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# Editorial

## ‘Something Understood’

The whole Reformation period in England was a time of liturgical upheaval. Gregory Dix, in his *The Shape of the Liturgy*, described the beginning of this upheaval in a famously dramatic fashion: ‘With an inexcusable suddenness, between a Saturday night and a Monday morning at Pentecost 1549, the English liturgical tradition of nearly a thousand years was altogether overturned. Churchgoing never really recovered from that shock.’<sup>1</sup> Looking through some early numbers of *Faith & Worship* recently, I found the passage quoted in an editorial which went on to make the following comparison:

Now clearly the Worship and Doctrine Measure is a very different piece of legislation from the First Act of Uniformity; but at the local level its consequences have sometimes been almost as profound. There are now many parishes, perhaps even whole deaneries, where the Prayer Book has fallen entirely into disuse; and we can think of parishes in which the advent of a new incumbent has had the effect of producing a liturgical transformation every bit as sudden—and therefore every bit as inexcusable—as that produced by the First Act of Uniformity in the country as a whole.<sup>2</sup>

That was written nearly twenty-eight years ago.<sup>3</sup> Of course the ‘revolution’ was not only a matter of the rite (in the sense of text) being used: it was often accompanied by changes in the way liturgy

<sup>1</sup> Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London 1945), p.686.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Editorial’, *Faith & Worship* No. 4, Summer 1978.

<sup>3</sup> If the ‘liturgical revolution’ then in progress suffered some arrest, no doubt the Prayer Book Society can claim some of the credit—a wider public was alerted to what was happening, and ordinary lay people were strengthened in their defence of what they took to be good by the knowledge that they had rights and arguments on their side too. Not that the Society was ‘fundamentalist’ about the Prayer Book. David Martin said years ago that if it had been provided that one main service a month should be according to the Book of Common Prayer in every parish much of the heat would have been taken out of the argument. It was the high-handed way in which the Prayer Book was swept away altogether in some parishes, and the hostility shown towards it, which justifiably generated anger. Of course there are those who conscientiously avoid modern liturgy,

was 'done'; the altar might be moved or the seating rearranged, new forms of lay 'participation' might be introduced, or there might be a new emphasis on informality and 'spontaneity'. This was the 'other liturgical revolution' trenchantly described by I. R. Thompson in another early *Faith & Worship*.<sup>4</sup> These changes of rite and 'stagecraft' profoundly affected existing understandings of reverence and the sacred, disturbing and eroding what was, perhaps, an inarticulate attachment to a known way of worshipping God. Historians such as Eamon Duffy have brought home to us the comparable, doubtless far greater, disorientation experienced by ordinary worshippers at the Reformation, and so amplified in detail Dix's dramatic statement.

But the analogy between 1549–1552—the 'stripping of the altars'—and the 'liturgical revolution' of our own time is in some ways an uncomfortable one for supporters of the Prayer Book. The sixteenth-century Prayer Books were imposed on worshippers with far less consultation than the recent new services—the various parliamentary acts enforcing uniformity left no margin of choice at all: how can we complain, it may be asked, if new liturgies have been introduced by consent and by the enactment of the Church's own governing body? Of course there are any number of possible replies to this—among them, that to believe that good things, such as the Book of Common Prayer and the Elizabethan Church settlement, came out of the English Reformation is not to be committed to the view that everything said and done at that time was admirable, or that it is wisdom to turn 'a case of necessity into a rule of law'.<sup>5</sup> But the historians are helping us to see, in any case, that the whole Reformation period presents a very much more complex picture than the one many of us were brought up with.

David Loades's vivid description in this issue of the Reformation in Durham is a case in point: Dix's legislative revolution between 'a Saturday night and a Monday morning' looks much more patchy and

and go to great lengths to attend traditional services; but I know from correspondence that there are equally those—within the Society as well as more widely—who wish the Prayer Book to continue to be honoured and used, but who are prepared also to accept and use modern services alongside it. In any case the existence of parishes with a mixture of services does sometimes result, if my own observation is anything to go by, in newly-ordained priests coming to know and value the Prayer Book even when their training and background have given them little acquaintance with it.

<sup>4</sup> I. R. Thompson 'The Other Liturgical Revolution', *Faith & Worship* No. 7, Winter 1979–80. Thompson used J. A. T. Robinson's *Honest to God* to exemplify the new approach, but could equally have used the still earlier *Liturgy Coming to Life* (1960).

<sup>5</sup> Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, 1790, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford 1993), p.17.

piecemeal as actually carried out on the ground in a diocese remote from the centres of power. There were opportunities enough to resist or evade in an area 'deeply committed to the old ways', and at any one stage of the process there can have been little sense of permanence. And yet, as Professor Loades indicates in his conclusion, by the 1630s, in a development which seems paradoxical, the originally revolutionary Prayer Book was the rallying point for the liturgically conservative. The Book of Common Prayer had, after a generation or so, made its way into the hearts and minds of many ordinary worshippers and become, as it were, a new locus for the sense of the sacred. The Cheshire petitioners to Parliament in 1641, wishing to uphold the lawful liturgy, asserted

that scarce any Family or Person that can read, but are furnished with the Books of Common Prayer; in the conscionable Use whereof, many Christian Hearts have found unspeakable joy and Comfort; wherein the famous Church of England our dear Mother hath just Cause to Glory: and may she long flourish in the Practice of so blessed a liturgy.

In a different complaint it was maintained that the (puritan) minister and curate of a parish had failed to administer Holy Communion 'according to the Ancient order of our Church of England prescribed in the booke of Common Prayer'. In the same case one of the complainants regretted that 'many orders and Customs which we have had in former times ... [are] now taken from us'. These last two quotations suggest not only that the Common Prayer was revered as a 'blessed' source of 'unspeakable joy and comfort', but that it was seen as a vehicle for continuity with earlier times. It is one of Dr Judith Maltby's contentions in the book from which these examples are drawn<sup>6</sup> that

Backed by the laws of parliament and the protection of the 'godly prince', the most pervasive agent of change, the Book of Common

<sup>6</sup> Judith Maltby, *Prayer Book and People in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England* (Cambridge 1998), pp.27,49. It is the great virtue of Dr Maltby's very interesting study that it takes 'conformism' seriously, and, using the evidence of church courts and the petitions of 1641, presents the ordinary conforming churchgoer as positively attached to the forms of the Church of England, rather than just passively submissive to them: 'Historians of religion have concentrated on disaffection from the reformed Church of England. The spotlighting of the spiritually disgruntled is explained, if not justified, by the greater visibility of the non-conformist over the conformist in the historical record ... The women and men who did conform and whose conformity grew beyond mere obedience to the prince (though we must never lose sight of the religious significance of obedience) into an attachment, perhaps even love, for the Church of England surely deserve some attention' (p.2).

Prayer, gained a place in the religious consciousness and even affections of the English laity. Its success may be explained in part by the element of continuity it gave its users along with innovation.<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps then, given time and a period of undisturbed enjoyment, there is a natural human tendency to invest what has become customary in worship with the aura of the sacred?<sup>8</sup>

There does seem to be a deep human need to stabilize and even consecrate, what may originally have been experienced as revolutionary, or as a violent disturbance of 'the old ways'.<sup>9</sup>

Given time: there was time in Elizabethan and early Stuart England for the laity to take possession of the liturgy, or to be possessed by it. As both Juliet Hole and Canon Evans emphasize in this issue a liturgy, like a church building, needs to undergo, as Miss Hole puts it, an 'historic process of becoming our own'—'liturgical worship' in Canon Evans's words 'does not yield up its treasures easily'. The General Synod has reached a welcome pause in liturgical business, and a time is now needed to see just what in *Common Worship* is of a stuff that will endure: that the Prayer Book has powers of endurance has been sufficiently demonstrated. A novel liturgy necessarily calls attention to itself rather than God; it needs to become familiar before it can—if it is in it to do so—point beyond itself. I don't know whether George Herbert had this in mind when he wrote of prayer as 'something understood', but it serves to suggest that a public liturgy needs not only to be apprehended by the mind but also, the other sense of 'understood', to be 'assumed as known or fixed',<sup>10</sup> because already our own.

John Scrivener

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p.17.

<sup>8</sup> cf. 'Leopards break into the temple and drink to the dregs what is in the sacrificial pitchers; this is repeated over and over again; finally it can be calculated in advance and it becomes a part of the ceremony.' Franz Kafka, *Parables and Paradoxes* (New York 1961), p.93.

<sup>9</sup> Even congregations which think of themselves as thoroughly unliturgical seem to pattern and shape what they do: the most 'charismatic' and pentecostal services have an implicit order, from what one gathers—the 'speaking in tongues' has its expected place, and would presumably be unwelcome during the sermon. There is a desire for the 'given', and for form and order, even where spontaneity is most prized.

<sup>10</sup> OED.

# Durham, the Reformation and the Prayer Book

DAVID LOADES

**O**n the 14 November 1569 Christopher Nevell, Cuthbert Nevell, uncles of the sayd Erle of Westmerland, and Thomas Markynfelde, wythe others to the number of three score horsemen, armed in corsletts and coyts of playt, with speares, harquebusses and dagges ... entered the mynster there [Durham] and theyr toke all the bokes but one, and theyme and the communion table defaced, rentt and brok in peces ...<sup>1</sup>

This is probably the best-known image of Durham's relationship with the Prayer Book during the whole Reformation period, but Christopher Neville and his colleagues were rebels whose cause quickly collapsed, and whose protest made little difference to the steady advance of the Protestant Church. Nevertheless, their actions were not unwelcome to some of the inhabitants of the close, nor to many of the neighbouring citizens. When Elizabeth's commissioners visited Durham after the settlement of 1559, they had found that eight of the twelve prebendal stalls were still occupied by former monks of the abbey, which had been dissolved twenty years earlier; two were held by ex-religious from other houses, and just two by secular priests of recent appointment.<sup>2</sup> In spite of the fact that the diocese had had no legal existence in 1553–4, the cathedral had been relatively little disrupted by the short-lived radicalism of Edward VI's reign. The whole Chapter had followed its

<sup>1</sup> Sir George Bowes to the Earl of Sussex, 15 November 1569. British Library, Cotton MS Caligula B IX, 331. Printed by Sir Cuthbert Sharp in *The Rebellion of 1569* (1840); reprinted with a foreword by Robert Wood (1975, pp.36–7).

<sup>2</sup> D. Marcombe, 'The Dean and Chapter of Durham, 1558–1603' (Durham Ph.D. 1973), pp.372–80.

bishop in accepting the First Uniformity Act of 1549—and in doing as little as possible to implement it. The death of Dean Whitehead in 1551 had enabled the ultra-Protestant Robert Horne to be appointed to the Deanery, but only one conservative prebendary had died and been replaced during the reign, so Horne had very little support in the Chapter and could achieve only the most superficial conformity, even at the cost of making himself very unpopular. The advent of Mary must have caused huge relief in the close. Horne fled, lamenting the failure of his hopes

God's book containing the word of life taken forth of the churches of the bishopric of Durham, and a foul sort of idols called Laymens Books brought in therefore ... the Common Prayer in the vulgar tongue banished (and) the Lord's Table taken away ...<sup>3</sup>

John Rudd, the one Edwardian prebendary, was deprived, and the fragile Protestant ascendancy collapsed. The Chapter had scrupulously followed the letter of the law, both in 1549 and in 1552, but apart from Horne and Rudd there is no trace of reformed enthusiasm in the cathedral—and very little elsewhere in the diocese. A trading centre and port town such as Newcastle inevitably had its share of religious radicals, but as dissenters they were neither numerous enough nor determined enough to cause the bishop any anxiety. The prevailing attitude in 1554 must have been that normality had been restored. Cuthbert Tunstall was back at Auckland Castle, and all was as it should be. When celebrations were ordered for the restoration of the Papal obedience in March 1555, they were distinctly low key. '3 pottels of wine in Dr Watsons chamber ... 2 gallons of ale drunk in the garth ... (and) wine expended by the servants at Nicholas Turpyns ...' with a few other oddments costing the princely sum of 6s 10d.<sup>4</sup> Durham was not much interested in the Pope, but it was deeply committed to the old ways.

The Elizabethan settlement, however, was different from that of Edward. Mary had stiffened and clarified attitudes, even if she had not generated much enthusiasm for Rome. This time Bishop Tunstall refused to subscribe, and when the cathedral was visited on 23 September 1559, only one of the twelve prebendaries was prepared to take the oath on the spot.<sup>5</sup> One other, the aged and highly conservative

<sup>3</sup> Horne's Apology (1553). Reprinted in J. Strype, *Annals of the Reformation*, II, 2, (1824) pp.681–93.

<sup>4</sup> *Durham Accounts*, ed. J. S. Fowler (Surtees Society, 103, 1901), p.730.

<sup>5</sup> Marcombe, p.162. Sparke, who had been consecrated as suffragan Bishop of Berwick in 1537, survived until 1572.

Thomas Sparke, appears to have done so subsequently. Of the twelve minor canons, four subscribed and eight refused. Tunstall was deprived of the bishopric in London a few days later, but this had nothing to do with the proceedings in the north. The recalcitrant canons were at once deprived of their supporting benefices—but not of their stalls. Instead the Dean, nine prebendaries and eight minor canons were bound over to appear before the High Commission in London. Although they had the power to deprive, the Visitors chose not to exercise it in this connection, feeling perhaps that such a wholesale clear-out of a major institution required the exercise of a higher authority, and one more closely in touch with the Privy Council.<sup>6</sup> Instead they left behind a set of Injunctions designed to encourage conformity with the new order—more in hope than expectation. No record of the High Commission proceedings survives, but by February 1560 five of the original refusers had submitted, and the other five, including the Dean, had persisted and been deprived.<sup>7</sup> All the eight minor canons cited appear to have submitted. After Thomas Robertson's deprivation, Robert Horne returned to the Deanery, but he remained only just over a year before being promoted to the bishopric of Winchester. He was followed in December 1560 by Ralph Skinner. Skinner himself lasted only three years before he was succeeded by the energetic William Whittingham.<sup>8</sup> Following Tunstall's deprivation the see was vacant for a year and a half, before James Pilkington was consecrated in March 1561.

Problems persisted. Pilkington visited his diocese in October 1561, and imposed stringent conditions of conformity on all clergy, but it was one thing to gain acquiescence and quite another to inspire enthusiasm. William Todd, one of the conformist canons, was repeatedly called before the High Commission in York for wearing vestments and using 'superstitious' prayers, before eventually being deprived in 1567.<sup>9</sup> Some of those who had been deprived earlier had obligingly gone abroad, but others lurked in the countryside of County Durham, encouraging opposition to the new order. Most seriously they developed close links with Catholic gentry families such as the Salvins and the Tempests upon whom they became financially dependent, and thus became involved in the rebellion of 1569. Following the

<sup>6</sup> Public Record Office, SP12/10, ff.175–81.

<sup>7</sup> After Robinson's deprivation, the other four appear to have been referred back to Robert Horne to administer the Oath of Supremacy. When this was refused, he was empowered to deprive them by the Commission. PRO SP12/11, f.16.

<sup>8</sup> Skinner died in 1563. Marcombe, p.372.

<sup>9</sup> Durham Chapter Records D/Sa/L.20.2, f.1/15, cited Marcombe, p.181.

incursion of 14 November, there was a serious attempt to restore the cathedral to Catholic use, and mass was celebrated with traditional pomp. Dean Whittingham and his Protestant colleagues fled as soon as it was clear that the rebels could not be thwarted, but of the four conservative canons who remained behind only one—George Cliffe—played any noticeable part in the restoration. The others kept discreetly out of sight, leaving it to the minor canons to fly the Catholic flag. Of these no fewer than nine were involved to some extent, four of them prominently. One—John Preston—was the celebrant at the High Mass. Nine of the ten lay clerks also participated in the revived liturgy.<sup>10</sup>

A month later the rebellion had collapsed, and on 16 December the last rebels fled from the City as the Earl of Sussex advanced. Before Christmas the Earl of Warwick and Lord Clinton were in possession of the cathedral, and on 28 December Sir William Cecil wrote

I wish some good example were at Durham to restore the bible and Common Prayers by some general assembly to confound the rebels' barbarousness ...<sup>11</sup>

As far as we know, no such assembly was held, but Dean Whittingham and his colleagues lost no time in restoring the English services. The fact that their houses had been plundered in their absence no doubt lent an edge to their zeal. An intensive investigation into what had happened then followed, but the results were less than dramatic. Four of the minor canons, including John Pearson, lost their positions at once, but only one prebendary—Stephen Marley—was eventually deprived in 1572. One priest was executed for his part in the rising, but he had no connection with the cathedral.<sup>12</sup> In the case of the clergy, the commissioners were surprisingly willing to accept pleas of coercion, and over a dozen who had been to some extent involved not only escaped with their lives but kept their preferments. The main consequence of the rebellion was that several leading Catholic families lost their lands, which were then redistributed among those loyal to the regime. The feudal sub-culture of the far north of England, undermined a generation before after the Pilgrimage of Grace, now finally came to an end. The cathedral resumed its interrupted course, and although both Whittingham and Pilkington would have liked more rapid progress in filling the stalls they had perforce to wait for

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p.173.

<sup>11</sup> *The State Papers and Letters of Sir Ralph Sadler (1809)*, II, p.79. After the rebellion the books which had been destroyed were replaced at a cost of £4 9s 0d. Fowler, *Durham Accounts*, p.177.

<sup>12</sup> This was Thomas Plumtree, who had preached to the rebel army. Marcombe, p.177.

dead mens' shoes. It was not until the 1580s, after both of them had gone, that the culture of the close became unequivocally reformed, and began to resound with the chatter of wives and the cries of children. Only then could the cathedral begin to function as that powerhouse of Protestantism which Dean Horne had so earnestly desired. Within a few years this was to create problems of its own—but that is another story.

Beyond the close, and outside those parishes which the canons held in addition to their stalls, reformed practices spread even more slowly. Even after the rebellion Catholicism remained strong, especially among the gentry, and known recusants were numerous.<sup>13</sup> Among the clergy at large for many years conformity was only skin deep. Incumbents dutifully took the Oath of Supremacy, and even provided Bibles and Prayer Books for their congregations, while continuing to celebrate clandestine masses for the large number who preferred that way of worship. Pilkington frequently lamented the hardness of his lot. Open defiance was rare, and could be dealt with, but in Durham the distinctions were more than usually blurred. This was a situation for which Bishop Tunstall had been at least in part responsible. In spite of his sufferings under Edward VI, he had not been in a vengeful mood when he regained his see in 1554. He was, as John Foxe put it, unwilling to have the blood of fellow Christians on his hands, and he had learned by long experience how to put the distance between Durham and London to good use. Although he remained in the south for the first eighteen months or so of Mary's reign, by the time that the persecution began in earnest in February 1555 he had returned to Durham; and there he stayed, keeping the Queen's more zealous agents at an arm's length.<sup>14</sup> There were no burnings in his diocese, and his attitude can best be illustrated by his relationship with Bernard Gilpin, later known as 'the Apostle of the North'. Gilpin was born in 1517, and was therefore over forty years younger than Tunstall. He was also a fairly remote kinsman, and the bishop felt some responsibility for him. He had a distinguished career at Oxford, becoming a fellow of Queen's College, and like a number of other reformers was at first

<sup>13</sup> *Acts of the High Commission Court within the Diocese of Durham* (Surtees Society, 34, 1858). For the ramifications of recusancy within the Bowes family, see Christine M. Newman, "'An Honourable and Elect Lady": The Faith of Isobel, Lady Bowes', in D. Wood, ed., *Life and Thought in the Northern Church, c.1100–c.1700* (Studies in Church History, subsidia 12, 1999), pp.407–21.

<sup>14</sup> Charles Sturge, *Cuthbert Tunstall* (1938), pp.308–15. Foxe records Tunstall as having been present at the examination of John Philpot in November 1555, so he may have made a visit to the south after March 1555, but it is not otherwise mentioned.

a stout defender of orthodoxy, first against John Hooper and later against Peter Martyr. However, by the time that the mass had become a central issue in 1549–50, Gilpin was beginning to have doubts—particularly about transubstantiation. He consulted Tunstall, who as well as his kinsman was obviously his patron. The latter was already in prison at the time, and about to be deprived. The eucharist was also very much in his mind as he had used his enforced leisure to write *De Veritate Corporis*—his only substantial theological work.

Tunstall apparently replied rather surprisingly

... that in the matter of transubstantiation Innocentius the Pope, the third of that name, had done unadvisedly, seeing that he had made it an Article of Faith. And he did further confess that the Pope [probably Leo X] had committed a great fault in that touching indulgences and other things he had taken no better order for the quiet of the church ...<sup>15</sup>

If this response is authentic, and there must be some doubt since it was recorded at second hand, the bishop's position was extraordinarily undogmatic. In the 1520s, as Bishop of London, he had been a zealous opponent of Luther, and had urged his friend Erasmus to take a stronger stand against the heretics.<sup>16</sup> However, it was justification rather than the eucharistic presence which had then exercised him, and by 1552 he was thoroughly ambivalent about the corporeal presence. He had no doubt at all about the reality of the presence of Christ, but the nature of the conversion was, in his view, a holy mystery. The orthodox position must be accepted on the authority of the church, but an intellectual definition was impossible. It was consequently the tendency of the Marian authorities to use a corporeal presence as the acid test of orthodoxy which made him so reluctant to proceed against heretics. He advised Gilpin to go abroad in search of an answer, and the latter, who had recently been provided to the vicarage of Norton, made provision for his benefice and left early in 1553. He stayed away for about three years, and in the course of that time saw *De Veritate Corporis* through the press in Paris.<sup>17</sup> When he returned, Tunstall had recovered his see, and promptly provided his kinsman to the rectory of Easington.

However, far from resolving Gilpin's doubts about transubstantiation, his travels had actually increased them. By the time that he began to

<sup>15</sup> G. Carleton, *Bernard Gilpin* (1629), p.33; quoting a letter written in 1575 and not now surviving.

<sup>16</sup> Sturge, pp.122–3.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, p.114.

preach energetically in 1556 there is little doubt that he was technically a heretic—on that issue at least. He fulminated against such abuses as pluralism and non-residence. These should have been safe matters because Cardinal Pole was equally exercised about them, but Gilpin was not Pole and many of his hearers were profoundly irritated. He made enemies, and although Tunstall warned him, within a few months he found himself facing heresy charges on a dozen counts, including the sacrament of the altar. This put the bishop on the spot, but since the matter was referred to his own jurisdiction, he was able to deal with it in his own way. ‘The bishop showed me’, Gilpin later recalled, ‘as much favour as I suppose he durst. In transubstantiation he would not trouble me, only he enquired concerning the Real Presence, which I granted and so was freed of that danger.’<sup>18</sup> A few months later he was collated to the important (and wealthy) living of Houghton-le-Spring. The only way to get at Gilpin, his enemies then decided, was to bypass the bishop altogether. This they did in the summer of 1558 by denouncing him to a Legatine Commission, headed by Bishop Bonner of London. Bonner knew nothing of Gilpin, but ordered his arrest. Before he reached London, however, both Mary and Pole were dead, and their commissions expired. So Gilpin survived to become one of the crucial ‘link men’ providing continuity and conformist leadership in Durham. In October 1559 he was joined with Roger Watson, the one conforming canon, and Edwin Sandys, soon to be Bishop of Worcester, in a royal commission with sweeping powers to carry out a visitation of the diocese.<sup>19</sup>

Tunstall had by then been deprived a second time, and was within a month of his death. Elizabeth had at first hoped that he would provide the vital continuity, but in spite of his ambivalence over transubstantiation he was not remotely Protestant in his sympathies, and his conscience could not stomach another change of jurisdiction. He was also eighty-five years old, and understandably unwilling to accept instruction from ‘laymen his juniors’. He died in the relative comfort of Lambeth Palace on 8 November and was buried in the parish church there, where he had first been consecrated bishop.<sup>20</sup> He

<sup>18</sup> Carleton, p.37. According to Gilpin his conscience later troubled him for so easily conceding a point upon which he was uncertain—but that may have been hindsight.

<sup>19</sup> L. Hinde, *The Register of Tunstall and Pilkington* (Surtees Society, 161, 1946). This commission was dated 8 October 1559, while the see was vacant. The entry appears on p.53 of the original MS.

<sup>20</sup> There is some doubt about the date of his funeral. *The Diary of Henry Machyn* (Camden Society, 1848), p.218, says 19 November. The Lambeth Palace register says 29. Sturge, Appendix 19.

had shown favour to Gilpin, and leniency towards other heretics, not because he sympathized with them, but because he understood them. Gilpin was a learned man, as he was himself, and learning virtually precluded facile certainties. He was also an energetic and devoted pastoral minister—and there were not too many of them around. So Gilpin made his equivocal submission, and was reinstated. Others the bishop rightly judged to be ignorant and confused, so that when he made it clear that he had no intention of making martyrs of them, they also submitted. No doubt a more rigorous judge could have found heretics to burn in Durham, and that would have provoked the same legacy of bitterness as was felt elsewhere. Durham was spared that experience; the boundaries remained ill defined, and change was extremely slow—until the rebellion of 1569 demonstrated the need for tougher and more decisive action.

This same vagueness also worked at the other end of the spectrum. Just how strong were Catholic convictions, as opposed to mere conservatism, in Durham? Why was the Prayer Book so much resented when the Royal Supremacy raised hardly a ripple? Theoretically the papal jurisdiction was a matter of faith, but it was treated as a question of usage. At the same time the English Bible and the vernacular liturgy were matters of usage, but they were treated as issues of faith. Originally these distinctions had been perceived clearly enough. Conservatives such as More and Tunstall had argued against the English Bible on practical grounds. It was dangerous to place so complex a book in the hands of the semi-educated, inviting all sorts of wild misunderstandings.<sup>21</sup> Only the learned (by whom they meant themselves) could be trusted with its interpretation in the name of the Church. Tunstall claimed at one point to have found over two thousand errors in Tyndale's translation of the New Testament, but that was linguistic quibbling rather than theological judgement.<sup>22</sup> Pole did not ban the Great Bible during Mary's reign, although there was no shortage of conservative voices urging him to. In principle he favoured vernacular scripture, and in time would probably have authorized a new translation. In practice, however, it went out of use. In Exeter diocese the Bibles were collected up on the bishop's orders, while in London they seem to have passed into private hands.<sup>23</sup> We do not know what happened in Durham. If Tunstall had ordered a mass destruction it would certainly have been recorded; some may

<sup>21</sup> David Daniell. *The Bible in English* (2003), pp.163–5.

<sup>22</sup> Sturge, pp.132–5, 224–8.

<sup>23</sup> Eamon Duffy, *TheVoices of Morebath* (2001), p.162.

have been destroyed by churchwardens or incumbents, but most were probably just stowed away. In the south of England Bible reading was not an exclusively Protestant practice, but it was frowned upon by the clergy, and in Durham may well have been regarded as a demonstration of heresy. It took a long time for Elizabeth's officials to restore the Scriptures to regular use across the region.

The Prayer Book was a rather different matter, because although the 1549 rite was capable of a Catholic interpretation, that of 1552 was unequivocally Protestant. When it was first introduced, all the existing service books were ordered to be destroyed, and it seems clear that both the Bishop and the Chapter followed this instruction to the letter. When the traditional services were restored by Mary, new missals and other liturgical aids had to be imported from France at considerable expense,<sup>24</sup> and when these in turn were ordered to be destroyed in 1559, the response was much less prompt. Lessons had been learned, and nobody could tell how long this new dispensation would last—if it ever struck root at all. The missals were quietly consigned to cupboards, and when the mass was briefly set up again in 1569 there were no complaints about a shortage of books. In this connection we have to remember how fragile the Elizabethan settlement looked at the time. Virtually all the surviving Marian bishops had been deprived in 1559, and John Foxe celebrated the triumph of the 'New Constantine' in 1563, but the Protestant victory was much less clear cut than it was made to look.<sup>25</sup> Elizabeth might die—as she nearly did in 1563—or she might marry a Catholic prince. Moreover, although nobody had challenged Elizabeth in 1558 in the name of Mary Stuart, there was a strong case for regarding her as the heir, especially after her return to Scotland in 1561; and her Catholicism was unimpeachable. Although a number of the more zealous and committed Catholics took themselves off to the continent after 1559, there was a strong case for religious conservatives simply to sit tight and wait for better times. Both Elizabeth and Cecil knew this perfectly well, and the restraint of their early actions reflects this knowledge. It is why a conforming Tunstall would have been so useful, and why relatively few of the recalcitrant canons lost their jobs at once. Caution and ambiguity served the government well for over ten years, and although there was pressure on the northern clergy to conform, many of them were able to sit on the fence for the whole of that time.

<sup>24</sup> *Durham Accounts*, p.728.

<sup>25</sup> The first edition of the *Acts and Monuments of the English Martyrs* included a dedicatory preface to the Queen, which hailed her by that title. For a recent discussion of the precariousness of the settlement, see N. L. Jones, *The Birth of the Elizabethan Age: England in the 1560s* (1993).

This situation was changed permanently by the events of 1569–70. The rebellion itself was a shambles, because it had two different agendas. The main movement sprang out of a court conspiracy to oust William Cecil and to marry Mary Queen of Scots to the Duke of Norfolk. The conspirators aimed to secure Mary's position as heir, and repeal the 1559 religious settlement.<sup>26</sup> Their agenda in that respect was 'religion as King Henry left it'. This was the intention of the Earls themselves, and of most of their followers. However, embedded within the latter was a much more radical group, led by Christopher Neville and Richard Norton, which aimed to get rid of Elizabeth entirely, and bring in Mary and the papal jurisdiction. It was these men who appealed to the Duke of Alba and to Pope Pius V for support. Alba was not interested, judging (rightly) that the movement lacked substance, but the Pope responded in 1570, long after the rebellion had collapsed, with the Bull *Regnans in Excelsis*. This not only declared Elizabeth deposed, but absolved all her subjects from their allegiance, and was a declaration of war.<sup>27</sup> Thereafter anyone who upheld the Pope's authority in England was the agent of a foreign and hostile power, and thus technically a traitor. It is not my intention to pursue the logic of this into the confused world of penal laws, recusancy and conspiracy, but it is important to realize the nature of the watershed. Before 1570 the mass was an irritating gesture of non-conformity, afterwards it was a symbolic act of treason. The Prayer Book consequently became equally symbolic of loyalty to Church and State. The English liturgy became a patriotic banner in a sense which it had never been before.

Such an outcome was far from the thoughts of Cranmer and those who had first supported him. To them a vernacular liturgy had nothing to do with 'being English'; it was a matter of principle, the fulfilling of the biblical precept to edify the people in a language which they could understand. This was common ground to all the reformed churches. Henry VIII had allowed Cranmer to experiment with such a liturgy as early as 1544, and had the old king lived longer, England might well have had an English mass.<sup>28</sup> As it was, it was the first Protestant government which introduced the Prayer Book, and thus made it an heretical book to all good Catholics. The only connection of Durham with this process was through the person of Nicholas Ridley. Nicholas was the son of Christopher Ridley of Unthank,

<sup>26</sup> W. MacCaffrey, *The Shaping of the Elizabethan Regime* (1969), pp. 199–246.

<sup>27</sup> That it was seen in that light at the time is clear from William Cecil's tract *The Execution of Justice in England* (1583) (ed. R. Klindon, 1965).

<sup>28</sup> D. MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer* (1996), p.328.

Northumberland, and thus another member of the ramifying Tunstall kindred. His uncle, Robert Ridley, who paid for his studies in Cambridge, was for a number of years Cuthbert Tunstall's secretary. Robert died in 1536, and was thus spared the sight of his nephew moving steadily into heresy. Nicholas moved cautiously in the wake of Thomas Cranmer, and became one of the Archbishop's favourite protégés. At his rectory at Herne in Kent he was encouraging his parishioners to say the *Te Deum* in English long before such practices were lawful.<sup>29</sup> Ridley did not play any acknowledged part in the composition of the new liturgy, which was almost entirely Cranmer's own work, but he was probably one of the eleven unnamed Divines who were consulted in the autumn of 1548. The 1549 rite was based on the Sarum Use, and was the logical outcome of the Henrician changes, expressing as it did the old king's known desire for an order of service which would be uniform throughout the *Ecclesia Anglicana*. It was Protestant, but implicitly rather than explicitly. Several traditional rites were omitted or truncated, and elevation of the eucharistic elements was prohibited by rubric. However, so ambiguous was its language that Stephen Gardiner, the conservative champion at the time, expressed his willingness to use it.<sup>30</sup> Only the Cornish rebels and the Princess Mary rejected it outright. It is hardly surprising that Tunstall, who had voted against every stage of the Bill of Uniformity in the House of Lords, nevertheless used it without further protest when it was formally introduced at Whitsun 1549. His subsequent deprivation had nothing to do with non-conformity in that sense. In theory it was for misprision of treason, and in practice for a general obstructiveness to the policies of the Earl of Warwick.<sup>31</sup> When the see was dissolved by statute in 1553, and it was proposed to erect new sees in Durham and Newcastle, the name pencilled in to the former vacancy was Nicholas Ridley.

When the second Prayer Book was introduced in 1552, the see of Durham was vacant, and was about to be abolished. No visitation was conducted during the vacancy, and we do not know how the new liturgy was received—if it was ever received at all in more than the most formal sense. Robert Horne was Dean, and he would have insisted upon conformity within the cathedral, but he had little influence outside the close, and only just over a year later the rite was withdrawn.

<sup>29</sup> *Letters and Papers ... of the Reign of Henry VIII*, XVIII, ii, 346. J. G. Ridley, *Nicholas Ridley* (1957), p.69.

<sup>30</sup> J. A. Muller, *Stephen Gardiner and the Tudor Reaction* (1926), pp.187–8.

<sup>31</sup> D. Loades, 'The Last Years of Cuthbert Tunstall, 1547–1559', *Durham University Journal*, 66, 1973, pp.10–21.

The 1552 liturgy would certainly have been more to Ridley's taste than its predecessor, but again there is no record of his having been formally consulted. Those whose influence is on record were Martin Bucer, Peter Martyr and John Hooper, and with Hooper the Bishop of London is known to have had serious disagreements.<sup>32</sup> By the end of Edward's reign there was a handful of Protestant incumbents in the diocese, and they presumably used the new Prayer Book, but even that cannot be demonstrated. In and after 1559 there are regular visitation returns, but they are relatively uninformative about the use of the Prayer Book. A number of clergy were disciplined or deprived, but usually for negligence, pluralism or absenteeism rather than liturgical nonconformity. Such general comments as have survived were usually about the backwardness of the region, implying that its conservatism was more the result of inertia than of positive Catholic convictions. As early as 1535 Dr Richard Layton had written to Cromwell about rural Northumberland and Durham

... there can be no better way to beat the king's authority into the rude people in the north than to show them that the king intends reformation and correction of religion.<sup>33</sup>

Apart from the gender of the monarch, that could have been written by Pilkington to Cecil, although the bishop was usually more careful to express a pastoral concern.

The main emphasis of those responsible for managing the spiritual life of Durham was always more upon preaching than upon liturgy. Even Tunstall, who resisted change in most guises, wanted more preachers. The trouble was that, apart from the cathedral, the diocese was an unattractive posting for a graduate priest. The border parishes were huge, and the stipends meagre; while even the wealthier lowland cures often saw a bewildering succession of short term incumbents.<sup>34</sup> The important garrison town of Berwick-upon-Tweed had preachers drafted in, but they seldom stayed long. Continuity and the regular provision of services were often in the hands of humble curates. These were usually local men, decent and hard working, who knew their communities, but they were without education or any formal training. Such curates could celebrate mass, or read the offices, but little more. Inevitably they tended to be very conservative, not out of theological

<sup>32</sup> When Hooper refused to be consecrated as Bishop of Gloucester wearing vestments, Ridley led the campaign to enforce his compliance. Ridley, pp.223–5.

<sup>33</sup> Layton to Cromwell, 30 June 1535. *Letters and Papers*, VIII, i, 955.

<sup>34</sup> S. M. Keeling, 'The Church and Religion in the Anglo-Scottish Borders, 1534–1572' (Durham Ph.D. 1975).

conviction, but simply out of a natural preference for going on doing what they had always done, and what they knew they could cope with.<sup>35</sup> Sometimes they were Scots, who were suspect to the authorities for a number of reasons. They were usually fugitives rather than men attracted by superior prospects—so before 1560 they were suspected of heresy, and after 1560 of popery. John Knox preached both in Berwick and in Newcastle during Edward's reign, because he had made Scotland too hot for him, but he was exceptional, both in his ability and in his high profile. His humble countrymen make regular appearances in Pilkington's register for unspecified offences, and since they had little of which they could be deprived, were usually enjoined training exercises of a simple nature. It was because Bernard Gilpin was so outstanding, both in his level of education and in his commitment to the diocese, that he assumed such importance in the middle years of Elizabeth's reign.

By the time that Gilpin died in 1584 non-conformity of a different kind was beginning to trouble Bishop Richard Barnes. This trouble arose from the fact that the most zealous anti-Catholic preachers, and those most willing to brave the conditions of the far north, were those who were beginning to be known as 'Puritans'. Such preachers had little love for the Prayer Book, and none at all for the liturgical garments which they were supposed to wear. They were, by comparison with their less zealous neighbours, diligent pastors, and their non-conformity presented their superiors with a serious dilemma. The problem went back at least to 1560. James Pilkington was one of the most radical members of Elizabeth's original bench, and although in his visitation of 1561 (and subsequently) he had insisted—as he was bound to do—that his clergy accept the Prayer Book as well as the Royal Supremacy, he was most reluctant to proceed against any incumbent for that type of non-conformity. Dean Whittingham, who was even more radical, and on the cusp of conformity himself, waxed indignant in a letter to the Earl of Leicester in 1564,

Alas, my Lord, that such compulsion should be used towards us, and so great lenity towards the papists. How many papists enjoy liberty and living ... nor yet do any part of duty towards their miserable flocks? These misers laugh and triumph to see us so dealt with, yea, not ashamed to brag that they trust that the rest of their things shall follow.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Jane Freeman, 'The Parish Ministry in the Diocese of Durham, 1570–1640' (Durham Ph.D. 1979).

<sup>36</sup> J. Strype, *The Life and Acts of Matthew Parker* (1821), III, p.83.

We need not take the Dean's hyperbole too seriously. Elizabeth was trying to build bridges which Whittingham could not see, nor understand the need for. She was also scrupulous about using her bishops as agents, and it is unlikely that Pilkington was as severe as this lament implies. Whittingham was himself an example of the delicate balance which was being maintained. Before his appointment he had been roundly taken to task by Cecil for failing to use the Prayer Book during his service with the garrison at Boulogne, yet the Deanery was a Crown appointment, and within months he had been promoted to it.<sup>37</sup> Although there were a few deprivations for Puritanism in Durham, other factors were usually involved, and both the Dean and the Bishop knew that in the north east it was Catholic survivalism which was the real enemy. If any proof was needed the rebellion of 1569 provided it.

Pilkington, however, died in 1576, and Whittingham in 1579. Richard Barnes became Bishop in the former year, and Toby Mathew Dean in 1583. Both were fervent evangelical Protestants, but neither shared the non-conformist sympathies of their predecessors. Mathew had been a strong supporter of the suspended Archbishop Edmund Grindal, and as Dean he made strenuous attempts to enforce sabbatarianism in Durham, but both their attitudes towards Puritans were well expressed by Mathew's successor, William James

... surely it is an ill physic for this bleared eye or sore foot to chop off the head and kill the body ... it is hard that nothing can please these men ...<sup>38</sup>

Mathew Hutton, when he was Dean in 1603, referred specifically to the 'fantastical and giddy headed puritans'. By then the old radical sympathies of the chapter had almost entirely disappeared, but while this meant that Puritanism within the close was no longer a problem, it had by no means disappeared from the diocese as a whole. Ralph Skinner, who held the fifth stall from 1567 to 1585, may be regarded as typical of the older generation. A man with an abrasive personality and a radical past, not long before his death he wrote that he believed the Church of England to be the place in which '... the Holy Sacrament be rightly administered, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is truly preached, and the public liturgy duly set forth according to the Holy Scriptures ...'<sup>39</sup> Under Bishops Barnes, Hutton and Mathew from 1576 to 1606, Protestant non-conformity was no longer winked at as it had been in Pilkington's time, nor led from within the chapter. So

<sup>37</sup> ODNB.

<sup>38</sup> W. James, *A Sermon Preached at Paul's Cross* (1590).

<sup>39</sup> BL, Lansdowne MS 36, ff.136/7.

where did it come from? As the old faith gradually ebbed away in the latter part of Elizabeth's reign, it left behind a smaller but much more defined recusant movement. It was in order to confront this, with its treasonable potentiality, that the President of the Council of the North, Henry Hastings, the 'Puritan Earl' of Huntingdon introduced into secular government that anti-Catholic priority which had previously existed mainly in the Church. Crown livings tended to be filled with the 'hotter sort' of Protestants. These men were not exactly non-conformists, because such a challenge would not have been acceptable to the bishops, but men who saw themselves primarily as preachers, and upon whom the Prayer Book liturgy sat lightly.<sup>40</sup> The nature of the Lord President's influence is indicated by his own observation, 'I do all I can to get good preachers planted in the market towns of this country'. It was with these urban preachers and their backers amongst the magistrates that the puritan problem had chiefly come to reside by the end of the century.

The magistrates were chiefly concerned with good order and social discipline within their jurisdictions. This had once been provided (up to a point) by the confessional and the culture of 'good works'. To obtain similar support after 1559 the urban elites had to look to the new establishment, and this meant the promotion of 'godliness' in the Protestant mode. However, sometimes they did not control the benefice or benefices within the town, and were often saddled with conformist incumbents who did as little as possible beyond what was legally required. Encouraged by the Earl of Huntingdon, and looking to their own interests, they began to appoint town preachers. These were clergy without the traditional cure of souls, and their appointment was not subject to episcopal control. Their responsibility was to their employers, and although they might conduct regular services (with the agreement of the incumbent) they were not usually bound to do so.<sup>41</sup> Such positions naturally attracted those who found both clerical attire and the Prayer Book distasteful, and as they were usually quite well paid they were also more attractive to young graduates than traditional livings. These preachers ran what were in effect 'urban missions', which were strongly anti-Catholic and supportive of 'godly discipline'. They were not formally exempt from episcopal control, but they were difficult to get at. If they stepped too far out of line, and began (for example) to preach openly against the use of the Prayer

<sup>40</sup> D. J. Lamburn, "'Digging and Dugging": Some Aspects of Lay Influence in the Church in Northern Towns', *Life and Thought in the Northern Church*, pp.365–81.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

Book, then their licences could be revoked, but they could virtually ignore the ordinary liturgy, and as long as they retained the favour of the magistrates they remained secure.

Bishops Hutton and Mathew both fretted about this between 1589 and 1606, but it was only with the emergence of the High Church movement in the 1620s that there was serious confrontation. As first Richard Neile (1617–28) and then John Howson (1628–32) began to insist on the observation of the ‘ornaments rubrics’, which their predecessors had usually been content to overlook, opposition to the Prayer Book began to build up, and the focus shifted.<sup>42</sup> Whereas in the 1560s the Prayer Book had been seen as an instrument of godliness, and a symbol of detachment from the old faith, by the 1630s it was being favoured by those who still hankered after the old ways, and grasped at the liturgical straws which it offered. It could not be represented as Catholic in any positive sense, but it was nostalgic in the same sense as the *Rites of Durham*. Town preachers and magistrates, incensed by the new episcopal earnestness, became overtly hostile, and Puritanism, which had always claimed to be acting in the best interests of the Godly Prince (even if she did not always appreciate it), now began instead to claim that the Prince was Ungodly. The implications of this were seismic, because they opened up the fault line, which had always existed, between those who were content to accept a rule of faith prescribed by the Crown (on the grounds that the monarch was informed by the Holy Spirit), and those who insisted that only the Scriptures as interpreted by ‘the best reformed churches’ could prescribe such a rule. Elizabeth had held these two potential factions together with great difficulty and the use of much studied ambiguity, but after 1630 they fell apart. The 1632 edition of John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*, hitherto seen as very supportive of the establishment, contained a new exhortation to martyrdom, not at the hands of foreign tyrants but of an apostate government.<sup>43</sup> The Prayer Book, that symbol of the Royal Supremacy, ceased to be the godly liturgy which Ralph Lever had commended, and became instead an instrument of neo-Catholicism. Real Catholics, of whom there were still quite a lot around, must have heard this rhetoric with bewilderment.

Durham was in the forefront of this new controversy, because the need to confront Catholic survivalism had kept the peace between

<sup>42</sup> Freeman, ‘Parish Ministry’.

<sup>43</sup> Damian Nussbaum, ‘Appropriating Martyrdom: Fears of Renewed Persecution and the 1632 Edition of the Acts and Monuments’, in D. Loades, ed., *John Foxe and the English Reformation* (1997), pp.178–92.

the rival Protestant groups longer than in many other places. Because they were great anti-Catholics, puritan eccentricities had long been more or less tolerated. Consequently, by the 1630s both Newcastle and Sunderland were major puritan centres—the latter of course the base of the Lilburnes.<sup>44</sup> For similar reasons even Bishop Howson had been willing to provide the abrasive Anthony Laphorne to the rectory of Ovingham. Laphorne was by nature an itinerant preacher, and he infused Derwentdale with puritan zeal, attracting huge crowds. He also denounced all those liturgical gestures enjoined by the Prayer Book which the Bishop was endeavouring to enforce, and was haled before the High Commission in April 1638.<sup>45</sup> He was a classic example of the tensions which were tearing the church apart in the 1630s.

From the start the Prayer Book had been both a reformed liturgy and a symbol of the domestication of the Reformation. It was also an expression of that peculiarly English situation wherein a Church took its rules of faith from the State. However, the alliance between the godly and the Crown had always been uneasy, and as real Catholicism diminished, and 'Arminianism' took its place as the target of the zealous, the alliance finally broke down. The Prayer Book was then seen as belonging to the king rather than to the faith. Durham, more than any other part of England, then rejected it, along with episcopal government and the executive power of the Crown. When the king came back in 1660, and the Prayer Book and the bishop returned with him, the good old cause was transmuted into a powerful strand of dissent. Among all the alarms of the Restoration period, it was only the Derwentdale Plot which came near to fruition.

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<sup>44</sup> W. Dumble, 'Governing Religion and Military Affairs in Durham during the Civil War and Interregnum' (Durham M.Litt. 1978).

<sup>45</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, 1634–5*, p.263.

# When Were You Last Absolved?

ANDOR GOMME

**M**y topic is a search for an elusive performative verb. Let us then be clear at the start about how this possibly unfamiliar part of speech behaves. A performative verb<sup>1</sup> is one the pronouncement of which is itself the enactment of that which it pronounces: the pronouncement and the act are fused, one and the same. If I say, 'I promise to meet you at four o'clock', my speaking the sentence is itself the making of my promise: no further act is involved in its making. 'I order you to sit down' is the giving of the order, the ordering. Performative verbs are commonly used in the first person, but by no means always. They may be in the second: Mr Honest was told, 'Thou art commanded to be ready against this day sevensnight, to present thyself before thy Lord at His Father's house.'<sup>2</sup> They may be in the third: 'Our sovereign Lord the King chargeth and commandeth all persons being assembled immediately to disperse themselves ...' These indicative sentences are actual commands quite as much as if the angel of death had said, 'Be ready in a week's time' or the king had read the riot act in his own person. Nevertheless there is always a hidden or implied first-person behind the indirect usage.

Performatives appear at several points in the Book of Common Prayer. In a short article published a few years ago in *Faith & Worship*<sup>3</sup> I pointed out that the groom performs the act of wedding his bride in saying 'I thee wed'. (Now that, almost invariably, they both speak these words, it is an interesting question in logic whether the repetition by the bride is performative; for are they not wedded already by the groom's declaration? Once he has wedded her she is wedded to him.

<sup>1</sup> The term was invented by J. L. Austin: see *How to Do Things with Words* (1962).

<sup>2</sup> *The Pilgrim's Progress*, part ii.

<sup>3</sup> 'How to Get Wed', No.51 (Advent 2001), pp.12–13.

For long, of course, wedding—the action, not the ceremony—was something that the man did to his wife, not something that they both did to one another.) Similarly, if they are using the 1662 book, the groom endows her with all his worldly goods—and that’s that: he hasn’t simply promised to endow her, he has already done it. In the wishy-washy 1928 version—‘all my worldly goods with thee I share’—the functioning of the word *share*, in the present indicative, is ambiguous. Presumably it is intended as a promise that he will share them with her, for clearly he is not half-emptying his pockets at the moment of his saying it in church; as it stands it is simply a descriptive statement which, at the point at which he makes it, happens not to be true.

Two points of qualification. Some verbs are invariably and inescapably performative when used in the first person: *promise* is one, *command* another, *wed* a third—at least when used literally. If I bequeath my second-best bed to my wife, I cannot in logic bequeath it to anyone else (unless I make a new will): the act is done in the writing of the will. It is of course possible to make contradictory promises which cannot both be kept, and commands, like bequests, can be rescinded before they are acted upon. I may promise Jones to be at his house at ten tomorrow morning, having already promised Smith to be at his house at the same time. But the fact that if I did this deliberately I should be a scoundrel, just as if I bigamously *wed* a second woman, doesn’t mean that I am any the less committed to having made the second promise than I am to the first. In the case of *give*, on the other hand, it depends on the context. If I say ‘I give you £10’, you are not going to be satisfied until I actually hand you a note. But in the marriage service the bride and groom both end that part of the ceremony known as their betrothal by saying ‘I give thee my troth’.<sup>4</sup> And to give one’s troth—compare ‘I give you my word’—is to make a promise in different words.

But situation—context—can certainly affect either the commitment of the speaker or the efficacy of his words. An actor speaking his lines may make a stage promise which clearly does not bind him when he is in mufti. A couple preparing for their wedding are very likely to rehearse the ceremony in their church, probably with the priest present, and maybe also the best man and the father of the bride: they will say all the required words in the presence of a priest and

<sup>4</sup> At least they do if they are using either of the Edwardian prayer books or 1928; for some reason which I don’t know about, 1662 reverted to the formula from the Sarum rite in which the groom says ‘I plight thee my troth’—though the bride says ‘give’. *Plight* and the modern *pledge* are further examples of invariably performative verbs.

‘before a congregation’ (two are legally enough). Yet no-one will have broken troth if they call it off before the due day: the crucial words become performatives only when spoken within the context of a duly constituted service of holy matrimony. Likewise the pronouncement of the words, ‘I baptize thee in the Name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost’ is itself the Baptism, but only, according to the rubric, if the priest dips the child in the water discreetly and warily. On the other hand, if I, a layman, were to offer absolution—if I were actually to say, to a congregation or to one penitent alone, ‘I absolve you of your sins’—my words would be null and no absolution would be performed.<sup>5</sup>

And this brings me near to the heart of my subject: when, according to the rites of the Church of England as set out in the BCP, is absolution pronounced, and by whom is it given? In the Prayer Book, absolution is thrice identified as such, with identical pronouncements at Morning and Evening Prayer and a variant form at Holy Communion. On a fourth occasion, during the order for the Visitation of the Sick, it is said that after the sick person has made ‘a special Confession of his sins . . . the Priest shall absolve him’. And the absolution which follows is significantly different from all the other three. This difference is of course no new discovery of mine: it is for example ably and clearly set out, albeit in what sounds now like slightly old-fashioned language, in a century-old book by Canon Evan Daniel which I judge from my own copy (of the 22nd edition, published in 1909) to have been at one time widely read.<sup>6</sup> But it is, I think, worthwhile to give the issue a fresh look.

To start, then, with the morning and evening form of the Absolution—‘or’, as the rubric puts it, ‘Remission of sins, to be pronounced by the Priest’. That looks unambiguous: sins are being remitted by what the priest proceeds to say:

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he may turn from his wickedness, and live; and hath given power, and commandment, to his Ministers, to declare and pronounce to his people, being penitent, the Absolution and Remission of their sins: He pardoneth

<sup>5</sup> It is for this reason and the distinction that is implied that, notwithstanding what seems to be a common casual disregard of the rule, I believe it is very important that any lay reader taking Matins or Evensong should obey the rubric printed in the Prayer Book to refrain from pronouncing the absolution and to say instead the Collect of the Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity. He (or she) has no power to absolve.

<sup>6</sup> Evan Daniel, M.A., *The Prayer Book: its History, Language and Contents* (London, Wells, Gardner, Darton & Co. Ltd).

and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel. Wherefore let us beseech him to grant us true repentance, and his holy Spirit, that those things may please him, which we do at this present; and that the rest of our life hereafter may be pure and holy; so that at the last we may come to his eternal joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord.<sup>7</sup>

The grammatical structure needs examining. The first few lines, as far as ‘Remission of their sins’, consist of what in the context we may think of as a name or title—‘Almighty God’—followed by an appositive phrase and then by a single, but long and complex, relative clause; it has no main verb. There follows what one can regard as an indicative sentence in the third person complete in itself, of which ‘He’ is the subject.<sup>8</sup> In view, however, of the grammatically incomplete form of the preamble, we naturally take ‘He’ to be in apposition to ‘Almighty God’ and hence the whole of what has preceded to be the subject of ‘pardoneth and absolveth’. That obviously makes good sense and good theology: he it is who both pardons and absolves. But this doesn’t clear up the precise status of the two verbs. Are they like ‘chargeth and commandeth’ in the magistrate’s reading of the riot act? Is the priest at this point speaking in God’s name as the agent who has been given power and commandment? Or are we still in a descriptive statement, limited to telling us what God’s way is? The fact that the priest’s words in the preamble have reminded us that Jesus did explicitly give power to his ministers to absolve the truly penitent naturally inclines one to the former: ‘He pardoneth’ means that he is actually doing it at this very moment through my (the priest’s) agency; pardon and absolution have been pronounced.

Daniel is sure about this: ‘in form this Absolution is declaratory’; but it ‘is not a mere declaration of God’s mercy to the penitent; it is an actual, though conditional remission of sins, for the pronouncing of which God’s ministers have received both “power and commandment”’.<sup>9</sup> We are not however at an end. ‘Wherefore’, beginning the second main sentence, evidently points to a consequence, which turns to an exhortation to the congregation to fulfil the stated condition according to which God will grant remission and receive us into his kingdom. If then we are still to get on to our knees to ask God for the repentance on which pardon is conditional, the implication seems to be that pardon

<sup>7</sup> The punctuation is taken from the current edition of the BCP published by OUP: except for substituting a semicolon for a colon after ‘live’, it is exactly the same as that in the Everyman edition of the 1552 book.

<sup>8</sup> Note that no part of this absolution is addressed to God.

<sup>9</sup> Ed. cit., p.102.

hasn't yet been granted, and the 'absolution' ends in the air with a hope or trust that the prayer will be fervent and effectual enough to be answered, but no explicit statement that it has been.<sup>10</sup> Alternatively, is the adjuration pointed only toward the future—'the rest of our life'—to ensuring, now that we *have* been pardoned and absolved, that we keep ourselves in the pure and holy state just achieved through absolution? It is, I suggest, significant that at this point the priest identifies himself with the congregation—'let us beseech him to grant us true repentance'—which would seem to distinguish his position as a leader of prayer from that of a minister invested with God's power. And what we are doing 'at this present'—on our knees in church—is to start a new life, or to restart life with the slate just now cleaned by absolution. That is the best understanding that I have reached, but I still feel some nagging doubt owing to a sequence of verbal ambiguities which I wish Cranmer had either resolved or not let loose.

The Absolution in the Communion service absorbs the promise of God's mercy to the truly penitent into the preamble of a third-person prayer:

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who of his great mercy hath promised forgiveness of sins to all them that with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto him; Have mercy upon you; pardon and deliver you from all your sins; confirm and strengthen you in all goodness; and bring you to everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

This is close to being an actual pronouncement, and in form the priest has stepped back from identifying himself with the congregation to pray for, rather than with, them. But it is in the optative mood, in which the people are addressed directly but again God is not (*hath*, not *hast*): it remains in form a prayer *for* absolution, not an explicit act of granting it by the priest (Daniel calls its form 'precatory'<sup>11</sup>). Perhaps I should add at this point that I do not mean to question the efficacy of the Church's chosen forms of attaining absolution, and I note that on each occasion the rubric is specific that what the priest is doing is *pronouncing* an absolution: I am concerned essentially with its choice of language.

Finally we have the distinctively different form adopted for the Visitation of the Sick—addressed of course to a single person:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to his Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in him, of his great mercy

<sup>10</sup> I purposely omit any discussion of the thorny question about how the penitence by which we have to earn God's pardon can simultaneously be his gift to us.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.370.

forgive thee thine offences: And<sup>12</sup> by his authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

An optative prayer first; a clear pronouncement second, concerning which the rubric is explicit, stating that ‘the priest shall absolve him (if he humbly and heartily desire it)’. Here alone, a formula, which apparently only came into use in the twelfth or thirteenth century,<sup>13</sup> survived into the post-Reformation rite of the English church; here alone the priest explicitly states his authority and, a necessary consequence, his power, and having done so, here alone he audibly performs the absolution. Why, if at all, here and nowhere else? I do not know the answer to this question. Daniel dodges it while pointing out that it is also unique to this form of absolution that it is unconditional, that ‘it tacitly assumes, with the charity so conspicuous in the Prayer Book throughout, that the sick man is truly penitent.’<sup>14</sup> It is doubtless safer to do so in the intimate circumstances of a private visitation than in the public of a church service; and no doubt it is a similar privacy which has enabled it also to survive in the confessional of the Roman church, where traditionally at the close of his confession the penitent humbly asks pardon of God and penance and absolution of his confessor.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless the priest’s authority and his power to pronounce absolution remain wherever he is, inherited from our Lord’s words to his disciples—‘whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whose soever sins ye retain they are retained’<sup>16</sup>—repeated almost word for word by the bishop as the priest is ordained. What the bishop actually says is ‘Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven’—while leaving the ‘retain’ clause unaltered. Why did Cranmer make this change, and is it important? His own translation of the New Testament follows Tyndale in preferring *remit*,<sup>17</sup> which is indeed a literal translation of St John’s word ἀφῆτε: ἀφίεναι means literally to send back

<sup>12</sup> ‘And’ is awkward here—linking an optative third-person with an indicative first—and surely redundant.

<sup>13</sup> Daniel (ed. cit., p.370n.) tells us that at that time there were those who received it with hostility.

<sup>14</sup> Ed. cit., p.102.

<sup>15</sup> The general confession and absolution have no part in the Mass, though traditionally the priest himself makes public confession, in non-specific terms, and asks for the choir’s (i.e., the congregation’s) prayers.

<sup>16</sup> John 20.23,

<sup>17</sup> Wyclif had used ‘forgive’, and the word came back in the much later Rheims Bible.

or throw away, that is to re-mit; and to absolve is literally to set free—which is not quite the same as to forgive. Perhaps this is splitting hairs; for who can forgive sins but God? And if a disciple or a priest is remitting them he is doing it as God's ambassador. Even so, the distinction in the Roman confessional is suggestive: first secure God's pardon, then his minister can remit your sins, throw them away, make them of no further account, absolve the penitent sinner.

The formulae used in all the three congregational services make it plain, as Daniel has insisted, that the absolution is conditional: the bishop's double charge to the ordinand, like Jesus's to his disciples, entails a duty in him who is given this power to ensure that remission, if granted, has been earned. Whether or not the priest in a confessional or at a sickbed is in a position to judge the sincerity of penitence (and surely Jesus's injunction makes it clear that if he suspects a fraud he must withhold absolution), he cannot make assumptions about that which is expressed in a general confession. A rogue may lie in the confessional, but he doesn't have to do even that if for some reason he thinks he will smother an uneasy conscience by joining in a general confession. In such circumstances no priest, I suppose, would be rash enough to stand in front of a congregation and, adopting the formula of the sickbed, say 'I absolve you all from all your sins'. He could perhaps, though it might sound grudging, make a conditional pronouncement—'I absolve all of you who are truly penitent'—leaving it to the Lord to sort the sheep from the goats. And in fact the great virtue, as it now seems to me, of the Prayer Book absolutions which avoid an actual performative utterance is that they do indeed leave it to the Lord who alone knows the hearts of all, and the priest, in praying with the people in the morning and evening service, and for them before the Communion, gathers their penitence together and in so doing urges them into the condition in which they can be pardoned and absolved by the one who alone owns the right and the power.

I confess to feeling a little sheepish about this conclusion: our Lord did after all unambiguously give to his disciples the right and the power to retain or remit. There is no provision in the Prayer Book for them to take it in their hands to do the former on any public occasion; and as commonly practised no formal occasion even for warning of the dangers of unworthy action—now, that is, that one of the regular casualties even of Prayer Book Communion is the magnificent exhortation, one of the noblest passages in the book, which the priest is directed to make before the Prayer of Humble

Access, reminding the faithful that ‘as the benefit is great, if with a true penitent heart and lively faith we receive that holy Sacrament ... so the danger is great if we receive the same unworthily’. The absolutions on the other hand stand firm, and yet by their particular formulae excuse the priest from a specific pronouncement. Of course Jesus didn’t actually say the disciples had to make one; he didn’t enjoin them to make any public statement of the matter. And if they and their apostolic descendants are going to, it is of course the Prayer Book’s way to allow interpretation lee-room. And so the performatives remain indirect.

Or they can be entirely implicit. How are the bread and wine consecrated at the Eucharist? After ‘order[ing] the Bread and Wine, that he may with the more readiness and decency break the Bread before the people, and take the Cup into his hands’, the officiating priest is instructed to ‘say the Prayer of Consecration’. This prayer, unlike the absolution a few minutes earlier, is at the start addressed directly to the Father:

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who of thy tender mercy didst give thine only Son to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption;

at which point the accent shifts to an account of what that sacrifice has achieved and a first reminder of our Lord’s ‘command’ at the Last Supper. Then again a direct address to the Father—‘Hear us, O merciful Father ...’—a prayer that our fulfilment of the command may be effectual; and then a second return, this time to a narrative of Christ’s actions at the Supper—taken word for word, with minor verbal amendments from SS Luke and Matthew, from St Paul’s account in the first epistle to the Corinthians<sup>18</sup> of the revelation he had been granted of what had there been said and done. The recounting of these holy events must be taken to effect the consecration: the priest nowhere says anything like ‘I consecrate’, and clearly it is understood that, though it could not take place without his presence and his performing the precise actions which the rubric lays down, the consecration—the making sacred or holy—is the work of the Holy Spirit, who is explicitly invoked at this point in the eastern liturgy and also in the considerably longer prayer of consecration in the 1549 Book.<sup>19</sup> The ‘performance’ therefore here, and doubtless also at

<sup>18</sup> 11.23–5.

<sup>19</sup> Where it appears immediately after the Prefaces and before the Confession, Absolution, Comfortable Words and Prayer of Humble Access. Daniel (*op. cit.*, p.377n.) suggests that the introduction of the Holy Spirit at this point was a result of Cranmer’s recent study of the eastern liturgies. Why was it dropped later?

the Absolution, is not in human hands, even though its effectuality requires the presence of an ordained priest and his performance of a specific set of actions. We must, so to speak, since we are human, conceive of the presence of the Holy Spirit enacting the consecration in silent words, just as our Lord himself did audibly in the upper room. God and man together.

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# Considering the Heavenly Creatures: The Angelology of Richard Hooker as a Reflection of the Book of Common Prayer

JONATHAN MACY

## Introduction

**I**n my previous article (*Faith & Worship* 56), I concluded by saying that in the work of Richard Hooker we would see the theological flesh being placed upon Cranmer's liturgical bones in the Book of Common Prayer. Hooker expanded the basic position of the BCP, developing the distinctive emphasis on the corporate unity of, and interaction between, the Body of Christ and the society of angels along the lines of Hebrews 12.22. Hooker gave weight and detail to the integration of, co-operation between, and relationship concerning

the two groups. This article is a more detailed explanation of that statement.<sup>1</sup>

Whereas in the previous article I explored the angelology of the Sarum Missal (which is broadly representative of medieval Catholic angelology), here I will also overview the angelology of William Perkins, and I do this for two reasons. He wrote his piece on angels at the same time as Hooker (1595), meaning we can compare exactly what two contemporaries said on the same subject. Second, Perkins is an ideal representation of the Reformed Calvinist position, and so it is instructive to have his ideas to compare to Sarum and the BCP.

## Background<sup>2</sup>

From Edward VI's reign onward, angels and angelology had been a subject little engaged with by the Anglican apologists, with defence against the central objections to Rome being more required. However, by the 1590s political peace led the Church of England to a more constructive theology of positively defining what it was, and within this, a move away from European reformed thought occurred. This move provided space for an affirmative and distinctive angelology to be developed by Hooker along the lines of the BCP.

The 1590s was a period of growing conflict between, broadly speaking, Calvinist Presbyterians and an emerging group of patristically-influenced Episcopalians.<sup>3</sup> The Admonition Controversy demonstrated an ideological 'rejection of Whitgiftian fatalism [in favour of] a Hookerian anti-Calvinist sacramentalism'.<sup>4</sup> Aidan Nichols wrote that:

The Puritan party held that predestination is not simply God's foreknowledge but is his causal determination of all things, [so] it was difficult for them to accept that sacraments are instruments of grace in and of themselves ... The sacraments were signs of grace already received in election.<sup>5</sup>

While this primarily talks of sacraments, there are wider implications in terms of angelology. For Reformed Presbyterians, the church

<sup>1</sup> This article is a heavily edited version of Jonathan Macy 'Angels In The Anglican Tradition 1547–1662' (Ph.D. thesis, King's College London, 2003) Ch.5. This piece only addresses the connections with the BCP, whereas the thesis also deals with areas such as the angelic creation, their nature and actions, and their fall and confirmation.

<sup>2</sup> This background is fully detailed in the above chapter.

<sup>3</sup> W. Haugaard *Elizabeth and the English Reformation* (CUP, 1968) pp.242–6; S. L. Greenslade *The English Reformers and the Fathers of the Church* (OUP, 1960) pp.5–6.

<sup>4</sup> P. Lake *Anglicans and Puritans?* (London, Unwin Hyman, 1988) p.244.

<sup>5</sup> A. Nichols *The Panther and the Hind* (Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1993) p.48.

comprised the elect,<sup>6</sup> living in Godly discipline, who met to hear the preacher speak God's truth by the Holy Spirit.<sup>7</sup> For a church that is eternally elect, and where the grace of election for men to grow in holiness can operate through Word and Sacrament alone, it is difficult to see how angels have anything to add to one's life or walk with God. They have no role in bringing people toward the Gospel, since God achieves this via his Spirit making election real within the believer, and, as Calvin had said, angels were for the elect alone and not the reprobate.<sup>8</sup> This theology would doubt that God would want men to know that angels blessed or taught them as these are tasks which God would do through human ministers. Angels are superfluous to Calvinist ecclesiology and soteriology, even more so to a developed Calvinism like Beza's. Yet, in 'Hookerian sacramentalism' there is the principle that one can gain grace from factors external to one's election, besides just Word and Sacrament (by 'secondary means').<sup>9</sup> This implicitly allows a foothold for a developed angelology to grow in his thought. In addition to this point, two others were also influential. First, the heavily Christo-centric nature of Bezarian Calvinism would naturally militate against anything that would seem to compromise the position of Christ, and secondly the association of a developed angelology with Catholicism simply made the area difficult to explore without being laid open to the accusation of crypto-Papism. With this general background we will now look at Perkins and Hooker specifically.

### **William Perkins (1558–1602)**

Perkins was one of the most important Puritans of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,<sup>10</sup> and saw himself as within the mainstream of the Church of England.<sup>11</sup> He was committed to reformed orthodoxy built around the Bezarian doctrine of strict double predestination and supralapsarianism, which wanted to assert and protect the absolute sovereignty of God.<sup>12</sup> His classic text, *The Golden Chain*, was published in 1595,<sup>13</sup> and its treatment of angels is very brief and functional. There

<sup>6</sup> Lake p.2.

<sup>7</sup> L. Thornton *Richard Hooker: A Study of his Theology* (London, SPCK, 1924) p.23.

<sup>8</sup> *Institutes* I:XIV:9.

<sup>9</sup> S. Schriener *The Theatre of His Glory* (Labyrinth Press, 1991) pp.52–3.

<sup>10</sup> J. I. Packer *An Anglican To Remember* (Pamphlet from St Antholin's Lectureship, 1996) pp.1–2, 19.

<sup>11</sup> Kendall p.54: Packer p.17.

<sup>12</sup> Packer pp.17–19.

<sup>13</sup> Text used: I. Brevard *The Works of William Perkins* (Apleford, 1970): Chapters VII & VIII.

is no attempt to analyse the scriptural data or use his grounding in the Fathers to develop any ideas, as may be expected from a Calvinist. Important is the lack of any idea of a joint society of, or interaction between, angels and men. Perkins even moves beyond Calvin through the absence of any mention of angels doing God's will on earth—their involvement in God's providence. While the sixth clause of chapter VIII vaguely points to angelic ministry in this way (angels 'perform his commandments'), the lack of detail encourages the reader not to link angels to providence. Similarly, since Perkins cites the work of angels as being solely in heaven, there is no encouragement to extend 'performing commandments' to something that happens on earth. Perkins only specifically talks of angels as being in heaven ('in society with him'), and not of them interacting with men and the Church on earth. One reason for this is that a Bezarian theology driven by an overriding need to assert God's sovereignty would not want anything to appear to compromise this, and a full and active angelic ministry could be seen as doing so. To give this a wider context, Packer notes what was important to Perkins' thought:

[Perkins centred on] regeneration and repentance, self-suspicion and self examination, rational biblicism and righteous behaviour, discursive meditation and rhetorical prayer, faith in and love to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, recognition of the sovereignty in providence and grace, and judgement, the comfort and joy of well-grounded assurance, the need to educate and cherish one's conscience, the spiritual war against the world, the flesh, and the devil, the ethic of discipline and duty, and the saints' hope of glory.<sup>14</sup>

Perkins' exposition on angels has no bearing on these areas whatsoever. But arguably, angelology touches on all these points, and thought within the Church of England in the generation prior to him had noted a role for angels in prayer,<sup>15</sup> self-examination and righteous behaviour,<sup>16</sup> providence,<sup>17</sup> assurance,<sup>18</sup> judgement,<sup>19</sup> and spiritual warfare,<sup>20</sup> besides which Bullinger had noted that a developed understanding of angels was

<sup>14</sup> Packer p.2.

<sup>15</sup> *Primer 1559: Private Prayers* (Parker Society, 1851) p.93.

<sup>16</sup> *Latimer II:86* (Parker Society); *Bull p. xiv* (Parker Society).

<sup>17</sup> *Becon III:33* (Parker Society); *Bull p.53* (Parker Society); *Pilkington pp.136–7* (Parker Society).

<sup>18</sup> *Bull p.12* (Parker Society); *Bradford I:338* (Parker Society).

<sup>19</sup> *Sermons or Homilies* p.367.

<sup>20</sup> *Becon I:185, III:16–17* (Parker Society).

a part of proper (thus, rational) biblical interpretation and application.<sup>21</sup> Not even the positive, yet passive, role of angelic obedience as an example for men to copy is cited, as it is in the Book of Homilies.<sup>22</sup> Elsewhere, confirming this approach, in *An Instruction Touching Religious or Divine Worship*, Perkins does indicate how men and angels relate, but it is only in heaven and only in the area of worship.<sup>23</sup> This, while linking men and angels, falls far short of the idea of a joint society.

### **Richard Hooker (1554–1600): Introduction and Background**

In stark contrast to Perkins' approach is Richard Hooker's. Compared to Perkins' minimalism, Hooker's was fundamentally different in methodology, application and outcome. One should note here that there will be a reasonably long introduction to Hooker's thought, as it is this that provides the seed bed for his later thinking on angels and the church.

His angelology is mainly to be found in Books I and V of his *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (1595), and involves discussion of the angelic creation and their place within God's wider creation, their nature and existence, how the angelic society operates, the angelic fall, angelic knowledge, and how angels and men interact. This, in itself, is a clear move away from Perkins' approach, but more important is that Hooker envisaged an inter-connected universe where angels, men and the Church each interacted with, and depended upon, the others:

God has created nothing simply for itself: but each thing in all things and of every thing, each part in other hath an interest, that in the whole world (i.e. the universe) nothing is found whereunto anything created can say; I need thee not.<sup>24</sup>

This is the central deviation from Perkins and those in the Calvinist tradition. For Hooker, angels could never be superfluous to theology or the Christian life.

### *The Eternal Law of God and the Angelic Law*

Hooker's primary conception of the universe, similar to that of Thomas Aquinas, is that it is based around a series of laws.<sup>25</sup> God is both the

<sup>21</sup> Bullinger III:327–8 (Parker Society)—Bullinger was important as he was required reading for all ordained ministers from 1586 onward.

<sup>22</sup> *Sermons or Homilies Appointed to be read in Churches* (London, Prayer Book and Homily Society, 1833) p.72, 367.

<sup>23</sup> Perkins p.312.

<sup>24</sup> *Sermons* III:2.

<sup>25</sup> P. Munz *The Place of Hooker in the History of Thought* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952) pp.29–67.

First Cause and the Final Goal, and everything is created with this goal in mind; the goals are achieved through following God's eternal law, and this eternal law is the root of all other laws.<sup>26</sup> The entire creation reflects its Creator, and it is an ordered universe that leads man to know that there is a God.

Every created being has a purpose that can be traced back to God, the First Cause. Everything flowing from God has a role related to him, and a role which brings it back to him.<sup>27</sup> The key to understanding all things, and therefore angels, is to discover their purpose and goal. To know the purpose of something is to know the meaning of its existence, and one is required to move towards the goal or purpose of one's existence. For Hooker, reason, will and action are inter-related. While in created beings they are imperfectly expressed, in God they are all fully and perfectly expressed and formed. Angels, in the same way, will show a direct relationship between their nature, their purpose and their actions.<sup>28</sup> When God created angels, he gave them a purpose—to reach the fullness of their nature. However, angels, like men, have free will, and so the chance to fall away and to move away from their goal. Therefore this purpose is more of a possibility or potential fullness of nature to be realised, than an inevitable outcome of their nature.<sup>29</sup> One moves from possibility to fullness by striving to imitate God:

The next degree of goodness is, that which each thing covets, by affecting resemblance with God, in the constancy and excellency of those operations which belong unto their own kind.<sup>30</sup>

This is essentially an act of the will, since 'nothing can move unless there be some end, the desire whereof provokes unto motion'.<sup>31</sup> The laws of the universe are designed to lead creation toward its God-given goal,<sup>32</sup> and the angels, as a part of creation, have a law to enable them to do this. It is a law which 'they do clearly behold, and without any swerving observe, [and it is a] law celestial and heavenly'.<sup>33</sup> Thus, the eternal law, as it relates to the angels, can be summarized as follows. All created things have a God-given and defined purpose, this

<sup>26</sup> Munz pp.175–7 cf. J. S. Marshall *Hooker and the Anglican Tradition* (London, A. & C. Black, 1962) p.85.

<sup>27</sup> I:2:1—paraphrased by Marshall p.78.

<sup>28</sup> cf. Greg. Naz.: Th. Or. II:31.

<sup>29</sup> I:5:1.

<sup>30</sup> I:5:2.

<sup>31</sup> I:7:1.

<sup>32</sup> I:3:1.

<sup>33</sup> I:3:1.

purpose being to reach the fullness of their nature. This is achieved by imitation of God, and the greater the imitation the closer they are to their God-given goal, and thus fullness of nature.<sup>34</sup> Imitation of God is achieved by following the eternal law, which angels do by following the angelic or celestial law.

Hooker sees two levels of eternal law. The first may be called the primary eternal law, and it is the ultimate foundation of all other laws. It is that law which applies to all that has been foreordained and foreseen before creation by God, and this includes the Incarnation, atonement and issues around predestination.<sup>35</sup> Since the law was to 'anew and adjust disorder',<sup>36</sup> this would indicate that God knew that men and angels would fall, which would point to the idea that the laws presuppose the human and angelic fall, and presumably would provide a solution to them. As we will later see, the angelic laws may be seen as leading angels to be involved in this 'regulation' and 'adjustment' of the 'disorder' in the human realm.

The second level of eternal law is fivefold, and is there to bring creation closer to God, by leading it to God's primary eternal law:<sup>37</sup>

- i. Nature's Law—that which orders and controls nature.
- ii. Celestial Law—that which applies to the heavenly realms and the angels.
- iii. The Law of Reason—that which men use to understand themselves, each other and the world around them.
- iv. Divine Law—that which is not apprehensible by human deduction but only by special revelation from God.
- v. Human Law—that which humans take from Reason and Divine Law to order society.

Clearly we are interested in the celestial (angelic) law, but Hooker's angelology begins in nature's law, as this includes both inanimate and animate or voluntary agents.<sup>38</sup> Hooker then moves to celestial law in Book I:4, but why does he look at angels before men? Clearly, Scripture indicates that the angels were created before mankind, but there seems to be another reason for it. It may be that, like Aquinas,

<sup>34</sup> The importance of imitation may not be immediately apparent, but it is a central concept for Hooker, rooted in verses like Ephesians 5.1, 1 Cor. 11.1.

<sup>35</sup> I:2:6—'This law therefore we may name eternal, being that order which God before all ages has set down with himself, for himself to do all things by.'

<sup>36</sup> G. Hillerdal *Reason and Revelation in Richard Hooker* (Lund, C. W. K. Gleerup, 1962) p.43.

<sup>37</sup> I:3:1: 'All things therefore, which are as they ought to be, are conformed to this second law eternal.'

<sup>38</sup> I:3:2.

he envisaged a hierarchical universe, and so began with angels as the intermediate beings between God and man, thus providing man with a wider context to be discussed in.<sup>39</sup> Although this may be a part of the reason, a further implication is that men must look to angels who perfectly fulfil their law, and then aim to do the same:

[The law] bindeth them *each to serve unto the other's good*, and all to prefer the good of the whole before whatsoever their own particular.<sup>40</sup>

There is unity between the laws, and an inter-connectedness, which begins in the angelic law and flows into the laws for men and the Church. At the very first stage, Hooker has rejected the Calvinist idea that one must be 'willingly ignorant' of the angels, since to understand fully God's law for man, one must have an understanding of God's law for angels. As Hooker later argues, man finds and gains his context from the realms both above and below him.<sup>41</sup>

### *The Angelic Society and Men*

Hooker starts his section dealing specifically with Angels (Book I:4:1) by saying that Christ taught men to pray that 'here it might be with us, as with them it is in heaven'. This is probably a reference to the Lord's Prayer, and shows Hooker to hold a similar view to the many that preceded him who looked for men to see angels as moral models for them to emulate and imitate.<sup>42</sup>

Angels are organized in 'huge, mighty and royal armies', and live 'in perfection of obedience unto that law, which the Highest, whom they adore and love, and imitate, hath imposed upon them'. It is in their 'imitation of the Highest' that angels achieve the perfect obedience which God requires, which harks back to Scholastic and Patristic influences.<sup>43</sup> The goal of all things is the highest good, and this highest good is to be as like to God as is possible, but Hooker ties it into the law, where the law leads angels to that goal. This idea is crucial for understanding how angels operate in Hooker's thought. He starts with the premise that angels are moved by their love for God, but, importantly, they are also moved by a love for his creation:<sup>44</sup>

<sup>39</sup> For example, Aquinas wrote: 'The angel's nature is midway between the divine nature and the nature of bodies.' S.T. 1a:LXI:3:2.

<sup>40</sup> I:3:5 (my italics).

<sup>41</sup> Marshall pp.88–9.

<sup>42</sup> E.g. Becon II:158; Latimer II:85–6; Pilkington pp.27–8; Bull pp.42f.

<sup>43</sup> Aquinas: Summa Contra Gentiles 1:30; Munz p.176; Origen: De Principiis 3:6:1; Ps. Dion: CH: III:1–2, IV:21.

<sup>44</sup> I:4:1.

[The Angels'] desire to resemble him in goodness, maketh them unwearable and even insatiable in their longing to do by all means all manner of good unto all the creatures of God, but especially unto the children of men.<sup>45</sup>

God as creator loves and protects creation, and so angels, in imitation of God, do the same. Their mission is rooted in the fact that they desire to imitate God as closely as possible, and since God works providentially, so angels desire to do the same with a direct action upon, and concern for, creation, and thus mankind.

Hooker then sees three ways in which angels are receptive to God's action of moving them, and thus led to fulfil the angelic law:<sup>46</sup>

- i. Angels are moved by love caused by their vision of God.
- ii. They are moved by *intellectual adoration*, built on an understanding of the power and omnipotence of God.<sup>47</sup> (These first two reflect God's call to men to 'love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy mind', and shows that angels operate in a similar way to men.)
- iii. They are moved by *imitation*. God loves, sustains and assists his creation, and this is what angels also desire to do, as we have seen.

### *Angels and Men*

Until now, Hooker has been implicitly building a link or interaction between angels and men, but it is now in I:4:2 that he begins to make it explicit:

Of angels we are not to consider only what they are and do in regard of their own being, but that also which concerneth them as they are linked into a kind of corporation amongst themselves, and of society or fellowship with men.

Whereas Perkins was content to describe angels in a way that radically minimized how they related to men, Hooker takes a more dynamic approach, and wants to look at their being and work, and then how this relates to mankind—since we are to 'consider' how angels are 'concerned' with mankind. Hooker sees that angels are linked into a society with men via three laws.

- i. That law of the angels, whereby angels are to praise God *individually*.

<sup>45</sup> I:4:1.

<sup>46</sup> I:4:1.

<sup>47</sup> Both my phrases.

- ii. The law whereby *corporately* they are formed (or organized) into ‘an army, one in order and degree above another’.
- iii. The ‘third law which bindeth them to works of ministerial employment’, arising from their being one with men in a communion of joy, and their not disdaining to ‘profess themselves our fellow servants’.

The third point flows from the first two. Angels have a law which guides how they relate to God, a law which guides how they relate to other angels, and a law which guides how they relate to men. Hooker is building a holistic, interconnected scheme of laws that not only filters ministry down from God to men, but guides angels in all areas of their existence and ministry.

#### *Angelic Knowledge and Men*

Beyond the already stated relationship between men and angels, is a relationship (or difference) between angels and men and their knowledge. The goal is for men and angels to imitate God. Imitation is acting according to one’s nature, and one’s nature is relative to God. Imitation can be measured by knowledge expressed in action, since ‘by proceeding in the knowledge of the truth, and by growing in the exercise of virtue, man, amongst creatures of this inferior world, aspireth to the greatest conformity with God’.<sup>48</sup> How does this pattern relate to angels and men, and how much knowledge do they have to have in order to imitate God?

In the matter of knowledge, there is between the angels of God, and the children of men, this difference. Angels already have full and complete knowledge in the highest degree that can be imparted unto them: men, if we view them in their spring, are at first without understanding or knowledge at all. Nevertheless, from this utter vacuity they grow by degrees, till they come at length to be even as the angels themselves are. *That which agreeth to the one now, the other shall attain unto in the end; they are not so far disjoined and severed, but that they come at length to meet.*<sup>49</sup>

Angels have full knowledge, and so can act in full accordance to their being, and be fully conformed to God.<sup>50</sup> This fullness is as much as their nature can bear, and would seemingly allow perfect imitation of God, and thus for them to attain the reward of happiness. This passage also shows Hooker’s idea that it is man’s goal to reach such a degree of perfection of

<sup>48</sup> I:5:3.

<sup>49</sup> I:6:1 cf. I:10: my italics.

<sup>50</sup> cf. Aquinas: S.T. 1a:LXII:A: 8; 1a:LXIV:A: 1–4; Bullinger III:336.

knowledge that he becomes like the angels. Man's maximum knowledge is the same as the angel's current maximum, which allows them to act fully in accordance with their nature, and it would not be a huge leap of logic to see this as part of men becoming *ισαγγελοι* ('like unto the angels')—Hillerdal says exactly this, that an increase in knowledge would lead to an increase in respect to the moral life, which then leads man closer to God.<sup>51</sup> To be *ισαγγελοι* is to resemble God in holiness, and for Hooker this is achieved by a growing perfection in knowledge leading to perfection in holiness. Elsewhere, Hooker also cites the *ισαγγελοι* as being perfected in joy, peace and delight for all eternity.<sup>52</sup>

### *Angels and the Church*

Throughout the initial chapters Hooker regularly points toward a developed view of the society and unity that exists between angels and men. In other sections of *Ecclesiastical Polity*, Hooker reveals more about the question of prayer, the nature of the Church, and of how the Church comprises both angels and men. It is here, building on what has gone before, that Hooker fully elucidates the thought which underpinned the Book of Common Prayer.

In Book I:16 Hooker starts to build an argument where he sees the following of the various laws as central to the Church of Christ, and that all laws are rooted in God and so have a level of inter-connectedness. It is man's aim to discover how these laws lead him to God.

Men are to search by what steps and degrees (the soul) riseth unto perfection.<sup>53</sup>

From here, in I:16:3, the link between the natural law and the actions of men is stated:

The axioms of that law therefore, whereby natural agents are guided, have their use in the moral, yea, even in the spiritual actions of men, and consequently in all laws belonging unto men howsoever.

Hooker then links this to the angels:

Neither are the angels themselves so far severed from us in their kind and manner of working, but that between the law of their heavenly operations and the actions of men in this our state of mortality such correspondence there is, *as maketh it expedient to know in some sort the one, for the other's more perfect direction.*<sup>54</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Hillerdal p.46.

<sup>52</sup> I:11:3.

<sup>53</sup> I:16:1.

<sup>54</sup> I:16:4.

Hooker has now linked natural law to men, and then to the angelic law, and says that moral and spiritual actions of men are taken in a more 'perfect direction' by an understanding of the angelic law. There is a co-inherence between the laws, and so one is required to have an understanding of angels, and there is not such a great gap between men and angels as to stop men doing this. With this closeness it is not surprising that angels are 'themselves fellow-servants with the sons of men'. From this Hooker concludes that since angels and men have 'one Lord [so] there must be some kind of law which is one and the same to both, whereunto their obedience being perfecter is to our weaker both a pattern and a spur'.<sup>55</sup>

In this light, Hooker elsewhere parallels the uses of the laws for men and angels:

To angels and men there was allotted a threefold perfection, a perfection of the end whereunto they might come, eternal life; a perfection of duty, whereby they should come, which duty was obedience; and a perfection of state or quality for performance of duty. The first was ordained, the second required, and the third given.<sup>56</sup>

The same pattern is required to the same end—obedience to the law, to bring moral perfection, to bring salvation. There is also a suggestion that the laws for angels and the laws for men are, in some sense, identical, since both are designed to lead them (creatures) closer to God. For angels, this is achieved by imitation of God, and for men a similar end is called for—as Thornton says, correctly summarizing Hooker:

Man's end is the greatest conformity with God [by] the exercise of his rational and moral faculties. Man's proper activity is twofold, knowledge of truth and exercise of virtue; and both of these involve a process of growth and education.<sup>57</sup>

As we have seen, angels have achieved both of these (knowledge and holiness), through obedience to their law. Thus the two laws of men and angels have the same end, but angels have achieved theirs and men are on the way to theirs. In this light, seeing angels as a 'pattern and a spur' looks very much like the angels leading men to greater and greater imitation of God—they being able to do so because they know what it is to fulfil fully the law that God has given. It is the job

<sup>55</sup> I:16:4.

<sup>56</sup> V:App 1:28.

<sup>57</sup> Thornton, p.37.

of angels to lead men to the same fullness they have. It is also for this reason, in similar vein to Origen, that when in church, men should be mindful of the presence of angels.<sup>58</sup>

In things publicly done by the Church are we not somewhat to respect what the Angels of Heaven do? Yea, so far hath the Apostle Saint Paul proceeded, as to signify, that even about the outward orders of the church which serve but for comeliness, some regard is to be had of Angels, who best like us when we are most like unto them in all parts of decent demeanour

An orderly church pleases the angels, but more than this, and building on the point just made, Hooker says that the perfect Church must look to follow the angelic laws and example. Explicitly, the angelic laws are important as to how the Church is actually run. Thus:

The laws of angels we cannot judge altogether impertinent unto the affairs of the Church of God.<sup>59</sup>

Here Hooker changes tack completely and leaves the relationship between man and angels, and it is only much later in *Ecclesiastical Polity* that he takes this up again. In Book V:22 Hooker stresses the centrality of preaching, and yet raises the question, what if the listener is illiterate, poorly educated, or has a bad preacher teaching him? His answer, in the end, is that all people should pray for right teaching, and in this light he begins to speak of angels:

Between the throne of God in heaven, and his church upon earth here militant, if it be so that angels have their continual intercourse, where should we find the same more verified than in to ghostly exercise, the one doctrine and the other prayer.

Hooker details this in terms of a two-fold (prayer and teaching) and two-way (descent and ascent) operation reminiscent of Jacob's Ladder:

For what is the assembling of the church to learn but the receiving of angels descended from above? What to pray, but the sending of angels upwards?

God uses angels to accomplish his will in the church, and as they move between heaven and earth, they enact an

intercourse and commerce between God and us. [The angels'] teaching brings us to know that God is the supreme truth, [just as] prayer testifies that we acknowledge him as our sovereign good.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>58</sup> I:16:4.

<sup>59</sup> I:16:4.

<sup>60</sup> V:23.

The difference from the medieval Catholic model is plain, since here the individualized idea of a guardian angel is replaced by the corporate angelic society ministering to the corporate Body of Christ. Also, the divergence from a Puritan/Calvinist model is striking. Angels are involved in prayer and taking prayers to God, something that, while affirmed in the 1549 Prayer Book, the 1552 had shied away from. Further, angels bring knowledge and teaching to men in the church and then testify to it before God, and not necessarily the congregational teacher inspired by the Spirit. Calvin would have understood angels involved in teaching as dangerous as they would mislead the congregation.<sup>61</sup> For Hooker, angels provide a link between the Church and God. Regarding the angelic role in the Church, prayer is a crucial part of the Christian life, and is one more similarity and common link between men and angels. There is a connection between knowledge and prayer, and the imparting of knowledge as a function of angels is expressed in terms of a hierarchy—as a part of the cosmological structure of the universe:

sith on God as the most high all inferior causes in the world are dependant; and the higher any cause is, the more it coveteth to impart virtue unto things beneath it.<sup>62</sup>

Here angels mediate ‘virtue’ down towards men, but Hooker cites this, not as a giving or mediating of grace, but more as a desire within angels to give men teaching and knowledge to enable a closer walk with, and imitation of, God. This is the central deviation from the Catholic understanding of guardian angels. For Hooker, angels are a pattern and a spur to follow, and the angelic law provides the understanding to do this. Angels do not mediate grace, and do not empower men to holiness. In this light, Hooker speaks of prayer as an activity common to both the saints in heaven, angels, and the Church militant:

The knowledge is small which we have on earth concerning things that are done in heaven. Notwithstanding, this much we know of even saints in heaven, that they pray. And therefore prayer being a work common to the church as well as triumphant as militant, a work common unto men with angels, what should we think, but that so much of our lives is celestial and divine as we spend in the exercise of prayer? For which cause we see that the most comfortable visitations which God has sent men from above, have taken especially the times of prayer as their most natural opportunities.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Institutes I:XIV.

<sup>62</sup> V:23.

<sup>63</sup> V:23.

Prayer is a work common to the entire Church, men with angels, and angels stir men towards prayer.<sup>64</sup> Angels intercede and come in response to prayer. This dual nature of the Church is expressed again later using a quote from John Chrysostom.

For the honour and furtherance whereof, if it be as the gravest of the ancient Fathers seriously were persuaded, and do oftentimes plainly teach, affirming that the house of prayer is a court, beautified with the presence of celestial powers; *that there we stand, we pray, we sound forth hymns of praise to God, having his angels intermingled as our associates*; and that with reference hereunto, the Apostle does require so great a care to be had of decency for the angels' sake; how can we come to the house of prayer, and not be moved by the very glory of the place itself, so to frame our affections praying, as does best beseech them, whose suits the Almighty does there sit to hear, and his angels attend to further?<sup>65</sup>

Angels are 'intermingled as our associates'—but Hooker does not further develop this relationship. However, the importance of the recognition by men of angels being at church cannot be understated, since Hooker says there was a time when this truth was 'ingrafted in the minds of men', and the churches were filled with people wanting to come to pray, so the state did not have to legally enforce attendance.<sup>66</sup>

## Conclusion

On his death bed Richard Hooker was asked what he was thinking about, and replied: 'The number of angels and the excellence of their order, joying that it was so in heaven and would that it might be so on earth'. Hooker's understanding of the angelic realm was not simply an academic exercise, but part of his personal Christian faith. Certainly his angelology is very different from both Perkins and the broad Catholic tradition. Aidan Nichols, while talking generally, unwittingly pinpoints Hooker's concept of angels, men and Church perfectly:

[Hooker had the] idea that the cosmos is constituted by a web or network of giving and receiving.<sup>67</sup>

If we place Hooker on a simple scale between the Catholic and Calvinist models, we see an ideal example of the *Via Media*. For Catholicism,

<sup>64</sup> cf. Origen: On Prayer 11:1–4.

<sup>65</sup> V:25:2 (Chrysostom's quote in italics) cf. Chrysostom: Hom. Heb. 15 cf. Hom. Act. 24; cf. 1 Cor. 11.10, Ps. 96.6.

<sup>66</sup> V:25:2.

<sup>67</sup> Nichols pp.46–7.

angels are integral to cosmology, salvation and the Church. For Calvin they were peripheral to cosmology, salvation and the Church. For Hooker they are integral to cosmology, involved in, but not central to, salvation, and important to the Church and the growth of men in holiness and knowledge of God. Hooker's view of angels is interactive, but it is corporately focused, not individually focused. No neat divorce of angels and men is possible, which is exactly the basis from which Cranmer worked when creating the Book of Common Prayer. A right perspective was needed, to be sure, but a Calvinist-style rejection was not an option. Hooker took this on board as he wrote his *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, and in doing so provided not only the theological flesh for Cranmer's liturgical bones, but a positive and distinctive angelology for the Church of England, that succumbed to neither the theological excesses of Catholicism or the poverty of Calvinism.

(Jonathan Macy completed his doctorate on Angels in the Anglican Tradition (1547–1662) at King's College London in 2003.)

# Authentic Encounters

JULIET HOLE

A little while ago it was reported that the Government had shelved plans to tackle light pollution—excessive artificial light which, among other things, dims or obliterates our view of the stars.

One does not need to be an addict of conspiracy and hidden agenda theories to see why an aggressively atheist political establishment does not mind if we cannot see the stars. The stars are a constant reminder that there is and always will be an 'outside' to the social systems being constructed around us—to the 'world' in the biblical sense—something beyond merely scientific speculation, something mysterious and significant, a source of wonder, leading us to see ourselves and our lives in a new way and a different light, and in

relation to something else. This is dangerous, to a society which denies God and must therefore set itself up in his place and provide secular answers to all our needs, wishes and questions. In order to do this it must secularize us as well, control our needs, wishes and questions and if necessary manufacture ones to which there are political and commercial answers ready. The stars are no help here.

Where else can we encounter that 'otherness' that sets us free and nourishes our souls? Pre-eminently in prayer and worship; also in nature, and in art—if, that is, we can escape the mass of intrusive 'information' that so often gets in the way of the real encounter that we need, and which is often intended, consciously or not, to 'package' the experience in question and suggest that it is given its significance by the people in charge.

Then there are churches. To enter a country church is to enter a different dimension and be completely at home in it: to be immediately enfolded in a community of prayer, faith and love. I am talking here about the church when it is empty: the 'building', so often nowadays referred to by senior clergymen as if it were a nuisance rather than God's house. These buildings, with their silence and spaces, speak to the heart like no others. Entering, we are enabled to leave the 'world' behind, and this is not an escape from reality, but an escape to reality. For a moment we can gain insight into who we really are, and why we really matter, and what things are really important. It is a rare counter-cultural experience; broken connections are restored, and some are moved to pray, perhaps for the first time in years, or ever, or in a new way.

The country church where I worshipped throughout my childhood and youth is, along with many others, under attack. 'Focus groups' were organized, and subsequently claimed to have proved a 'need' for changes to the interior of the building. Plans have been made for the west end—the details are irrelevant here, but if I say 'meeting room', 'toilets', 'kitchen area', 'welcoming area', you will get the idea. What is proposed is architecturally and aesthetically disastrous, but it could be argued that this is nothing new: sixteenth and seventeenth-century Puritans and later restorers and refurbishers have all been somewhat careless with our buildings at times, though that is no reason why we should be. What we are now faced with, however, is something different in kind: a *deliberate* move to import precisely the secular chatter and clatter and 'busyness' and corporate self-importance that these churches, uniquely, have up until now enabled us to leave behind. Visitors must no longer slip in during the week and find themselves, in the silence and emptiness, at home and at peace (look through any visitors' book if you doubt the nature and value of such experience).

Parishioners must not assume, as they always have, that the church is theirs—they must be told so, in a manner that makes it feel anything but. They must negotiate apparatus supposed to ‘make them feel welcome’ and ‘protect them from embarrassment’: entrance areas, notice boards, even the mugshots of important people (or ‘people who do things’, to quote the phraseology which increases the infant-school atmosphere and ensures we are not frightened off by anything too brainy).

What is going on here? Is it a new idea that the church building is there for the glory of God and the edification of his people? No, but there is a subtext, and it is the same as that of other examples of intrusive marketing, packaging and presentation: all this is from us. It is symptomatic of our modern self-obsession, our inability to stop pointing at ourselves; most tragic when we should be pointing to God, which the building was already doing, infinitely better.

Why are we/‘they’ doing this? One can, as mentioned earlier, understand why an atheist establishment is driven to market experience so as to block the way to the transcendent and keep our minds on the here and now, so that, for instance, before we can go to the woods and encounter nature we are directed to ‘information’ in some form, where nature is explained and interpreted for us and becomes ‘nature’, a detached and artificial experience rather than a real experience. (There is a place for information, of course, and it should be kept there.) But why do influential Christians seem to want to encounter ‘God’ rather than God? Several factors come to mind. The Church of England is in love with managerialism and has adopted its very conformist mindset, forgetting that the Christian church is supposed to represent something different. It has failed to grasp that ‘modernization’, as now practised, is the same thing as secularization; that the whole point of destroying the traditional and familiar and historic is a totalitarian one: to uproot and disorient and create dependence on an imposed political and/or commercial culture, and leave no ‘outside’—no concept of an alternative. The technique should be well enough known from the old Communist states. Conniving with this process is the direct opposite of what the Church should be doing, and in de-sanctifying a church building with secular intrusions, something of inestimable worth, a real answer to real needs, is reduced to the sort of thing that can be found anywhere. What will happen to the instinctive reverence with which people enter a church? Modernizers do not understand reverence, and do not like it. Probably they see it as a sign of ‘embarrassment’.

The Church of England has got one of its regular attacks of the fidgets. It knows that the nation desperately needs to be re-evangelized, but keeps losing its nerve in the face of materialistic mockery and politically-correct disapproval. However, it has got to be seen to be doing something, and has gone for the soft and futile option of seeking popularity through 'modernization'. It continually claims that the process which, viewed objectively, has to be called 'dumbing down' is necessary to attract new members and especially young people, which is simply insulting. Furthermore, it is a process which has been failing for so long and so spectacularly that it should be quite obvious that more of the same is not the answer.

The pretentious and destructive schemes such as that mentioned earlier cost, needless to say, huge sums of money; it is almost beyond belief that there is anybody in the Church of England who honestly cannot think of better, more truly religious, more compassionate, ways of spending it. Yet it goes on. Our liturgy having been vandalized, it now seems to be the turn of our churches; the comparison is revealing, for it is the same destructive secularism which produces the lugubrious speechifying of so much recent liturgy, and subjects churches to self-conscious 'presentation'. The Prayer Book and places of worship possess the same unanalysable but evident authenticity, and have undergone the same historic process of becoming our own. Both need protecting, for the sake of the people, of the nation, of 'insiders' and outsiders' alike, and perhaps most of all for the sake of the young. What can we do?

# Devoutly Kneeling

PETER TOON

**I**n Morning and Evening Prayer, in the Book of Common Prayer (1662), the congregation is described as ‘devoutly kneeling’. In the two daily services the expression occurs after the Creed and before the Lesser Litany which prepares for the saying of the Lord’s Prayer.

In the the Order for Holy Communion from the same Prayer Book the minister calls the congregation to confession of sins, ending his exhortation with the words: ‘and make your humble confession to Almighty God, meekly kneeling upon your knees’. In the rubric, which then is printed before the text of the General Confession to be said by all, are these words: ‘both he and all the people kneeling humbly upon their knees’.

In other places of all these services, there is direction for minister and people to kneel.

For example, at the first saying of the Lord’s Prayer before the versicles in the daily services the rubric reads: ‘the Minister shall kneel ... the people also kneeling with him’.

In the Order for Holy Communion, in the rubrics which appear at the very beginning of the service are these words: ‘the Priest shall say the Lord’s Prayer with the Collect following, the people kneeling’.

The Anglican tradition has been that the congregation kneels to pray, stands to sing and recite the Creed, and sits to hear the Word of God. So, if the tradition is to kneel for prayer, why should the expressions ‘devoutly kneeling’ and ‘kneeling humbly’ be used at specific places and at those only?

It appears that these expressions are used to give special emphasis at this point to the spiritual and moral need to lay aside all wandering thoughts, and to attend to the great work of prayer that they are about; for though the Minister alone speaks most of the words, yet the affections of the worshippers must go along with every expression/petition/phrase, and sign them all at last with a hearty ‘Amen’.

Let us note that ‘devoutly kneeling’ is used in the daily services at

the transition point in the office where there is a move from praise of God and hearing his Word to the offering of prayer. This is indicated by 'Let us pray.' Then in the Order for Holy Communion it is before the General Confession, which is the immediate preparation for the move towards the consecration prayer and the receiving of Holy Communion.

Of course, in all prayer there should be humility before God but people are weak in will and in devotion and thus at these critical points they are urged to kneel humbly and devoutly.

In the American Book of Common Prayer(1928) the expressions are only found in the Order for Holy Communion and at exactly the same place as in the English Prayer Book of 1662.

One further point needs to be made. In the description of services from the second and third centuries after Christ that still exist, it can be deduced that the congregations in those times in the Roman Empire usually (maybe always in some cases) stood for prayer. This led liturgists from the 1970s onwards to call for imitation and to seek to change the Anglican tradition of kneeling to the supposed primitive church custom of standing. And to a large extent they have succeeded in many congregations. (One may suggest that anything that makes participation in a service easier and less demanding on soul and body is easier to commend than the opposite, asking for greater demands on soul and body!)

Some clergy devoted to this innovation have tried to show that the rubrics of the historic Book of Common Prayer (editions of 1549, 1552, 1662 and USA 1928) required standing for the Prayer for the Church militant here in earth. Their reasoning is that there is no specific rubric requiring kneeling for this prayer and that a little later there is the specific call to confess sins 'devoutly kneeling'. Thus they say that no kneeling is required because it is not commanded. What they overlook is the very general requirement in the daily offices and then also in the first part of the Order for Holy Communion that the congregation is to kneel when it addresses God Almighty.

Let us acquire the habit of devoutly and humbly kneeling!

*(Dr Peter Toon is the author of numerous books and articles, including Neither Archaic Nor Obsolete (with Louis R. Tarsitano, 2003), Common Worship Considered (2003) and, most recently, Worship Without Dumbing-down.)*

# Reviews

JAMES ATKINSON: *Faith Lost: Faith Regained*

Deo Publishing, 2005 ISBN 9 05854 027 8 £25.95

**T**his book has a three-fold aim:

To analyse the factors which, since the Middle Ages, have contributed to the weakening of Christian faith.

To expose the failure and the inability of modern liberal thinking to halt the decline.

By reaffirming the centrality of Christ, to mark out paths for the restoration of Christian faith in a modern secular world.

As Emeritus Professor of Biblical Studies of Sheffield University and as a recognized authority on Luther, Professor Atkinson brings a wealth of learning to his formidable tasks. His review of the causes of the decline of the Christian faith is masterly. The Enlightenment, the rise of science, the developments of post-modernism, the disillusionments of materialistic society, the horror of man's inhumanity to man—of these Professor Atkinson makes compelling reading. But, as he recognizes, the story has been told many times before. As I read his account of faith being weakened and lost, I was reminded of Lesslie Newbigin's *The other Side* of 1984 and his *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society* and of *The Gospel and Contemporary Culture*, edited by Hugh Montefiore. These books, and others, present the challenge to Christian faith in a world in which the major movements of thought have left the Church and theology irrelevant to most people in western society. Fifty years ago, Michael Polanyi exposed the fallacies and inadequacies of a philosophical and intellectual framework that allowed no room for faith. He called then for a 'post-critical philosophy'. Post-modernism meets none of his requirements. What is needed is none other than a modern Augustine to provide a framework of truth that will answer and overcome apathy, cynicism and the spiritual sterility of so much in our materialistic culture.

It is against this background of the seemingly inexorable advance of intellectual, cultural and philosophical movements inimical or apathetic to, or suspicious of, any claim for the necessity of Christian

faith that we turn to the second part of Professor Atkinson's book. Here he presents a credo for *Faith Regained*. His starting point is the inadequacy of liberal theology to stem the continuing decline of faith. What he calls 'liberal/modernist' thinking is, in Professor Atkinson's view, too accommodating of secular culture to provide an antidote for modern ills. He condemns some 'pop-theologians' for choosing to ignore fundamental theological truths, for sweeping these aside in a search for 'relevance'. He maintains that hard-won Scriptural truths have nothing to fear from those who would give priority to the claims of reason or the siren calls of contemporary cultural norms.

Professor Atkinson does not underestimate the demands of faith. He devotes a chapter to what he calls 'The Darkness of Faith'—the experiences that all the faithful have to face in the hiddenness and absence of God, the dark and sterile periods in prayer, the, at times, overwhelming burden of the suffering of the world. But faith is a way to walk in, not a set of ready-made answers to life's problems. The book poses a double challenge. How to counter the intellectual and cultural norms that dominate western society. That is a task for theology, which has lost its position as a dominant influence, or even as a serious contender, some would say. But that alone is not enough. There remains the task of bringing a person to faith in Christ. At times, Professor Atkinson oversimplifies this second task. His reference to a 'simple path of how to find faith', will not help the non-believer or the sceptic. 'You have,' he says 'to take but one step to discover faith ... and that is to allow Christ to give you new birth'. Whilst that is undoubtedly true, and whilst the centrality of Christ must be affirmed again and again, a restoration of the three pillars of reason, Scripture and tradition challenges the Church in our time. Lesslie Newbigin's conclusion to his book *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society*, written fifteen years ago, remains both a clarion call and a stark reminder of the challenges of the times we are in:

In a pluralistic society there is always a temptation to judge the importance of any statement of the truth by the number of people who believe it. Truth, for most practical purposes, is what most people believe. Christians can fall into this trap. It may well be that for some decades, while churches grow rapidly in other parts of the world, Christians in Europe may continue to be a small and even shrinking minority. If this should be so, it must be seen as an example of that pruning which is promised to the Church in order that it may bear more fruit. (John 15.1 ff) When that happens it is painful. But Jesus assures us, 'My Father is the

gardener'. He knows what he is doing, and we can trust him. Such experience is a summons to self-searching, to repentance, and to fresh commitment. It is not an occasion for anxiety. God is faithful, and he will complete what he has begun.

George Tolley

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DAVID BRETT: *The Plain Style: Protestant Theology in the History of Design*  
Lutterworth Press, 2004 ISBN 0 7188 3032 6 £17.50

In many respects this is a very disappointing book, which is unfortunate given the fascinating nature of the subject matter. The author begins by exploring the origins and effects of the rejection of imagery by the reformers of the sixteenth century, and tracing the ensuing development of a distinctive imageless architectural style. So far he is on ground that has already been covered by Nigel Yates, *Buildings, Faith and Worship* (1991 and 2000) which the author does not appear to have used, and by Timothy Mowl and Brian Earnshaw, *Architecture without Kings* (1995). There is quite a lot of common ground shared with Mowl and Earnshaw, though their useful term 'Puritan Minimalism' is rejected in favour of the contemporary expression the 'Plain Style'. After discussing this Plain Style in some detail, a digression is made to consider the architectural and design traditions of the Anabaptist, Shaker and Quaker movements in North America, of which the author has detailed knowledge. In many ways this is one of the most interesting sections of the books, though unfortunately here, as elsewhere in the work, the devil is in the detail.

The final sections of the book enter much more contentious territory. In a chapter which the author admits is largely speculative, he suggests that the 'Plain Style' produced the conditions favourable to what he terms a 'technical culture' which was exemplified in industrial design in England in the early stages of the Industrial Revolution. From this we are led to consider the Modern Movement exemplified by Mondrian and Le Corbusier (both of whom had Calvinist ancestry and upbringing) as a logical conclusion of the process of 'imageless thought' which originated in the Reformation. Thirty-one pages of

rather large type are somewhat inadequate to develop this proposed direct link from meeting-house to Bauhaus, and, as elsewhere in this book, examples are relatively few, whereas there is a great deal of theory. The author expresses sympathy with neo-Marxist writers, and his approach reflects much of the Marxian methodology, and has been influenced by the largely discredited writing of Max Weber and of Robert Merton, to whose theses reference is constantly being made. More seriously, the author clearly prefers theorising to analysis of examples, and where these are discussed, many questions are often begged, or counter-interpretations which might modify the basic argument are ignored.

Some generalizations touch upon important points which are then left undeveloped. For example on page fifteen we are told that

The Episcopalian Church of Ireland, though part of the Anglican communion, is notably less iconic than its sister church across the Irish Sea because it has always had to mark itself off from Catholic and 'popish' practices to avoid being outflanked on this issue by Presbyterian and Congregationalist rivals.

which raises several interesting points. No one can deny that Church of Ireland places of worship present a more Protestant appearance than those on the mainland, but what evidence is there to suggest that this was partly the product of pressure from the main nonconformist sects? What may have been true in Belfast or even Dublin surely did not apply to the many rural parishes throughout the midlands and south of Ireland where there was no other Protestant presence but the Church of Ireland. More fundamentally, there is no suggestion that the situation which Brett describes was not always so, and even a cursory examination of F. R. Bolton, *The Caroline Tradition of the Church of Ireland* (1958) would have shown that many decidedly 'high church' practices and ornaments were in use in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Ireland.

In a similar manner, there is a brief mention on page eighty-five of the T-plan churches which were exported from Scotland to Ireland in the eighteenth century. We are told that the T-shaped plan found favour with Ulster Presbyterians 'perhaps because of its Scots associations', and are provided with two examples, one of which has now been re-erected in an open-air museum at Omagh. The T-plan is, however, far from being simply a Presbyterian phenomenon. Yates points out that it was also popular with Anglicans with thirty examples in England and particularly Wales, and also others in Bermuda and Virginia. There are even two Roman Catholic examples in Ireland dating from the eighteenth century (Crathoe, Co. Clare; Aghold, Co. Wicklow).

Detailed examination of examples often reveals that the situation is far less simple than appears at first sight.

One final example of this widespread tendency to make unsupported generalizations must suffice. In discussing Shaker design, the author illustrates a spinning wheel from Mount Lebanon on page 164, which is described as 'the most traditional of craft devices, interpreted in the industrial formal vocabulary of classical Shakerism'. An experienced teacher of hand-spinning to whom I showed the illustration confirmed my suspicion that it was a perfectly straightforward walking wheel (i.e. without a treadle) of a type usually employed in this country, with no uniquely Shaker characteristics.

The production of the book leaves something to be desired. It is profusely illustrated, but the photographs are not always well chosen. The interior of the 'Four-Square Kirk' at Burntisland on page eighty-five gives little indication of the extraordinary nature of the building. There is a much better illustration in the Fife volume of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (Scotland), for which permission to reproduce could surely have been obtained. A view of the east end of the delightful Immanuel Church at New Castle, Delaware, would have been more instructive than the western view included on page 150. More disconcertingly, the illustrations are not numbered (inhibiting textual references) often interrupting the text for several pages (e.g. 138–42) without being clearly set apart as a section of plates. It is also annoying to find reference made in the text to works which are not cited in either the endnotes or in the bibliography, as happens on a number of occasions, for example with reference to M. S. Briggs' *Pioneering Puritan Architecture and its Future* on page ninety-one.

One could forgive most of the points noted above were it not for the interminable use of jargon. The author proposes on page 155

that we consider Shaker discipline, and that of independent dissent in general, as a response to an overwhelming sense of *anomie*, of living in a normless world, a search for a revived *Gemeinschaft*.

It is shame that his admiration for the Plain Style does not extend to the use of the English language.

Martin Speight

# Letters

## LITURGICAL WORSHIP

From Canon COLIN R. EVANS, *Dawlish*

There have been one or two articles recently about liturgy—perhaps a word or two from an elderly priest might be added, for it was the Book of Common Prayer that helped bring me into the Church of England when I reawoke to Christianity, and its ordered use has carried me on into the newer forms of service, for the timeliness of well-ordered liturgy does not really change, except, in changing circumstances, in order to remain the same.

It can seem curiously impersonal: the priest, for example, prepares himself (or herself—and so throughout, because we have not yet devised a usefully inclusive way of doing this) with care, putting his whole person into it, draws on the week's pastoral contacts to inform the style and content of the preaching and prayers, and yet, at the same time, endeavours to be as unobtrusive a presence as possible, using his robes, and the customary, familiar gestures to show that it is not him, as a particular person, who is leading the worship, but rather that he is the responsible, authorized celebrant, his own specific personality at most the vehicle for this. It takes a few years to be able oneself to worship whilst being the celebrant: but until it has become second nature, one has to be content with doing one's part as carefully and well as may be, which is itself a real satisfaction of the spirit.

As to the congregation, of which he comes increasingly to know himself an integral part, and which somehow tells him and teaches him what it is to be a priest, the regular, reliable, expected order of known words, known ceremony, all with sound seasonal variation, and carefully articulated readings from Scripture—in a word, all that ordered liturgy entails, all this comes to be a way of allowing the whole person to be drawn nearer to the presence of God, to whom it is all addressed as worship. For the busy surface of the mind does not have to be perpetually watchful, lest it miss something: one relaxes, somehow slots in, and is carried along; and the upper part, maybe the cerebral part, is somehow combed through and realigned, and the deeper part of one's being is opened. One drops down deeper, and in

a perhaps fleeting way—not to be exaggerated, nor specifically sought after, but real all the same—one’s spirit is touched and accepted by the Spirit himself. One cannot exactly do this to order—and many Sundays may go by with one having been aware of gladly doing no more than one’s bounden duty—but something of that order is a true part of the nature of it all, for priest and people alike.

So too the sermon. Set, as it is, in this context of giving oneself over to God, one’s guard is down, one is open to hearing things that one might miss, or even resent, if said in the high street. The preacher is himself included in this—and it is not so much that he is preaching the Word of God (though, may he be preserved, that is what he is doing) but rather that a word from God often forms itself, not so much in the mind, as in the heart, of preacher and listener alike; and, strangely, it is not always the brilliant sermon that allows this to happen.

All this does not immediately reveal itself to the casual enquirer: liturgical worship does not yield up its treasures so easily—but treasures they are, rich, deep and true, and they suffice for a lifetime. Maybe today’s danger is that the world around us is used to instant satisfaction, and thinks this ought to be the norm in worship, and some clergy, with great integrity, think we must try to offer worship in this way. But it seems to me that if people are convinced of the need to seek God and worship him—and he does continue to call people—they will not thank us if we give them half rations, liturgically or otherwise, and forget the overriding duty of stewards to be found faithful.

## PRESENT ISSUES

*From Mr JOHN OSBORNE, Strasbourg*

In *Faith & Worship* 57 (Michaelmas 2005) Mrs William Selka asks how the Book of Common Prayer is reconciled with the aims of those who support the consecration of women bishops. In your editorial you wisely remind your readers that the Society, as such, takes no view on the substantive issue; nor does Mrs Selka (unless her question is purely rhetorical).

Rather than venturing into scholarly discussion, may I respond on a more basic level? In English certain words are ambiguous in having both an inclusive and an exclusive meaning. Take the word ‘day’,

which is sometimes used to mean (exclusively) the period between sunrise and sunset, and sometimes (inclusively) the period of twenty-four hours between midnight (0.00) and midnight (24.00). The intended meaning is generally evident from the context; thus if we say there are only twenty days to Christmas, we are not implying that there are no nights! Nor, when we sing ‘forty days and forty nights’ do we really mean a total of eighty nights. This potential ambiguity used to be fairly widespread with certain apparently gender-specific terms and one still occasionally sees job advertisements for the post of ‘theatre sister’ in which it is clear that men may apply. However, it is no longer customary (as Mrs Selka perceives) to use the words ‘man’ and ‘men’ in a gender-inclusive sense. Canon C4(b)(2), cited by Anthony Kilmister in *Faith & Worship* 57, page 23, was introduced (rightly or wrongly) to resolve the ambiguity.

In 1662 things were different. When we pray for ‘all sorts and conditions of men’, it is manifestly not intended that women be excluded, even though the word *persons* is used elsewhere in the Book of Common Prayer (e.g. in the prayer For fair Weather). I leave others to discuss the intended meaning of the word ‘man’ in the service of Consecration. It is, however, evident from Anthony Kilmister’s article, that this intention cannot be established solely on the basis of the text of the Book of Common Prayer.

*From Cllr FRANK R. McMANUS, Todmorden*

Dare I venture to respond to Mrs Selka’s letter as you suggest? There’s always the temptation to dredge up arguments in support of a desired conclusion! Nevertheless I offer the old felicity that, in the Book of Common Prayer as elsewhere, ‘the male embraces the female’. I as Reader have greeted all-female congregations with the words ‘Dearly beloved brethren’; and I wonder how women at their Churching have relished being told by the priest that ‘Happy is the man that hath his quiver full [of young children]’.

Your correspondent cites the terms ‘this person’ and ‘this man’ in the BCP ‘priesting’ and ‘bishoping’ services respectively. They stem from the 1549 Ordinal, which is referred to in our Article 36, and which appears in the 1552 Prayer Book with minor alterations (e.g. ‘Bisshoppe’ becomes ‘Bishoppe’). ‘This man’, presented as bishop-elect, soon found himself at the receiving end of ‘the othe touching the knowledge of the king’s supremacie ... ministred to the person elected’. Thus the two terms, like the spellings, have no bearing on

today's situation. They were used randomly by liturgists who had different theological fish to fry from ours.

As for the article in *Faith & Worship* 57 by Anthony Kilmister who served the Prayer Book Society so long and so well, can we really do no better than create enclaves and redoubts within our church? Let us seek a more excellent way via a code of conduct which ministers to everyone, including parishioners who dissent from their 'parish establishment'.

From Mr CUTHBERT HEPPLETHWAITE, Oxford

In response to Mrs Selka's letter I should like to point out that the Church of England in general does not use the ordination service in the BCP when ordaining its Bishops, Priests and Deacons, rather it uses modern versions of the rite which allow for the ordination of women. The Ordinal in the BCP clearly does not allow for the ordination of women and clearly the authors of it (and the revisions in say 1928) would never have imagined that women could be priests. Were the BCP service to be used in the ordination of women and the words in the service changed this would in my opinion change the entire meaning of the text and the beliefs the BCP enshrines: that is that the Church of England is still a Catholic Church ...

As a twenty-four-year-old Anglican I hope to remain within the Church of England. I am hoping and praying that there will be a Third/Free Province. In a recent statement Forward in Faith stated that the BCP would be used in such a province as one of the authorized liturgies (I would want to see it given wider use). The PBS will have work to do there as well in promoting the BCP.

*(The letters above were received before the appearance of the Guildford Group's proposals for Transferred Episcopal Arrangements. It should be added that the last two letters are abridged from the originals.)*

## **'KNOWING THE UNKNOWNABLE'**

From Professor ANDOR GOMME, *Stoke on Trent*

Dewi Hopkins tells us that Mr Mullen's mention of Dr Johnson's famous anecdote about the stone shows (among other things) 'that Bentham and Mill were wrong, push-pin being by no means as good as poetry, or one work of art necessarily as good as another'. Surely when Mr Hopkins was studying English and philosophy he will have come across Mill's critical essays on Bentham and his autobiography. It is a gross libel on Mill to accuse him of believing in the crude equation of quantity of pleasure with quality. The equally famous tangle that he got into in *Utilitarianism* because he, who adulated Wordsworth, knew full well the infinite superiority of poetry and could not logically square this with the Benthamite felicific calculus in which he had been brought up, used to be one of the first challenges set to the young philosophy student. But Mill held it unquestionable that it is better to be Socrates unsatisfied than a pig satisfied, and he knew where to find the best music too.

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