
‘Anglicanism’ and the Origins of the Church of England

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This article aims to provide an introductory historical sketch of the origins of the Church of England as a background for canon law in the present-day Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church. Written by a specialist for non-specialists, it summarises the widely held view among ecclesiastical historians that if the Church of England could ever be said to have had a ‘normative’ period, it is not to be found in its formative years in the middle decades of the sixteenth century, and that, in particular, the origins of the Church of England and of what we now call ‘Anglicanism’ are not the same thing.

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INTRODUCTION

There exists a very large gap institutionally and culturally between the infant Church of England under Henry VIII and the modern worldwide ‘Anglican Communion’. The best research by ecclesiastical historians over the last twenty years has pointed out how the term ‘Anglicanism’ itself is, when discussing the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, actually an anachronism; that is, that ‘Anglicanism’ was not a term used until the eighteenth and especially nineteenth centuries, when it was used uncritically to project the historically inaccurate view that the Church of England was from its very beginnings a unique and stable ideal of moderation between the extremes of Geneva and Rome – somehow simultaneously, and happily, both ‘Reformed’ and ‘Catholic’, and always at unity with itself.² As with all generalisations, some of this is in some senses true, but the first hundred years of the Church of England’s history, from Henry VIII’s break with Rome to the English civil wars of the 1640s, is a story of something that was inconsistent, ill-defined and highly contested. This can be best seen (or at least I see it most clearly) by surveying the

1 This article was written for presentation at the ‘Comunione Anglicana e Chiesa Cattolica tra Passato e Presente’ conference convened by members of the Faculties of Law at the Universities of Palermo and Milan in Agrigento, Sicily, in May 2014.

2 See P Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterianism and conformist thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (London, 1988), pp 4–6, 159–160; P Lake and M Questier, ‘Introduction’, and N Tyacke, ‘Lancelot Andrewes and the myth of Anglicanism’, in P Lake and M Questier (eds), *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c. 1560–1660* (Woodbridge, 2000), pp ix–xx and 5–33.

origins of its liturgical formularies and use of the Bible, which are not as simple as nineteenth-century and later 'Anglicans' might have assumed.

THE BIBLE IN THE REFORMATION

The origins of the Church of England's *praxis* – that is, its religious culture – pertained more to texts than laws. This is a point perhaps best understood in the light of the coincidence of the English Reformation with the height of European humanist scholarship, which, as we can see in the case of Erasmus, had reforming tendencies at its heart even for Roman Catholics; for it was in humanism first, not in Protestantism, that we find a deep engagement across the Christian West with new trends in textual scholarship that were being used to show that many textual authorities, not least the Vulgate, had been corrupted by centuries of accumulated human errors. At the heart of humanist scholarship was the ideal of achieving textual purity – whether in a text by Cicero or the Bible itself – by pursuing the view that the most reliable text was that version committed to paper closest in time to that of the author, and that subsequent later copies often contained layer upon layer of errors or additions that had crept in either by mistake or deliberately.

The problem or (depending on your religious views) the success of this scholarly revolution was that it could be applied to things other than texts, such as whole institutions, including the Church. So, when Henry VIII made the fateful decision to invite Oxford and Cambridge academics to argue the case for his divorce from Catherine of Aragon, he was inviting comment from many who were at exactly the same time becoming emboldened by Luther's calls to return the Church to its original sources – something that Luther had summed up in his famous Latin tags, *sola scriptura* ('by Scripture alone') and *sola fide* ('by faith alone'). With the excuse of the divorce and a possible break with Rome, many leading English academics, clergy and prelates applied to the Church itself the humanist ideal of returning *ad fontem*, on the grounds that the Church, like any important text, needed 'editing' – that the accretions of time needed to be pared away to return to the pure, ideal 'base text' of the primitive Christianity. In this process of church-editing, in the Reformers' view the only reliable text against which the late mediaeval Church could be measured for purity was the Bible, and in particular the New Testament, since it alone contained clear commandment and example of those things instituted by Christ and his Apostles. And thus, in a crucial shift away from one and a half millennia of Christian thought and practice, the Bible, literally interpreted, was held to be not only antecedent to the Church and its traditions but also superior to them in all matters of faith and practice.

It was the authority of the Bible, literally interpreted, that fell like a guillotine on the neck of late mediaeval Catholicism in England. The effects were felt in a

reorientation of all three major aspects of Western Catholic Christianity: worship, theology and, of course, structures of authority. The Catholic riches of ritual and physically sensory worship were replaced by a drastically logocentric cult with Scripture dominant in almost every aspect – liturgies were pared down to make the biblical lections more prominent; the cult of the mass was replaced by an almost obsessive emphasis on interpreting the Bible in sermons; polyphonic music was replaced by the simple psalm-singing commended by St Paul; and, in waves of iconoclasm justified by a literal reading of the fourth commandment, the entire visual apparatus of Catholic worship was replaced by whitewashed visual plainness that focussed devotional attention not on altars, paintings or statues, but on the pulpit and on Scripture written on walls.

The major theological shift was again radical, and perhaps best summed up as a move away from *mediated* to *unmediated* grace. Priestly mediation was restricted in the reduction of seven sacraments to two (Baptism and the Eucharist); Catholic piety marked by a belief in the efficacy of works was redirected to a Protestant personal piety defined by Luther's *sola fide*, where works were not operative but instead signs or 'fruits' of favour already given by God; and the elaborate mediaeval cult of the dead was erased by the rejection, as non-biblical, of the doctrine of purgatory. In England this was replaced with John Calvin's doctrine of predestination: since souls were predestined to eternal life, the mediation of the saints, the efficacy of prayers and masses for the dead were rendered pointless and the object of satire. They were replaced by a new Protestant piety that emphasised the believer's own self-examination, unmediated by the Church or its clergy, the aim of which was not to secure salvation but simply, and sometimes desperately, to find evidence of one's predestined election. And finally, of course, there was the revolution in ecclesiastical authority, which was to be vested not in the Pope but in the monarch, as Supreme Governor of the Church of England.

Since the justification of all of these reforms was an appeal to biblical authority, it is important to say something about the English and their Bible, or rather their Bibles, since, for all of English Protestants' insistence on the almost monolithic importance of Scripture, there were no fewer than four official translations of the Bible in the first hundred years of the reformed Church of England. Moreover, it was another English Bible, an entirely unofficial one, that was the most popular and influential. And it is with these Bibles that we begin to see how quickly later notions of a stable, uniform, moderate 'Anglicanism' cannot apply to the early Church of England. Published with much fanfare in 1539 was Henry VIII's so-called 'Great Bible', which advertised on its title page the king as the dispenser of saving biblical truth in the vernacular offered to a nation that had been kept in a dark prison of ignorance by Rome and its Latin Vulgate. A slightly revised version of the Great Bible was also

promulgated by Henry's son, the boy-king Edward VI. However, it is a mistake to see either of these, in spite of the iconography of their title pages, as in any way populist. The scholar who translated the majority of the Great Bible, William Tyndale, had published his New Testament in a small format that was deliberately meant to be affordable, portable and used by the widest possible range of the literate classes. But the official Bibles of Henry and Edward were only printed as lectern bibles – they were huge folios, as expensive as they were large, and were neither suitable, nor intended, for private or domestic use by the laity. Although both Henry and Edward embraced having lectionary readings in church services in English, where any interpretation of them would be in the context of the liturgy and only read and possibly preached on by a licensed minister, neither monarch took the fully evangelical step toward encouraging private Bible-reading by lay people.

The next two official, authorised, versions of the English Bible were the same. One was promulgated by Queen Elizabeth and called the 'Bishops' Bible', and the other was commanded by King James and published in 1611; it is still called the 'Authorized Version' (or, especially, in the USA, the 'King James Bible'). Again, these were for lecterns in church, not for use at home. Because of that, they did not have the cultural significance in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that we might expect. In 2011 King James' 'Authorized Version' had its 400th birthday, which was marked by a vast amount of attention and even expense, both from the UK Parliament and the many national churches in the Anglican Communion, and also from cultural organisations such as the BBC and the universities, and even a new (and very good) play by the Royal Shakespeare Company – all to celebrate the version of the Bible that has become synonymous with Anglicanism and a kind of cultural icon in England and America, even among the unchurched.

But when academics like me were interviewed, or asked to speak for these anniversary celebrations, we often had to rain on the parade, because it had to be pointed out that almost no-one noticed when the Authorized Version was published. In fact, we do not even know when in 1611 it appeared from the press. The great cultural weight of the so-called 'King James' Bible only began when the Church of England started to become what we now call 'Anglican' – that is, after the turmoil of the seventeenth century had finally ended, and when religious culture within the Church of England had not only become more settled and stable, but also began to be confidently exported across the world in what was fast becoming the British Empire. Because there were no new versions of the English Bible authorised for use in Anglican churches from after the Restoration of King Charles II in 1660 until the early twentieth century, the 1611 Bible did become well known and much-loved, or at least very familiar, but neither it nor its official predecessors were the versions used by the laity, nor even by very many ministers, at the time they were published.

The Bible that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English Protestants used was not only not official but had not even been translated into English in England, nor even first printed in England – but rather in Geneva. This is the so-called ‘Geneva Bible’, which was the work of English divines who were refugees there during the reign of the Catholic Queen Mary from 1553 to 1558. They had been welcomed to Geneva by John Calvin himself, and one of the chief translators among those exiles even married Calvin’s daughter. Not surprisingly, then, the theology expressed in the marginal notes of this translation was very Calvinist, especially on such key points as predestination and the Eucharist as memorial, not sacrificial. When those same Protestant exiles returned to England upon the death of Queen Mary and the accession of her half-sister, Elizabeth, their influence, and the influence of the Bible that they brought with them, was a deciding factor in why, theologically, English Protestantism was very soon not Lutheran, as it had been under Henry VIII, but Calvinist.

The Geneva Bible was hugely popular precisely because it was *intended* for use by the laity, and because it was deliberately produced in a form that emphasised its exciting novelty and easy accessibility. To begin with, it was printed in vast quantities in formats that were inexpensive as well as portable – small quartos that almost anyone could afford, and that could be carried easily. It was also stylish – it was the first English Bible to be printed not in old-fashioned Gothic black-letter type but in modern roman type. It also included aids and helps which allowed lay access to the hitherto academic domains of biblical history, with maps of the Holy Land and illustrations of Solomon’s Temple, appendices of Hebrew proper names and their meanings, an index of principal persons and events in the Bible, and two chronologies, one from the Creation of Adam to the present day, the other of the ministry of St Paul.

Even more important in the history of English Protestantism, though, was that the Geneva Bible was the first to divide the chapters of its books into numbered verses, and to put in the margins cross-references from one verse to others. This built the Biblical culture of evangelical Protestantism far more than the authorised lectern Bibles ever did; the Geneva Bible put the vernacular into the homes and hands of individuals, outside the interpretative control of the Church, and said, ‘Look, you too can not only read this, but also study it.’ In doing so, it exemplified the Reformed principle not just of *sola scriptura*, but also of the so-called priesthood of the believer, who, without priestly or other institutional mediation, could understand and interpret the Scripture without any aid other than Scripture. The favourite justification for this method was Romans 12:6, which instructed that preaching was to be according to the ‘proportion’ or ‘analogy’ of faith, and which St Augustine had interpreted as the Bible being its own best interpreter. Protestants took this as clear evidence that human interpretations, even those of the Fathers, and certainly not those kept by tradition or church custom, were inferior to simply solving difficult

places of Scripture with reference to other parts of Scripture. So the great English poet George Herbert would celebrate the way that, in Scripture, 'This verse marks that, and both do make a motion / Unto a third, that ten leaves off doth lie', and the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England (1563) could insist that the 'Holy Scriptures containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein be not required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith'.

The Geneva Bible was also a great success and influence because it appealed directly to the virulent anti-Catholicism of those who had suffered persecution under Queen Mary. Even its title page illustrated how Scripture was to be used polemically. Under the title was a woodcut depicting the Children of Israel crossing the Red Sea to escape from Pharaoh and his army of Egyptians. Framing the picture on four sides were verses from the Psalms and the Book of Exodus: 'Great are the troubles of the righteous but the Lord delivereth them out of all', 'Feare not, stand still, and beholde the salvation of the Lord' and 'The Lord shall fight for you: therefore hold your peace'. In this typology, of course, the crossing of the Red Sea alludes most immediately to the escape of the English Protestant exiles across the North Sea to safety in Protestant Germany and France, saved by God from the clutches of Queen Mary who had turned England, they thought, into an Egypt of idolatry and false religion. More generally, the Geneva Bible title page was also only one example among many of the iconography and mythology of anti-Catholicism that became such a stubborn part of the national consciousness – that the Protestant English were God's chosen people, set apart and saved by him from Roman Catholicism.

THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

I will return to the Bible and its interpretation to suggest some of the ways in which biblical interpretation was far more complicated and troublesome for the early Church of England than early Protestant apologists claimed. But first I need to turn to the other text that laid the foundation of 'Anglicanism', the *Book of Common Prayer*. Here again, as with English Bibles, we need to speak in the plural, of *Books of Common Prayer*, for there were no fewer than three very different versions of it in the first ten years of the Church of England's existence. The story of those three books illustrates just how hesitant and conflicted was the emergence of the new national church, and for me, these account most for what are still the greatest strengths and the greatest weaknesses of Anglicanism.

To begin with, it is important to realise that worship in the vernacular, like having the Bible in the vernacular, was introduced tentatively and incrementally over a relatively long period of time. Henry VIII's first cautious step, in 1537, was

to leave the Catholic mass in the Latin of the Sarum Rite entirely intact *except* for having the epistle and Gospel read in English from the new Great Bible. A year later, with the Sarum rite still in place, he added the requirement that the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments be said in English. It was not until six years later, in 1544, that any complete service entirely in English was promulgated, and this was not the mass or even one of the daily offices, but a special litany to be said in all churches with intentions for the king's success in his war with France. So, even the introduction of worship in the vernacular, and that with little or no change to any of its theological content, was hesitant at best under Henry VIII. It is also clear that, at the end of his life, he had second thoughts about even using an English Bible in churches: having secured his desired divorce and filled the royal coffers with the riches of the monasteries, he came increasingly under the influence of the so-called 'Conservative Reaction' of traditionalist Catholic bishops against Reform, and approved limitations on reading the Bible in English.

Henry's death in 1547 brought to the throne his young son Edward VI, who, with the counsellors who controlled his government, was deeply committed to Evangelical Protestant reform. So, while Henry VIII was hailed by reformers as the Moses who had led the English chosen people out of the Egypt of Catholicism, it was Edward whom they greeted as the Joshua who would take them into the Promised Land of full reform. Within a year of Edward's accession, he promulgated the first complete English service book, compiled by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, the 1549 *Book of Common Prayer*. It was decreed that the new book would be used in all churches throughout the land from the feast of Pentecost of that year – that date was of course heavy with symbolism because it inferred that, just as God had reversed the confusion of the tongues at the Tower of Babel and christened his new church with the Holy Spirit at the first Pentecost, on Pentecost 1549 in England the church would be reborn with a new rite, a *Book of Common Prayer*, that would replace the Babel of ecclesiastical Latin with one native language that all could understand.

Although the new prayer book was a radical departure from the Roman rite, it is vital to the understanding of how the Church of England, and later Anglicanism, thinks of itself, to remember that what was radical was arguably not the imposition of new things but the reduction in the number of old things. Cranmer's first guiding principle was simplification of what he considered the overly elaborate and confusing number of liturgies. For the full number of Catholic services that might be said by a bishop, for example, as many as eight books might be required: breviary, missal, processional, manual, pontifical, psalter, gradual and antiphonal. As Cranmer complained in the Preface to his new book, 'the nombre and hardness of the rules of . . . the service' of the old rite 'was the cause, that to turne the boke onelye, was so hard and intricate a matter, that many times, there was more busines to fynd out what should be

read, then to read it when it was founde out'. To solve the problem, he explicitly applied the humanist principle of restoring corrupted originals, declared in the opening sentence of the Preface:

There was never any thing by the wit of man so well devised, or so surely established, which (in continuance of time) hath not been corrupted: as (among other thinges) it may plainly appere by the common prayers in the Church, commonlye called divine service.

He then proceeded to cut anything in the Sarum rite that he thought could not be supported by Scripture. The result was one book instead of up to eight, and it was revolutionary in its economy. As Cranmer bragged, 'by this order the [ministers] shall need no other books for their public service but this book and the Bible'. And, indeed, the list of contents of the entire *Book of Common Prayer* – that is, the list of every service that was legal to be said in England – fit on one side of one page of a small quarto book.

Cranmer's principal economy was the drastic reduction of the eight canonical hours to just two daily liturgies, Morning Prayer (adapted from Mattins and Lauds) and Evening Prayer (from Vespers and Compline). The most sensitive liturgy, the Mass, was left largely unchanged in both its name and its structure, though the term 'oblation' was made to refer only to the congregation's 'prayers and thanksgivings' and the past, historical sacrifice of Christ (not to any present sacrifice), while the elevation of the consecrated host was omitted. Perhaps most keenly felt by the laity, however, was the severe trimming of the Kalendar. Using the scalpel of biblical authority, all commemorations of saints who were not New Testament figures were cut out; thus, at one biblical stroke, the number of saints' and feast days in England was reduced from about two hundred to twenty-one, and even those saints were only to be commemorated, not prayed to. In fact, one non-biblical saint escaped the purge – St George – who, in spite of being very legendary even by late mediaeval standards, was of course England's patron saint, and his survival in the new Kalendar (although only as a black-letter day, without a collect or propers) tells us much about the self-conscious nationalism of the new Church. It also tells us something of the importance of the Royal Supremacy, since the king was the master of England's principle order of chivalry, the Order of the Garter, whose patron saint was St George. So there were some limits even to Biblicism.

Cranmer claimed that his whole goal in this exercise of liturgical editing was to put the Bible more firmly at the centre of worship in England. His revised liturgies were themselves tissues of Scripture conceived as a frame for the reading of the two biblical lessons and psalms, which were appointed in an ambitious lectionary conceived so that if you attended daily Morning and Evening Prayer you heard the entire Psalter every month, the entire Old Testament once a

year and the entire New Testament three times a year. As Cranmer claimed, this was

more profitable, because here are left out many thynges, whereof some be untrue, some uncertein, some vain and superstitious: and is ordeyned nothyng to be read, but the very pure worde of God, the holy scriptures, or that whiche is evidently grounded upon the same . . . commodious, bothe for the shortnes thereof, and for the plaines [plainness] of the ordre, and for that the rules be fewe and easy.³

And of course, for the first time, and more than twenty years after the first steps toward Reformation, the entirety of all these services was in English.

The first prayer book did not change enough for Cranmer, however, especially theologically, and he immediately set about revising his own revision of the liturgies while coming under the ever-increasing influence of Calvin and Martin Bucer. The result was the so-called Second Prayer Book of Edward VI, promulgated in 1552, which principally carried out Cranmer's major aim to remove all language and gesture of sacrifice and 'real presence' in the Eucharist. His drastic reordering of the Mass included too many changes to spell out here, but perhaps they are all best illustrated by the single example of his change to the words of administration to communicants. His first Prayer Book had the explicit declaration by the priest: 'The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life', which was simply a translation of the Roman rite's *custodiat corpus tuum et animam tuam in vitam aeternam*, and which could still, obviously, accommodate Catholic belief in the transubstantiated real presence. But in 1552 Cranmer replaced those words with new ones that emphatically barred any belief in real presence, and which insisted that the consecrated elements were strictly memorials or symbols of an explicitly past and final sacrifice, and that they were operative only as a seal or confirmation of the believer's faith and thankfulness: 'Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith, with thanksgiving'. Even more explicit, or shocking, was the rubric that required normal domestic bread, not wafers, for the host, and instructed that if there was any left unconsumed, the priest was to 'have it to his own use'.

THE BEGINNINGS OF 'ANGLICANISM'

An introduction to the origins of the Church of England that stopped here would leave one with a rather uncomplicated narrative of the progress of Reform that

3 B Cummings (ed), *The Book of Common Prayer: the texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662* (Oxford, 2011), pp 4–5.

gives us most of the expected ingredients: a constitutional and cultural break with Rome, the monarch established as supreme governor of the national church, the Bible and liturgies in English, a memorialist eucharistic theology, the abolition of monasticism and the dismantling of the cult of the dead, and the iconoclastic purging of church art and ceremony. But, although this is the beginning of the story of the Church of England, it is not the end of it, and it does not capture what came to be called 'Anglicanism', because it is too simple, too uncomplicated and too Reformed – in short, it is not messy enough to be 'Anglicanism'. For that, we need to look later into the sixteenth century, and into the beginning of the seventeenth.

Diarmaid MacCulloch's scholarship has made it clear that Archbishop Cranmer was eager even after the 1552 prayer book to continue what he thought would be the further necessary purification of the English eucharistic rite according to Calvinist principles.⁴ Had his patron and protector King Edward not died shortly after the 1552 rite was published, the Church of England would probably have become more like the Presbyterian Calvinist churches of Scotland or even Geneva. However, the accession of the devout Catholic Queen Mary in 1553 put a stop to the Reformed liturgies, and, of course, to Cranmer, who was burned at the stake in Oxford in 1555. Mary's Catholic reign was similarly very short, and the accession of Queen Elizabeth in 1558 saw yet another attempt to refashion the vernacular Protestant liturgy of the Church of England.

Famously, Elizabeth sent out very mixed signals in the early months of her reign. Although educated as a Protestant, she had conformed to Catholicism during her half-sister's reign; her principal counsellors, too, had conformed rather than choosing exile on the Continent. At her accession she issued no anti-Catholic edicts, and even insisted, to the horror of many, that a crucifix remain on the altar in her Chapel Royal; but she also made a point to receive and kiss a copy of the English Bible during her coronation procession. At her first Christmas mass, the Roman rite was used but the celebrant was commanded not to elevate the host. The returned English Protestant exiles from Geneva, Frankfurt and Strasbourg were a powerful lobby for an aggressive return to Reform, and themselves created problems for Elizabeth and her councillors by working against any measure that they thought too conservative. Meanwhile, deaths and deprivations removed Catholic bishops from the House of Lords. The first Elizabethan Parliament did pass a bill to re-instate Protestantism, but just barely – not so much because of Catholic opposition but because hard-line reformers found the whole compromise too lukewarm.

The Prayer Book that was instituted by the Act of Uniformity – the 1559 *Book of Common Prayer* (England's third) – is I think, more than anything else, crucial

4 D MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer* (New Haven, CT, and London, 1996), pp 504–512.

for understanding the early Church of England and the origins of Anglicanism. And that is because it, like Anglicanism, was such a compromise. Depending on your views, this is still either the great weakness or the great strength of Anglicanism. Again, the compromise of the 1559 prayer book, and so much of Anglicanism itself, is summed up by the small but eloquent example of the priest's words of administration at the Holy Communion. Where Cranmer's first book had the traditional Catholic declaration of the consecrated elements as the body and blood of Christ, and his second book had the almost outrageously novel statement that they were simply memorial symbols, the 1559 book simply put the two together, and the priest said both. This 1559 solution to the debated question of eucharistic presence, which has remained unchanged in the *Book of Common Prayer*, epitomises 'Anglicanism' – because it is such a classic example of not just making an honest effort to please everyone but also succeeding in really pleasing no-one, at least not completely. At the same time, joking aside, it is a pragmatic compromise that maximises, or at least attempts to maximise, inclusivity: to hold together different theological and liturgical views for the sake of being communal, to be a Church of 'Common' prayer.

There is further evidence of this in the 1559 prayer book, which – because it was that book which has lasted for centuries now – gave the Church of England its ability to gather around it something like a national consensus. So, in a clear bid to win the support of those with Catholic leanings, the use of vestments and the sign of the cross on the child's forehead in baptism were retained, and Cranmer's earlier rubrics that called the Pope a 'tyrant' were quietly dropped. The reasons for concessions such as these were primarily pragmatic: there was no possibility that vicious anti-Catholicism or a fully Calvinist eucharistic theology would have been approved by Parliament. So Parliament's role cannot be underestimated when thinking about the origins of the Church of England and Anglicanism. It was, and still is, a brake on drastic or sudden reforms, and puts into the hands of a lay majority decisions on all matters of public worship. But the concessions to more conservative English Protestants were also the private views of Queen Elizabeth, so the influence of the Supreme Governor must also be counted an important factor. Moreover, unlike the Reformed churches in Germany or Switzerland, the mixed polity of the Church of England, which included clergy, the laity in both houses of Parliament, and the sovereign, prevented it from becoming a sect formed and identified with a single individual, such as a Luther or a Calvin, and its claims to integrity are not weakened by being an 'ism' named for a person.

If there *was* a single person who put a stamp on the settled, more mature Church of England, though, it was not Henry VIII, or his son Edward, but Elizabeth I. The best scholarship makes it clear that her brand of Protestantism was far more conservative than that of most of her clergy and advisors. After the religious instabilities of her father's and two siblings'

reigns, she came to the throne determined that her nation and its church would not be scorned in Europe as reactionary or lacking in dignity; and she seems to have been animated by an honest desire to avoid (at times unsuccessfully) the extremities of religious persecution. But her early caution and conservatism led to immediate opposition from those who thought her 1559 settlement was not just a compromise but also a betrayal, especially when she made it clear to them that she considered the matter of religion in her realm settled for good. Many had accepted the 1559 settlement as a necessary temporary measure, and had assumed that there would soon be a continued 'progress' toward greater institutional reform, perhaps even on the Presbyterian model, with the abolition of bishops and cathedrals. Even more people had assumed that there would be a continuation of liturgical and theological reform, in particular that, like Cranmer, they would be allowed to continue reforming the prayer book, which one leading former exile said did 'not correspond to complete reformation of the Church, and which perhaps might radically be changed for the better'. A petition to Parliament in the early 1570s put it in even more inflammatory terms, calling the 1559 book 'an unperfect book, culled and picked out of that popish dunghill, the mass-book of all abominations'. Elizabeth, though, clung to the ideal that the guiding principle of the prayer book and her 1559 settlement of the Church was reformed continuity with the past, and uniformity in practice – the ideal of a nation worshipping in unison in a common language according to the same forms.

Working against that ideal, and against her, however, was the Protestant passion for individual autonomy in matters of faith and practice, which expressed itself most in the interpretation frenzy unleashed by the Protestant cult of Bible-reading and, in particular, preaching. Also profoundly challenging were the logical implications of the very *exclusive* doctrine of predestination for a supposedly *inclusive* national church. Both of these things fostered a vigorous culture of some practicing their religion *outside* the liturgies of the prayer book, often by ignoring parts of it, such as not following the rubric to make the sign of the cross at baptism, or omitting canticles like the *Te Deum* because they were not Scripture. Many ministers refused to wear the minimum requirement of gown and surplice when saying common prayers or preaching. Nevertheless, because the queen took disobedience to the prayer book as disobedience to *her*, she pursued a successful crackdown on such kinds of nonconformity, and this established the important principle of the monarch's supremacy over *adiaphora* (practices not relating to faith).

Such measures came at the cost of forcing into opposition large numbers of her initial supporters. This group was noted for the seriousness with which they took what had become entirely orthodox doctrines of election and reprobation and then applied them to their own lives and experience in a drive to externalise their status as the predestined 'elect'. For the preciseness, or 'purity' with which

they did this they were soon labelled (abusively) as ‘precisions’ or ‘puritans’. They preferred to call themselves ‘the godly’, and felt that godliness was best confirmed and fostered in small, exclusive groups, who thought of themselves as set apart from the majority – they did not accept the Church of England’s definition of membership in it by the public, sacramental rite of baptism and attendance at public worship according to its official formularies. This, of course, created by strong implication the existence of an invisible church of the truly elect inside the visible national church. And that powerful reforming rhetoric of the ‘remnant’ of the true Church, the predestined elect, nurtured a culture of voluntary religion outside lawful prayer-book worship – an enthusiastic seeking after edification and confirmation of godliness through participation in activities which affirmed zeal and extra individual commitment, usually small-group Bible-reading, and extra sermon-going, often outside one’s legal parish.

All of this naturally led to distrust and resentment on both sides, and exasperation from the queen. She told a select group of bishops and clergy in 1585 that they

suffer many ministers to preach what they list, and to minister the sacraments according to their own fancies – some one way, some another – to the breach of unity; yea, and some of them so curious in searching matters above their capacity as they preach they wot not what . . . nay, I have heard of there be six preachers in one diocese the which do preach six sundry ways. I wish such men to be brought to conformity and unity, that they minister the sacraments according to the order of this realm and preach all one truth.⁵

There we hear a Supreme Governor insisting on the dream of uniformity in the Church of England. We also see that she was not a supporter of something that most of her subjects were – sermon-centred piety. For her, sacraments and liturgical worship were to be the bedrock of the Church, and sermons an allowable extra that was not always necessary. On this point, we need to understand that preaching and ordained ministry were not the same thing: ordination did not carry the right to preach in the Church of England until the eighteenth century. Before then, separate licensing to preach, in addition to ordination, was necessary because of low educational standards among the clergy, especially in the decades after the deprivation of many Catholic incumbents. In the Diocese of Worcester in the first year of Elizabeth’s reign, for example, only 19 per cent of clergy held a university degree. Over the ten years from 1560 to 1570, 282 priests

5 L Marcus, J Mueller and M Rose (eds), *Elizabeth I: collected works* (Chicago, IL, 2000), p 178.

were ordained in the northern diocese of Chester, and only one of those was a university graduate.⁶ Because of this, the Elizabethan statutes could only require that every parish have a sermon four times a year, and even those often had to be hired sermons by a visitor because the parish priest was not himself licensed to go into the pulpit.

This state of affairs did not suit the sermon-hungry godly. But the queen thought that there was more than enough preaching. In 1585, Archbishop John Whitgift put the case to Queen Elizabeth that there were 13,000 parishes in the country and he did not know how he could supply licensed preachers for all of them. She responded with a surprising oath:

'Jesus!' *quod* the queen, 'thirteen thousand! It is not to be looked for. I think the time hath been there hath not been four preachers in a diocese. My meaning is not you should make choice of learned ministers only, for they are not to be found, but of honest, sober, and wise men, and such as can read the Scriptures . . . well unto the people.'⁷

Godly or 'puritan' anger at this state of affairs finally exploded in 1589, when an anonymous writer who called himself 'Martin Marprelate' secretly printed a series of outrageous, and outrageously funny, satires against the bishops and the whole establishment status quo; they accused the hierarchy and the queen of ignoring their evangelical responsibilities to minister the gospel in preaching and not to clutter the liturgy with left-over Catholic ceremonies. The official reaction to this was severe, and Archbishop Whitgift successfully rooted out puritan and Presbyterian opposition by suspending hundreds of ministers and driving others into exile.

It was at precisely this time, the 1590s, that there began to emerge, in a small minority of leading figures in the Church, the first signs of the kind of churchmanship and theology that later came to be thought of as 'Anglicanism'. In the universities, especially Cambridge, a few leading divines began to criticise the Calvinist theology of grace. Also, in response to radical Presbyterians and voices such as Martin Marprelate came the classic defence of the established church from Richard Hooker, *The Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity*, with its defence of the royal supremacy and the *Book of Common Prayer* and, for the first time in print from an apologist for the Church of England, strong criticism of the earlier Reformers' insistence that frequent preaching was necessary for salvation; Hooker even included a full defence of church music.

More quietly, behind the scenes, there were other clergy who, like Hooker, had grown up under the Elizabethan settlement and also began to criticise

6 P Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: the Church in English society 1559–1625* (Oxford, 1982), p 94.
7 Marcus et al, *Elizabeth I*, p 181.

what they felt had been some of the excesses of the first generation Reformers. Lancelot Andrewes, who would become one of the most influential bishops under King James, as a canon of St Paul's Cathedral during Elizabeth's reign revived the custom of hearing confession in the cathedral during Lent, included prayers for the dead in his private devotions, and in his sermons warned against how churches had become *auditoria* – places of hearing – rather than *oratoria* – places of prayer. Knowing the queen's sympathies for his anti-Calvinist views, in a sermon on Christ's words, 'Remember Lot's Wife', Andrewes preached against predestination, using Lot's wife as an example of how salvation could be lost unless the individual co-operated with divine grace with his or her own acts of will and moral fortitude.⁸ In an academic disputation in Cambridge in 1590 Andrewes went so far as to openly criticise the sequestration of church endowments and tithes by the Crown and the distribution of them to laymen as court patronage, arguing that the physical and spiritual edifice of the Church was being weakened by the practice. He even insisted that tithes were due to the clergy by divine right – a position that had not been argued in England since the Catholic days of Queen Mary.⁹

It was this group of clergy (soon to include the poet John Donne, ordained a priest in James I's reign) which began to temper the anti-Catholicism of previous generations. This is a point that I want to be careful not to exaggerate – even the most liberal divines like Andrewes and Donne never wavered in their firm rejection of papal authority. But, for the first time since the Reformation, they and others like them began to argue about and with Rome from the position that it was a true church – flawed, of course, they would say, but a true church. They also for the first time articulated regret for the divisions caused in Christendom by the Reformation. That was a major step away from the early Reformation rhetoric found even in prayer books of Edward VI which held that the Pope was Anti-Christ and the Church of Rome the false church of the Whore of Babylon.

These divines, who became most prominent in the first two decades of the seventeenth century, also gave to the Church of England a greater respect for the place of scholarship and tradition, especially through their sermons and high esteem for liturgical worship. Replacing the uncompromising Scripturalism of the early Reformation in Andrewes' sermons was his deep study and commendation of the early Church Fathers. He horrified some by insisting that in matters of disputed Biblical interpretation, the Fathers were a better guide than modern divines such as Calvin, and that patristic guidance, if applied judiciously with learning and reason, could access difficult

8 P McCullough (ed), *Lancelot Andrewes: Selected Sermons and Lectures* (Oxford, 2005), pp 108–121, 353–365.

9 *Ibid*, pp 82–99, 331–334.

Scriptural truth better than the closed-circuit of only Scripture interpreting Scripture. Donne even immersed himself in contemporary Catholic scholarship when preparing his sermons: although he could not name his sources in the pulpit for obvious political reasons, he drew very heavily, if selectively, from the works of the Jesuit commentators Jean de Lorin and Alfonso Salmeron, and he was a careful student of Aquinas.

CONCLUSION

This takes us quite some distance away from what might be thought of as the 'origins' of the Church of England in the reign of Henry VIII. But that is because the origins of Anglicanism lie in the longer story of its evolution through the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The Church of England in its earliest origins was fiercely Scripturalist, radically Calvinist, uncompromisingly anti-Catholic, deeply sermon-centred and suspicious of ceremonial worship. None of these things characterises mainstream Anglicanism today. What is, to us, the first recognisable Anglican moment came at the end, not the beginning, of the sixteenth century, when clergy such as Hooker, Andrewes and Donne took full advantage of the flexibility of the 1559 Settlement to argue for the place in it of tradition, for a finer balance between the ministry of the Word and the ministry of sacraments and liturgy, and for a willingness to engage less confrontationally with Rome. After the upheavals of the civil wars and the proliferation of radical sects under Oliver Cromwell, the restored King Charles II and his church looked back to the example of Elizabeth I and early Jacobean divines for their definition of what only then came to be called 'Anglicanism'.