository of God's revealed truth, which must needs be one with itself, every where and always the same; *Sanctity*, because the very purpose of Christ's coming was to destroy the works of the devil, and purify to Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works; *Catholicity*, because we are told, that in Christ the wall of partition is broken down; the new covenant was to be, not like the old one, local, national, and limited, but "a light to lighten the Gentiles," as well as "the glory of His people Israel;" and *Apostolicity*, because

thus only can we be sure that its doctrines and sacraments are really those which Christ taught and instituted, if we know it to be the true representative, by direct succession, of that body of Apostles who received them from Himself, inheriting therefore that Divine Warrant of their commission, "As my Father hath sent Me, even so send I you," together with the promise of perpetuity; "Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world."

Another advantage in this line of argument is its broad, general character, which saves me from being entangled in any examination of details; in truth, such an examination would be very difficult, if not wholly impossible, because I am ignorant of your present position in this matter. English high churchmen differ so much from one another, and from themselves at different times (those, at least, who have at all *gone on with the movement*), that I really do not know what are the precise points in "Roman doctrine" which you now consider to require an apology, what you are ready to concede, or what you would pass by as unimportant; e. g. one clergyman concedes the *cultus* of the saints, but cannot believe in purgatory; another holds purgatory to be both ancient and reasonable, but cannot conceive why we should pray to those who were once our fellow-men, and so on, through a graduated scale of opinions, from those who have but recently learnt to question whether Rome be really Antichrist, to those who claim to hold (or, less confidently, not to reject,) all Roman doctrine.

This, then, is the plan which I propose to follow: to