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# Editorial: A Snapshot Of The Sixties

I recently reread Paul Ferris's portrait of the Church of England, originally published in 1962 ('between the end of the Chatterley ban and the Beatles' first LP'), and then in an updated edition in 1964<sup>1</sup>. I find it fascinating; Ferris avowedly approaches the subject in the guise of the sceptical modern—'I am of course an outsider'—and a point is often reached at which the words used by theologians or clergy leave him puzzled or bemused. On the other hand the attitude is not satirical, except in so far as the people interviewed make themselves absurd by their own quoted words<sup>2</sup>. He has a journalist's nose for a story, and a novelistic eye for detail. And the reader is impressed with his industry: he had not only thoroughly researched the structure, law and finances of the Church, but interviewed a very large number of people—the Archbishop of Canterbury (Ramsey) and other bishops, parochial clergy, bureaucrats at Church House, investment men at the Church Commissioners, monks and nuns, the Church Society, the Lord Chancellor's Appointments Secretary, religious broadcasters and a number of well-known theologians and commentators (including John Robinson, Alec Vidler, Charles Raven and HA Williams). He attended parochial meetings, clergy training sessions and the deposition ('unfrocking') of a priest at Southwark Cathedral presided over by the flamboyant Mervyn Stockwood. He sat in on an Industrial Mission in a factory. He visited four theological colleges (there were twenty-six at the time) and chose well—Oak Hill, Mirfield, Westcott and Ripon Hall, as representing the range of possible churchmanship. He seems to have read the Church press thoroughly during the period of his research, and sampled a large number of parish magazines. When something was in the news he did his own digging, rather than relying on press reports. All in all, he can't be accused of skimping, and the book is no scissors-and-paste job.

Its interest, nearly sixty years on, is largely historical, but it does raise in the reader's mind the question: how much of this portrait—or snapshot—of the Church is still familiar? Obviously some of Ferris's examples were topical—the controversy surrounding the appointment of the Dean of Guildford is quite forgotten now—but they were intended

1 Paul Ferris, *The Church of England*, 2nd edn. (Harmondsworth 1964). This is the edition quoted

2 An example: a monk at Nashdom relates that 'a young monk from [Roman Catholic] Prinknash came here and said "I don't think much of your incense". He didn't know we had a letter from the Holy Father, saying "Thank you for your gift of incense, which was charming". We'd sent some with an Italian abbot who blew in'.

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to illustrate longer-term concerns, in this case about the appointments system. And there are purely period details, as when the three clergy in a team parish meet to pray and read Scripture together and share some silence, after which ‘everyone lit cigarettes and the room filled with smoke’. But much of what Ferris described still has resonance today: an urban incumbent writes to his bishop of ‘the casualties of the welfare state that end up on my doorstep every day’, and interestingly, in view of later debates, the Church’s Council for Social Work is credited with being ‘a pressure group for reforming the law on homosexuality’ and helping to bring about the Wolfenden Committee. There is perhaps a rather different vibration in an exchange Ferris reports at a factory meeting presided over by an industrial chaplain:

‘There’s nowt wrong with parsons,’ said the big man. ‘It’s the congregations, mate.’

‘You’ve only to look at the *News of the World*,’ said the atheist. ‘They’re perverted, half of them. There was a man the other day was bound over for three years for interfering. You and me would be over the wall for three years . . . They ought to ban vestries . . . that’s where the damage is done.’

A man going out of the door said: ‘If my lad, who’s in the choir, says anything about the vestry, I say: Home, straight.’

The book abounds in vignettes like this. What we mostly find when reading is that issues which bulked large then still bother the Church in a form recognizably continuous with the past, though in a later phase. And Ferris was acute enough to note events and concerns which were still only on the horizon—the plans for a General Synod, and Michael Ramsey’s dedication to liturgical reform among them. He noted the growing influence of the liturgical movement, and included a question on liturgy in a questionnaire he sent to 120 clergymen (thirty of whom replied):

How closely do you adhere to the Prayer Book? (*Answers too varied to be tabulated.*) Do you consider liturgical experiment is important? (*Unqualified Yes, 13. Qualified Yes, 11. No, 4. No comment, 2.*)

‘*Answers too varied to be tabulated!*’ Anyone reading of the openness to ‘experiment’ should have been ready for the liturgical mugging which took place ten or fifteen years later—though those who gave a qualified ‘yes’ may have been envisaging a gentler change.

Ferris’s book was published at a time when theology was still news, especially when it took what seemed to be unorthodox forms. John

Robinson's *Honest to God* was published between the two editions of his book. These debates are still remembered, of course, but they are not still alive in the same way; things have moved on as they always do. What stands out in retrospect is how wide an audience was still able and willing to take an interest.

The area of the Church that strikes one as having changed least is the parochial ministry. Ferris spent time with clergy in a variety of parishes, and they spoke to him frankly (most are given pseudonyms). The settings are various—large urban, small rural, the new 'team' experiment in South Ormsby—as are the men (they all were men then, of course). What recurs is the difficulty of overcoming not hostility but indifference. There are heroic individuals here, struggling to build up the Church in the most difficult circumstances; and there are the more placid, accepting the limitations on what they can do—'All you can do is strengthen the attitude of the faithful . . . ultimately one feels the outcome of these things is in the hands of heaven'. One incumbent had lost his faith, but continued to perform his duties. Another was content with the long haul in his little nook ('it has taken him twelve years as a clergyman to get three families "interested" in the Church'). But the reporter only sees so much. As one of his interviewees told him:

. . . it was not possible to report on the reality of the Church, any more than one could report on the reality of family life: you could live it, but your jokes and customs, so important on the inside, would be meaningless to someone outside the circle. There was about the Church . . . an unreportable intimacy.

And the reporter is necessarily excluded from all those invisible transformations and graces which the Church makes possible. As Ferris himself recognises '[Clergy] sometimes tend to speak lightly of important things—they don't do themselves justice, they make self-critical remarks that, when reported by journalists, have a bleak and hopeless ring that may not have been intended'. And he also recognises that the more newsworthy activities of clergy are not only not the whole story, but that some clergy think them overrated:

He [the clergyman] may believe in bustling from meeting to meeting, firing advice to schoolgirls and councillors. Or he may believe, with a substantial minority, that the Church is too busy, that it talks too much about 'strategy' and 'involvement' and 'identification' and 'missionary situation'. He may believe in sitting still and concentrating on things that are said in one word but need

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hours of patient explanation before an inkling of them gets through to strangers—‘prayer’, ‘fellowship’, ‘spirit’, ‘love’. He may believe in nothing much in particular except God, who is so much part of his life that to disbelieve in him would be like disbelieving in . . . the stones in his church.

A ‘substantial minority’ of clergy may think that could have been written today.

The value of Ferris’s book in the early nineteen-sixties was that it gave the Church a picture of itself from the outside<sup>3</sup>. Perhaps its value now is to put our own not very different problems in perspective. One of the greatest needs of the present seems to me to be to rid ourselves of the idea that current disagreements, whether political or religious, are unprecedented.

John Scrivener

3 Which makes it now much more readable than other books of the time written by church people with axes to grind, whether ordained or lay—for example Nick Earle’s *What’s Wrong With the Church?* (1961) or Monica Furlong’s *With Love to the Church* (1965).

# The Doctrine of Holy Communion According To The Formularies of The Church of England

SIMON MCKIE

## **The Church Of England's Distinguishing Feature is That it is Governed By, and is Subject To, The Queen's Law**

**I**n this article I review the sources of the doctrine of the Church of England according to the law of the Kingdom of England, in an attempt to determine what doctrine of Holy Communion they express.

All other Christian confessional bodies in the Kingdom of England<sup>1</sup> are, like the confessional bodies of other religions, governed by law only to the extent that their members have adopted English legal forms to govern their activities.<sup>2</sup> The Church of England, its activities and the mutual duties and rights of clerics and laymen are governed by the ecclesiastical law of England, a branch of law with deep historical roots which yet has spawned, in recent years, an enormous volume of new statute law and delegated legislation.

## **The Sources of Ecclesiastical Law**

### **The highest legal authority**

Under the law of the Kingdom of England an enactment by the 'Queen's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons'<sup>3</sup> in the Queen's High Court of Parliament, that is an Act of Parliament, has the highest of all legal authority.<sup>4</sup>

1 The Interpretation Act 1978 s.5 and Sch. 1 provides that, unless a contrary intention appears, the phrase, the 'United Kingdom' in any statute means Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Great Britain consists of the Kingdoms of England (which includes the area known as Wales) and Scotland (Union with Scotland Act 1706 Article I). The United Kingdom Parliament possesses legislative powers throughout the United Kingdom but three different legal systems exist in the United Kingdom, one of which is that of the Kingdom of England (see *Halsbury's Laws, Volume 20, Constitutional Law* para. 55 (Pub – LexisNexis))

2 *Shergill and Others v Khaira and Others* [2014] UKSC 33

3 Words which are used in the preamble to every Act of Parliament

4 This is, of course, consistent with the doctrine of the Church of England. Article XXXVII of the Articles of Religion states that the Queen has: '... the chief power in this realm of England and other her

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### **Measures of the General Synod**

The Church of England Assembly (Powers) Act 1919 s.2 (as amended) provides that every Measure passed by the General Synod should be submitted to the Ecclesiastical Committee, a Committee of fifteen members of the House of Lords and fifteen members of the House of Commons. The Ecclesiastical Committee must consider the Measure and report on it to Parliament. If a Resolution is passed by each House of Parliament directing that such Measure in the form laid before Parliament be presented to the Monarch, it is to have the force and effect of an Act of Parliament on the Royal Assent being given.

### **Measures derive their authority from the Royal Assent**

A Measure of the General Synod, therefore, takes its legal authority, not from the decision of the General Synod that it be submitted to the Ecclesiastical Committee, but from the Monarch giving to it the Royal Assent. So Measures, like all statute law of the United Kingdom, ultimately derive their legal authority from that assent. The assent of the General Synod is only a preliminary stage on the way to the giving of the Royal Assent.

### **The Power to make Canons**

Under the Synodical Government Measure 1969 the General Synod has the power to make Canons which was formally vested in the convocations of Canterbury and of York. Under the Submission of the Clergy Act 1533 s.1 (which is still in force) no Canon may be made without the Royal Assent.

### **Power To make Provision By Canon In Respect Of Worship**

The Church of England (Worship and Doctrine) Measure 1974 (the 'Worship and Doctrine Measure') s.1 provides that:-

- (1) It shall be lawful for the General Synod—
  - (a) to make provision by Canon with respect to worship in the Church of England, including provision for empowering the General Synod to approve, amend, continue or discontinue forms of service;
  - (b) to make provision by Canon or regulations made thereunder for any matter, except the publication of banns of matrimony, to which any of the rubrics contained in the Book of Common

Dominions, unto whom the chief Government of all Estates of this Realm, whether they be Ecclesiastical or Civil, in all causes doth appertain, and is not, nor ought to be, subject to any foreign Jurisdiction'

Prayer<sup>5</sup> relate;<sup>6</sup> but the powers of the General Synod under this subsection shall be so exercised as to ensure that the forms of service contained in the Book of Common Prayer continue to be available for use in the Church of England.

- (2) Any Canon making any such provision as is mentioned in subsection (1) of this section, and any regulations made under any such Canon, shall have effect notwithstanding anything inconsistent therewith contained in any of the rubrics in the Book of Common Prayer.

### **Power to make Canons in respect of the consecration and ordination of females**

The Bishops and Priests (Consecration and Ordination of Women) Measure 2004 s.1 provides that:-

- (1) It shall be lawful for the General Synod to make provision by Canon for enabling women, as well as men, to be consecrated to the office of bishop if they otherwise satisfy the requirements of Canon Law as to the persons who may be consecrated as bishops.
- (2) It shall continue to be lawful for the General Synod to make provision by Canon for enabling women, as well as men, to be ordained to the office of priest if they otherwise satisfy the requirements of Canon Law as to the persons who may be ordained as priests<sup>7</sup>

5 For all purposes of the Worship and Doctrine Measure the Book of Common Prayer means: the Book annexed to the Act of Uniformity 1662 and entitled 'The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church according to the use of the Church of England together with the Psalter or Psalms of David appointed as they are to be sung or said in Churches and the Form and Manner of Making, Ordaining and Consecrating Bishops, Priests and Deacons', as altered or amended by any Act or Measure or in accordance with section 1(7) of this Measure (s.5 *ibid*) Thus, in this Measure, the Book of Common Prayer includes the Ordinal but not the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion. The Canons, by contrast, refer to the 'Ordinal' as something separate from the Book of Common Prayer. Canon A4 refers to: 'The Form and Manner of Making, Ordaining, and Consecrating of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, annexed to The Book of Common Prayer and commonly known as the Ordinal'. From this it is clear that references in the Canons to the Ordinal are references to the Ordinal annexed to the Act of Uniformity 1662 with the Book of Common Prayer and forming part of what is identified in the Worship and Doctrine Measure as the Book of Common Prayer.

6 S.1(1)(b) *ibid*. therefore, provides a power to make alterations to the rubrics of the Prayer Book. Canon B17A (on the disposition of the alms at Holy Communion) and Canon I1 (as it relates to the use of different translations of the Bible and of the Psalms) are examples of the exercise of this power. The Worship and Doctrine Measure s.1(7) also provides a power for changes to be made by Royal Warrant in prayers referring to the Sovereign and other members of the Royal Family allowing the alteration of names and the making of any other necessary alterations

7 Canon C2(6) provides: 'In the forms of service contained in The Book of Common Prayer or in the Ordinal words importing the masculine gender in relation to bishops are construed as including the



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### **The Canons' authority derives from the Royal Assent**

So the power to make Canons, deriving as it does from the various Measures, also derives ultimately from the Royal Assent.

### **The Doctrine of The Church of England**

It is often said that the Church of England has no special doctrine of its own. It certainly does not claim to be a separate Church or even a separate confessional body. It is simply that part of the Universal Church which is in England 'by law established'<sup>8</sup> and its faith is grounded in the Scriptures. There have been many differing and contradictory accounts of the Christian faith which have been claimed to derive from the Scriptures, however, and the Church of England certainly has a broadly defined body of doctrine.

### **Canon A5**

Canon A5 of the Canons of the Church of England provides that:-

- (i) The doctrine of the Church of England is grounded in the Holy Scriptures, and in such teachings of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Church as are agreeable to the said Scriptures.
- (ii) In particular such doctrine is to be found in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion,<sup>9</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer*, and the Ordinal.

### **The Formularies**

The Holy Scriptures and the teachings of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Church are part of the general inheritance of the whole Church. The Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer and the Ordinal, however, are formularies of the Church of England<sup>10</sup> and

feminine'. Similar provision is made in respect of priests and deacons by Canon C4.

Whether the making of these Canons is authorised by the Bishops and Priests (Consecration and Ordination of Women) Measure 2004 s.1 is too large a topic to be discussed here

8 See Canon A1 of the Canons of the Church of England

9 The Worship and Doctrine Measure s.5 provides that: 'References in this Measure to the doctrine of the Church of England shall be construed in accordance with the statement concerning that doctrine contained in the Canons of the Church of England, which statement is in ...[Canon A5]'

Neither the Worship and Doctrine Measure nor the Canons of the Church of England contain a definition of the phrase the 'Thirty-nine Articles of Religion' but the Articles are sufficiently identifiable from the edition reprinted by order of King Charles I in 1628 and accompanied by his declaration which is included in all modern editions of the Book of Common Prayer

10 The Formularies are defined in this way in Canon C15 of the Canons of the Church of England which provides that: 'Led by the Holy Spirit ... [the Church of England] ..., has borne witness to Christian truth in its historic formularies, the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, The Book of Common Prayer and the Ordering of Bishops, Priests and Deacons.'

what is most distinctive in the Church of England's understanding of Christian doctrine is to be found in them.<sup>11</sup>

We shall, therefore, examine each of the Formularies in turn to see what doctrine of Holy Communion they set forth.

## Construction

### The general principles of statutory construction

As they are incorporated into the statute law of the United Kingdom and derive their authority in law from being so, the Formularies are to be interpreted according to the normal rules of statutory interpretation. They must not be construed narrowly or by adopting a strained and unnatural reading but they must be interpreted, as all legislative material must, primarily by reference to the words used having regard to their purpose. Where their meaning is uncertain, contextual material may be of use to decide between equally viable constructions of the same words. Where the meaning of their words is plain to a reasonable man, however, a consideration of contextual materials cannot justify a construction different from the plain one except where adopting the plain meaning would lead to manifest absurdity.<sup>12</sup>

### What purpose? What usage?

As we have seen, the current authority for the use of the Prayer Book derives not from the Act of Uniformity 1662 but, via the Canons, from the Worship and Doctrine Measure. The current text of the Book of Common Prayer is, however, substantially unchanged from the original version annexed to the Act of Uniformity 1662 although minor revisions have been made to it. Its language was already, to some extent, that of a former age when the Act of Uniformity 1662 was enacted and, although it is generally intelligible to a modern, educated reader its language is certainly not the language of 1974.

In seeking to construe the Book of Common Prayer according to its legislative purpose are we to consider its purpose in 1662 or in 1974? How are we to take account of changes in English usage between these two times? These questions will only receive an authoritative answer in the unlikely event that they are at issue in some future case but one can apply the principles which I have summarised above to reach some tentative conclusions.

11 I do not consider in this article the doctrine of Holy Communion in the wider Anglican Communion

12 The summary of the principles of statutory construction given in this paragraph simplifies in a few words principles which can only be accurately expressed at great length. See Bennion on *Statutory Interpretation*, 7th Edn with the 1st Supplement (Pub: Lexis Nexis 2019). Within the limits of space, however, I consider this an accurate summary of accepted principles

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In construing the Book of Common Prayer as a matter of law, one is primarily concerned with the purpose of Parliament in respect of it in enacting the Worship and Doctrine Measure and with the meaning of its words at that time. Because, however, Parliament adopted, in the Measure, the text of the Book of Common Prayer substantially unchanged from that annexed to the Act of Uniformity 1662, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, it is to be presumed to have adopted the meaning expressed by Parliament in 1662. In determining that meaning, therefore, regard must be had to English usage as it was in 1662 and one must also take account of English usage at the time of the enactment of the previous versions of the Book of Common Prayer in respect of those parts of the 1662 Prayer Book which are derived from them.

### The Gorham case

The Privy Council case of *Gorham v Bishop of Exeter*,<sup>13</sup> provides judicial authority for the principle that it is the meaning of the words of the Formularies and not the opinions of their framers which must be considered in determining what is the doctrine of the Church of England as a matter of English law. In that case Lord Langdale said:-

This question must be decided by the Articles and Liturgy, and we must apply to the construction of those books the same rules which have long been established, and are by the law applicable to the construction of all written instruments. We must endeavour to attain for ourselves the true meaning of the language employed, assisted only by the consideration of such external or historical facts as we may find necessary to enable us to understand the subject-matter to which the instruments relate, and the meaning of the words employed.

In our endeavours ... we must by no means intentionally swerve from the old-established rules of construction, or depart from the principles which have received the sanction and approbation of the most learned persons in time past ...

As the subject-matter is doctrine, and its application to a particular question, it is material to observe that there were different doctrines

<sup>13</sup> *Gorham v Bishop of Exeter* (1850) Moores Special Report 462 DC.

In 1841 John Henry Newman had, in *Tract 90* of the *Tracts for the Times*, set himself to examine the Articles of Religion to determine to what extent they were consistent with what he considered to be the Catholic Faith. In doing so, although he did not avoid strained and unnatural readings, he paid close attention to the actual words of the Formularies concentrating, not on the opinions of the numerous individuals who contributed to the drafting of the Anglican Formularies, but on the actual words which were the subject of enactment in the law of England.

It is ironic, perhaps, that Newman's approach to the construction of the formularies in this highly controversial tract should, nine years later, have received confirmation in the equally controversial *Gorham* case, which horrified so many Anglo-Catholics and led to Henry Manning's submission to the Church of Rome

or opinions prevailing or under discussion at the times when the Articles and Liturgy were framed, and ultimately made part of the law; but we are not to be in any way influenced by the particular opinions of the eminent men who propounded or discussed them; or by the authorities by which they may be supposed to have been influenced; ... The Articles and Liturgy, as we now have them, must be considered as the final result of the discussion which took place - not the representation of the opinions of any particular men ... but the conclusion which we must presume to have been deduced from a due consideration of all the circumstances of the case...<sup>14</sup>

## **Distinguishing the relevant from the irrelevant**

### **The current Prayer Book, not previous versions**

In asking what is the doctrine of Holy Communion given expression by the Formularies and in particular, by the Book of Common Prayer, we need to bear in mind that we are examining the words enacted by the monarch in Parliament in the form which is enshrined in our law today. With minor and unimportant variations<sup>15</sup> in respect of the Prayer Book, including the Ordinal, this is the form which it took in the Fifth Prayer Book of 1662<sup>16</sup> so that we are not primarily concerned with the four previous versions of the Prayer Book. To the extent that they are significant, they are reflected in the Prayer Book of 1662 although, as we have said, the English usage ruling at the times of their enactment may be relevant to construing those parts of the Prayer Book of 1662 which derive from them.

### **The document itself not the opinions of those who contributed to it**

We are also not concerned with what the Formularies meant to the individuals by whom they were drafted. We need not ask, for example, what Archbishop Cranmer might have meant when he wrote the text which now forms part of the Exhortations.

### **Liturgical usage as the Prayer Book directs**

Nor are we concerned with actual liturgical usage. In my article, 'A Godly Unity',<sup>17</sup> I referred to the fact that, since the nineteenth century

14 *Gorham v Bishop of Exeter* (1850) Moores Special Report 462 DC

15 Save as to the effect of Canons C2(6) and Canon C4 referred to above

16 In respect of the Articles of Religion the version enshrined in our law is that which was published in 1571 under the Queen's authority having been passed by the convocations and subscription to them having been prescribed by the Subscription Act 1571

17 *Faith & Worship*, Easter 2010 p.79

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even where the Book of Common Prayer is used, the habit has grown of observing its provisions only selectively so that the exact observance of its provisions has for practical purposes passed away.<sup>18</sup> Although that is the case, it does not affect our quest to determine what doctrine is expressed by the Formularies considered as part of the ecclesiastical law of the Kingdom of England.

### The Thirty Nine Articles of Religion

#### Of the Sacraments

Article XXV 'Of the Sacraments' provides that:

Sacraments ordained of Christ be not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they be certain sure witnesses, and effectual signs of grace, and God's good will towards us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our Faith in him.

There are two Sacraments ordained of Christ our Lord in the Gospel, that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord.

Those five commonly called Sacraments, that is to say, Confirmation, Penance, Orders, Matrimony, and extreme Unction, are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel, being such as have grown partly of the corrupt following of the Apostles, partly are states of life allowed in the Scriptures; but yet have not like nature of Sacraments with Baptism, and the Lord's Supper, for that they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God.

The Sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon, or to be carried about, but that we should duly use them. And in such only as worthily receive the same they have a wholesome effect or operation: but they that receive them unworthily purchase to themselves damnation, as Saint Paul saith.

Thus Article XXV defines what is a sacrament, states that there are only two sacraments ordained of Christ and distinguishes the other five sacraments so called from the two sacraments of the gospel. The second part of the Article is a little obscure. It deals with both sacraments of the gospel but it is unclear how 'baptism' could be 'carried about' and it is surely of the nature of public baptism that it is 'gazed upon'.

<sup>18</sup> In a recent article in *Faith & Worship* ('Word for Word', *Faith & Worship*, Lent 2019) David Fuller makes the same point but with some complacency as to this neglect of the proper use of the Prayer Book

Plainly this paragraph of the Article is mainly concerned with the sacrament of Holy Communion and to condemn the veneration and carrying about in procession of the reserved elements.

### **Of Holy Communion**

Articles XXVIII to XXXI then deal specifically with Holy Communion. Article XXVIII ('Of the Lord's Supper') provides:

The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another; but rather it is a Sacrament of our Redemption by Christ's death: insomuch that to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith, receive the same, the Bread which we break is a partaking of the Body of Christ; and likewise the Cup of Blessing is a partaking of the Blood of Christ.

Transubstantiation (or the change of the substance of Bread and Wine) in the Supper of the Lord, cannot be proved by holy Writ; but it is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.

The Body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, in the Supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the Body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is Faith.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshipped.

Article XXVIII makes it clear that Holy Communion involves a real eating of the Body and a real drinking of His Blood but that the eating and drinking is 'only after an heavenly or spiritual manner'. Plainly one cannot subscribe both to this Article and to the doctrine of transubstantiation but whether the Article leaves room for belief in the physical presence of Christ in the elements in some other way has been a matter of controversy for too long for it to be resolved in a single article. It seems to the author, however, that if the Body of Christ is given, taken and eaten in the Supper, 'only after an heavenly or spiritual manner', it cannot be eaten in a physical manner and that this construction of these words of the Article is confirmed by the context of the whole.<sup>19</sup>

Article XXIX ('Of the Wicked which eat not the Body of Christ in the use of the Lord's Supper') provides:

The Wicked, and such as be void of a lively faith, although they do carnally and visibly press with their teeth (as Saint Augustine saith)

<sup>19</sup> Writing in *Faith & Worship* No 44, Ian Robinson ('Thomas Cranmer on the Real Presence') points out that the distinction between 'physical and spiritual' is not equivalent to that between 'real' and 'unreal' and that a symbol of a thing may really mediate that thing

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the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, yet in no wise are they partakers of Christ: but rather, to their condemnation, do eat and drink the sign or Sacrament of so great a thing.

Article XXIX makes it clear that those who take the elements without a 'lively faith'<sup>20</sup> do not partake of the Body and Blood of Christ the receiving of which is dependent on participation with such a faith.

Article XXX ('Of both kinds') provides:

The Cup of the Lord is not to be denied to the Lay-people: for both the parts of the Lord's Sacrament, by Christ's ordinance and commandment, ought to be ministered to all Christian men alike.

Article XXXI ('Of the one Oblation of Christ finished upon the Cross') provides:

The Offering of Christ once made is the perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin, but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifices of Masses, in the which it was commonly said, that the Priest did offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, were blasphemous fables, and dangerous deceits.

Newman was surely right, in Tract 90, in characterising this Article as directed against 'the teaching that there is a sacrifice for sin other than Christ's death, and that masses are that sacrifice'. Such a position is surely now uncontroversial amongst Christians of all the major branches of Christendom.

## The Catechism

We shall now look at what the Catechism has to say about the sacrament of Holy Communion. One might say that this is done out of order as the Catechism is part of the Book of Common Prayer. We do so, however, because the Catechism contains the essential rules of faith which an English Christian should know if he is to be admitted to Holy Communion according to the Prayer Book.<sup>21</sup>

20 As to of what a lively faith consists, see below for a consideration of the Homily of the Worthy Receiving and Reverent Esteeming of the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ

21 The Prayer Book provides in the rubric at the end of the Order of Confirmation that: '... there shall none be admitted to the holy Communion, until such time as he be confirmed, or be ready and desirous to be confirmed.'

The Catechism is headed by a legend describing it as: 'An instruction to be learned of every person, before he be brought to be confirmed by the Bishop.'

## **In respect of sacraments in general**

In respect of Sacraments generally the Catechism says:-

- Question. How many Sacraments hath Christ ordained in his Church?  
Answer. Two only, as generally necessary to salvation, that is to say, Baptism, and the Supper of the Lord.
- Question. What meanest thou by this word Sacrament?  
Answer. I mean an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us, ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof.
- Question. How many parts are there in a Sacrament?  
Answer. Two, the outward visible sign, and the inward spiritual grace.

## **In respect of the sacrament of Holy Communion**

In respect of the sacrament of Holy Communion, the Catechism contains the following:-

- Question. Why was the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper ordained?  
Answer. For the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ and of the benefits which we receive thereby.
- Question. What is the outward part or sign of the Lord's Supper?  
Answer. Bread and Wine, which the Lord hath commanded to be received.
- Question. What is the inward part, or thing signified?  
Answer. The Body and Blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper.
- Question. What are the benefits whereof we are partakers thereby?  
Answer. The strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the Body and Blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the Bread and Wine.
- Question. What is required of them who come to the Lord's Supper?  
Answer. To examine themselves, whether they repent them truly of their former sins, stedfastly purposing to lead a new

Canon B15A deals with admission to services of Holy Communion generally and is less restrictive than the Prayer Book rubric. It is arguable that the Prayer Book requirement is in addition to these requirements of the Canons where the service concerned is Holy Communion according to the Book of Common Prayer



## The Doctrine of Holy Communion

life; have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death; and be in charity with all men.

Plainly the Catechism gives expression, in respect of Holy Communion, to the doctrine summarised in Articles XXV ('Of the Sacraments'), XXIX ('Of the Wicked which eat not the Body of Christ in the use of the Lord's Supper') and XXXI ('Of the one Oblation of Christ finished upon the Cross') but refers only obliquely to Article XXX ('Of both kinds').

## The Homilies

### Article XXXV: Of Homilies

Article XXXV of the Articles of Religion provides that:

The second Book of Homilies, the several titles whereof we have joined under this Article, doth contain a godly and wholesome Doctrine, and necessary for these times, as doth the former Book of Homilies, which were set forth in the time of Edward the Sixth; and therefore we judge them to be read in Churches by the Ministers, diligently and distinctly, that they may be understood of the people.

The rubrics to the Prayer Book provide that the Homilies may be read by the priest<sup>22</sup> at Holy Communion instead of his giving a sermon.<sup>23</sup> Thus they are incorporated by reference in two of the three Formularies in which, under the law of England, the doctrine of the Church of England is to be found.

The publication of the Homilies and their authorisation to be read at Holy Communion in the reigns of Edward VI and Elizabeth I was designed to remedy the deficiencies of the clergy who were either not licensed to preach or were incapable of composing a sermon of a reasonable standard.<sup>24</sup> In the reign of the Second Elizabeth, with the general decline in the educational standards of the clergy, it is once again the case that many clergy would do better to read one of the Homilies than to compose and deliver their own sermon.

22 The rubrics to the Holy Communion service use the terms 'priest', 'minister' and 'curate' without any apparent distinction of meaning. In this article the term priest is used throughout

23 See the rubrics following the creed in the Holy Communion Service in the Book of Common Prayer

24 Homilies: 'Introduction' p. viii (Brynmill/Preservation Press edition 2006)

## **An Homily of the Worthy Receiving and Reverent Esteeming of the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ**

The *First Book of Homilies*, published in the reign of Edward VI when the liturgical life of England was radically restructured, contains no homily directly on the subject of Holy Communion. The *Second Book of Homilies*, published in the reign of Elizabeth I, itself contains only one such homily; Number 15 *An Homily of the worthy Receiving and Reverent Esteeming of the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ* (the *Homily of the Worthy Receiving*). If one finds this paucity of material concerning Holy Communion in the *Homilies* surprising, it is, perhaps, to be explained by the fact that, as we shall see, the Holy Communion service itself contains three extended pieces of teaching<sup>25</sup> which are to be used at, or in preparation before, celebrations of Holy Communion.

### **What does the Homilist say about the operation of the sacrament of Holy Communion?**

The *Homily of the Worthy Receiving* starts by emphasising both that Christ's sacrifice of himself on the Cross was the unique act of divine love which brought the benefit of redemption and salvation to mankind and that His love was also reflected in the provision of Holy Communion: '... in that he so kindly provided, that the same most merciful work might be had in continual remembrance, to take some place in us, and not be frustrate of his end and purpose.'<sup>26</sup>

From this, one might think that Holy Communion acts only as a commemoration which recalls the events of the Lord's passion to our memory. The *Homily* goes on, however:

For, as tender parents are not content to procure for their children costly possessions and livelihood, but take order that the same may be conserved, and come to their use, so our Lord and Saviour thought it not sufficient, to purchase for us his Father's favour again (which is that deep fountain of all goodness), and eternal life, but also invented the ways most wisely, whereby they might redound to our commodity and profit.<sup>27</sup>

So Holy Communion is not the means by which we obtain the Father's favour and eternal life but, in some way, is the means by which both the Father's favour and eternal life may redound to our commodity and profit. From this passage it is clear, that, in participating in Holy Communion, we receive a benefit which is not merely subjective.

25 The Exhortations

26 *Homilies: 'An Homily of the Worthy Receiving'* p. 320 (Brynmill/Preservation Press edition 2006)

27 *Ibid.* p. 320.

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The Homily goes on to enumerate two ways in which the sacrament of Holy Communion operates:

...being rightly done by the faithful, it doth not only help their weakness, who be by their poisoned nature readier to remember injuries than benefits, but strengtheneth and comforteth their inward man, with peace and gladness, and maketh them thankful to their Redeemer, with diligent care of godly conversation.<sup>28</sup>

### **How does the Homilist consider we should participate in Holy Communion?**

The Homily insists that we have a duty to participate in Holy Communion and not to be merely passive observers of it as, it is clear that the Homilist thinks, was the case before the Reformation:

...every one of us must be guests, and not gazers, eaters and not lookers, feeding ourselves, and not hiring other to feed for us; that we may live by our own meat, and not perish for hunger while others devour all.<sup>29</sup>

The Homilist states, not only that we must participate in Holy Communion, but that we must do so in a:

...reverent and due manner; lest, as physic provided for the body being misused, more hurteth than profiteth, so this comfortable medicine of the soul, undecently received, tendeth to our greater harm and sorrow.<sup>30</sup>

### **The three requisites**

Having thus introduced the subject, he goes on:

we must certainly know that three things be requisite, in him which would seemly - as becometh such high mysteries - resort to the Lord's table, that is; a right and worthy estimation, and understanding of this mystery; secondly, to come in a sure faith; and thirdly, to have newness or pureness of life, to succeed the receiving of the same<sup>31</sup>

### **An overriding principle**

28 Ibid. p. 320.

29 He bases this view on Christ's command: 'Do ye thus, drink ye all of this.' Ibid. pp.320-1.

30 Ibid. p. 321.

31 Ibid. p. 322.

Before examining these three requisites, the Homilist states an overriding principle:

that this Supper be in such wise done and ministered, as our Lord and Saviour did, and commanded to be done, as his holy Apostles used it, and the good fathers in the primitive Church frequented it.<sup>32</sup>

That simple principle, of course, has probably led to as much controversy and argument as any question in English history but the Homilist is clear that Christ's instruction was that Holy Communion should not be, in itself, a sacrifice but a memorial, that it should be a corporate act, that all participants should receive both elements and that Holy Communion is not for the benefit of the naturally dead but of the naturally living:

We must then take heed lest, of the memory, it be made a sacrifice; lest of a communion, it be made a private eating; lest of two parts, we have but one; lest applying it for the dead, we lose the fruit that be alive.<sup>33</sup>

Having thus stated his general principle, the Homilist returns to examine, in turn, the three requisites.

### **A right understanding**

The first requisite, the Homilist states, is that the communicant should have: '...a right understanding of the thing itself.'<sup>34</sup> His grounds for saying so are:-

...that the ignorant man can neither worthily esteem, nor effectually use those marvellous graces and benefits, offered and exhibited in that Supper<sup>35</sup>

This is because he will:

...either ...lightly regard them, to no small offence, or utterly condemn them, to his utter destruction<sup>36</sup>

He quotes King Solomon's advice in the Book of Proverbs:<sup>37</sup>

32 He bases this view on St Paul's words: 'He that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh his own damnation'. Ibid. p. 321.

33 Ibid. p. 321.

34 Ibid. p. 321.

35 Ibid. p. 321.

36 Ibid. p. 321.

37 Proverbs 23:1-3

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When thou sittest at an earthly king's table, to take diligent heed what things are set before thee <sup>38</sup>

The Homilist then adopts an image of St John Chrysostom, which is startling in its earthiness and in its taking a decidedly physical view of Christ's presence in the consecrated host:

“For this table is not,” saith Chrysostom, “for chattering jays, but for eagles,” who flee “thither where the dead body lieth.” <sup>39</sup>

He concludes, therefore, that:

..the ignorant cannot with fruit and profit, exercise himself in the Lord's Sacraments. <sup>40</sup>

So that we should:

...thrust not ourselves to this table, with rude and unreverent ignorance ... <sup>41</sup>

This, of course, presents a great difficulty. Not everybody can be an exact theologian and few can speak of the Holy Communion without falling into one doctrinal error or another. The Homilist therefore says that:

Neither need we to think that such exact knowledge is required of every man, that he be able to discuss all high points in the doctrine thereof. <sup>42</sup>

So what ought we to understand before we take Holy Communion with reverent knowledge? The Homilist says:

...thus much he must be sure to hold, that in the Supper of the Lord there is no vain ceremony, no bare sign, no untrue figure of a thing absent, but as the Scripture saith; the table of the Lord, the bread and cup of the Lord, the memory of Christ, the annunciation of his death, yea, the communion of the body and blood of the Lord in a marvellous incorporation; which by the operation of the Holy Ghost, the very bond of our conjunction with Christ, is through faith, wrought in the souls of the faithful, whereby not only their souls live, to eternal life, but they surely trust to win to their bodies a resurrection, to immortality. <sup>43</sup>

38 Ibid. p. 322.

39 Ibid. p.322.

40 Ibid. p. 322.

41 Ibid. p. 322.

42 Ibid. p. 322.

43 Ibid. p. 322.

He emphasises that we should not concentrate in Holy Communion on the physical elements:

...oh how would they inflame our hearts to desire the participation of these mysteries! and oftentimes to covet after this bread, continually to thirst for this food; not as specially regarding the terrene and earthly creatures which remain, but always holding fast and cleaving by faith to the Rock, whence we may suck the sweetness of everlasting salvation. <sup>44</sup>

The taking of Holy Communion, the Homilist says, has a real effect upon us but it is an effect upon our mental, moral and spiritual state:

...the faithful see, and hear, and know, the favourable mercies of God sealed, the satisfaction by Christ towards us confirmed, the remission of sin stablished. Here they may feel wrought, the tranquillity of conscience, the increase of faith, the strengthening of hope, the large spreading abroad of brotherly kindness, with many other sundry graces of God; the taste whereof they cannot attain unto, who be drowned in the deep dirty lake of blindness and ignorance. From the which, O beloved, wash yourselves with the living waters of God's Word, whence you may perceive and know, both the spiritual food of this costly Supper, and the happy trustings and effects, that the same doth bring with it. <sup>45</sup>

### **A sure faith**

If we are to participate in Holy Communion in the right way, however, we must not only understand the nature of the sacrament in which we participate but we must understand that sacrament in the context of our faith in Christ. So, the Homilist says, we must have:

... sure and constant faith, not only that the death of Christ is available, for the redemption of all the world, for the remission of sins, and reconciliation with God the Father, but also that he hath made upon his cross, a full and sufficient sacrifice for thee, a perfect cleansing of thy sins; so that thou acknowledgest no other Saviour, Redeemer, Mediator, Advocate, Intercessor, but Christ only, and that thou mayest say with the Apostle, that he loved thee and gave himself for thee. <sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. p. 323.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. p. 323.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. p. 323.

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He insists, that taking Holy Communion is effectual only through the faith of the recipient:

It is well known, that the meat we seek for in this Supper is spiritual food, the nourishment of our soul, a heavenly refection, and not earthly; an invisible meat, and not bodily; a ghostly sustenance, and not carnal; so that to think that, without faith, we may enjoy the eating and drinking thereof, or that that is the fruition of it, is but to dream a gross carnal feeding, basely abjecting and binding ourselves to the elements and creatures...<sup>47</sup>

Having dealt with the first two of his three requisites for the worthy receiving of Holy Communion in the First Part of his homily, in the Second Part the Homilist turns his attention to:

...the third thing necessary, in him that would not eat of this bread nor drink of this cup unworthily: which is newness of life, and godliness of conversation.<sup>48</sup>

He cites the words of St Basil of Caesarea:

...it behoveth him that cometh to the Body and Blood of Christ, in commemoration of him that died, and rose again, not only to be pure from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, lest he eat and drink to his condemnation; but also to show out evidently, a memory of him that died, and rose again for us, in this point: that he be mortified to sin and the world, to live now to God, in Christ Jesu our Lord.<sup>49</sup>

Our first duty, he says, is to thank God.

Our second is to participate in a spirit of love of our neighbours. That love must express itself in practical steps:

Wherefore, O man, tender thine own salvation; examine and try thy good will, and love towards the children of God, the members of Christ, the heirs of the heavenly heritage; yea, towards the image of God, the excellent creature thine own soul. If thou have offended, now be reconciled. If thou have caused any to stumble in the way of God, now set them up again. If thou have disquieted thy brother, now pacify him. If thou have wronged him, now relieve him. If thou have defrauded him, now restore to him. If thou have nourished spite, now embrace friendship. If thou have fostered hatred and

47 Ibid. p. 324.

48 Ibid. p. 325.

49 De Baptismo Lib 1.3 cited *ibid.* p. 325.

malice, now openly show thy love and charity; yea, be prest and ready, to procure thy neighbour's health of soul, wealth, commodity, and pleasure, as thine own.' <sup>50</sup>

Lastly, we must ensure that our own inner life is pure and innocent:

Wherefore, if servants dare not presume, to an earthly master's table whom they have offended, let us take heed we come not with our sins unexamined, into this presence of our Lord and Judge. If they be worthy blame, who kiss the prince's hand with a filthy and unclean mouth, shalt thou be blameless, which with a filthy, stinking soul, full of covetousness, fornication, drunkenness, pride, full of wretched cogitations and thoughts, dost breathe out iniquity and uncleanness, on the bread and cup of the Lord? <sup>51</sup>

### **The Homilist's conclusion**

So having considered the three requisites for the worthy receiving of Holy Communion, the Homilist concludes:

Thus have you heard how you should come, reverently and decently, to the table of the Lord, having the knowledge out of his word, of the thing itself, and the fruits thereof; bringing a true and constant faith, the root and wellspring of all newness of life, as well in praising God, and loving our neighbour, as purging our own conscience from filthiness. So that neither the ignorance of the thing shall cause us to contemn it, nor unfaithfulness make us void of fruit, nor sin and iniquity procure us God's plagues; but we shall by faith in knowledge, and amendment of life in faith, be here so united to Christ, our head in his mysteries, to our comfort, that after, we shall have full fruition of him indeed, to our everlasting joy and eternal life. <sup>52</sup>

## **THE EXHORTATIONS**

### **An essential part of the service**

In addition to the sermon the Holy Communion service provides an explanation of the nature of Holy Communion in three exhortations. When we remember the Homilist's emphasis on the importance of communicants properly understanding the nature of the sacrament in

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. p. 327.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. p. 328.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. p. 328 .



## *The Doctrine of Holy Communion*

which they participate, it is clear that these exhortations are an essential part of the service. Yet I have never heard them read in any service of Holy Communion which I have attended, not even at the Prayer Book Society's celebrations of Holy Communion at its own conference.

### **The First Exhortation: The Exhortation to Future Communion**

The first exhortation is one to future communion (the 'First Exhortation'). It announces the day on which the priest intends next to celebrate Holy Communion and reminds the congregation that the sacrament of Holy Communion is to be received in remembrance of Christ's 'meritorious Cross and Passion' and that it is only through Christ's death on the Cross that we receive remission of our sins and, therefore, are made partakers of the Kingdom of Heaven. The priest reminds the congregation that we have a duty to give thanks to the Father that He gave His Son, 'not only to die for us, but also to be our spiritual food and sustenance in that holy Sacrament'.

The priest further reminds the congregation that it is not a light thing to take Holy Communion.

Which being so divine and comfortable a thing to them who receive it worthily, and so dangerous to them that will presume to receive it unworthily; my duty is to exhort you in the mean season to consider the dignity of that holy mystery, and the great peril of the unworthy receiving thereof; and so to search and examine your own consciences, and that not lightly, and after the manner of dissemblers with God: but so that ye may come holy and clean to such a heavenly Feast, in the marriage-garment required by God in holy Scripture, and be received as worthy partakers of that holy Table.

The exhortation then goes on to set out how an intending communicant should prepare himself for Holy Communion. He should examine his life and conversation, confess his sins and make such amendment for his offences as he can. The priest concludes with saying:

And because it is requisite, that no man should come to the holy Communion, but with a full trust in God's mercy, and with a quiet conscience; therefore if there be any of you, who by this means cannot quiet his own conscience herein, but requireth further comfort or counsel, let him come to me, or to some other discreet and learned Minister of God's Word, and open his grief; that by the ministry of God's holy Word he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice, to the quieting of his conscience, and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness.

## **The Second Exhortation: the Exhortation against Negligence in Communication**

It is clear that the draftsmen expected parishioners to be reluctant to come to Holy Communion. When one considers the grave warnings as to unworthy receiving which are given in the Exhortations, that is, perhaps, unsurprising. There were two further reasons, however, why in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries parishioners were reluctant to receive Holy Communion.

First, as we shall see, the pre-Reformation practice was to receive only in one kind and only once per year. The laity is usually more conservative in its worship than the clergy and it may well have taken some time for parishioners to accept reformed practice. Secondly, as Puritanism advanced, suspicion of Prayer Book worship spread<sup>53</sup> until its use was forbidden by the rebel government formed during the Great Rebellion.

It is provided that where the priest ‘...shall see the people negligent to come to the holy Communion’, instead of the First Exhortation, he shall use the Second Exhortation, the Exhortation against Negligence in Communication.

The Second Exhortation opens with an echo of Christ’s parable of the Rich Man’s Feast.

Ye know how grievous and unkind a thing it is, when a man hath prepared a rich feast, decked his table with all kind of provision, so that there lacketh nothing but the guests to sit down; and yet they who are called (without any cause) most unthankfully refuse to come.

The priest then warns:

Wherefore, most dearly beloved in Christ, take ye good heed, lest ye, withdrawing yourselves from this holy Supper, provoke God’s indignation against you.

He then goes on to consider the reasons that one might give for non-attendance, the pressures of business or the consciousness of sin, and, having explained their speciousness, he concludes by reminding his parishioners that taking Holy Communion is not only a great gift from God but a duty of a Christian:

...it is your duty to receive the Communion in remembrance of the sacrifice of his death, as he himself hath commanded: which if ye

<sup>53</sup> Richard Hooker’s *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, for example, was a response to Puritan criticism of the Prayer Book

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shall neglect to do, consider with yourselves how great injury ye do unto God, and how sore punishment hangeth over your heads for the same; when ye wilfully abstain from the Lord's Table, and separate from your brethren, who come to feed on the banquet of that most heavenly food.

### **The Third Exhortation: the Exhortation to Correct Communication**

On the day Holy Communion is actually celebrated the priest is to deliver the Third Exhortation; the Exhortation to Correct Communication (the 'Third Exhortation'). In this exhortation he reminds his congregation of how important it is that they should prepare themselves properly through self-examination and of the danger of unworthy receipt and so he exhorts them to review their actions, to repent their sins, to amend their lives, to be thankful to God and to remember Christ's self-sacrifice for us:

... to the end that we should alway remember the exceeding great love of our Master and only Saviour, Jesus Christ, thus dying for us, and the innumerable benefits which by his precious blood-shedding he hath obtained to us; he hath instituted and ordained holy mysteries, as pledges of his love, and for a continual remembrance of his death, to our great and endless comfort.

Having examined the teaching contained in the *Homily of the Worthy Receiving*, and in the Exhortations, as to the nature of Holy Communion and the manner in which it should be received, we now turn to the Holy Communion service itself.

### **The Service of Holy Communion**

#### **The basic pattern of Prayer Book worship in the parishes**

In my article 'A Godly Unity' I described the basic pattern of parish worship provided by the Prayer Book as being:

...a daily Morning Service and Evening Prayer, attendance at which, apart from on Sunday and Holy Days, is voluntary for the laity. This Morning Service is enhanced by the saying of the Litany on Wednesday and Friday. On Sunday and Holy Days the normal pattern is for an extended Morning Service consisting of Morning Prayer, Litany and Ante-Communion with a short evening service, of Evening Prayer.

At least three times a year on Easter and on two other occasions<sup>54</sup> Holy Communion is to be celebrated.

Until the nineteenth century celebrations of Holy Communion in parish churches were infrequent events, taking place only on important days in the Church's calendar. Infrequent communication, however, did not necessarily imply indifference. Indeed, High Anglicans, although communicating infrequently, treated the Holy Communion with solemn respect and careful preparation.<sup>55</sup>

In considering the doctrine expressed in the Prayer Book one needs to bear in mind that Holy Communion is properly to be preceded by Mattins and the Litany without interruption or break. Those who take Holy Communion fully in accordance with the provisions of the Book of Common Prayer will, therefore, already have heard the promises of God's mercy, confessed their sins, expressed their faith in the Apostles' Creed, or heard the *Quicunque Vult*, have praised God and thanked Him for the blessings He confers and have prayed for the Monarch and his or her family, for Bishops and Curates and their congregations and for their necessities and have joined in the recitation of the Litany before the Order of the administration of the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion, comprised in the Morning Service, begins.

## The Rubrics

### The full participation of the laity

The framers of the Prayer Book were anxious to change the pre-Reformation practice, under which the laity communicated only once a year<sup>56</sup> with much of its devotion being directed towards observing the priest's celebration rather than participating in it, to more frequent Communion and full participation in it. Accordingly, the rubrics to Holy Communion provide that there must be a minimum number of communicants without which Holy Communion cannot be celebrated.

54 When this pattern was followed it was common for Holy Communion to be celebrated on Christmas Day and Whitsun in addition to Easter. See the *Oxford Guide to the Book of Common Prayer* (Oxford 2006) p.84.

55 Ibid. pp. 97-99. Since the replacement of the 1604 Canons by the current Canons, this pattern has been modified to provide for more frequent communication. Canon B14, as amended by amending Canon 38, provides that:

The Holy Communion shall be celebrated in at least one church in each benefice or, where benefices are held in plurality, in at least one church in at least one of those benefices at least on all Sundays and principal Feast Days, and on Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday...

One presumes that Canon B14 applies, under the Worship and Doctrine Measure s.1, even to churches which use the Prayer Book exclusively

56 The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 provided that all Christians should communicate at least once a year. This minimum was the normal practice in the later Middle-Ages (*Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd Ed. Revised, Oxford 2005)

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And there shall be no celebration of the Lord's Supper, except there be a convenient number to communicate with the Priest, according to his discretion. And if there be not above twenty persons in the Parish of discretion to receive the Communion; yet there shall be no Communion, except four (or three at the least) communicate with the Priest.

No modern draftsman would have allowed that parenthetical indecision as to the minimum number of communicants permitted.

### **Notification to the incumbent**

The rubrics of the Prayer Book provide a procedure under which:

So many as intend to be partakers of the holy Communion shall signify their names to the Curate, at least some time the day before.

### **Exclusion from Holy Communion**

We have seen the Homilist's concern that those taking Holy Communion should do so reverently and having done their best to put right whatever wrongs they have done. So the rubrics contain provision for the priest<sup>57</sup> to exclude those who have committed grievous and open sin from Holy Communion. The framers of the Prayer Book, however, were also aware of the importance of Holy Communion and that it is a grave thing to exclude any man from the benefits which communicating confers so the rubric also provides for the priest's power of exclusion to be subject to oversight by the Ordinary and for the excluded person to have an opportunity to appear before him.

## **The conduct of Holy Communion**

### **The Communion table**

The word 'altar' is used only once in the Holy Communion service and then only in a direct quotation from St Paul's letter to the Corinthians. Avoiding the word 'altar' serves to ensure that there is no suggestion that Holy Communion is a sacrifice of Christ's Body and Blood. Instead the word 'table' is used.

The Table, at the Communion-time having a fair white linen cloth upon it, shall stand in the Body of the Church, or in the Chancel, where Morning and Evening Prayer are appointed to be said.

<sup>57</sup> The rubrics here use the word 'curate'. The power to exclude is exercisable by the person who holds the cure of souls in respect of the church concerned

These much disputed words, therefore, allow the Communion table to be placed either in the Chancel or in the body of the Church.<sup>58</sup> Although it was probably the general practice in the late sixteenth century for the table to be placed on an East/West axis<sup>59</sup> the Prayer Book does not prescribe such an arrangement.

### **The position of the celebrant**

What is the position of the priest? At the start of the service he is clearly to stand, not to kneel, at the north side of the Communion table:

And the Priest standing at the north side of the Table shall say the Lord's Prayer, with the Collect following, the people kneeling.<sup>60</sup>

The rubrics provide that, later in the service, the priest, having preached the sermon from, it is to be presumed,<sup>61</sup> the pulpit:

'Then shall the Priest return to the Lord's Table, and begin the Offertory...'

Is he to return to his former northward position?

The rubrics do not say so expressly and it is their silence on this matter which, many argue, allows the priest at this point to adopt a westward or eastward position.

### **The elements**

What of the elements of Holy Communion? The rubrics provide:

And to take away all occasion of dissension, and superstition, which any person hath or might have concerning the Bread and Wine, it shall suffice that the Bread be such as is usual to be eaten; but the best and purest Wheat Bread that conveniently may be gotten

That plainly permits the use of ordinary leavened bread at Holy Communion, and that became the normal practice until the use of unleavened wafers became common in the nineteenth century under the influence of the Oxford Movement. As the rubric provides only that

58 It is unclear, however, what is the force of the words 'where Morning and Evening prayer are appointed to be said'.

59 See *The Oxford Guide to the Book of Common Prayer* (Oxford 2006) p. 83

60 Final words of the opening rubric.

61 The rubrics do not direct him to do so. Canon F6 of the current Canons provides:

'In every church and chapel there shall be provided ... unless it be not required, a decent pulpit for the sermon, to be set in a convenient place; which place, in the case of any dispute, shall be determined by the Ordinary.' This says for what the pulpit is to be used but not that the sermon must be preached from the pulpit.

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the use of leavened bread is 'sufficient', the rubric does not proscribe the use of unleavened bread.

We have seen that the Homilist is concerned that we should not concentrate on the physical elements but on their spiritual effects and the Prayer Book evinces a similar concern to exclude all suggestion that God is physically present in the elements of Holy Communion. No doubt that is the reason why the rubrics provide that all the consecrated elements should be consumed at the service at which they are consecrated.

### **Kneeling**

The Book of Common Prayer prescribes that the congregation should kneel for most prayers and that communicants should kneel in receiving Holy Communion. That is consistent with the Homilist's emphasis that we are, in communicating, attending a feast of the heavenly King. The Prayer Book evinces an equal concern that there should be no suggestion that, in kneeling, communicants are worshipping the elements themselves or Christ's Body and Blood physically present in them. To make that clear the following rubric<sup>62</sup> was included in the Fifth Prayer Book, that of 1662:

Whereas it is ordained in this Office for the Administration of the Lord's Supper, that the Communicants should receive the same kneeling; (which order is well meant, for a signification of our humble and grateful acknowledgement of the benefits of Christ therein given to all worthy Receivers, and for the avoiding of such profanation and disorder in the holy Communion, as might otherwise ensue;) yet, lest the same kneeling should by any persons, either out of ignorance and infirmity, or out of malice and obstinacy, be misconstrued and depraved; It is here declared, That thereby no adoration is intended, or ought to be done, either unto the Sacramental Bread or Wine there bodily received, or unto any Corporal Presence of Christ's natural Flesh and Blood. For the Sacramental Bread and Wine remain still in their very natural substances, and therefore may not be adored; (for that were Idolatry, to be abhorred of all faithful Christians;) and the natural Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ are in Heaven, and not here; it being against the truth of Christ's natural Body to be at one time in more places than one.<sup>63</sup>

62 This rubric is commonly referred to as the 'Black Rubric' because, in the nineteenth Century, the habit developed of printing the rubrics in red except this one, which was printed in black, on the grounds that it was not a true rubric not being an instruction as to an action but a declaration of the significance of an action previously prescribed in a rubric at the appropriate place in the service (see article on 'The Black Rubric' in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*).

63 An earlier version of the Black Rubric was included in the Second Prayer Book of 1552 at the last moment after its consideration by Parliament. It was not included in the Third (1559) or Fourth (1604) Prayer Books.

## The Lord's Prayer

Holy Communion starts with the recitation of the Lord's Prayer which the congregation would have heard recited three times before in the Morning Service, twice in Mattins and once in the Litany. Answering the puritan objection to this repetition, Hooker explained that we say the Lord's Prayer:

... not mistrusting, till these new curiosities [the Puritan objections] sprang up, that ever any man would think our labour herein misspent, the time wastefully consumed, and the office itself made worse by so repeating that which otherwise would more hardly be made familiar to the simpler sort; for the good of whose souls there is not in Christian religion any thing of like continual use and force throughout every hour and moment of their whole lives. <sup>64</sup>

## The Collect for Purity

Reflecting the teaching of the *Homily of the Worthy Receiving* and the Exhortations that the participant should approach Holy Communion with a true faith which is reflected in his behaviour the Collect for purity follows in which we ask that our hearts may be cleansed, that we may love God perfectly and that we should magnify His holy name.

## The Ten Commandments

The congregation is then reminded of its duty to follow God's commandments by the recitation of the Ten Commandments. The deposited Prayer Book, rejected by the King's High Court of Parliament in 1928, substitutes Christ's summary of the law for the Ten Commandments and it has become common, even in celebrations of Holy Communion which are otherwise according to the Prayer Book, to do so. Noble and beautiful as the summary is, encapsulating as it does in two short sentences the whole essence of God's revelation, its very generality means that it is less suitable for use at this point in the service to remind us of our duty to God and our neighbour. It is too easy for an adulterer or perjurer to listen to Christ's summary of the law without asking himself whether his adultery or perjury is inconsistent with his duty to love God and his neighbour. It would surely be impossible for him to listen to the seventh and ninth commandments without his being conscious that he had indeed transgressed God's Commandments.

<sup>64</sup> Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* Book 5, XXXV (3).



## **The Collects, Epistle, Gospel, Creed, Sermon, Exhortations and Sentences**

There then follows one of two alternative Collects for the Queen. Those Collects not only pray for the Queen's good but remind us that she exercises an authority conferred by God and that we owe her a duty of obedience. The priest then says the Collect for the Day<sup>65</sup> and then reads the Epistle and Gospel.<sup>66</sup> Having reinforced our faith in this way, we express it by reciting the Nicene Creed.<sup>67</sup> We then listen to the sermon, or an appropriate homily, and where the First or Second Exhortation is to be read, it is read after that sermon or homily. In this way we reinforce and confirm that understanding of the Faith which both the *Homily of the Worthy Receiving* and the Exhortations make clear is required for the proper receiving of Holy Communion. The Sentences then remind us, just before the alms are collected, of our duty to relieve the needs of the poor, the sick and the needy.

### **The Prayer for the Church Militant**

Once the alms are collected and the bread and wine has been placed on the table by the priest, we say the prayer for the Church Militant. That prayer is carefully written to avoid all suggestion that Holy Communion is a sacrifice of Christ to God the Father. Instead we pray that God should receive our prayers and, only if there are actual alms or oblations, that He should accept them.

The prayer for the Church Militant has been a part of the Prayer Book since the First Prayer Book of Edward VI. Each of the five Prayer Books was enacted at a time when men argued furiously over the nature of God's truth and, in particular, the truth as to the nature of Holy Communion, when the Church was disunited and when theological controversy frequently led to armed conflict. It is in this context of human imperfection that we ask for God's truth, unity and concord. We then ask for the political conditions which will allow that truth to prevail; for God to defend all Christian kings, princes and governors and especially our own Monarch and that her council and all to whom she delegates her authority, may truly and indifferently<sup>68</sup> minister justice and

65 The congregation will already have heard the Collect for the Day at Mattins and will hear it again at Evensong

66 These are not the only readings from the Bible which the congregation would hear at the Morning Service for it would already have heard the lessons of Mattins from the Old and New Testaments. At Evensong it would hear further lessons from the Old and New Testaments

67 Having recited the Apostles' Creed or heard the *Quicumque Vult* at Mattins and hearing the Apostles' Creed again at Evensong

68 The meaning of 'indifferently' in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was closer to the meaning of our modern word 'impartially' than to its modern meaning. There are many words in the Prayer Book which have similarly shifted their meanings. For some unfathomable reason, clergymen afflicted

punish wickedness so as to maintain true religion, and virtue; that is the right behaviour to which true faith gives rise. We ask that the Bishops and all curates,<sup>69</sup> that is all clergymen with a cure of souls, may set forth God's word not only in what they say but in what they do. We then ask that God's people, and in particular the congregation of which we are part, may serve God in holiness and righteousness. Finally, we ask God to comfort those in adversity, thank Him for the faithful departed, but without praying for their welfare in the afterlife which has already been determined, and ask for God's grace to follow their good example.

### **The Third Exhortation**

At this point on Sundays and on Holy Days when Holy Communion is not to be celebrated, the Morning Service concludes with Collects. Where Holy Communion is to be celebrated, however, the Third Exhortation, the Exhortation to Correct Communication follows.

### **The invitation, confession and absolution**

The priest then invites the congregation to take the sacrament but conditionally upon their first confessing their sins. Of course, they will already have made the general confession of sins at that part of the Morning Service which consists of Mattins and they will do so again at Evensong. The confession at Holy Communion, however, emphasises our offence against God and the justice of His wrath which that sin provokes. We acknowledge that we cannot carry the burden of our sins ourselves so that we require God's mercy. We ask, therefore, for forgiveness and that we may be able to serve Him properly in the future.

### **The Comfortable Words**

Having pronounced the absolution<sup>70</sup> the priest then recites the Comfortable Words, extracts from the New Testament showing that Christ came to save sinners and that His sacrifice is sufficient to cleanse us of sin and to relieve us from what would otherwise be its consequences.

### **Glorifying God**

We then turn, in the Sursum Corda, and the Sanctus<sup>71</sup> to glorify God.

### **The Prayer of Humble Access**

with the liturgical fidgets, are happy to use 'quick' and 'ghost' in an archaic sense yet insist on changing 'indifferently' to 'impartially'

69 'Curates' is another word which stimulates the liturgical fidgets with the word 'clergy' often being unnecessarily substituted

70 The priest does not absolve our sins but pronounces God's absolution of them

71 With a Proper Preface provided for the feast days of Christmas, Easter, Ascension, Whit Sunday and Trinity, feasts on which Holy Communion will, or is likely to, be celebrated

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This is followed by the Prayer of Humble Access in which we acknowledge our unworthiness to receive the sacrament of Holy Communion but ask for God's grace:

so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us.

In this it is made clear that in participating in Holy Communion we are really, but spiritually, eating Christ's flesh and drinking His Blood as He commanded us and that the sacrament is effectual to clean and purify, both our bodies and our souls. It also makes clear, in accordance with the teaching in the *Homily of the Worthy Receiving* and in the Exhortations, that the effectiveness of Holy Communion is dependent upon our worthy receiving of it.

### The Prayer of Consecration

The Prayer of Consecration then follows.

Since Dom Gregory Dix confidently set out what he asserted was the pattern of the early Church's celebration of Holy Communion in *The Shape of the Liturgy*<sup>72</sup> liturgists have become far less confident of their ability to reconstruct, from the few liturgical materials which have come down to us from the early period of the Church, what was universal in the early Church's celebration of Holy Communion.<sup>73</sup> The Prayer Book order of Holy Communion, which takes its essential shape from the order in Edward VI's Second Prayer Book of 1552, has had removed from it those elements of the order of the First Prayer Book which might support the view that the elements are physically changed. The service expresses the doctrine that we do, indeed, eat and drink Christ's Body and Blood in Holy Communion, but that we do so spiritually and not physically.

So the Prayer of Consecration starts with the priest referring to Christ's death on the cross as a once and for all 'full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world' and with his reminding us that Christ commanded us to continue to

72 Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (1945)

73 Anthony Burton, in *Faith & Worship* No 62 ('An Anglican Perspective') wrote that:

... almost every insight into the life of the Early Church that the Liturgical Movement advanced has been brought into serious doubt. Increasingly scholars are finding that the Liturgical Movement was a movement away from Early Church norms – insofar as they can be established at all.

He went on to say:

Dix's theory, that a seven-action shape at the Last Supper was condensed by the Early Church to a four-fold action—taking, thanksgiving, breaking, and communion—has been universally adopted in newer Anglican liturgies. All newer Eucharistic rites bear Dix's imprint. But the theory has since been discredited

celebrate Holy Communion to be a perpetual memory of His death until His second coming. The priest then asks God that in eating the physical elements of bread and wine, we may partake of Christ's Body and Blood. It must be implicit that, if, as is assumed, it is possible to eat the elements of Holy Communion without partaking of Christ's Body and Blood, the Body and Blood are not physically present in those elements.

The priest then recites the Institution Narrative linking Christ's words to the priest's breaking of the bread and the taking of the chalice of the wine into his hands.

When the bread and wine are actually administered to the communicants, the priest refers to both the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ preserving the body and soul of the communicant and to the physical bread as being eaten in remembrance that Christ died for us. Similarly, the priest asks that Jesus' Blood should preserve our body and soul but also instructs the communicant that he should drink the wine in remembrance that Christ's Blood was shed for him.

Thus it is clear from the service itself, that Holy Communion is a memorial of Christ's once and for all sacrifice on the cross, that it involves a real eating of Christ's body and a real drinking of His Blood but not a physical eating and drinking of the Body and Blood in the elements of Holy Communion.

## **Post-Communion**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

When the elements have been received by the communicants the Lord's Prayer is said, for the fifth and last time at the Morning Service, and, this time, by the celebrant and congregation together.

### **The Prayers of Oblation and Thanksgiving**

Two prayers follow, either of which may be used. Both derive from the first Prayer Book of 1549, but whereas the second always followed the Communion of the People, the first was moved to this position only in the 1552 book, and altered in the process.<sup>74</sup> The two prayers are sometimes contrasted as if one expressed a 'higher' doctrine than the other. That contrast, however, is largely illusory.

First the doctrine expressed by the current, Fifth Book of Common Prayer must be expressed in its entire contents not just in one part read in isolation from the rest. Secondly, the first prayer's extensive use of the word 'sacrifice' expresses a sacrificial understanding of Holy Communion,

<sup>74</sup> It is a shortened and adapted version of the prayer which in 1549 followed the words of institution and preceded the Lord's Prayer, the Peace, the Confession, the Comfortable Words, the Prayer of Humble Access and the Communion of the People.

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although not as a sacrifice of Christ's Body and Blood, being carefully constructed to refer only to the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving and of our souls and bodies whilst the second prayer carefully differentiates the spiritual food of Christ's Body and Blood from our feeding on the physical elements used in the Sacrament.

Taken together the two prayers give expression to the doctrine of Holy Communion set forth in the *Homily of the Worthy Receiving* and in the Exhortations and individually emphasise different elements of it which are of equal importance.

### **The Gloria and the Peace**

The service then concludes by returning, in the Gloria, to the praise of God and with the priest pronouncing the blessings of the peace of God on the congregation.

### **Conclusion**

A close consideration of the Formularies, in which, according to Canon Law, the doctrine of the Church of England 'is to be found', applying the principles of statutory construction appropriate to such texts, reveals that they express a consistent doctrine of Holy Communion.

That doctrine might be summarised as follows. Holy Communion is a sacrament instituted by Christ by which we remember His once and for all sacrifice upon the cross. It is a grievous sin either to partake of it unworthily or to neglect our duty to partake of it at all. Although the Body and Blood of Christ are not physically present in the elements, in participating in Holy Communion we partake of that Body and Blood, eating and drinking them spiritually, and thereby we receive real and effectual benefits. In accordance with the great value of this freely given gift of God we are to treat Holy Communion with the greatest seriousness, to prepare for it carefully and to approach and receive it with gratitude and reverence.

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# ‘I Believe in The English Reformation’

ROBERT J. D. WAINWRIGHT

Some years ago I went along to the OICCU (Oxford Inter-Collegiate Christian Union) Bible reading, which in those days was still held on a Saturday night. For some mysterious reason—heaven knows why—today’s students meet midweek. Possibly they do not believe that piety should interfere with clubbing, and perhaps they are right. I remember the occasion because an august elder statesman of the Evangelical world had been invited to address the undergraduates, and my expectations could hardly have been higher had Thomas Cranmer himself been speaking. This clergyman was explaining to the students what it meant to have a personal faith, and by way of illustration he compared the statement ‘I believe in Jesus Christ’ to the somewhat less theologically-loaded commitment ‘I believe in hot baths.’ The latter could have several meanings, he said. It might mean I believe there is such a thing as hot baths, that they do in fact exist; or it might mean that I exercise faith in God when I am myself submerged in a bath tub; alternatively, and perhaps most likely, it could mean I think taking a hot bath does a person good, and that they are something in which I place my trust. Whichever way, the notion that this preacher’s personal faith was somehow related to his personal hygiene has remained with me.

To affirm belief in the English Reformation undoubtedly has more affinity with the tenets of the Nicene Creed than do hot baths. If we are going to talk about a politically-imposed solution to a political problem which had major theological dimensions then we could equally find ourselves engaged in discussion of the religious policies of Constantine I as of Henry VIII, each of whom was concerned to assert authority over his respective empire. The hot bath analogy may at least serve to structure our thoughts. ‘I believe in the English Reformation’ might mean we think the historical event actually happened; or it might imply that our own practice of the Christian faith is somehow identified with it, or rather, that we see ourselves as somehow continuing to participate in the same movement. Lastly it might mean that we think the English Reformation was a ‘good thing,’ a trusty guide for the soul, however we might construe the benefit.

Formal credal statements are not especially in vogue. Tony Little, the former headmaster of Eton, writes in his book *An Intelligent Person’s*

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*Guide to Education* about the constraints the adoption of a creed places on a believer: ‘Creeds,’ he says, ‘tend to be written after the charismatic individual is gone. It is a challenge for young people to consider whether Jesus would have wished for a formal creed at all.’<sup>1</sup> Perhaps he sees them as a ‘bad thing’; but Little is perfectly correct that ‘creeds constrain’ insofar as our convictions—intellectual as well as religious—usually have implications for life and practice. If what we believe to be true about the past turns out to be inconvenient for the present then in history, no less than in theology, we may be tempted to alter our beliefs about what is true. Indeed, for some, the English Reformation has been an inconvenient truth.

Whether or not the Reformation actually happened has been a matter of contention since the seventeenth century. Two hundred years later, by the time Tractarians were writing the history books, Reformation-denial was in full swing.<sup>2</sup> A Protestant Reformation in England was a serious problem for anyone who wanted to emphasise the Catholic credentials of the Church of England. The English Reformation’s Protestant character had to be denied or, at the very least, heavily qualified by generations of Anglo-Catholic clergymen seeking historical justification for their innovative approach. Thus was concocted the ideology of the *Via Media* between Rome and Wittenberg, which located so-called Anglicanism as a compromise solution between papal error and Protestant excess. Conveniently, of course, any modification of Catholic theology in light of Lutheranism was not likely to have much bearing on the Sacrament. The English reformers had surely never intended to suggest that Christ was anything other than really present.

Ironically enough, Thomas Cranmer himself was the principal victim at the feast. While other prelates had engaged in painfully Protestant activities, Cranmer had produced a very nice liturgy. The accidents of the Holy Communion service could be altered to make it more ceremonially elaborate even while the substance remained. And surely this was what Cranmer would have wanted; at least according to the nineteenth-century Tractarian Edward Pusey, who wrote in Tract 81 of the ‘poor Archbishop unhappily surrounded by foreigners.’ To any modern historian Pusey’s caricature is almost amusing. He alleges malign influence from continental refugees like Peter Martyr, Jan Laski, and Martin Bucer who, he says, rejected episcopacy, the doctrine of the Sacraments, and were ‘generally unsound.’ The weak-willed Cranmer was surrounded by them, and ‘paid much deference to them, as a man of no decision is wont to do to those who are bent on carrying a point.’

1 Tony Little, *An Intelligent Person’s Guide to Education* (2015), p.148.

2 For a definitive treatment of Tractarian historiography see Diarmaid MacCulloch, ‘The Myth of the English Reformation,’ *Journal of British Studies*, 30/1 (1991), pp.1-19.

Had Cranmer had his own way, the first edition of the Book of Common Prayer in 1549, which Pusey calls 'our genuine English Liturgy,' would also have been the last.

The opinionated individual who Pusey blamed for the rotation of altars into tables was John Hooper, Bishop of Gloucester. In 1551 Hooper was consecrated kicking and screaming dressed in the traditional episcopal garb of rochet and chimere. The Vestment Controversy was a gift to anyone who wanted to deny the Protestant force of the English Reformation because it seemed to involve Cranmer in a defence of Catholic tradition.<sup>3</sup> To his friends Hooper was 'the future Zwingli of England', 'a true friend of ... the church and commonwealth of Zürich,'<sup>4</sup> who had received a cold reception from Cranmer on his return from Alpine exile. The Tractarians were able to pit Hooper against Cranmer: the hot-Protestant advocate of alien practices being reined-in by a Catholic-minded archbishop. Hooper represented Reformation and Cranmer refused to follow his lead. Indeed, Bishop Ridley had Hooper thrown into gaol for insubordination. Yet that is the very point on which the argument falls down, for it was Hooper's refusal to bow to authority, rather than his Reformed ecclesiology, which caused scandal. Cranmer and Ridley were fully in favour of the symbolic understanding of the Sacrament agreed between John Calvin and Heinrich Bullinger in 1549. They simply chose to implement that theology with the decency and order of the traditional ecclesiastical polity behind them. Their Catholicism was only in the eye of the Anglo-Catholic beholder.

The authority which dictated the direction and pace of the English Reformation was, of course, the Crown. Edward VI was reminiscent of the godly young Josiah from the Old Testament who promised, had he survived adolescence, to preside over a realm thoroughly reformed of its Catholic past. Even as a boy he exercised his prerogative in line with his precocious Protestant convictions. Again it was Hooper who occasioned one of the most memorable examples, again in relation to the Ordinal. His complaint against the mention of saints in the oath of Supremacy was undoubtedly awkward for Cranmer, who must have had similar reservations, but due regard for authority did not permit even an archbishop to change words approved by Henry VIII. It must have impressed Cranmer that his royal godson Edward took a pen and crossed out the offending reference. Such a gratifying exercise of Supremacy only emphasises the sacral importance of obedience in that Hooper did

3 John Opie, 'The Anglicizing of John Hooper,' *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 59 (1968), pp.150-75.

4 Martin Micron to Conrad Pellican, quoted in W. M. S. West, 'John Hooper and the Origins of Puritanism [2],' *Baptist Quarterly*, 16/1 (1955), 24; John Stumphius to Bullinger, May 1549, in H. Robinson (ed.), *Original Letters Relative to the English Reformation*, 2 vols. (Parker Society; Cambridge 1846/47), p.462.



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not get everything that he wanted. Still, it was with more than strokes of a pen that the Edwardian authorities set about cleansing the realm of superstition, dissolving chantries, stripping out altars and rood screens, and desecrating shrines and images. Even if the pace of change never again recovered the revolutionary speed of those years, a blow had been struck for English Protestantism of such force that Mary Tudor would have needed many more years than she was given to reverse it.

The centrality of the Royal Supremacy to the English Reformation is clear. Long before it passed into law in 1534 it was clear that Henry VIII intended to uphold the liberties of the Church only insofar as they were not prejudicial to the interests of the Crown. However, if Reformation did come from the top, some historians claim it was not really adopted by people on the ground, and so the political leadership of the Crown has been used by some historians to argue that the Reformation in this country was little more than constitutional reform, an ‘act of state’ which passed most people by.<sup>5</sup> The English experience, on this view, was quite different from the populist upheaval on the continent where peasants urged their princes to overthrow Catholic doctrine. Here a king set on an annulment and then on a windfall from the dissolution of the monasteries excluded the influence of the Bishop of Rome without making or intending any significant doctrinal alteration. Religious enthusiasts were enthusiastic for good letters and high clerical standards, not Lutheran heresy. Allegedly what Henry offered them was Catholicism without the Pope.

Revisionists thirty or forty years ago were right to emphasise the time it took for Protestantism to catch on. Any evangelist worth his salt knows that true conversion does not come about by mass intimidation but through individuals having the opportunity to engage with new ideas. We should hardly have expected personal convictions to be legislated by Parliament and the whole thing to have been done and dusted in time for the Settlement of 1559 (when many older histories of the period come to an end). Yet it is wholly incorrect to suggest that the English Reformation was devoid of doctrinal content. Gordon Rupp was a lonely prophet when in 1947 he ventured the suggestion that ‘the English Reformation is not wholly to be explained in terms of that conspiracy by which a lustful monarch and predatory gentry combined to plunder the Church and rend the unity of Christendom. It had, after all, something to do with the beliefs of Christian men.’<sup>6</sup> While revisionists were playing down the speed of popular reform, other scholars were uncovering evidence of substantial minority engagement with new religious ideas,

5 F. M. Powicke, *The Reformation in England* (Oxford 1941), p. 1.

6 E. G. Rupp, *Studies in the Making of the English Protestant Tradition (Mainly in the Reign of Henry VIII)* (Cambridge 1949), p. xi.

originating, they claimed, in continuity with native Lollard dissent passed down since the time of John Wyclif.

Henry VIII's stock as a theologian has risen in recent years beyond the mere title of Defender of the Faith. His *Assertion of the Seven Sacraments* in 1521 gave him opportunity to familiarise himself with the claims Luther was making and, like everyone else who encountered his ideas, to decide for himself what he thought. It is true that he did not think very much of Luther, but he was ready to rebuild his own theological outlook with royal responsibility for the Church as the cornerstone. The 'King's Great Matter' catalysed Henry's personal struggle with divine providence. His self-identification with the Old Testament King David helps to inform our understanding—and perhaps informed his own understanding—of his complex relationships with women as well as his religious responsibilities as God's anointed over the nation. He took his faith seriously, and so when he became convinced of the need to end the Pope's usurped authority, he also looked for a new theological basis for the English Church. He brought an end to Purgatory, downgraded Confirmation, Ordination and Extreme Unction as sacraments, and was prepared to see images defaced. The fact that he held firmly to transubstantiation was not enough to maintain Catholicism without the pope. On the key doctrine of justification the Henrician Church formally abandoned the Catholic position for several years without ever adopting justification by faith alone. Without the Pope, the king would settle religion as he saw fit. Royal Supremacy became a tenet of the Gospel. It is the prejudices of our own age which make a theology founded on the divine commissioning of kings appear sub-Christian.

Thomas Cranmer's willingness for the Evangelical cause to progress at the rate allowed by Henry ensured that it was not cut off in its infancy. When members of the Privy Council tried to bring him down in 1543, Cranmer was preserved because he enjoyed the full trust of the king. Henry not only tipped-off his archbishop but choreographed events so as to humiliate Cranmer's accusers. Just as they informed him he was under arrest, Cranmer produced the king's ring as a sign of the absolute confidence in which he was held.<sup>7</sup> The Protestant future of England rested on his ability to compromise and to work with the regime.

The real doctrinal change achieved in the twenty years from the break with Rome to the death of Edward VI shows that official Reformation from above could be an effective agent of Evangelical theology. What is more, post-revisionist scholars seeking to understand minority engagement at a popular level have uncovered not only a much more impressive degree of interest among the lower orders than was once thought, but they have also challenged the narrow idea of the English Reformation as a

7 See Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: A Life* (1996), pp.320-21.

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peculiarly English phenomenon. However appealing a tradition of native dissent stretching back from William Tyndale to John Wyclif may be, the reality is that academic Wycliffism was extinct long before Lutheranism washed up on England’s shores. When Lollards met a Lutheran like Robert Barnes, they were not imparting their knowledge to him but recognising a correspondence between his educated Evangelicalism and their own religious traditions. It is interesting to notice that the early evangelical heartlands were also places known for Lollardy, but this is by and large coincidental. Suffolk, Essex, London, Kent and the Thames Valley were also the areas of England most exposed to the influx of ideas from the continent, and this European dimension is far more interesting.

To say ‘I believe in the English Reformation’ is not to say I believe in an English Reformation fundamentally different from other European Reformations. Hearing again Rupp’s prophetic voice, ‘We shall be wise if we refuse to imitate those historians who loved to glorify some imaginary and splendid isolation of the English Church, as though there was something inherently disreputable in borrowing from abroad.’<sup>8</sup> The idea that England’s Reformation was *different* because it did not reproduce any one pattern on the continent is a back-door way of denying that what happened in this country was the same thing as happened over there. Certainly there were local variations across Europe, but we have not helped ourselves by focusing on the exceptional forms of English devotional practice rather than observing the unexceptional exchange of ideas to which the English Channel was no barrier. We must acknowledge, with some considerable humility, that England produced no first-rate theologians in this period, not even—it must be said—Thomas Cranmer. The intellectual basis for Evangelical reform was picked piecemeal from books bought in Frankfurt and gospel truths gossiped by Merchant Adventurers going to and fro from Antwerp. Those who were most theologically advanced in their faith were exiles who encountered these ideas directly in visits to Wittenberg, to Strassburg, and to Zürich. The English could be independently-minded in the combination of ideas they chose to believe, but they were far from original.

This means we need to describe the theological complexion of English Evangelicalism more sensitively than we once thought. The word ‘Protestant’ is anachronistic before mid-century. Moreover, if we suppose most Evangelicals were Lutherans because they hoped adherence to the Real Presence might be more palatable to the king, then we risk yet another version of the mild, Anglican *Via Media* projected back into the reign of Henry VIII. English Lutheranism was more apparent in the breach than in the observance. Many reformers across the continent drew courage from Martin Luther to make their break with Rome but it does

8 Rupp, *op. cit.*, p.47.

not follow that they adopted his teachings wholesale. Men like Hugh Latimer, ‘little Bilney’, and Barnes were united more than anything else by their desire to preach Christ from the Scriptures. Most translations of Luther’s works into English neatly side-stepped his pronouncements on justification by faith alone.<sup>9</sup> Not only might the taint of antinomianism upset the prospects for reform as government policy but, all in all, the English found more affinity with Huldrych Zwingli and Martin Bucer’s ideas concerning true worship and communal renewal. What is more, the collaboration between civic and spiritual authority in a city state like Zürich lent itself to appropriation by England’s centralised regime. The man who exercised Royal Supremacy on behalf of the king, Thomas Cromwell, was playing the long game, but he was nonetheless at pains to expose the nation’s brightest and best to the influence of Heinrich Bullinger. He licensed books, protected Sacramentarians, and sponsored an exchange programme between Oxford and Zürich. The Royal Supremacy dictated that Reformation would proceed in an orderly manner, but the Supremacy could be harnessed to guide the nation in directions other than that in which the king sought to lead. In those early years, reformers from above and from below were still working out a coherent theological position. What must impress us—and what can hardly have come out of nowhere—was the groundswell of Reformed theology under Edward VI, with Cranmer riding a wave which broke in the Prayer Book of 1552. When it rolled off the presses of the king’s printer no one could deny that that the English Reformation had actually happened.

Approaching now our credal experiment from another angle: ‘I believe in hot baths’ could mean I have faith when I am immersed in a bath tub, and when I get out and towel myself dry I no longer believe. Clearly ‘I believe in the English Reformation’ cannot connote our participation in events nearly five hundred years ago, but many believers today do see their faith as drawing upon the same movement and therefore identify as its spiritual progeny. The Prayer Book Society is a case in point, ‘established for the advancement of the Christian religion as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer; and, in furtherance of this Object, for the promotion of the worship and doctrine enshrined therein’. Up north we find similar links between faith and a Reformation heritage. For example, ‘the United Free Church of Scotland, with all the Churches of the Reformation, acknowledges as her supreme standard the word of God contained in the Scriptures.’<sup>10</sup> Members of the Evangelical tradition within the Church of England often single out the doctrine of the Prayer

9 Carrie Euler, ‘Does Faith Translate? Tudor Translations of Martin Luther and the Doctrine of Justification by Faith,’ *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 101 (2010), p.80.

10 *The Manual of the Practices and Procedures of the United Free Church of Scotland*. My italics.

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Book and Articles as being essential to Anglican identity. Yet caution must be advised. If the existence of the English Reformation was contentious, and Anglo-Catholic claims found insupportable, then we should also be slow to accept other assertions of Anglican credentials which cast the Reformation in any particular contemporary image. This raises the question: would we recognise the English Reformation if it walked up to us in the street?

John Henry Newman happened to be right when he labelled the Church of England a ‘Reformed’ church rather than a ‘Protestant’ church, but he meant something different. As I have begun to suggest, its Reformed identity received its definition from the theology of the Swiss Reformation, not as an alternative to the Catholic reforms of the Council of Trent. Understanding what that means gives us a right sense of the Church of England’s foundational character. Perhaps we are familiar with the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, the Congregation of Pastors, and the Genevan Academy. Quite possibly we talk about Reformed theology interchangeably with Calvinism, and measure its practitioners by the standards of ‘TULIP’. In order to avoid anachronism, we need to appreciate that an authentically Reformed church in the sixteenth century might not, in fact, look like Calvin’s Geneva at all.

We have already seen the priority assigned to decency and good order in the case of John Hooper and vestments. Obedience to authority was a religious obligation. Witness the extraordinarily ham-fisted bid to alter the succession to Jane Grey in 1553. Cranmer had every reason to want to avoid a Catholic monarch, yet he advised his godson against diverting the succession away from Mary. It was only out of obedience to Edward that he consented. Cranmer was not launching a pre-emptive strike. It was simply submission to his dying prince that took precedence over submission to the will of a prince already dead. Yet once the scheme unravelled, we find even Bishop Hooper proactive in proclaiming Mary as Queen and sending troops to her aid. One thing Hooper should have learnt from his time in Zürich was the authority of the magistrate to decide matters ecclesiastical.

This obviously does not mean that loyal Englishmen refrained from making their views known, but there were more and less acceptable ways of doing so. On Christmas Eve 1545 Henry VIII famously addressed the closing ceremony of Parliament. He took the opportunity to rebuke both wings of religious opinion, condemning the absence between them of that most excellent gift of charity: ‘the one calleth the other Heretic and Anabaptist, and he calleth him again, Papist, Hypocrite and Pharisee.’<sup>11</sup> Henry was effectively knocking heads together and asking his subjects to

11 Quoted in Peter Marshall, ‘Mumpsimus and Sumpsimus: The Intellectual Origins of a Henrician Bon Mot,’ *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 52/3 (2001), p.512.

play nicely. Good order was, for him and his successors, a pearl of great price. As is so often the case, the burden of leadership is to take a wider view. National stability depended on ensuring that no one ran too far ahead and no one lagged too far behind. Unless someone really were a Papist or an Anabaptist, it was the agitators themselves who were guilty of rocking the boat.

Had the authorities conceded Hooper's proto-Puritan way of thinking the Church of England might have been easier for us to recognise as a Reformed ecclesiastical polity. The striking thing is that reformer after reformer sided against him. When it came to externals Bucer said each Church was fully empowered by God to judge what was most conducive to sustain and increase popular reverence for sacred things.<sup>12</sup> Calvin told Hooper not to contend too far. Bullinger thought he ought to trust less in himself and more in God. Peter Martyr warned that if Evangelicals contend for adiaphora 'more bitterly than we ought, this may be a hindrance to the advancement of the Gospel.'<sup>13</sup> Every one of these luminaries favoured further reform, but not one of them at the price of disorder.

In the last twenty years historians have come to understand better the nature of the sixteenth-century Reformed tradition. From the 1950s there was a misguided belief that Geneva set the norm and that Zürich represented a separate theological track. Geneva against the Zürichers, like the conceit 'Calvin against the Calvinists', implied a subjective judgment against the theological emphases of Heinrich Bullinger, which allegedly compromised the gracious nature of salvation. More recently it has been recognised that one unified Reformed tradition accommodated theological diversity.<sup>14</sup> Rather than being drawn into that debate, suffice it to say that the Reformed ecclesiastical polity was authentically represented both by Geneva and by Zürich, and that the Church of England as it was settled under Elizabeth could make an equally plausible claim to being Reformed.

No one could epitomise the break with Rome in their own person so well as Elizabeth I, the child of the Royal Supremacy. Sir John Neale unhelpfully obscured the true nature of the Elizabethan Settlement by suggesting that she was a religious conservative and would have restored her father's religion had her designs not been thwarted by Puritans in Parliament. The fact that the queen liked a crucifix in her chapel and objected to her clergy being married hardly amounts to a betrayal of

12 George Gorham (ed.), *Gleanings of a few Scattered Ears, During the Period of the Reformation in England* (1857), p.205.

13 *Ibid.*, p.189.

14 See Richard Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford 2000) and Richard Muller, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford 2003).

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Reformed faith however, and later studies have demonstrated beyond doubt that Elizabeth got exactly the religious settlement she hoped for. What this meant was a restoration of her brother’s Church as it had been in 1552. In noticing continuities between Edward and Elizabeth we might reflect that they not only shared the same father but the same godfather as well. The Articles and Prayer Book were brought back. The only changes were to allow the ornaments and vesture of 1549 and to amalgamate the words of institution with the aim of uniting the widest section of Protestant opinion possible. ‘The body of our Lord Jesus Christ given for thee’ was not intended to contradict ‘feed on Him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving.’ Rather the dual formula acknowledged the true range of Reformed sacramental symbolism. It was quite possible and legitimate for Reformed theologians like Bullinger and Calvin to use language which, out of context, sounds physical and corporeal, but is in fact indicative of the power of symbolism. The idea that Zwingli taught ‘mere memorialism’ has done us a great disservice when we try to appreciate the true depth of Reformed sacramental theology.

If we enquire as to the inspiration for 1559 then the answer is the same as that of 1552: the Reformed religion of Strassburg and Zürich. Elizabeth gathered to herself advisors whose Protestant formation had occurred under Edward VI. These men were pragmatists who understood that good government required obedience.<sup>15</sup> They were idealists steeped in Christian humanism. They were the sort who came together in Cambridge common rooms and believed the country should be reformed gradually, by gentlemen, calmly conversing together. It was men like these who decided what the English Reformation would look like. What is more, these men had remained in England throughout the Marian persecution. By contrast the exiles returning from Geneva wanted rapid and comprehensive change immediately. They had gazed with their own eyes on Calvin’s little republic—and they had seen it sufficiently late in its development not to appreciate the long and difficult journey Calvin had trodden in producing such a paragon.<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth and her councillors wanted a Reformed settlement, but not Reformed to the extreme.

The Zürich connection makes it untenable to pit conformist Elizabethans against Puritans. Nonconformity only has an exclusive claim to Reformation if we concede the view that authentic reform must mean going as far as one can go (which of course is not the same as *semper Reformanda*—a phrase which no one at the time used). In reality the establishment itself was moderately Puritan.<sup>17</sup> Plenty of Puritans wanted further reformation and yet conformed to the decisions of those

15 See T. E. Hartley (ed.), *Proceedings in the Parliaments of Queen Elizabeth I: 1558-1581* (1981), p.51.

16 See William Naphy, *Calvin and the Consolidation of the Genevan Reformation* (1994).

17 See Judith Maltby, *Prayer Book and People in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England* (Cambridge 1998).

in authority; some of them even held high office within the Church. Only a minority, albeit a disproportionately vocal minority, spent their energies demanding disciplinary reform and Presbyterian governance. An even smaller number felt compelled to separate from the Church altogether. We now see that the vast majority of Elizabethan ecclesiastics were theologically Reformed. This ‘Calvinist consensus’, loosely-termed, places the sniping of radical Puritans in a different light.

Take preaching for example. The authorities were repeatedly criticised for not doing enough to support godly preachers, and even for hindering them; many ministers were unfit to preach and so read out the official Homilies instead. Thomas Cartwright, a Presbyterian, argued that ‘the bare reading of the scriptures without the preaching cannot deliver so much as one poor sheep from destruction and from the wolf.’<sup>18</sup> We might wonder what he made of Augustine or Luther’s conversions reading the Bible in private; yet complaints ignored the bigger picture. Archbishop Whitgift was clearly frustrated in his retort, ‘I wish that every minister were a preacher; but, that being impossible as the state is now, I see not how you can condemn reading ministers, seeing reading is necessary in the Church, and faith cometh as well by reading the scriptures in the book, as by rehearsing of them without book.’<sup>19</sup> In spite of official efforts, a severe shortage of clergy meant that bishops were forced to ordain men who were literate yet uneducated. They could read, mark and learn, but they were not competent to help the congregation inwardly digest. A diocese was doing well if one in three clergy were graduates eligible for a licence. Only seven per cent of parishes could afford to pay a learned preacher, and parts of the West Country were fifty years behind East Anglia in recruiting.<sup>20</sup> It is true that the Crown did not take a lead, but then the authorities knew themselves to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that they were understandably nervous of the dissent that could be stirred up from the pulpit. In 1558 all preaching was banned to silence Catholic priests until Elizabeth had established herself. Catholicism remained a real threat throughout her reign, and the suppression of Zürich-style preaching groups in 1577 sprang from the Queen’s fear of unregulated gatherings. It did not help that the Puritans branded these workshops ‘Prophesyings’, which sounded difficult to control. Richard Bancroft used a musical analogy to warn that separatists ‘resembled one and the same lute string’ as nonconformist Puritans, just ‘set up a note or two higher.’<sup>21</sup> Back in the 1530s William Tyndale had

18 J. Ayre (ed.), *The Works of John Whitgift, D.D.*, 3 vols. (Parker Society; Cambridge 1851-53), iii/475.

19 *Ibid.*, i/539.

20 Patrick Collinson, ‘The Elizabethan Church and the New Religion,’ in C. Haigh (ed.), *The Reign of Elizabeth I* (1984), pp.186-87.

21 Quoted in Patrick Collinson, *Richard Bancroft and Elizabethan Anti-Puritanism* (Cambridge 2013), p.30.



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been prepared to give up his writing if only the king would allow the Bible in English. In a similar fashion, the Elizabethan authorities trusted (almost naively) in the power of God’s Word to keep the Church in true religion while they concentrated on keeping the peace.

It is easy to problematise the nature of the English Reformation by focusing on residual Catholicism or thinking in terms of a ‘Long Reformation’ carrying on a further century. Yet in its narrower—and perhaps more obvious—sense, the English Reformation was defined before 1603. We need only observe that, remarkably for a Tudor, the Elizabethan Settlement outlived Elizabeth. When James I came to the throne there was no drastic change of national religion as there had been at every other succession since the break with Rome. When we focus on the phenomena that have come to be understood as the English Reformation, two characteristics consistently emerge which help us to establish its essential identity. Firstly, the English Reformation as it happened was determined by the Royal Supremacy. Whether the Crown seemed revolutionary or reactionary, it always had an eye to good order and decency. There was nothing wrong with private opinion provided that no one pursued their own individual interpretations of the faith in such a way as to prejudice godly people against what was ordered by royal governance. Secondly, the English Reformation which emerged had as its inspiration the Reformed theology of Zürich. Were we determined to explain this as a *via media* then Zürich does lie somewhere in between Geneva and Wittenberg geographically, but far from a compromise, to the architects of the Church of England, this was the theological position they preferred. When they surveyed all the options, this one came top of their list and they were not ashamed to defend it.

Supposing we are now in a better position to recognise the English Reformation should it approach us in the street, perhaps we can also assess with more accuracy contemporary claims about the Church of England’s identity and what it means to build upon the foundations of Anglican theology and praxis. Our final question is not usually permitted to the historian, but to affirm in good faith that ‘I believe in the English Reformation,’ we must form an opinion on whether the English Reformation was a ‘good thing’. We might not know the historical details any more than we can explain Nicene Christology, but if we think the English Reformation is something we wish to learn from and in which we have confidence—as we might say to a friend, ‘I believe in you’—then we want to know whether, like a hot bath, it will do us good. If this seems overly subjective, we may at least agree that peace and concord is generally a good thing and that civil war is usually a bad thing. Even in the sixteenth century many people were nervous about killing your neighbour for the things he believed.

One might feel a conclusive answer has already been given by Sellars and Yeatman in their satire 1066 *And All That*: 'Henry wanted the Pope to give him a divorce from his first wife, Katherine. He wanted this because (a) she was Arrogant. (b.) he had married her a very long time ago. (c) when she had a baby it turned out to be Broody Mary, and Henry wanted a boy. (d) he thought it would be a Good Thing. The Pope, however, refused, and seceded with all his followers from the Church of England. This was called the Restoration.'<sup>22</sup>

For forty years Elizabeth presided over a Church which many Puritans considered in need of further reformation. Another forty years on and the tune had changed. Although some still clamoured for the 'root and branch' abolition of episcopacy, others petitioned for restoration of what they called the 'pure religion of Elizabeth and James.'<sup>23</sup> In retrospect, on the verge of Civil War, many people were able to acknowledge that the English Reformation had been a 'good thing' after all. Historians used to talk about the 'Puritan Revolution' as if radicals were seizing an opportunity to overthrow the 'Anglican' regime. It is now possible to detect a conservative reaction in defence of the Elizabethan Settlement, which, in spite of naysayers, had worked remarkably well. Elizabeth I and James I succeeded in holding the Church of England together for three generations, but under Charles I it fell apart. What was their secret?

The answer is Reformed theology and Royal Supremacy. At the beginning of the seventeenth century there was consensus among the clergy on the essential points of Reformed theology. James was prepared to tolerate a diversity of private opinion on secondary matters provided that churchmen upheld this basic foundation of essential doctrine. Those within the Church who were sceptical about predestination, known as Arminians or, more correctly, Anti-Calvinists, were required to keep their views to themselves.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, James maintained the Elizabethan emphasis on subscription to the Articles and Prayer Book. Catholics were a problem less for their theological beliefs as for their allegiance to the Bishop of Rome, which amounted to disloyalty and treason. James strongly emphasised the connection between regal and episcopal authority. His famous dictum 'no bishop, no king' warned Puritans not to go too far in their criticism lest it should detract from his authority. He insisted on them signing-up to the official church order but was prepared to overlook *de facto* nonconformity. Thus James maintained unity

22 W. C. Sellars and R. J. Yeatman, *1066 And All That: A Memorable History of England* [1930] (The Folio Society, 1990), p.55.

23 My italics. See Maltby, *Prayer Book*, 83ff.

24 See the useful collection of essays in Nicholas Tyacke, *Aspects of English Protestantism c.1530-1700* (Manchester 2001).

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by conciliation and moderation towards anyone who would accept these minimum standards. No one faction, be they moderate Puritan or Catholic sympathiser, Calvinist or Anti-Calvinist, was allowed to un-Church another.<sup>25</sup>

The achievement of the English Reformation, then, was Reformed, Catholic unity. It might not have lasted very long, but there was something about the way Elizabeth and James exercised their authority which, to a remarkable degree, held the Church together. Partly it was their refusal to police private consciences. As Francis Bacon famously suggested, the queen would not make windows into men's souls. When the bishops' visitors called on parishes to check that they were conforming to the rules, they rarely enquired as to the *reasons* for nonconformity. At the same time, they knew perfectly well that without royal authority each man would follow the devices and desires of his own heart. The execution of the king in 1649 opened a Pandora's Box of fissiparous Protestant sects.

Charles I lost control because he abandoned a policy which worked. Everyone knows 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it,' yet Charles was determined to resettle English religion. He was clearly biased in favour of Anti-Calvinist clergy, thereby upsetting the balance and alienating both moderate Puritans and the middle ground. Not only Puritan practices but doctrinal Calvinism in general began to be treated as unorthodox, and so Charles' credibility as a defender of the Reformed faith disintegrated. He placed restrictions on preaching and, with Archbishop William Laud, ritualised the liturgy, bowing to altars and praying for saints. This emphasis on sacramental ministry was a sharp and shocking break with the past. In the words of John Morrill, 'it is almost impossible to overestimate the damage caused by the Laudians....The programme of Charles and Laud was profoundly offensive to most lay and much clerical opinion.' The rich piety which had grown up around the Prayer Book over seventy years came under fire from their narrow, ultra-conservative interpretation of what was permitted. Laud's attempt to wrap himself in the flag of the English Reformation convinced almost no one.<sup>26</sup>

Lest Laud should seem to be too much the scapegoat, the Puritans ought to carry their fair share of the blame for unravelling the English Reformation. In several respects Puritanism had an image problem which could be exploited. First of all, the Puritan emphasis on preaching at the expense of public prayer exposed their interpretation of the Elizabethan Settlement to criticism. Before the Reformation Catholic laity had stood around while the priest said Mass; after the Reformation Puritan laity

25 An essential introduction to the period remains Kenneth Fincham (ed.), *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642* (1993).

26 John Morrill, 'The Religious Context of the English Civil War,' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 34 (1984), pp.162-3.

sat around while the preacher sermonised. One might be forgiven for feeling that all the laity had to do was turn up. The Puritans could be accused of diminishing the mystery of faith. Charles found Laud's emphasis on the beauty of holiness appealing. His Prayer Book piety gave the people something to do, and cultivated a sense of wonder.

Secondly, more hard-line Puritans increasingly tried to distinguish between people who were elect and people who were damned. This did not endear them to anyone who was deemed to stand outside God's Covenant of Grace. They became more confident that the so-called 'Godly' could be identified and that they ought to separate themselves as a distinct community. This contributed to the utopian hopes of many of those who journeyed over the sea to start society afresh in the New World. By contrast, a less precisionist approach to Prayer Book religion was accessible to a much wider section of society, irrespective of their progress in cultivating a healthy personal spirituality. This was a good thing for the authorities.

These are relatively minor points. Much more important is the way Puritans shot themselves in the foot by failing to appreciate that patience is a virtue. Contending more bitterly than they needed to, they jeopardised the advance of the Gospel. It is ironic that nonconformity and the demand for further reform helped to tip the balance in precisely the opposite direction. If Puritans had been impeccable in their submission to royal authority and trusted that the king would fulfil their desires as may have been most expedient for them, it would have been much more difficult for Charles—and well-nigh impossible for James—to suspect their obedience to the Crown. As it happened, Anti-Calvinists were able to use nonconformity as leverage against Calvinism in general. The achievement of the English Reformation collapsed because its two key features, Reformed theology and Royal Supremacy, were made to contradict one another. It is an overstatement—but not a big one—to say that the Puritans unwittingly knifed the Reformation in the back.

Whatever shortcomings we see in the English Reformation, however many people abandoned the old faith and yet failed to embrace the new, there is something to be admired in what it did achieve. If we cast our eyes over England's rulers in the long century from the break with Rome to the Civil War, we might view them as three pairs. To begin and end we see Henry VIII and Charles I, the king who became Supreme Head and the king who lost his head. Both threw their weight around in the Church in a way that made them look like tyrants. Neither of them built theological consensus; instead they rode roughshod even over loyal subjects to impose their personal religious preferences. In the middle were Edward and Mary. Both their reigns were short and both were unsettling. Edward had little opportunity to prove himself and Mary had

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little opportunity to redeem her reputation. Then we see Elizabeth and James who, by and large, judged England aright. The 'Virgin Queen' and 'Rex Pacificus' lived up to their titles in the relatively benign manner in which they exercised Royal Supremacy and built consensus around the Reformed faith. Theirs was the Reformation that saw the light and had a chance to prove its worth.

We know that in the sixteenth-century sense of the word Thomas Cranmer was no saint, nor did he wish to be regarded as such. He might more readily concede himself a place in the ranks of the noble army of martyrs. A commemoration lecture rightly acknowledges (and celebrates) the extent of his legacy. Most expansively we see it in his liturgy, used around the world; but as a figure in history his greatest achievement, for those who knew him, was the 'pure religion of Elizabeth and James.' Without Cranmer, Reformed theology would never have been expressed with such order and decency as it was in those days. It was his brand of Evangelical conviction—gracious, godly and Christ-centred, without being overly precise—that appealed to the architects of the Elizabethan Settlement, and which he preserved in the Prayer Book for them and for all generations. He was not looking to add to the Creed, to constrain believers further than the plain teaching of Scripture required. Yet this charismatic individual clearly did expect the Church of England to have a Creed, and assumed that all who were admitted to the fellowship of Christ's religion would eschew those things that are contrary to their profession. These matters must be pondered, each in his own heart. I trust that, on the present subject however, there will be no hesitation: with more or less conviction and in whatever manner we may wish to affirm it, it is very difficult not to believe in the English Reformation.

*(The Revd Dr Robert Wainwright is Chaplain and Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford. This article is derived from a lecture given for the commemoration of Thomas Cranmer, 21 March 2019)*

# John Mason Neale: Hymnologist

ROGER HOMAN

## 1 Context

The English Reformation took its toll of a rich legacy of devotional texts, of the hymnody of the ancient Church, of the close connection of the faithful to the created world, of the rhythms of life measured in the times of the day and seasons of the year and of the gestures and physical setting of devotion that secured (ideally) reverence and dignity in the houses of prayer. These were the elements of a unifying behavioural creed, one aspect of which was that worship was carried by a standard text without intrusion or variation of a human minister. The Prayer Book did much to salvage these treasures. A latent function of the wearing of vestments or habits, abetted by the eastward posture of the celebrant, was to restrain the intrusion of the personality of the officiant. The choreography of worship is nowadays often announced by the celebrant whose role thereby becomes that of manager, but in the Prayer Book stage directions are controlled by the text and are thus extrinsic to local dynamics: 'make your humble confession to Almighty God meekly kneeling upon your knees'.

The festivals of major saints and martyrdoms were documented only where there was a narrative in Scripture. The connection with the created world, its beauty and its vicissitudes, was rehabilitated by the redoubtable and deeply spiritual Hawker of Morwenstowe in 1843: reviving ancient customs, he composed a distinctly Christian Harvest Festival service that has endured in the English Church.

Meanwhile, Hawker's fellow Tractarian John Mason Neale was to introduce and resource with his own writings a carol service for Christmas.

The inheritance of hymns had been virtually suspended as the language of worship switched to the vernacular. Cranmer was less averse than Henry VIII to hymn singing and yet only one hymn, *Veni Creator Spiritus*, survived in the Prayer Book.

## 2 Early life

John Mason Neale (1818-1866) is the most prolific contributor to Anglican Hymnody. His parents were intellectually inclined and his

father Cornelius, who died in Neale's childhood, was an Evangelical clergyman in London.

Neale was educated at Sherborne School and Trinity College Cambridge, where he was regarded as the most outstanding Classics student in his year. Nevertheless he could not secure an honours degree as he was let down by his Mathematics. And his doctorate was not awarded in England but by Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut.

However, he achieved distinction in his day as a suspected subversionist of the Anglican Church and after ordination the bishops of Winchester and Chichester declined to let him practise.

In his recovery of ancient and medieval hymns, in his foundation of an Anglican order of nuns and in his involvement in Cambridge with the Ecclesiologists on the ordering and furnishing of church buildings he was in close alignment with the contemporary movement in Oxford. His advanced priestly ministry was prohibited by his diocesan bishops but he is nowadays honoured in the Anglican calendar on 7 August.

Ill health dogged him throughout his short life, and his ministry as a priest was inhibited by his bishops. But he has emerged from history with more honour than he enjoyed in his own time.

Together with Benjamin Webb, a fellow undergraduate at Trinity, Neale founded in 1839 the Cambridge Camden Society which later moved to London and became the Ecclesiological Society. They were both committed to revival in the Church and were in sympathy with the principles of the Oxford Movement. But whereas the Tractarians dwelt in theology and history, Neale and Webb addressed themselves and the Society to the development and regulation of an aesthetic sense in the environment and conduct of worship.

Emerging from the double adversity of ill health and episcopal inhibition, Neale proved himself a responsible Christian steward of his own time on earth. His enduring legacies survive as an ordered ministry to the poor and as a valued and celebrated contributor to the English hymnals.

The 1875 edition of *Hymns Ancient and Modern* contains fifty-eight of Neale's hymns and the 1906 edition of the *English Hymnal* has sixty-three of his translations and six originals.

### 3 Scholarship

Neale brought to the cause a Classics background and a facility in Latin, Greek and others of the twenty or so languages in which he is said to have worked. There are three principles affecting his selection of ancient texts: he seeks to introduce hymns to support the daily offices, he recovers the moods of the seasons and he looks for devotional texts to address the sacraments and supply the hours of the day, to chime with

the rhythm of times and seasons set out in Keble's *The Christian Year* first published in 1827.

On behalf of the contemporary movement in Oxford John Keble endorsed the discipline of the Book of Common Prayer and wrote many prayerful compositions appropriate to the offices of Morning and Evening Prayer, such as 'New every morning is the light'.

The Prayer Book collects for morning and evening register respectively the sense of relief for safekeeping through the previous night and the hazard of perils and dangers in that which is to follow. There are echoes here of the sense of being beset by the nocturnal gremlins that lurk in our medieval churches in the medium of Anglo-Saxon sculpture and Romanesque frescoes. By contrast, the ancient hymns which Neale chooses mark daylight and darkness as distinct moral and spiritual phases of the interior life. For the morning he translates 'Thou hallowed chosen morn of praise' from St John of Damascus in the eighth century. From St Ambrose he provides 'Now that the daylight fills the sky', and from St Gregory he draws 'O blest Creator of the light', while 'Stars of the morning, so gloriously bright' is by St Joseph the Hymnographer in the ninth century.

For the evening, Neale introduces a seventh century hymn of unknown authorship, 'The day is past and over'. His vividly phrased and much favoured translation of the Compline hymn by St Ambrose *Tē lucis ante terminum* deploys a word that was irregular in its day but has now come into its own, pollution:

*From all ill dreams defend our eyes,  
from nightly fears and fantasies:  
tread under foot our ghostly foe,  
that no pollution we may know.*

The riches that Neale introduced to the seasons of the Church's year have in many cases become standards. For Advent he developed the twelfth century Latin antiphon as the hymn 'O come, O come, Emmanuel'. At Christmas he brings 'Of the Father's love begotten' and 'A great and mighty wonder' from St Germanus in the eighth century. Together with Thomas Helmore Neale published *Carols for Christmas-tide* in 1853 and drew from the fourteenth century German mystic Heinrich Suso 'Good Christian men rejoice'. Suso was a Dominican monk and there is a story, somehow rendered plausible by the associated melody *In dulci jubilo*, that he received the words in a visitation by angels and entered with them into their dance.

On the basis of a traditional German legend Neale wrote as a ballad for 26 December the verses that are widely sung as a Christmas carol.



'Good King Wenceslas' picks up the seasonal theme of care of the poor, for whom Neale developed a special concern during the earliest days of his ministry.

His translation of the Palm Sunday hymn written by Theodulf of Orleans in c.820, 'All glory laud and honour' brings with it the habit of public procession which today is, weather permitting, widely undertaken as a witness in the English churches. Where practised the ceremonies of Maundy Thursday, including the stripping of the altar and vigil are accompanied by the lines of Thomas Aquinas, translated by Neale, 'Of the glorious body telling'.

The rituals are coupled with the hymns of the early Church, as again on Easter day with the acclamation from the Syrian church, 'The day of Resurrection' by St John of Damascus.

As well as finding a focus for each of the daily offices and an enrichment of the liturgical seasons, Neale brings into the English language a number of hymns that are distinctly more sacramental than those of familiar collections. Several of these were favoured by the compilers of the *English Hymnal*. For example he translated from Latin the seventh century hymn 'Draw nigh and take the Body of the Lord'.

Some of these hymns introduced into English by Neale have at times a didactic force and a capacity for contemplation that are not often to be found in the hymns of subsequent centuries.. For example, Neale makes no intellectual concessions to those who sing Aquinas' hymn that is now standard on Maundy Thursday:

*Therefore we, before him bending,  
This great sacrament revere;  
Types and shadows have their ending,  
For the newer rite is here;  
Faith, our outward sense befriending,  
Makes the inward vision clear.*

But theological gravity is complemented by an aesthetic sense elsewhere. The sensual experience of the sunrise which is so widely appreciated in new-age spirituality but is barely featured in mainstream modern liturgies is recovered by Neale in his provisions for the morning offices,

The continuity which Neale secures in drawing from ancient sources is not merely a western witness (Bernard of Cluny, Peter Abelard, Thomas à Kempis) but that of the African church, of the Syrian (St John of Damascus), of the eastern or Byzantine (St Anatolius of Constantinople) and of the Greek (St Andrew of Crete). Newman recognized that a distinctive property of the Anglican Church was its foundation in primitive Christianity. Keble urged it to reconnect with its ancient and

medieval inheritance. And Neale had the linguistic skills to achieve this. He had a clear vision of the need and potential benefit of his translations for the English Church.

In celebrating the seasons the hymns are expressive of a triumph not only in the Gospel narrative but in overcoming the earlier centuries of persecution and insecurity for the Christian faithful. There is an inescapably defiant tone in addressing the pagan world around the Christian community: to sing the words of St John of Damascus is to rejoice with a community that has come a long way—'The Day of Resurrection /Earth tell it out abroad'. The confident claim to the great truths of the Christian faith is made corporately and against a background of cultural adversity.

Several of these ancient affirmations have found their place in the mainstream of English hymnody:

'Christ is made the sure foundation' (6th or 7th century)  
'Sing my tongue the glorious battle'  
'The Royal banners forward go'.

If there is any aspect of Neale's contributions that does not well serve Anglican piety it is the virtual absence of the first person singular: the relationship with God and the spiritual pilgrimage of the individual are seldom voiced. This dimension of faith registers in the hymnals in the form of translations of the Psalms by George Herbert and others such as Joseph Addison:

'The Lord my pasture shall prepare  
And feed me with a shepherd's care'

And the relationship of the individual had, of course, been often explored and famously expressed in the 6,500 hymns written by Charles Wesley:

'Jesu lover of my soul,  
Let me to thy bosom fly'  
'O for a thousand tongues to sing  
My great Redeemer's praise'

#### **4 Priesthood**

Neale was ordained in 1842. He sought to enter parish life at St Nicolas Guildford but the Evangelical bishop Charles Sumner of Winchester declined to license him on account of his association with the Camden Society.

But he suffered ill health throughout his short life. A recurrent lung disease compelled him after only six weeks to resign the living of Crawley in Sussex to which he had been presented.

The Ecclesiologists' principles of decency and order did not prevail in the parish to which he came where he was alarmed to find the churchwarden's gloves and umbrella on the altar while the churchwarden stood on it to open the window.

He was compelled to seek a more congenial climate and spent three years in Madeira occupied in the habit of scholarship which endured in his subsequent ministry. He translated the eastern liturgies into English and wrote a devotional commentary on the Psalms. In 1847 he published his celebrated *A History of the Holy Eastern Church*.

In 1846 he had accepted the wardenship of Sackville College, a residence for the poor in East Grinstead. Here he assayed to improve the physical arrangements with furnishings as modest as a Cross on the altar. But the bishop of Chichester, Ashurst Gilbert, a 'high churchman' who resisted Catholic practice, had forbidden him to preach in the diocese and condemned his furnishings as 'frippery' and 'spiritual haberdashery'. Neale challenged his inhibition on the grounds that Sackville College was outside the parish system but he lost in court.

He was moved by what he saw of the condition of the poor and destitute in the villages around. His was a modest situation affording Neale only twenty-seven pounds per annum. He remained in that ministry until his death.

In 1854 he co-founded an Anglican order of nuns, the Society of St Margaret with the principal mission to nurse the poor. Only nine years previously John Henry Newman had converted to the Roman church and the foundation of the Sisterhood attracted to Neale the suspicion and spotlight that Newman had endured.

Its first mission was to nurse the poor. The Society was occupied through cholera epidemics in the east of London and established a priory in Hackney, and in the 1870s it established a hospital in Queen's Square in Bloomsbury and a school of ecclesiastical embroidery. Since Neale's death the Order has had no single superior but has been constituted of autonomous houses. Although the convent at East Grinstead closed in 2015 the Order remains active in England, the United States, Haiti and Sri Lanka.

It will be seen why Neale was regarded in his time as following the way of John Newman who had declared loyalty to the Anglican church but then had converted to Rome. Orders of nuns were not known within the English church, least of all by the Protestant vigilantes of Lewes in the mid-nineteenth century.

Early in the history of the Sisterhood one of the nuns, Sister Amy, died aged thirty of scarlet fever. As Emily Scobell she was the daughter

of the rector of All Saints Lewes, in the churchyard of which she was to be buried. The coffin was brought by train on 17 November 1857 and Neale led the procession to the church along with eight nuns in grey and black habits.

Bonfire night has long had a high profile in the county town of Lewes which was the scene of seventeen martyrdoms in the reign of Queen Mary. The excitable month of November was not a good time to process through Lewes in monastic habits and they were obstructed by a crowd of hundreds that lay in wait at the station. In the mêlée that followed habits were torn and the nuns were separated from each other, four of them with Neale being carried by the crowd to the King's Head in Priory Street where the police formed a protective cordon. Some Lewes protesters forced their way into the pub and were placated by Neale's purchase of a round of drinks. He escaped over a nine foot wall at the back of the building and ran to the station to catch the 7.04 train.

He was spotted again the following day when he returned to visit the vault: this time he took refuge in the White Hart. And when bonfire night came round in 1858 the Cliffe Bonfire Society paraded a seven-foot effigy of Neale.

At this time Neale's youngest sibling Elizabeth, the daughter of a Calvinist minister, had been running an orphanage in the parish of St Paul Brighton. She accepted an invitation to carry the work to the docks at Wapping and there in 1857 founded the Community of the Holy Cross which later moved to the convent at Haywards Heath. In due course it was ordered on Benedictine lines and since 2011 has been based in a purpose-built convent at Costock in Nottinghamshire.

## 5 A word from Neale

In 1849 he wrote in *The Christian Remembrancer*, a quarterly review with Tractarian sympathies to which a number of the Cambridge Ecclesiologists contributed:

Among the most pressing of the inconveniences consequent on the Adoption of the vernacular language in the office-books of the Reformation, must be reckoned the immediate disuse of all the hymns of the Western Church. That treasury, into which the saints of every age and country had poured their contributions, delighting, each in his generation, to express their hopes and fears, their joys and sorrows, in language which would be the heritage of their Holy Mother until the end of time those noble hymns—which had solaced anghorets on their mountains, monks in their cells, priests in bearing up against the burden and heat of the day, missionaries in girding themselves for martyrdom—henceforth became as a sealed book and as a dead

letter. The prayers and collects, the versicles and responses, of the earlier Church might, without any great loss of beauty, be preserved; but the hymns, whether of the sevenfold daily office, of the weekly commemoration of creation and redemption, of the yearly revolution of the Church's seasons, or of the birthdays to glory of martyrs and confessors—those hymns by which day unto day had uttered speech, and night unto night had taught knowledge could not, by the hands then employed in ecclesiastical matters, be rendered into another, and that a then comparatively barbarous, tongue.

One attempt the Reformers made—the version of the *Veni Creator Spiritus* in the Ordinal; and that, so far perhaps fortunately, was the only one. Cranmer, indeed, expressed some casual hope that men fit for the office might be induced to come forward; but the very idea of a hymnology of the time of Henry VIII may make us feel thankful that the prelate's wishes were not carried out.

The Church of England had, then, to wait. She had, as it has well been said, to begin over again. There might arise saints within herself, who, one by one, should enrich her with hymns in her own language; there might arise poets, who should be capable of supplying her office-books with versions of the hymns of earlier times. In the meantime the psalms were her own; and grievous as was the loss she had sustained, she might be content to suffice herself with those, and expect in patience the rest.<sup>1</sup>

( Professor Roger Homan is a Vice President of the Prayer Book Society.)

<sup>1</sup> J M Neale, 'English Hymnology: Its History and Prospects', in the periodical *The Christian Remembrancer*, 1849.

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