

doctrines of his contemporaries are for the most part accurate, and his condemnation of them measured. His most infamous work, *Chillingworthi novissima* [The Last Days of Chillingworth], exemplifies the ambivalent nature of Cheynell's Calvinist piety. Cheynell attended CHILLINGWORTH after his capture and ministered to his needs, physical and spiritual. His zeal in performing the latter duty made him Chillingworth's tormentor as well. When Chillingworth died, Cheynell was instrumental in providing him with a Christian burial, yet at the ceremony he condemned the man and his work.

Cheynell's defence of the Trinity, *The Divine Trinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit* (1650), his last and most substantial work, is learned and conceptually acute. It presents a comprehensive system of Christian divinity from the standpoint of scholastic Calvinism. Scripture, dogmatically interpreted, is its only intended source. The doctrine of the Trinity is not an inference drawn from certain assertions in Scripture, it is the whole content of Scripture, which properly understood presents the self-revelation of the one God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This self-revelation is said to be equally manifest in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. In this respect, Cheynell anticipates the recent system of Karl Barth, offering an account of it that is clearer and more compact. Like Barth, Cheynell's programme self-consciously denies that philosophical concepts can be used to illuminate theological dogma, and rather undertakes to redefine philosophical terms, for example 'person', in the light of revealed truth.

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epistemological and took the form of addressing the definition of the *regula fidei*, that is the ultimate criterion of certainty in matters of faith and Christian doctrine. The problem was how to secure a sure foundation for theological discourse which reason had not yet succeeded in subverting. The infallibility of papal authority, of Scripture, ecclesiastical tradition, private prophetic inspiration, and even geometrical demonstration were all in the running in the unfolding 'crisis' as potential principles of certainty. In the course of a disputation with the Jesuit John Piercy (alias Fisher), Chillingworth came to doubt the orthodoxy of the reformed Church of England and longed for some resolution of his own experience of scepticism. Attracted by the prospect of an infallible doctrinal authority he came to view the Roman Church alone as competent to claim infallibility, especially in matters of faith necessary to salvation. He became convinced, as he explained later, that 'there was and must be always in the world some church that could not err; and consequently, seeing all other churches disclaimed this privilege of not being subject to error, the church of Rome must be that church which cannot err' (*Works*, vol. 3, p. 386). (It is interesting to note that even here, in his affirmation of an infallible dogmatic authority, Chillingworth appeals to syllogism.)

Shortly after he became an open convert to the Roman Church in 1630 he attended the Jesuit College at Douai, a seminary originally established by Philip II of Spain for the purpose of training mission priests for the restoration of Catholicism in England. Chillingworth's conversion was to be short-lived. At Douai he very quickly learned that he was expected no longer to think but to obey. Disillusioned by his experience at the seminary, he returned to Oxford 'a doubting papist' in 1631. An agnostic interlude between his return to England and his eventual formal profession

## CHILLINGWORTH, William (1602-44)

William Chillingworth was born in Oxford in October 1602 and died on 30 January 1644 in Chichester, where he was buried in the cathedral. He was godson of William LAUD, who was then a Fellow of St John's College, Oxford. Chillingworth attended Grammar School in Oxford and was appointed a Scholar of Trinity College, Oxford in 1618. He graduated BA in 1620 and was elected a Fellow of Trinity College in 1628. Attracted by the idea of an infallible Church, he converted to Roman Catholicism in 1629/30 but professed himself a Protestant once again in 1634. He was made prebendary of Chester Cathedral in 1635, chancellor of Salisbury Cathedral in 1638 and sat in the Convocation of 1640. Chillingworth joined the Royalist party in the civil war and served as chaplain to the king's army. He was taken prisoner in 1643 by Waller at the surrender of Arundel Castle. His principal philosophical achievement is contained in his famous treatise *The Religion of Protestants a Safe Way to Salvation*, first published in 1638, a copy of which was tossed into his grave by a Puritan nemesis Francis CHEYNELL.

An intimate friend of Lucius CARY, Viscount Falkland, and a key member of Falkland's celebrated *convivium philosophicum et theologicum*, otherwise known as the Great Tew Circle, Chillingworth was recognized early in his career at Oxford as an exceptionally able dialectician. His philosophy was formed against the background of the so-called Pyrrhonist Crisis of the early seventeenth century. Like other members of the Circle he was preoccupied by the problem of scepticism. In the 1620s he became deeply engaged in the doctrinal disputes which raged in Oxford between Protestantism and the Church of Rome, especially with respect to the so-called 'infallibility controversy'. The central question of this controversy was

of the Protestant religion was to bear fruit in a highly consequential intellectual struggle. Chillingworth gave up on his search for an infallible system of dogma and right practice, and transferred his intellectual energies to seeking out a rational basis for his Christian belief independent of the magisterial authority of the Church. In a letter at this time to John Lewgar, another contemporary English convert to Rome, Chillingworth offered his 'Reasons against Popery', afterwards published as a short treatise entitled *Letter Touching Infallibility* (1662). In this he set out to establish a rational basis for belief grounded upon the affirmation of the authority of human reason to interpret the Scriptures. At this point in his career Chillingworth declined the opportunity to take orders in the Church of England owing to his continued doubt that the *Thirty-nine Articles of Religion* were clearly demonstrable from Scripture; without such a demonstration, he maintained, forced subscription to the *Articles* could only be viewed as an intolerable imposition upon the conscience.

In addition to the reproaches he quite naturally earned from his erstwhile friends in the Church of Rome, Chillingworth also incurred vehement attacks by Calvinist adherents to scriptural infallibility. He took part in various formal disputations on the question of the *regula fidei* which led eventually to the publication in 1638 of his principal work, *The Religion of Protestants*. This treatise has been fairly described as the greatest intellectual contribution of the Great Tew Circle. Its argument is framed polemically as an answer to a pamphlet written by the Jesuit Matthew Wilson (alias Edward KNOTT), *Mercy and Truth, or Charity maintained by Catholics* (1634). Chillingworth's aim in his response to Knott is to maintain both the right of free, rational inquiry and the necessity of *conscientious* conviction of what is necessary to salvation: 'God does not require us as our duty to give

a greater assent to the conclusion than the premises deserve' (*Works*, vol. 1, p. 267). He upheld the principle of intellectual assent and uninhibited inquiry as the foundational principle of a Protestant hermeneutics. Although such a method might lead to error on some points, it could not ultimately result in exclusion from the divine promises, and was therefore 'a safe way to salvation'. The argument attracted considerable critical attention. Knott published several tracts in response to Chillingworth's treatise in the months following its publication and continued to do so even after the latter's death (*Infirmity Unmasked*, 1652). The Calvinist Cheynell condemned the work as heretical and 'a desperate designe of corrupting the Protestant religion'.

Although he adamantly refused to be identified openly with the school, Chillingworth was influenced by Socinianism. While he continued to profess adherence to the orthodox teaching of the Church of England, he nevertheless manifested an affinity for the Socinian rationalist legacy, viz. that reason constitutes the ultimate rule of faith. It has been shown that the library at Great Tew where Chillingworth wrote *The Religion of Protestants* was well stocked with works by Socinian authors, and indeed many of these are cited by him. In *The Religion of Protestants* Chillingworth's aim is neither to attack Rome directly nor to offer an explicit apology of the Church of England, but rather to uphold both the freedom of rational inquiry and the necessity of conscientious 'intellectual assent' to any public formulations of doctrine: 'I shall believe nothing which reason will not convince that I ought to believe it' (*Works*, vol. 2, p. 413). Chillingworth maintained that in both his conversion to Rome and his reconversion to Protestantism he had been led by the authority of 'reason alone' (vol. 1, pp. 2-3). In his argument he sought to

define a criterion of certainty from which natural reason could operate in religious discourse as an alternative to the acceptance of claims of infallibility made on behalf of either ecclesiastical power and tradition or 'enthusiastic' religious experience.

Influenced by his reading of Richard HOOKER and Hugo Grotius, both of whom he cites frequently, Chillingworth defined reason as a universal faculty found in everyone alike and which consists in a 'habit of innate principles'. On the one hand, reason is a mode of discourse which 'draws conclusions out of premises by good consequences'. According to this definition, reason appears to be a merely formal power, that is the capacity simply to draw inferences. At the same time, following a pattern of argument characteristic of other members of the Great Tew Circle, for example Henry HAMMOND and John HALES, Chillingworth also maintained that reason can also be viewed substantively as an emanation of the moral order, as the expression of natural law. In this sense reason manifests 'common notions written by god in the hearts of all men'. Furthermore, natural reason is just as indispensable to the definition of faith as it is to ordinary knowledge. And finally, although reason remains the sole criterion of certainty available, even it cannot lay claim to infallibility.

While the quest for infallibility was for Chillingworth ultimately a delusion, reason nevertheless offered the essential ground for a broadly conceived national Church. Following Hooker's lead he held that all of the articles of belief necessary to salvation are to be found in the Scriptures; but that it is manifestly reason's task to discern and distinguish which portions of the Bible actually constitute the essential teaching. By an appeal to the 'universality' and 'publicity' of reason he sought to avoid the two extremes of an intolerant certainty of an externally imposed dogmatism on the one

hand, and the vagaries of an essentially private 'inner light' on the other. Reason is 'a public and certain thing, exposed to all men's trial and examination'. While he maintained that the Scriptures contain all the teachings necessary to salvation, Chillingworth assiduously avoided any attempt to enumerate these teachings specifically and hence dogmatically. While reason alone might lay any plausible claim to providing a 'rule of faith', it cannot go so far as to offer a clear and demonstrable definition of what specific doctrine is essential to salvation. In this way reason's claim to provide a 'rule of faith' faltered and the prospect of falling back into the lap of either papal infallibility or a scriptural fundamentalism loomed once again. Chillingworth circumvented this dilemma simply by allowing that the very fallibility of reason renders doctrinal controversy ultimately insoluble; unanimity on even the basic points of faith must be abandoned owing to the impossibility of attaining unqualified certainty. He found refuge in the distinctive position that salvation depends more upon 'inquiry' than on specific belief: 'believe the scripture to be the word of God; use your endeavour to find the true sense of it, and live according to it; and then you may rest securely that you are in the true way of eternal happiness' (*Works*, vol. 2, p. 78). What matters is not so much 'knowing' the truth, since we cannot hope to attain unconditioned certainty in matters of faith; rather the practice of 'endeavouring' both to inquire after this truth and to act upon it becomes the most that can be hoped for. What is required for salvation is the struggle to know rather than any claim to certainty of possession. Probability coupled with a pragmatic moral posture has effectively displaced unconditioned certainty as the *regula*. Consequently the officially sanctioned formulations of orthodox doctrine become virtually superfluous. Ironically, reason also has lost much of its

vaunted claim to universality and hence to public authority. This aspect of Chillingworth's argument looks all the way forward to Hume.

Reason, then, cannot lay claim to infallibility. Indeed Chillingworth's intellectualist conception of faith led him inexorably to the conclusion that the authority of Scripture is ultimately based on 'probable belief'. Religious faith could lay claim to no more certain authority than the evidence adduced, namely the indemonstrable authority of divine revelation: 'The Bible only is the Religion of Protestants!' Despite the high-sounding rhetoric, Chillingworth was willing to settle for a reduced principle of certainty, namely a rationally vindicated probability combined with a limited pragmatic certainty. This revision of the 'rule of faith' relies heavily upon a conservative appeal to the tradition of natural law, to the claim that reason consists in certain innate principles of right. Moreover, Chillingworth's defence against scepticism, his response to the *crise pyrrhoniene*, is grounded in the recognition (derived from the methodological discussion at the outset of Aristotle's *Ethics*) that there are varying degrees of certainty appropriate to the different species of knowledge. Religion, like ethics, permits a pragmatic or moral certainty, but nothing comparable to the certainty appropriate to a geometrical demonstration. Religious faith for Chillingworth found its effective justification on the practical plane: 'The goodness of the [moral precepts] alone were sufficient to make any wise and good man believe that his religion rather than any other came from God, the fountain of goodness' (*Works*, vol. 2, p. 417). In an anticipation of the moralizing theology of the later seventeenth-century latitudinarian divines such as Edward STILLINGFLEET and John TILLOTSON, Chillingworth acknowledged that the great value of Christian belief was that it motivated the practice of virtue (*Works*, vol. 3, p. 59).

Having abandoned the quest for absolute philosophical certainty, Chillingworth was contented to rest in epistemological probability free from significant error. His position argued for the emancipation of reason from external control and thus anticipated a certain degree of toleration as the necessary condition of inquiry. This toleration was, however, more purely intellectual than institutional, for Chillingworth was still able to argue concerning the Church of England 'that the constant doctrine of it is so pure and orthodox, that whosoever believes it, and lives according to it, undoubtedly he shall be saved' and that there is no error in it which may necessitate or warrant any man to disturb the peace or renounce the communion of it' (*Works*, vol. 1, p. 35).

*The Religion of Protestants* went through numerous editions. Two appeared in the initial year of publication (1638). Four more editions appeared after the Restoration (1664, 1674, 1684 and 1687). Chillingworth's various other writings on episcopacy, infallibility and conversion to Rome were incorporated in numerous eighteenth-century editions of his works.

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CHISHULL, Edmund (1671-1733)

Edmund Chishull was born in Eyworth, Bedfordshire on 22 March 1671 and died in Walthamstow, Essex on 18 May 1733. He received his education at Corpus Christi