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Blast From the Past: Newman

Michael Sean Winters | Sep. 16, 2010 Distinctly Catholic

Tomorrow, the Holy Father will join the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury in a prayer service at Westminster Abbey. Not wanting to put a damper on the day, the prospect nonetheless called to mind the magnificent passage in Newman's Apologia when he recounts realizing that his view of Anglicanism as a *Via Media* had collapsed during his study of the Monophysite heresy and Pope Leo's response to it. Newman writes: "However, my new historical fact had already to a certain point a logical force. Down had come the *Via Media* as a definite theory or scheme, under the blows of St. leo. My 'Prophetical Office' had come to pieces; not indeed as an argument against 'Roman errors,' not as against protestantism, but as in behalf of England. I had no longer a distinctive plea for Anglicanism, unless I would be a Monophystite. I had, most painfully, to fall back upon my three original points of belief, which I have spoken so much of in a former passage, - the principle of dogma, the sacramental system, and anti-Romanism. Of these three, the first two were better secured in Rome than in the Anglican Church. The Apsotolical uccession, the two prominent sacraments, and the primitive Creeds, belonged, indeed, to the latter; but there had been and was far less strictness on matters of dogma and ritual in the Anglican system than in the Roman: in consequence, my main argument for the Anglican claims lay in the positive and special charges, which I could bring against Rome. I had no positive Anglican theory. I was very nearly a pure Protestant. Lutherans had a sort of theology, so had Calvinists. I had none."

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